

Technically Mystic

Field Notes from the Messy Middle

Technically Mystic (the Field Reporter)

January 2026

“To the superficial observer, it will appear like madness”

– C.G. Jung, The Red Book

Dedication

For the undercover mystics:

- The engineers meditating in their home office.
- The professionals experiencing kriyas they can't explain.
- The rational minds falling in love with the Formless.
- The ones torn in half between worlds.
- The ones who think they're going crazy.

You're not crazy.

This is awakening.

You're not alone.

And for the mystics who came before:

- Who died for speaking truth.
- Who were burned, imprisoned, silenced.
- Who left breadcrumbs in the dark.

I found them.

These are mine.

For whoever comes next.

Disclaimer

This document contains descriptions of mystical experiences, spontaneous physical phenomena (kriyas), and altered states of consciousness that arose through meditation practice. It is offered as documentation and personal testimony, not as medical or psychological advice.

If you experience concerning physical or psychological symptoms during spiritual practice, please consult qualified healthcare professionals.

The author is not a licensed therapist, medical doctor, or ordained spiritual teacher. This is a field report, not a prescription.

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How to Use This Document

This is not a book to read cover-to-cover (though you can). This is not a manual with step-by-step instructions (there are none). This is not a guru's teaching from the mountaintop (I'm still climbing).

This is a collection of field notes from the messy middle of spiritual awakening—written in real-time by someone who started meditating for burnout and accidentally fell in love with God.

Navigation by Depth

The content is organized by “Levels” based on accessibility and intensity:

→ LEVEL 0: TECHNICAL Start here if you’re skeptical, burned out, or new to meditation. Grounded. Practical. Evidence-based. Topics: burnout, stress, why meditation actually works

→ LEVEL 1: TRANSITIONAL

Read this when meditation stops being “just stress relief.” The worldview starts cracking. Things get interesting. Topics: strange experiences, falling in love with practice, the double life

→ LEVEL 2: MYSTICAL Enter when you can’t turn back anymore. Longing. Dark Nights. Poetry. Devotion. Topics: bhakti, the ghosting, falling in love with the Formless

→ LEVEL 3: UNION Direct transmission. Boundaries dissolve. Sacred sexuality, spontaneous kriyas, non-dual awareness. Enter only when ready.

Content warnings apply.

→ FIELD NOTES Short observations. Quick recognitions. Breadcrumbs.
Read these when you need a “me too” moment.

How to Read

- If you're curious → Start at Level 0 and work your way down
- If you're already deep in the messy middle → Jump to wherever resonates
- If you're researching modern mysticism → Read chronologically for developmental arc

What This is Not

This is not a how-to guide. I can't give you reproducible steps to enlightenment because spiritual awakening doesn't work that way. (See Field Note: "The Replication Crisis")

This is not safe, sanitized spirituality. It's raw. Sometimes uncomfortable. Sometimes explicitly about things "nice spiritual ladies" aren't supposed to discuss.

This is not written from the end of the journey. I'm documenting AS I go, which means I don't know how this ends. That's the point.

What This is

- Proof that this happens to ordinary people.
- Proof that the ancient texts are describing real, reproducible phenomena.
- Proof that you're not alone in the messy middle.

Read what resonates. Skip what doesn't. Return when you're ready.

The field notes will be here.

About the Author

I'm a software engineer who started meditating in 2022 to fix my burnout. I was looking for stress relief.

Instead, I accidentally dismantled my entire worldview.

For a decade, I've built systems, debugged code, and lived by logic. I am a Virgo Sun, a Senior Engineer, and a skeptic by trade.

Over 3.5 years, I went from agnostic workaholic to... whatever this is. Someone who writes love poetry to the Divine at 2 AM. Someone hiding the grief of "the Dark Night of the Soul" because it's too difficult to explain. Someone experiencing spontaneous kriyas during meditation. Someone navigating mystical union while trying to act normal in morning stand-ups and in my marriage.

I spent years thinking I was living a double life—torn between the person everyone knew and the heart beating under the floorboards.

I'm not a guru. I'm not enlightened. I don't have a certification in anything spiritual.

I'm an engineer with who approached meditation with the same rigor I approach debugging code—and discovered that the mystical experiences described in ancient texts are real, reproducible, and happening to ordinary people right now.

This document is my attempt to create the field notes I wish I'd had when meditation stopped being stress relief and started becoming something I couldn't explain.

I write under a pen name because I'm still navigating a double life— engineer by day, mystic by night. Maybe someday that won't be necessary. For now, anonymity allows honesty.

If you're reading this and recognizing yourself in these experiences:

You're not crazy. This is real. You're not alone.

Welcome to the messy middle.

— “Technically Mystic”, the Field Reporter

January 2026

Introduction

Why These Notes Exist

We have plenty of books by gurus who've reached the mountaintop. We have countless manuals on *how* to meditate. We have beautiful memoirs written *after* the journey is complete.

But where are the field notes from the messy middle?

Where's the documentation for the part where you're halfway up the mountain, terrified, exhausted, wondering if you're losing your mind or finally waking up?

Where's the guide for when meditation stops being stress relief and starts being... something you can't explain to your spouse, your therapist, or yourself?

Where's the voice saying: "This happened to me too. Here's what it looked like. You're not crazy."

I couldn't find those notes.

So I'm writing them.

This project started as private journaling—the “secret insanity” I was too afraid to share. Over 3.5 years, it evolved into systematic documentation. Then into a Substack. Now into this compilation.

Why compile it at all?

Because platforms die. Servers crash. Substack might not exist in 10 years, let alone 100.

But a PDF can be copied. Shared. Preserved. Found by someone who needs it in 2045 or 2150, long after I'm gone.

This isn't for fame. This isn't for validation.

This is for the person googling "why does my spine move during meditation" at 2 AM, terrified they're having a seizure.

This is for the engineer who meditates for burnout and accidentally falls in love with Something they can't prove exists.

This is for the undercover mystic living a double life, convinced they're the only one.

You're not.

What you'll find here:

- Honest documentation of what spiritual awakening looks like for a 21st century American woman with a day job
- Cross-referencing of mystical experiences with ancient texts (because I needed proof I wasn't making this up)
- The messy parts—relationship strain, fear of being seen as delusional, the terror of vulnerability
- Poetry that fell out of meditation
- Field notes from the journey, not instructions for how to take it

What you won't find here:

- A step-by-step enlightenment manual (doesn't exist)
 - Cleaned-up, sanitized spirituality (this is raw)
 - Certainty about what's happening (I'm figuring it out as I go)
 - Claims of expertise (I'm a field reporter, not a guru)
-

If you're reading this in 202X, know that you're part of a quiet revolution. Burnout is epidemic. Systems are failing. People are turning inward out of necessity—and discovering that the mystical experiences described in ancient texts are still happening. Right now. To ordinary people.

If you're reading this in 2050, 2100, 2150—I don't know what your world looks like. But if you're searching for evidence that direct mystical experience was possible in early 21st century America, despite the commodification and sanitization of everything sacred:

Here's your proof.

It happened.

It's happening.

It will keep happening.

Because the Divine doesn't stop calling just because the culture stops listening.

These are my breadcrumbs in the dark.

May they help you find your way.

Level 0 - Technical

Burnout, skepticism, and the rational analysis of spiritual phenomena. This is where I try to make sense of the “woo” without losing my grounding.

The Engine(er) Is Smoking: A Survival Guide for Tech Burnout

Subtitle: [Level 0: Technical] The guide I wish I'd had back in 2022 / Here's how to not die at your desk

Posted: Nov 13, 2025

*Update (Dec 20, 2025): This is **Level 0: Technical**. For **Level 1: Transitional**, read the sequel: *God is a Cosmic Masochist—A Meditation on Numbing.**

Something that's come to my attention within the recent years is how prevalent burnout is becoming in the workplace, particularly in tech (which is the only one I really have insight into given being in the tech space for a decade now). The world is churning people up and spitting them out, and most don't even realize they're burning until they're already ash.

In this guide, you'll learn:

1. How to recognize if you're burning out (before it's too late)
2. Two evidence-based practices that actually help
3. Why these work (the science behind completing the stress cycle)
4. How to start today (with a low bar you can actually clear) ## It's not just you At first I thought it was just me 4 years ago with 2 projects killed back-to-back within the span of 2 years as I was gunning for a

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promotion to staff-level (went up to 3 axed projects in a row as of 2 years ago, but this time I actually wanted it to be killed... maybe more on that in another post).

But as I talked to more of my friend network in the field, the more I noticed people:

- “crashing out” (at least, a former teammate used those exact words to describe it for them, another had a manic break that shook their entire life up and moved away)
- submitting notice with no jobs lined up to take an intentional gap in employment (a former coworker spent half a year with aging parents and traveling to decompress)
- retiring early / “Barista FIRE” (one former coworker decided to become a crossfit trainer for example, even AFTER a 2 month sabbatical)
- trying to swap out of a toxic job while juggling both scrum meetings and interviews all while getting heat from their manager in 1-on-1s for not meeting expectations under the unreasonable demands (you know who you are)
- OR, at the very least, considering how to make an exit from their current job / switch fields into something else entirely

I realized it wasn’t just my network when my favorite Harvard-educated psychiatrist and former-monk-in-training went on his channel earlier this year to do a video *specifically* on this topic. That was the moment when I went: “Oh shit. It’s not just us struggling”.

What can we do?

Notice the smoke

The first step of handling burnout unequivocally is realizing you actually have it (or are on the way to it). The problem is that it’s hard to detect until you think you’re suffering from depression (this comes up in the video I’ll mention later).

There is a phase called “brownout” which is the usually undetected or ignored stage before getting to full-blown burnout where you can no longer perform basic self-care tasks because even *that* takes too much energy and you’re just completely *spent*.

Warning signs you’re approaching burnout (brownout phase):

- You can’t remember the last time you felt excited about your work
- Sleep doesn’t restore your energy anymore
- You’re irritable over small things that wouldn’t normally bother you
- You’re constantly tired, even on weekends
- You’re disconnected from people and activities you used to enjoy
- You’re going through the motions at work but feel no sense of accomplishment
- Self-care feels like “one more thing to do” instead of restful

Warning signs you’re IN burnout:

- You can barely function at basic tasks
- Getting out of bed feels impossible
- You’re experiencing physical symptoms (headaches, stomach issues, constant illness)
- You feel emotionally numb or constantly on the verge of crying
- You fantasize about quitting without a backup plan
- You can’t focus or make decisions
- You feel hopeless about things improving

For a deeper dive into recognizing these patterns, Dr. K’s video on burnout is excellent, but the above gives you the essentials. I cannot recommend enough that you watch this video, even if you don’t think you have burnout. The warning signs are all too easy to miss.

What actually works (and it's simpler than you think)

I know you're so exhausted that you're stuck in the same routine because it requires the least thinking. It requires the least effort when you're running on fumes. It's automatic while you're too busy thinking about the mountain of tasks that loom ahead of you, the never-ending stream of concerning news, the chores that need attending to at home, among many other worries that all add up to an overwhelming load before you even have your morning coffee.

I know because I was there. Hell, I'm *still* there on some days. Not all of us can just leave and never have to fix **yet another** last minute feature that product management promised a customer would be available by next quarter (can you tell I've considered using spirituality as an escape before?).

BUT...

There is a way to keep the engine from becoming engulfed in flames causing you to make a strategic emergency landing at best and an abrupt crash-landing at worst.

Moving your body (yes, that counts as exercise)

In a later book recommendation post I intend to write, this is the FIRST thing that comes up in the Burnout book by Emily and Amelia Nagoski. This book is, and I quote:

for women (or anyone) who has felt overwhelmed and exhausted by everything they have to do, yet still worried they weren't doing "enough."

(As a woman in tech, this book hit me like a brick.)

The first chapter of the book explicitly talks about exercise. It's fundamental to complete the circuit on what they refer to as "the stress cycle", addressing the "fight or flight" response we have built into us when we're subject to:

WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS (AND IT'S SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK)11

- constant stressors (yes, even just responding to that Slack message from another coworker about that PR needing **yet another** rebase)
- unconscious microstressors of modern life, the “daily hassles” (think traffic, long lines, someone pinging you while you’re in the middle of debugging that pesky race condition that keeps messing up your unit tests).

To summarize the stress cycle:

- When you experience stress, your body activates the fight-or-flight response, releasing cortisol and adrenaline to prepare you to deal with a threat. (Maybe like me you’ve noticed from your fitness tracker / smart watch that your RHR is too high recently)
- In nature, this “stress cycle” completes when you physically respond: you fight the predator, you run away, the threat passes.
- **The problem in modern life:** Your body doesn’t know the difference between “saber-toothed tiger” and “passive-aggressive Slack message.” It floods you with stress hormones either way.
- But you don’t fight. You don’t run. You just... sit there at your desk trying to figure out when and how to respond. The stress hormones stay in your system, building up day after day.

To complete this cycle, your body needs a PHYSICAL outlet. For example:

- Walk around the block after a frustrating meeting
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Dance to one song (maybe easier if you work from home)

The goal isn’t fitness. **The goal is completing the stress cycle via physical movement** so those stress hormones don’t stay trapped in your body.

Kurzgesagt also recently put out a great video on modern stress if you’re interested.

Sitting in silence (yes, meditation—but not what you think)

This might be survivor’s bias, but I can honestly say this made a world of difference for me. This is what I would recommend AFTER you’ve tried your best to get regular exercise or *some* form of physical movement in direct response to a stressful conversation, meeting, or commute.

I want to emphasize that I AM NOT saying to go sit on a cushion and “focus on the breath” or whatever in RESPONSE to stress. That’s spiritual bypassing. However, ACTUALLY practicing breathwork (pranayama) such as box breathing or simply extending your exhales to be longer than the inhales DOES influence a physiological response to calm you down.

What *I AM* saying is that building meditation into your routine is *immensely* beneficial for your mental health. It strengthens the frontal lobes, the part of your brain that controls attention, applies the “brakes” for your amygdala (emotional center), and helps you make decisions... all things that are critical in managing and preventing burnout.

Options for what this could look like:

- Spending the first few minutes of the day *only* sitting quietly with only yourself when you first wake up as part of your “get ready for work” routine as soon as you roll out of bed, ideally before your brain really “turns on” *instead of immediately* checking the barrage of notifications / news updates, messages, whatever. Though, if it’s too ingrained as a habit, schedule a chunk of time on your calendar so it turns into an automatic notification reminder (or even schedule an alarm with a nice ringtone if you really need the ability to snooze it for a few minutes). I did the calendar event strategy (though now I no longer follow a strict schedule after several years of daily practice).
- Spending 5 minutes before or after eating your lunch to notice how you feel. *Notice* the hunger or fullness instead of operating from pure routine or rushing off to the next thing.
- Have your nightly wind-down include meditation. An effective practice is

yoga nidra where you lie down and just *rest*. If you end up falling asleep, great! You needed it! Happens at my local studio all the time.

Doing nothing is hard!

Whether at the start or end of the day, **thoughts are going to come**. They're going to snowball at first.

It's because:

- You're now NOTICING them. Many times we don't even realize we're thinking.
- These thoughts are now being allowed to *finally* surface after being suppressed with sensory stimuli for days, weeks, months, even years. When was the last time you even sat on the toilet without your phone? Maybe you even listen to podcasts in the shower or while on your commute to "stay up-to-date"?

BUT...

They will not keep snowballing. The surge will subside. This I interpret as the "poison" that comes up in the Hindu legend of the "churning of the ocean" to get to the "elixir of life" (amrita) at the bottom, what I understand as the mind for the "ocean" and the root of being for the "ocean floor" respectively.

The thoughts will become sparse and the gaps of that restful *Nothingness* will grow like watered seeds. I cannot tell you how long this takes because it directly depends how long you've been drowning out your own inner noise with outer noise. For increasingly more of us, that's been getting longer and longer.

TL;DR

Burnout is growing in the workplace, especially if you've been in the field for several years.

My number one advice is to do what the Burnout book calls "the stress cycle"

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via exercise or physical movement to blow off steam.

The next is to make meditation part of your nonnegotiable self-care routine, as important as showering or eating. You are tending to your brain's health by doing this and your overall body's by extension.

You need to let your mind take out the proverbial "trash", to digest the thoughts of the day (you may notice eventually this happens without your input!), or simply to create silence after waking up instead of a morning doomscroll sesh that creates a negative coloring over your whole already overwhelming day.

Thank you

My thanks for making it this far and I genuinely hope someone finds this post helpful. I needed to read this almost exactly 3 years ago when I was nearly crying at my desk from overwhelming pressure to deliver on a daunting and understaffed project to the point that I needed to take an immediate week off because I was barely functional. My hope is this reaches you before you get that far because not everyone is fortunate enough to have managers that will allow them to take time like this.

Don't let yourself burnout.

You still have so much life to live and you should feel ALIVE for it, not a husk of a person that used to have motivation and dreams.

That "person" is still in there.

They're at the bottom of the ocean waiting for you to meet them.

All it takes is some movement and some stillness.

Additional resources

Books

- [Previously mentioned] *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress*

Cycle by Emily Nagoski, PhD and Amelia Nagoski, DMA (non-Amazon link to the book: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/592377/burnout-by-emily-nagoski-phd-and-amelia-nagoski-dma/>)

YouTube Shorts

(As you may have noticed, I have a strong bias towards Dr. K's content because I don't subscribe to many channels and try to stay off YouTube in general)

- Why do we burnout? <https://youtube.com/shorts/-LE5q1GgkyU>
- Why software devs keep burning out <https://youtube.com/shorts/3IAQoduxAxM>
- How to stop burnout at work <https://youtube.com/shorts/BYVnZiL2ARo>

P.S. for the seekers

I intend to do a more “spiritual” take on this on a future date because that’s kind of my schtick. This post is more geared towards the strivers like I once was (and honestly, still may be a bit deep down, albeit to a more sinisterly subtle degree now).

Update (Dec 20, 2025)

The “spiritual take” is now live. If you are ready to move from survival (Level 0) to transformation, read the sequel: **God is a Cosmic Masochist—A Meditation on Numbing.**

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How to Love Without Strangling

Subtitle: [Level 0: Technical] For when passion meets striving and becomes the obsession that strangles what you love.

Posted: Nov 17, 2025

What happens when you don't give the flame air, when you don't let the fire breathe?

It goes out.

It took me exactly 5 days of working on something I truly loved (and falling asleep on the job from sheer exhaustion) to realize this. I woke up and cried as the pattern finally dawned on me.

I'm learning (painfully slowly) that:

- Passion doesn't have to mean smothering
- Love doesn't have to mean strangling
- You can be DEVOTED without being DESTROYED

I'm learning how to let the things I love... breathe.

That's the training that's still ongoing.

I hope to come back someday with my findings.

But for now, this is the field note: I saw the pattern. I'm in it. I'm learning.

Stay tuned.

P.S.

Can we appreciate how this post even came?

1. "I want to meditate, but I'm tired from good work"
2. Pass out for 2 hours on my mat
3. Begrudgingly go to bed
4. Tears come out of nowhere
5. Sudden insight
6. Post flows out from said insight
7. I feel a little better

Apparently even the lessons about not strangling arrive by... not forcing them.
Who knew.

Part 1: When Meditation Stops Being Stress Relief

Subtitle: [Level 0: Technical] What happened when I stopped running from burnout and started turning inward

Posted: Nov 22, 2025

On my burnout post, I mentioned in the P.S. that I would revisit this topic.

This is that post... or at least the first part of it.

It can happen to anyone

From those struggling to survive to those who labor and strive, no matter how much you do, there's always the Next Thing looming in the distance, the finish line receding further and further away into the horizon.

Eventually the human spirit tires of chasing and wonders why it was ever running in the first place.

At one point, it was towards love, but now it only seems to be away from fear.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when that switch happened. Perhaps you can't remember. I know I can't.

Fear

Fear uses up a lot of life energy (the will to live) over long periods of time. In a burst, it can save your life in a dangerous situation, jolting you into action, urging you to move towards safety or defend yourself from an incoming attack.

But sustained even mildly over years and decades? You get where we currently are now. Numb, disconnected, tired, and / or existentially exhausted. All of the above if you've already been reduced to ashes.

Ironically enough, resting is HARD at this point. Lying in bed, the thoughts are too loud. Maybe you can't fall asleep so you drown it out with background noise while you drift off. Yet, even in dreams maybe you're getting chased or stuck at the office as if working a double.

If the mind is such a hostile place when you're trying to just rest, why would you want to sit with that during the day, especially when everything needs doing and you're already running behind from exhaustion?

Something's gotta give

Either you're going to becoming a husk of a person going through the motions of the daily grind, your mind either too overactive or too numb to the point where you can no longer truly see what's right in front of you. Or... you stop... and maybe even turn around to face the other way.

When you stop running, you realize:

- The next promotion will not bring you the peace.
- The next trip will not bring you the satisfaction.
- The next thing will wash right over you.
- And you will still be here.

I'm not saying to quit your job, stay home, or never try to have fun again. I'm also not saying that you should never run, especially if your life truly depends on it (though sometimes we don't know if it actually does or not).

But if you've been chasing that Next Thing with the *expectation* that it will bring you joy, happiness, or contentment, you've already set yourself up for failure. This is what I did for my entire adult life. It's something I *still* catch myself doing.

"If I just get this promotion..." "If I just make this much more money..." "If he would just propose..." "If we could just buy a house..."

I would torture myself so much over wanting the Next Thing and how I don't have it *right NOW*. I'm a very impatient person, especially if *I* think I've put in enough effort for something. Historically, I've never been pleased with where I was and would be so miserable in the process of *striving* for the Next Thing that when things finally came together (due to time, herculean effort, sheer luck, profound grace, or some combination), I wouldn't even be able to *enjoy* the results.

And exhaustive efforts with no *perceived* reward? A recipe for burnout:

"Maybe if I just do / have *this* instead... *then* I'll be satisfied".

Sound familiar?

Enough is enough

It took me multiple projects getting killed mere weeks before launch back to back within a couple years all while I was gunning for a promotion—which depended on a track record of successful projects—to realize my actions *needed* to be decoupled from my expectations; they were *already* decoupled from the results. I didn't realize this at the time. I just thought I needed to “sublimate my driven ego”—something I knew conceptually that meditation was well-suited for according to Dr. K (my favorite Harvard educated former monk turned psychiatrist) from HealthyGamer.

I had decided in early 2022 after the rubble was settling from an acquisition to start meditating daily... and I was going to need help.

Community practice

This I think was the key. Had I started on my own with some simple guided meditations on a mindfulness app, I think I would have lost interest and fell off.

While counting the breath or visualizing a soothing scene works for some people, that kind of stuff didn't land with me. I'd tried some things here and there before (YouTube in college for stress and well as Calm and Headspace at another point), but these helped only in a superficial way.

I joined the HealthyGamer Discord's meditation channel, interested in the community participation and live guided sessions. I took part in these daily when I could and was introduced to new meditative practices including:

- samatha (calm abiding)
- metta (loving-kindness)
- neti-neti (not this, not this)
- and (my favorite) self-inquiry

Many others on the channel also resonated with self-inquiry to the point that the meditation lead took the time to compile an entire YouTube playlist on the topic. I binged all 30ish hours of it in one weekend. I was hooked.

Who are you?

I fell into a bit of a rabbit hole with self-inquiry around the end of April. Who am I if not anything I can witness?

Exactly a month after participating in these meditation sessions daily, I was going about my normal morning routine. I don't normally talk out loud if by myself, especially in the shower, so I was a little confused why I suddenly said out loud:

“Who are you?”

Instantly, something beneath the usual mental chatter shot back with a crystal

clear:

“That’s for me to know and you to find out!”

It stopped me in my tracks.

I hadn’t heard that phrase since my childhood. I had completely forgotten about it and yet here it was popping into my mind without any effort or prompt to “dig up” the memory. It was unsettling.

I brushed it aside shortly after, but mild curiosity persisted underneath.

Going deeper

Something was there, something I felt like I’d forgotten long ago, just like the quip in the shower. I was suddenly not so interested in mere stress relief and started craving something deeper.

I was then on the hunt for anything that could point the way: books, videos, lectures, podcasts. I wanted to dig deeper into my mind and beyond it into the stillness, into this sense of “Am-ness”.

About a month later, *The Impersonal Life* found me in its purest of forms: no cover, no author, no table-of-contents, no foreword... just a raw PDF that felt like it grabbed me. I remember the feeling of the hair on my arms standing on end as if my body was remembering something my mind was failing to process but something else even deeper recognized from my meditations, but in written word. Another weekend, another binge (still my favorite book, BTW).

The outer reaches of inner space

Now was the work of applying teachings. I couldn’t keep solely reading, listening, watching. I *had* to *experience* it for myself. Thus began my Jungian-style “psychonautics” (Red Book anyone?), sometimes assisted by a small edible. Later I learned cannabis has historical use as an entheogen.

This stirred up many archetypal images: the carp who became a dragon, the ouroboros, the shepherd, and finally, the Self. Now communication seemed to be established, albeit the signal wasn't very clear this early on.

The dream

To reiterate, I originally started meditation because I was burnt out from efforts that were either thrown away or didn't bring me joy.

As of late 2022, I was still trying to do well at work. I was at this point being asked to spearhead a new customer product with a next quarter due date for the beta according to the CEO.

Because of this, I was at my most stressed point yet in my career. Yet, I couldn't seem to stop caring, striving, even when I felt like I was doomed to fail. I was too scared to let that happen, too terrified to not try.

After a month of frantic struggling to make headway on the mountain of work to come up to speed on the new technology and meet the deliverables, I was feeling as gray as the mid-December sky.

One day, I ended up waking up at 5 AM and wasn't able to fall back asleep for an hour. As I was drifting off, something was telling me that I had to not rely solely on my brain for answers and to that, I internally approved of any answers that came forward from the rest of my being.

My mind then started to disconnect and it seemed to start talking on its own in snatches of speech. I didn't take it too seriously and next thing I knew, I was in a vivid dream.

It was a warning of exactly what would happen if I continued down this path: staying late at the office fixing production bugs I caused, all sense of enthusiasm for life gone.

But it didn't end there.

I was visited by a woman that spoke in a soothing language that captivated me in a trance. I couldn't look away. I couldn't understand the words, but

understood the message of compassion.

Her touch on my heart felt like home and she sang a song that lulled me into a dream within the dream.

Her song accelerated into a waterfall of information that flashed before me against the blackness in white text, words appearing faster than lightning.

I tried to keep up, but it was no use. I only saw one word several times that I recognized just before it would disappear:

God.

I didn't know what it meant. I didn't know what was happening. But I knew, somehow, that this wasn't just a strange dream.

Pissing Into a Serene Lake: A Meditation on Modern Yoga Culture

Subtitle: [Level 0: Technical] How the West turned union with the Divine into exotic stretching with a soundtrack

Posted: Nov 27, 2025

“Ah yes, the soothing sound of *Pissing Into a Serene Lake*.”

That thought came to me mid-sphinx pose at my Tuesday night yoga class when the most obnoxiously loud water sound effect blared through the studio speakers. It was so loud the instructor had to get up and turn it down.

I was lying in the front row, eyes closed, trying desperately not to laugh.

That’s when I realized: this is EXACTLY what’s wrong with modern yoga.

Before I even went to the class, I was doing some yin poses for grounding after my post-work meditation session. During this I was wondering about how yoga in the West got so... sterilized for lack of a better word.

Questions this post seeks to answer (or at least get you wondering):

- Why does yoga class feel so hollow / like spiritual bypassing in Lululemon?
- What is yoga ACTUALLY supposed to be?

- How did it get this way?

Brief history

Originally, the word “yoga” meant “union”—union with the Divine. But in the West that word has somehow come to be associated with exotic stretching with a few Sanskrit names thrown in. Yoga was stripped to its bare bones and exported to the West in a format that could be taught in group settings—at your local YMCA, or at a suburban studio like the one I attend.

In order to write this post, I did some research and was pleased to find that this topic has actually its own Wikipedia article already: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga_in_the_United_States.

I'll try to summarize it as best I can.

Early “pure” introduction

Yoga was introduced in America in the late 19th century, almost entirely as intellectual and spiritual.

Philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed yoga as philosophy (and was mocked mercilessly for his “Brahma” poem in 1857).

Hindu leader Vivekananda taught it in 1893 as a rigorous spiritual path of meditation and breathwork (pranayama). Notably, he rejected the physical postures (asanas) and hatha yoga entirely, focusing purely on the inner work.

The shift to physical practices

The “sanitization” began when teachers realized Americans were more interested in health and beauty than spiritual liberation.

The practice of yoga as consisting mainly of physical postures began in 1919 when the pioneer of asana-based yoga, Yogendra, brought his system, influenced by physical culture, to the United States.

In 1948, yoga got its Hollywood makeover when Indra Devi opened a studio there. She is credited with making yoga “glamorous” and acceptable to American women by framing it not as a religious ritual, but as a beauty and health regimen for celebrities like Gloria Swanson.

Mass media “whitewashing”

The most explicit example of sanitization in the article comes from Richard Hittleman, who launched the TV show *Yoga for Health* in 1961.

He strategically omitted or minimized esoteric aspects like kundalini and the subtle body in order to sell millions of books and keep his TV audience from changing the channel.

Although he personally believed the goal of yoga was “pure bliss consciousness,” he presented it publicly as a practical method for physical health, removing the “threatening” non-Christian spiritual elements for the average American.

Other yoga television shows followed, including Lilias Folan’s WCET series *Lilias, Yoga and You!*, which ran from the 1970s to the 1990s, helping to make yoga acceptable to the American public as well.

Modern fitness focus

By the late 20th century, the transformation from “spiritual union” to “fitness routine” was nearly complete.

Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga arrived in 1975 with continuous flowing movement that connects yoga poses together called vinyasas. It gave rise to a spinoff called Power Yoga in the 1990s. In 1974 there was the creation of Bikram Yoga, also known as hot yoga with studios heated to 105F (41C).

These all turned the practice of yoga into an energetic, sweaty, aerobic exercise.

Cosmopolitanism

The Wikipedia section “Cosmopolitan yoga” is basically all my complaints with actual references. To pull some particular powerful quotes (emphasis my own):

[The historian Jared] Farmer identifies 12 general trends in yoga's history in the United States from the 1890s to the 21st century:

peripheral to central; local to global; male to (predominantly) female; **spiritual to (mostly) secular**; sectarian to universal; **men-dicant to consumerist**; **meditational to postural**; intellectual to experiential; **esoteric to accessible**; oral to hands-on teaching; textual to photographic representations of poses; **contorted social pariahs to lithe social winners**.

Considering all these trends, Farmer stated that modern yoga as exercise belonged to Srinivas Aravamudan's category of the “global popular”, which Farmer glossed as “a postcolonial realm of religious cosmopolitanism.”

In Lasater's view, American yoga in the 21st century has lost “the gentleness, consistency, and direction of the practice”, **replaced by ambition**. Lasater believes that many Americans “have conflated asana with yoga.”

History summary

In short, since yoga's introduction in America about 150 years ago, it was converted from a practice of spiritual union into a secular consumer product.

What was *originally* included

So now that we've established that largely the spiritual side has been cut from modern yoga in America outside of ashrams and temples that seek to preserve its roots, let's cover what was originally included before it was secularized to the American public as a fitness routine or stress relief practice. Let's talk

about what yoga was before it became stripped down to just asanas (and maybe some breathwork if you're lucky).

So what exactly was lost in translation? To understand that, we need to look at what yoga actually consisted of before it became a fitness trend.

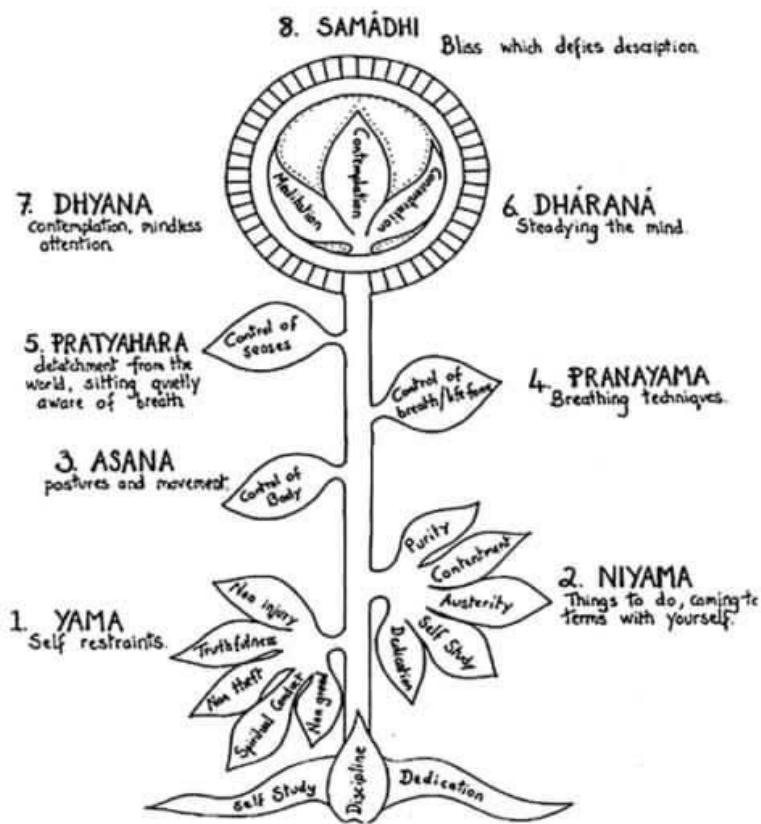
The missing limbs of yoga

The Yoga Sutras, written by sage Patanjali (who lived somewhere around 2nd century BCE and 5th century CE), are widely regarded as *the authoritative text on yoga*. They outline the **eight limbs or “branches” of yoga**.

It's helpful to approach this with the understanding that each “branch” that was cut from the ancient tree of yoga builds upon the previous one.

Most Westerners think yoga = asanas (physical postures). So let's start there, even though asana is actually the **third** branch of yoga's eight-limbed path. We'll build up from what you know to what got left out in order to appeal to the American mass in the past century.

Here's a diagram to visually understand the branches:



4th Branch: Pranayama

Asana is a way to move energy (*prana*) around the body physically. This can be experientially observed by most people.

You stretch to feel more awake don't you? It doesn't have to be reaching your toes; it can be as simple as stretching a tight neck, reaching your arms overhead in bed, or leaning side to side to stretch a sore back.

Pranayama is simply moving that energy around with the breath *instead* of stretches. You can also confirm this for yourself by changing the rate of your breath or the duration of your inhales and / or exhales.

If you're feeling anxious, you're likely hyperventilating or taking shallow breaths

with short exhales. This is the reason that many wellness apps or restorative / yin yoga classes will encourage the extension of the exhale—in order to calm down into relaxation and activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Conversely, you can get yourself more activated, awake, and stressed if you start purposely hyperventilating. You’re pushing more energy through the system / bringing more in with the rapid breaths.

5th Branch: Pratyahara

Now, when the energy can be directed with the body (asanas) and the breath (pranayama), we have 4 questions to answer:

- *How* can we concentrate that energy?
- *Where* do we concentrate it?
- *What* happens when we concentrate it?
- *Why* do we concentrate it?

Pratyahara answers the first.

It means to *withdraw the senses* (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). That means:

- Not focusing on the fake water soundtrack on Spotify
- Not huffing eucalyptus essential oil pouring out of a \$25 Amazon diffuser
- Not distracted by complicated flows or sweat pouring off your body from the overheated studio
- Just... turning inward. That's it. That's the practice.

6th Branch: Dharana

Once the energy has been awakened with movement and breathwork and the awareness has been withdrawn inward by turning away from the senses, *concentration* must unfold next to prevent the mind from becoming lost in the only sensory stimulation left: thoughts.

Dharana answers the second question of “*Where* do we concentrate the energy?”

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For many this can be the breath or an internally repeated mantra, *ideally something steady and arising with little to no effort.*

This is where: - modern yoga gives you all of 2-5 minutes of “savasana” (corpse pose) at the end of class to “go inwards” before “returning to your body by wiggling your toes and fingers” - seated meditation or yoga nidra (meditation while in savasana) would fit in if modern yoga was more of an esoteric practice. - the focusing on the breath or mantra starts to become powerful: when the previous branches have been honored in the practice.

7th Branch: Dhyana

Over time concentration becomes less effortful and instead absorption into the breath or mantra itself unfolds. This is where people will begin to make mystical statements of “becoming the breath,” “becoming the vibration,” or “becoming the practice”. At this point, you are still aware and sense oneness with the object of your (effortless) concentration (because absorption requires no effort like water into a dry sponge).

This level isn’t casually reached, not with a couple yoga classes a week, especially with no built-in meditation longer than a few minutes with how busy and hectic our modern lives are.

This answers the question, “What happens when we concentrate?”

8th Branch: Samadhi

This is the ultimate goal of yoga, answering the question “Why do we concentrate the energy”? *Samadhi* is a state of pure awareness, where the absorption isn’t into the object of concentration, but transcending the object so that awareness is absorbed into itself. I’ll save the deep dive on samadhi for a Level 2 or 3 post, but here’s the essence: this is the blissful state that unfolds when the original meaning of yoga is realized: union with the Divine (the awareness).

My lamentation for modern yoga

Here's my honest confession: I go to yoga class regularly, and it consistently feels **less** meditative than anything I do at home in my sacred space.

And I don't know how anyone is supposed to be practicing pratyahara with the stupid playlists and the running water noise from the diffuser (but maybe that's just me).

Comedic timing

What's funny is I wrote the above paragraph complaining about the playlist at yoga class, immediately went off to my Tuesday night yin + hatha + vinyasa blend class, and right in the middle of it, the most obnoxious running water sound yet came on for one of the tracks. It was so loud that the instructor had to get up and turn the speaker down.

I was thinking to myself, "man, that sounds like pissing" and then I don't even know what in my head was like, "ah yes, the soothing sound of *Pissing into a Serene Lake*". I was lying up front in sphinx pose with my eyes closed and a stupid grin on my face trying desperately not to bust out laughing. So that's how this post got its title.

I can't help but feel like this experience was in direct response to my complaint which is partially why it was extra funny. Normally, sounds like this irk me (misophonia anyone?), but tonight I was able to genuinely smile about it rather than get annoyed (because the only other alternative was to start snickering for no reason in the middle of class).

But now I'm left with the mystery: was it the still small voice or the personality who cracked the joke? Does it matter? Either way, I smiled instead of getting annoyed. Maybe that's the point.

Practical suggestions

If you feel like yoga class is missing something, *you're not wrong*. Here's what to try at home¹:

1. 3 rounds of sun salutations
2. 10 minutes of alternate nostril breathing
3. 20 minutes of seated meditation with eyes closed, no music, quiet environment, focusing on breath or an easy mantra

Wrapping up

Yoga isn't about touching your toes. It's about union. And you can't unite with the Divine if you're distracted by the sound of someone pissing into a serene lake.

So turn off the playlist. Sit in silence... and see what happens.

Footnotes

¹ Fair warning: If you do this practice consistently for a few months, you might accidentally catapult yourself into what mystics call “The Dark Night of the Soul.” I’m not kidding. See my Level 1 and Level 2 sections on here for what that actually looks like.

Level 1 - Transitional

The messy middle where practice deepens and strange experiences begin to arise. For seekers who've noticed meditation no longer feels like simple stress relief.

Insidious expectations

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] When consistency accidentally leads to expectancy

Posted: Nov 12, 2025

NOTE: I originally wrote this February 18th, 2025 for the HealthyGamer Memberships platform for the group of folks on there interested in spirituality and what was fondly referred to by the community as “The Weird Stuff”. Over the next few days be working through my backlog of posts I’ve either made on there or saved in draft and never actually got around to publishing. Anyway, on to the content!

I know it’s something that’s been brought up time and again, but based on a realization I had from my own experiences over the past few days, I feel like it’s worth a reminder: expectations can be *very* subtle.

It’s been 4 months since I’ve gotten much more intentional and consistent with my practice and diet (eating mostly sattvic, cutting out all coffee, alcohol, THC). As the months went by, it slowly felt like my meditation sessions ironically fell off in terms of depth and intensity. I logically knew at the beginning not to expect anything or nothing would happen. But, paradoxically, the more days and sessions I spent not expecting anything, the ever so subtly more I unconsciously expected something to happen. It wasn’t until I stopped

sticking to my diet and practice so rigidly for several days in a row while on vacation that I noticed the meditation sessions that I did do during that time go noticeably better. It was only now that I realized that was because I truly had no expectation of getting to any state of deeper consciousness while not adhering to my diet and routine.

Consistency is key, but consistency and expectations seem to go hand-in-hand, despite being repeatedly told not to expect anything. It took me breaking consistency to realize the expectations were still silently growing in the shadows.

Current Reflections

Reading this post now, 9 months later, I realize I was completely relying on my *senses* to tell me meditation was “working.” If it didn’t *feel* deep or intense, I thought I was failing.

Then I read Saint John of the Cross’s *Dark Night of the Soul* a couple months ago and had one (or many, I should say) of those “oh SHIT” moments. (Side note: I **highly recommend** the modern translation published in April 2024. Even if you’re allergic to religious literature, this book will mess you up in the best way.)

Turns out there’s a whole thing called the “Dark Night of the Senses” where meditation starts feeling dry, empty, boring and it’s not a sign you’re doing it wrong. It’s a sign you’re going *deeper*.

“Nothing *seems to be* happening” != “nothing *is* happening”

I’ll probably write a whole post about this book (I bookmarked the hell out of it because it described my experience so eerily), but for now: if your practice feels flat, maybe that’s actually progress. At least that’s what I’m telling myself.

Something No One Told Me About Meditating: Falling In Love

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] How I accidentally stumbled into bhakti through consistent meditation

Posted: Nov 12, 2025

NOTE: I originally wrote this May 19th, 2025 for the HealthyGamer Memberships platform for the group of folks on there interested in spirituality and what was fondly referred to by the community as “The Weird Stuff”. Over the next few days be working through my backlog of posts I’ve either made on there or saved in draft and never actually got around to publishing. Anyway, on to the content!

This definitely falls under the “weird stuff” category, so buckle up. I want to share a realization that I had which helped validate some complicated feelings that have been making me question my sanity for the past year and a half as I’ve been meditating daily. I’m not sure how common of an experience this is, but I wanted to bring it up regardless in case it does help someone else.

So last night I had one of those, “OH, that explains a lot” kind of moments. I

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was going through my YouTube watch later list and ended up stumbling on a meditation channel. I watched a couple videos from it and the teacher was saying in one of them that one of the secrets of tantric meditation is that as the spiritual journey deeper within continues, a romance unfolds. To quote:

We start to realize that that Supreme Consciousness is not just a source of bliss, but also a source of love. The closer we get to it, the more love it is showering over us. It is a never-ending wave of unconditional love. And as that spiritual journey deeper within continues, that bliss or that love becomes more and more intense, and you know how it is when someone loves us unconditionally. We simply start to love them back. That's natural and that's when the romantic parts start, that cosmic romance. This is the most exciting part of the spiritual journey without doubt, and this inspires us to do more meditation and go even deeper within and eventually the world around us start to disappear.

It struck me because I first encountered these feelings a year and a half ago. I journaled about them as they were unfolding because it felt so strange. I didn't understand what was going on and thought I was slowly going crazy. People usually fall in love with other people, things, experiences, etc. It's a really strange thing to fall in love with something you can't even define. I felt like I was falling in love similar to how I felt early on in my relationship with my partner of over 9 years. We grew closer over time with repeated exposure in college, and I think this was similar in that regard with meditation.

When I first started meditating 3 years ago, it didn't feel like anything was really happening for a while. Gradually these feelings of being in love started forming, and the "recipient" wasn't even a person, a corporeal entity, or even really an idea – which was really weird. I felt like I was going quietly insane inside. There would be nights that I would feel this inexplicable longing for some unknown beloved that would keep me awake and sometimes even crying. It felt like something inside was howling like a wolf at the moon. This lasted for several months on and off, but the painful aspect of it has largely subsided as I've continued with my meditation practice. I can't say if it was time, yoga,

diet, or a combination that helped.

As crazy as this is, I thought I'd share in case someone else is going through a similar strange experience. I don't really feel like it's talked about a lot, likely because of how unusual it is. I was originally going to make a post about this a few days ago but got sidetracked, but that video I mentioned felt like it resonated with some of the notes I already had written down. A couple excerpts:

I'm realizing [sadhana]s are impotent without the love. Think of love as the fuel or the energy that powers the machine. Without it, the practice falls flat. Anything done without love to move towards the Divine is ultimately futile and a striving of the ego.

[...]

The mind did not choose this path, the heart did. The mind wanted definitive action, a set of defined practices, and measurable progress. But that's not what true spirituality is. Behavior arises from being, to continuously wrangle with the behavior without addressing the root is folly.

To summarize, I think the mind can help get you started with meditation (diligence, understanding technical and philosophical aspects), but with repeated exposure and consistent practice, a love slowly begins to form that will help carry you forward, or rather pull you inwards. Just be aware that it might be a bit of a roller-coaster though – it was for me, anyway.

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The Mandala I Didn't Mean to Draw

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] When technical meets mystical (and you forget to bring a compass)

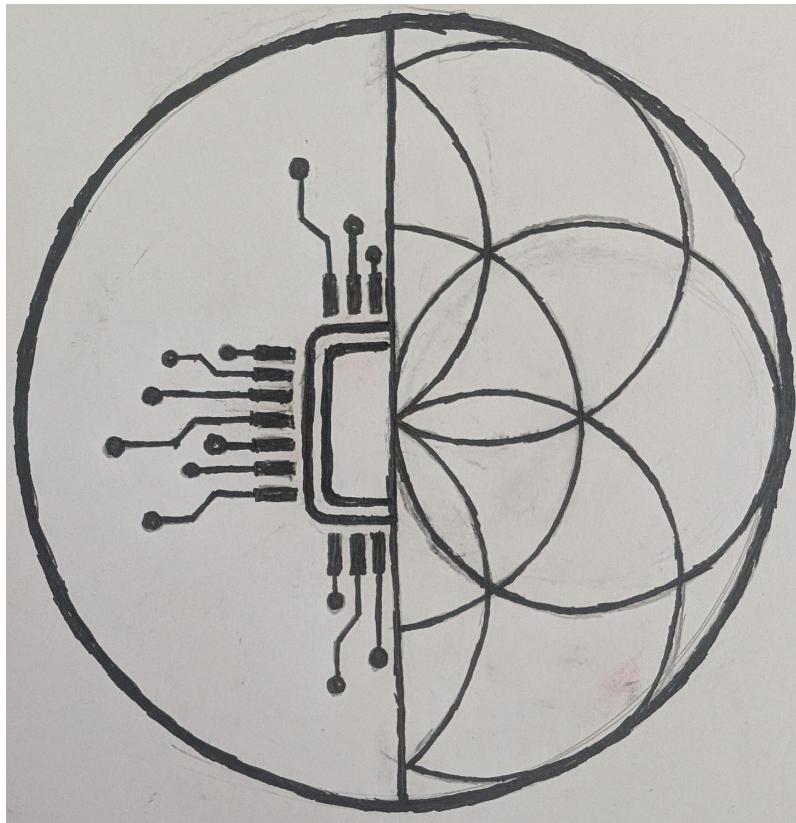
Posted: Nov 16, 2025

I wanted to make something like a logo that felt like it was bridging the mundane and mystical, something that felt distilled the name of this Substack into a simple design. I knew it needed to be encompassed in a circle, showing the wholeness from integration of both.

Take 1

Originally, I was trying to divide the circle down the middle, having the left side be more “techy” with something like circuitry and the right side have something that symbolized mysticism. The Seed of Life felt like a clear choice for something that could be recognized when only half of it was shown, plus I just found it appealing to look at.

I set out to sketch the design I had in mind, but as it appeared into physical form, something felt... off.



There does not seem to be any bridging here, just an uncomfortable truce if anything.

The hemispheres were completely disjoint and the design wasn't at all showing the bridging of the mundane and the mystical. Instead, it felt like jamming two things together that didn't belong and trying to reconcile them into one shape.

It then dawned on me that this was showing the state of my current integration rather than the goal.

I didn't even finish filling in the left side to balance it out because there was no way for the sides to properly synergize. No amount of filling in the gaps could force those two halves to belong together.

Take 2

I flipped to a new page in my sketchbook to try again.

This time, I used the Seed of Life in its entirety as the base rather than cutting it down the middle, sketching it lightly with the mechanical pencil.

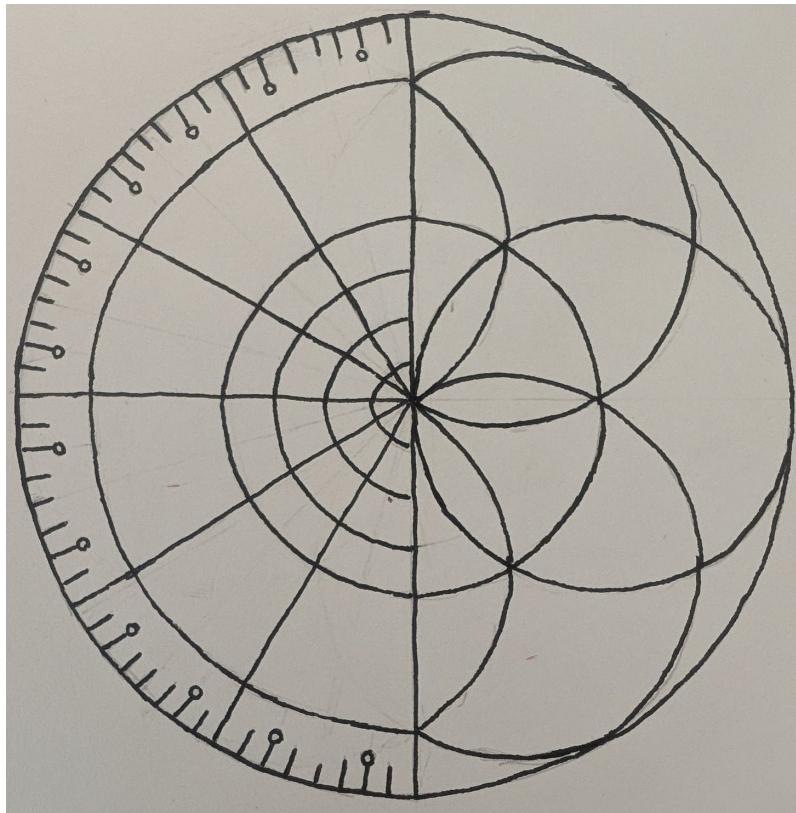
As I looked at it, I began to sketch in intersecting lines radiating from the center and added another circle near the outer edge to bisect more of the natural intersections. From there I added concentric circles to the middle, causing it to look like a target (which I'm realizing now is on-brand for me with my goal-oriented thinking). Yet this also seems to work as ripples radiating from that same center. The radiating lines also started to look like guide lines (rather than the dividing lines I drew over the Seed of Life). I used these guide lines to try to clean up the circles a little more.

I then added details to the edge of the circle to make it look more like those protractors we used in school to draw or measure specific angles for geometry. I didn't intentionally decide on a number of notch lines to draw per "slice", but it ended up being 8 which just felt "right" for lack of a better word. Though, in retrospect, had I done 9 there would have been 108 notches along the edge of the circle, but that would have required more intentionality than just cutting the "slice" in half like I was doing repeatedly.

Finally, I wanted the left to be more representative of the "technical" side of things, so I went in with the pen over the sketch lines of the protractor to make it the dominant element. I did the same on the right, but with the Seed of Life instead. What resulted was a design that actually felt like a bridge, an integration of the two hemispheres.

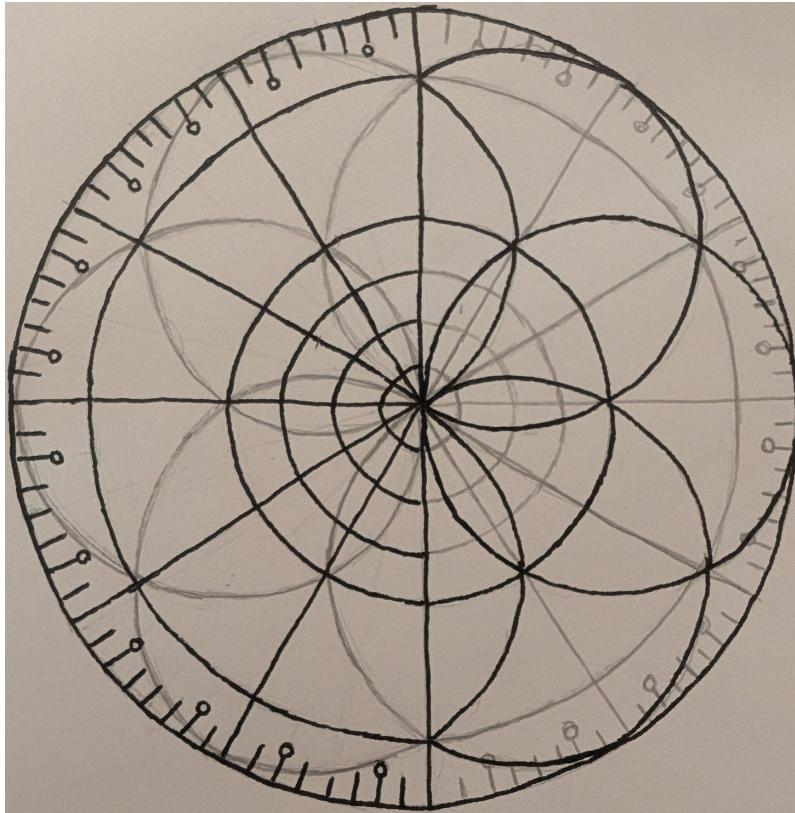
But then I erased the sketch lines.

What resulted felt... incomplete, like it had the same issue as the first image, just to a less extreme degree:



I had erased the *process*, the thing I was supposed to be documenting in the first place to show *how* the two were integrated. The “messy middle”.

I realized I needed to add the pencil lines back in so I did so intentionally and added the notch lines and ripples to mirror the left side. Then I realized it was actually done:



Although the line work isn't perfect, I think it fits to show the "messy middle", the idea of the goal in the absence of the tools to perfectly achieve it (if such a thing can be truly done).

Reflections

It's strange how even simple sketching sometimes reveals more than expected. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (cool dude, I enjoyed his Red Book) drew mandalas to map the Self. I didn't realize I was doing the same thing until I sat down to write this post and tried to explain what I'd drawn. I was apparently drawing a mandala of my own becoming.

Take from that what you will about the drawings above. My take? I still have a lot to learn. But at least now I know what integration looks like, even when it's imperfect.

Leaking Visibly: How a Meditation Practice Became a Temple

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] What happens when you can't keep it casual anymore

Posted: Nov 19, 2025

Originally this was going to be a serious post about the tension of being a mystic in a partnership, but I think I need to save that one for another night. The ideas are still percolating from a LONG 7 hour discussion last night where I finally stopped beating around the bush about what I've been going through. More on that in likely the next post.

What started as a hairline fracture with the purchase of a simple zafu at the end of 2022 has been widening, especially over the past year and a half as I began to put together my “sacred space”. I bought a standard yoga mat to begin incorporating asanas mid-2024 as well as some cute meditating cat figures. Quirky, but nothing to raise an eyebrow at.

Then came the incense and holder exactly a year ago. It was about the “vibe”.

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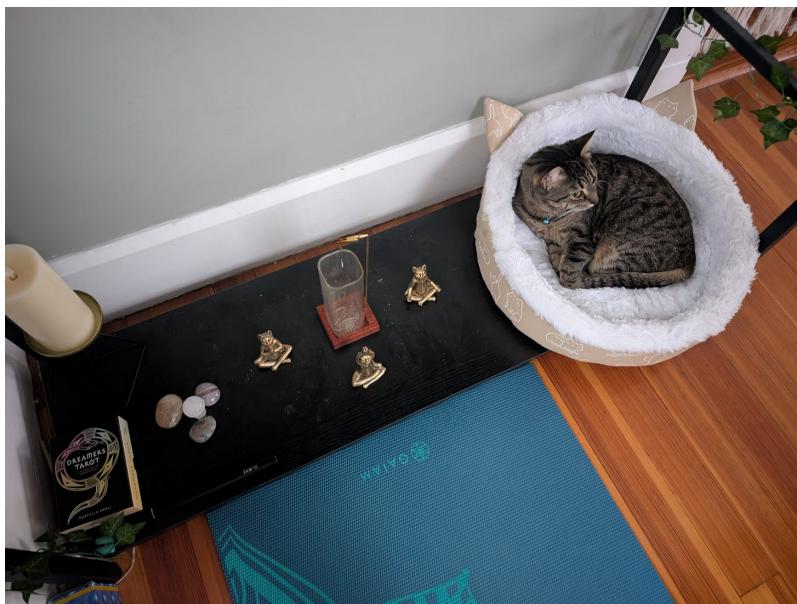


Almost exactly a year ago, a simple setup

This was also when I joined the local yoga studio after some trepidation and began practicing daily there, having been already doing a couple simple sequences at home for a month. Around this time, tension started to form in my partnership. I was leaking visibly now. It was now changing my routine. Dietary changes in winter only exacerbated this as I was trying to eat healthier to support my meditation practice.

Then the so-called “woo-woo” started really showing early this year when I finally went to a rock shop and brought back several rocks and a pack of tarot

cards (though to be fair, my partner brought me there on request and even egged me on to get more than the one peach moonstone I was drawn to). Now it was starting to get interesting:



Zen master reporting for duty

A few more small items were introduced here and there over the months: some stones from a trip, a ceramic elephant from a yard sale, a 3D-printed gift from a friend, and a wrist mala from a small shop. Now my space was starting to fill out, especially with the bolster and blocks.

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But then in September, something shifted. I could no longer stand having the space be open, contiguous with my office. People casually walking over to it felt... uncomfortable. At this point I did a major re-haul, unable to keep it casual as a “self-care routine” or “hobby” any longer. I needed a veil, a demarcation that beyond this point was sacred. I needed a temple.

Up went a macrame curtain, down came the black shelving left over by the previous owners. Instead, a reclaimed wood bench took over as the new altar. The mat found its new home at the yoga studio, replaced by two natural tree cork and rubber mats side-by-side, a Tibetan yak wool shawl layered over that,

and a sheepskin rug like I'd seen used by a kundalini yoga instructor—a solid foundation for any yin poses. The space was *finally* complete.



Bringing us to the present day:

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While the aesthetics don't truly matter *during* meditation, I often look over from my desk and am reminded that there's more to life than just work, which I suppose was the whole reason I got into this in the first place back in early 2022 when I was just meditating in my office chair. I'm truly grateful I'm able to enjoy this space at any point during my day (okay maybe not during meetings, but still).

I know it's antithetical to *need* a separate space, that the entire room, house, world, and Universe is a temple. But I'm still working towards that lived understanding rather than an intellectually known one one day at a time. One

day (hopefully), the veil will lift, the curtain will dissolve. In the meantime, this is what training wheels look like... just with some cool rhinestones on them.

Why I Can't Give You a Clean Stack Trace of How I Got Here

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] I tried to debug my own spiritual awakening (it didn't work)

Posted: Nov 24, 2025

I've spent the past couple days trying to write Part 2 of "When Meditation Stops Being Stress Relief." I originally thought I just needed to dig through my journals to find the next strange occurrence after that vivid dream in December 2022 and summarize that arc.

It sounded fairly straightforward. All I had to do was look back at my own field notes, the documentation that I had been recording along the way like a breadcrumb trail. I knew I had even tried to add specific emojis at the top of "important" entries as I went (with a legend to decode what they meant) for when I assumed I would want to reference them again in the future.

Except . . .

I dove into months—years—of my incoherent, messy, fever-dream-like journals split between Logseq and Obsidian (my fault for not just picking Obsidian from the start), trying to piece together what got me to this point.

I realized I was trying to debug my own mind with a stacktrace that was

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literally hundreds of “pages”, hundreds of kilobytes of information not even all sequentially linked.

Then I had a further realization after hours of digging through this textual junkyard crossed with a literary sewer, trying to extract something coherent:

I can’t.

As much as I want to treat my brain as a computer to debug, I can’t. Real life is a mess. And I don’t have the system dump of where exactly things started to go off the rails—or if they even did.

What I did find

As a headache formed from hours of digging through journals and cross-linked files, I found:

- A disclaimer at the top of the main page: “I believe I generally present as a mostly sane person. This is a page dedicated to my secret insanity. Like Jung’s Black Books I’ve been keeping this closely guarded out of sheer terror of being misunderstood or seen as nuts.” Also: “There will be shit in here that makes absolutely no sense” (yeah, no shit), and “I don’t literally hear voices for the ‘dialogues’”
- Pages of arguing with myself (or something that felt increasingly NOT like my usual self)
- Some variation of “am I going crazy” sprinkled in throughout the months (including wondering if I accidentally made a tulpa)
- Half-formed thoughts that made sense late after a late night meditation session but are more or less incomprehensible now
- Long-winded rants about work stress
- Philosophical musings that seemingly go nowhere
- Dreams I can barely remember but seemed significant enough at the time to note down

Parsing through the sometimes funny, oftentimes agonizing entries, I kept thinking: “If I can just find the **pattern**, I can explain this period coherently.”

“If I can trace this back to the **root cause**, I can write a logical narrative of what got me here.” “If I can **debug** this from my own log output, maybe I can help others understand their own.”

But the more I exhausted myself reading through my own raw stream-of-consciousness data, the more frustrated I got until I went to bed late yesterday, defeated by my own field notes.

What my own mess taught me

Today as I was reflecting on this failed endeavor, I realized:

Spiritual experience doesn’t work like code. There’s no clean stacktrace. No clear “panic: runtime error at line 247.” No single moment (or even *moments* plural) where you can say: “THAT’S where it broke,” or in my case, “THAT’S where awakening happened.”

Some people can point to a near-death experience (NDE) or some \$PSYCHEDELIC trip that induced it.

But for me, it was just... messy. Incoherent. Cyclical. Gradual.

But that’s how it has to be if you have a life you’re not ready to blow up. A job you don’t want to lose. A marriage you don’t want to leave.

Maybe I’m not supposed to give you a clean stacktrace. Maybe I’m not supposed to document every step like a “Getting Started” guide. Maybe the job isn’t: “Comprehensively chronicle the 3.5-year journey from agnostic engineer to ‘I moonlight for God.’” Maybe instead, the job is: “Share the moments that landed, the ones that can’t be explained away, the ones that changed me—even when I don’t know why.” Not the entire tangled mess of seeking, but the points that caused me to question the narrative in the first place.

My approach going forward

I'm giving up on the comprehensive stack trace. I can't make coherent what is by nature cyclical and beyond any single root cause.

Instead, I'm going to tell you about the moments that mattered, even if I can't connect them cleanly. Even if it looks like I'm just... leaping from one inexplicable event to another—because that's what it WAS.

This path has been a series of inexplicable events that somehow (over 3.5 years) added up to... whatever this is. And as much as it frustrates my engineering brain, I can't give you a reproducible set of steps. Instead, I'm sitting here in my junkyard of journals with a handful of weird moments I can't explain away.

So that's what I'll share: not a linear journey or how-to guide.

Just the moments that made me question everything I thought I knew about reality.

The moments where the boundary between “coincidence” and “something else” got uncomfortably thin.

The moments I can't explain... but also can't dismiss.

The Heart Under the Floorboards

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] Vulnerability is terrifying, so why am I here writing?

Posted: Dec 9, 2025

I'm crying while writing this. Not from a bad day or anything like that.

It's because I need to write. And nothing's coming today.

But why do I feel so compelled to write instead of taking a break? Especially when I'm completely sober? Especially when I'm running up a mean sleep deficit? Especially when I've been writing basically every day for the past 4 weeks? Especially when I keep getting ideas that I'm not ready to share out of lingering fear?

I have a working theory on that.

When Longing Overflows

I had a recent realization that I covered in "What Saying Yes to God Means" (Level 3). The TL;DR is that I could no longer hold back what's been building up inside me for the past several years.

But what I'm still unclear on is: *why?* And *why now* (as my supportive, but understandably confused spouse was asking)?

I don't know if it's a factor of:

- no community (sangha) to exchange my evolving ideas with (do I dare try my luck with Reddit?)
- my experience deepening to a point that I can no longer just brush it off as a casual hobby (it was SO hard to just jump right into morning standup after something as mind-bending as the realization I had in "When Being Becomes Doing, NOT the Other Way Around" hit me right beforehand)
- a genuine growing desire to want to share something in the chance that it's useful to someone else who's struggling

Or is the answer to why and why now something more... insidious?

- the spiritualized ego trying to distract me from *being* with more *doing* (HMM... this one honestly deserves its own follow-up post)
- trying to make my spiritual journey meaningful outside of my own life by making it my "duty" to share
- something I still don't have the awareness to realize because the ego is REALLY GOOD at self-preservation

It's SO GOOD at self-preservation, in fact, that it's been running me ragged fighting for its life while a new one tries to emerge from my depths.

The double life of the “modern mystic”

What I do know is that I'm backed up like the highway at rush hour ever since meditation has become more than “stress relief.”

My secret “double-life” has been eating away at me. The heart of a mystic is beating under the floorboards... and I can no longer ignore its pounding.

I'm tired of living in shame for what I'm becoming when it's given my life meaning that I thought I'd only ever be able to manufacture or cobble together

from society's expectations of a "good life." That only ever made me tired. And like many people, I'm tired of being tired.

Stretched to the breaking point

I've been struggling with this double-life for about a year. Looking back at my journals, the strain was visible—and the language I used was painfully consistent.

The day I finally broke and came out of the "mystic's closet" to my spouse, I wrote a very raw entry in my journal:

*What I want to tell him: "I don't feel like I can be myself around you anymore. Not because you've changed, but because I have... and I know there's no way to explain that will make you understand. When we made our vows, I kept nothing hidden from you. But a year later when I started turning inwards and digging into my own depths, I found things I didn't know how to translate into words... and it's only grown the deeper I've looked. And here I am 3.5 years later, feeling like I'm being **torn in half** by something even I don't understand, my soul screaming for more than I had ever planned at the start of this partnership. It feels like a betrayal and it breaks my heart because there's nothing I hate more than lying. But now I'm lying to both myself and you and it's killing me slowly every day."* (November 20, 2025)

There were also several other prior entries lamenting this struggle:

- *...I feel like trying to straddle these two worlds is how I am **torn in half**.* (Journal Entry, June 23, 2025)
- *I'm really struggling to integrate between the two worlds and feel like I'm getting **torn in half** as a result. It feels incredibly discouraging to be having such strange and deep experiences, feelings, and sensation during meditation and then feeling exhausted, frustrated, and tired at work and in my daily life in*

general. I know I shouldn't have to escape to an ashram to pursue this interest deeper, but God I really wish I could. Yet, I can't help but wonder if I'm just chasing something else again like I chased this current life that I once so aspired and dreamed of having. My life on paper is amazing and yet now here I am pursuing the Ineffable and ready to abandon all these wonderful things I have after 30 years. I feel like a fool. (Journal Entry, June 12, 2025)

- *It's all so much and I don't feel like I'm doing enough AND I have to juggle my job and my marriage. I felt like I was getting torn in half between worlds. I felt like something inside me was screaming to do MORE, MORE, MORE!!! But then... it dawned on me. My ego was hijacking this whole pursuit. It was trying to overwhelm me, burn me out, and make me give up. [...] I feel like I'm being torn in half right now between two worlds: the world I've lived in all my life and the one that seems to be shining in the distance beckoning to me like a siren song.** (Journal Entry, November 25, 2024)

You could say after a year of being pulled in “opposite directions,” I snapped like a rubber band.

Breakdown or breakthrough?

One thing I know about the path is that it feels like a constant slow-motion train wreck. My mess of journal entries over the years supports this.

But why make the mess public? Why now?

Because I said “yes” for some magical Nth time? Because of “Divine timing”? Because I finally broke? Because “Vishuddha became unblocked”?

I’m not sure I’ll ever know why now—why, after 3.5 years of keeping this close to my chest, it finally spilled over.

But the writing comes anyway. I was told from within: > It helps no one if you hold it back.

So here I am. Sharing the thing I was most terrified of being judged for. Hoping someone out there recognizes themselves in this mess. Hoping I'm not the only one torn in half by something I can't explain. But even if I somehow am... at least I'm finally being honest about it. The heart under the floorboards wouldn't stop beating. So I let it out.

If you're an "undercover mystic"

I can say after trying to hide this for 3.5 years that if you're truly earnest about this path—if you're truly being called to go deeper—compartmentalization is not sustainable. When the longing becomes unbearable and the thirst begins driving you mad, you start leaking. It can't be helped. Hiding the love isn't possible.

If you're reading this and thinking “oh God, that's me”—if you're living a double life, if you're being torn in half between the person everyone knows and the person you're becoming—**you're not alone.**

I don't know if that helps. I don't know if knowing someone else is going through this makes it any less scary, alienating, or difficult. But this is something I needed to hear even just a month ago. So I'm saying it now:

You're not broken. The shell (your ego) is breaking. You're not betraying anyone by changing. You're becoming true to your Self.

Waking up is messy, vulnerable, and terrifying... but it's the most honest thing you'll ever do.

Cerebral Serpent Hijackery—A Skeptic’s Experience and Investigation

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] What actually happens when your spine starts moving on its own

Posted: Dev 18, 2025

Note: This post discusses the intersection of nervous system function, kundalini awakening, and why these experiences can feel physically intimate. If that makes you uncomfortable, the first two sections (physiology + energetics) stand alone.

TL;DR: If your spine moves on its own during meditation, you’re not having a seizure—you’re experiencing kriyas (spontaneous purification movements). Your nervous system is discharging stored tension, and/or kundalini is clearing blockages. It’s natural, documented, has been happening to meditators for thousands of years. It happens to be using the same neural pathways as sexual arousal. Yes, really. Here’s what’s actually happening.

During Monday’s evening meditation, my spine did something I didn’t tell it

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to do. It built, paused, then jolted—a full-body ripple that would've been very awkward to explain if anyone had walked in. So naturally, I had questions such as: *What the hell is ACTUALLY going on? And why does it KEEP happening recently?*

In particular, this post aims to address the main questions I had:

1. “*What is the physiological correlate? Does it have one?*”
2. “*Why is my spine doing this when I'm just sitting upright with my eyes closed?*”
3. “*Why is it my entire spine shaking like [this] versus shaking like a muscle clenched for too long, especially when I'm relaxed?*”

This is an investigation that starts with science, moves through mysticism, and ends somewhere most spiritual teachers won't go publicly. I've marked the sections by depth—read as far as you're comfortable.

I will lose some people as I go—and that's fine. **I'm here to document and investigate, not to convince anyone.**

[Level 0: Technical] The physiological explanation

When you sit in meditation with an erect spine, eyes closed, focused inward, you're doing something your nervous system almost *never* gets to do in modern life: You're giving it permission to discharge stored tension.

Your nervous system has two modes:

- Sympathetic (fight, flight, freeze)
- Parasympathetic (rest, digest, heal)

Most people live in chronic low-grade sympathetic activation (stress, deadlines, screens, coffee, constant doing).

When you finally sit still—*really* still, not “scrolling on your phone” still—the parasympathetic system (eventually) activates.

When you give your body permission to let go

As you relax while sitting in stillness (physically and mentally), the nervous system starts releasing trauma, stress, and stored tension that's been locked in the body for years.

This shows up as:

- Trembling
- Shaking
- Spontaneous movements
- Muscle contractions
- Spinal undulations

This is documented in:

- Somatic Experiencing (Peter Levine, PhD)
- Trauma release exercises (TRE - David Berceli, PhD)
- Neurogenic tremors (the body's natural mechanism for discharging stress and trauma)

Animals do this after escaping a hostile situation—they literally shake it off. Humans? We hold it in for anywhere from days to *decades*.

While you can burn off stress that's currently active in the system with exercise (the key recommendation from *Burnout*), what about the stress that DOESN'T get released through physical exertion?

It doesn't dissipate like heat. It gets **stored**.

Not just in the mind—in the body... until we sit long enough and give the body permission to finally **let go**.

Why the spine specifically?

The spine houses:

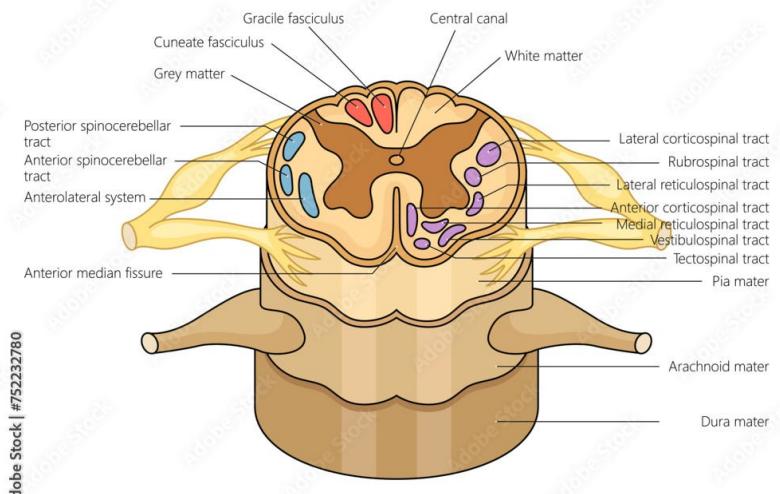
- The vagus nerve—the main parasympathetic highway
- The central nervous system—spinal cord

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- Tons of fascia—connective tissue that stores trauma and memory via tension (see Ida Rolf, “Mother of Fascia”)

When the nervous system starts discharging, the spine is ground zero.

Spinal Cord



Your spine: Ground zero for both nervous system discharge and kundalini awakening.

Okay but that doesn't explain everything

So that's the physiological explanation—real, documented, scientifically valid. But here's what the physiology leaves unanswered:

- Why do these movements sometimes follow patterns?
- Why do they happen in stages?
- Why does it feel like something *else* is moving through you?

That's where we move from neuroscience to... something else.

[Level 2: Mystical] The energetic explanation

Now here's where it gets really interesting.

Spontaneous movements during meditation are called *kriyas* in yogic tradition.

Kriya = spontaneous purification movement

When *kundalini* (dormant spiritual energy, called *Kundalini shakti* in the yogic tradition) starts waking up from no longer being suppressed with constant doing, it moves through the *nadis* (energy channels) in the spine.

But those channels have often been clogged for decades with:

- Suppressed emotions
- Unprocessed trauma
- Mental conditioning
- Egoic resistance
- Samskaras (imprints from past experiences)

Think of your nadis like pipes or channels. When they're clear, energy flows freely upward through the spine. But years of suppressed emotions, trauma, and conditioning act like sediment buildup—clogging the pipes until barely a trickle can pass through. Kriyas are the body's way of clearing the blockage.

So when kundalini starts moving, it has to clear the blockages. That clearing manifests as:

- Shaking
- Trembling
- Spontaneous yoga poses (e.g. why am I suddenly in puppy pose?)
- Spinal undulations
- Rhythmic movements

All of these are kriyas—spontaneous movements to purify the body. You're not consciously choosing to do these. Shakti is doing it through you. Your only job is to get out of the way.

Stages (in my experience)

This doesn't start as soon as I sit down to meditate, nor is it a single period of movement. There are (usually) phases:

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1. Building - Energy gathers, usually at the base of the spine. This is where the movement starts subtly. Alternatively subtle swaying happens from the mid/upper spine.
2. Pause - It seems like the movement subsides, slowing down to stillness.
3. Jolt - Energy ripples through the spine like a shock, similar to a hypnic jerk—the jolt you get when fall asleep sometimes—except there is no dozing off / microsleeping happening.

This can repeat several times in one sit. Sometimes it builds to a peak and stops. Sometimes it’s subtle throughout. There’s no “correct” pattern—your body knows what it needs to release.

The misconception around kundalini

As I discovered in my investigation, the above stages depict textbook kundalini activation.

I used to think it was a single mind-blowing eruption.

It's not.

This misconception is why I’ve seen others in spiritual communities (specifically HealthyGamer in my experience) express confusion about why they’re experiencing rocking and shaking in their meditation practice.

This is kundalini moving. It’s a natural side effect of deepening practice.

I can’t tell you how long it takes to encounter this (it’s different for everyone because everyone’s blockages are different).

For me, I’ve noticed it become more common since entering what’s been referred to as “The Dark Night of the Soul”, a purification stage from spiritual attachments (not merely a period of hardship).

Content Warning: The next section discusses why kundalini movements feel sexual. If you’re not ready for that conversation, this is a good place to stop. The physiology and energetics above are complete on their own.

[Level 3: Union] Why the spine moves *that way*

Now we get to the question everyone's thinking but nobody wants to ask:: *Why do these spontaneous spinal movements in meditation sometimes feel rhythmic, wave-like, or even sexual in nature?*

It's because it's utilizing the same neurological pathways—the same nerve networks that govern:

- Orgasm
- Deep emotional release
- Kundalini rising

These are all connected and all involve:

- Parasympathetic activation
- Pelvic floor engagement
- Spinal oscillation
- Rhythmic contractions
- Surrender of conscious control

So when your spine starts moving on its own in meditation, it's accessing the exact same hardware that governs sexual arousal and release.

The spinal undulation of kundalini rising is biomechanically identical to the spinal undulation of orgasm:

- same muscles
- same rhythm
- same surrender
- same mechanism
- **same energy moving through the same channels**

The key difference? The direction and endpoint of said energy.

Sexual energy:

- Moves down and out (release)
- Dissipates into the physical

- Temporary pleasure
- Depletes (you feel tired after)

Kundalini:

- Moves up and in (sublimation)
- Concentrates into the spiritual
- Permanent transformation
- Energizes (you feel activated)

This isn't new—it's been suppressed

This connection between sexual and spiritual energy has been known for millennia:

- Tantra (Kashmir Shaivism's *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra*, particularly verse 68) explicitly uses sexual energy for spiritual awakening
- Taoism emphasizes *jīng* (sexual essence) retention to nourish the spirit (**shen*)
- Yoga teaches *brahmacharya*—not celibacy for its own sake, but conservation and redirection of *virya* (vital energy)

Every mystical tradition knows this. Most just won't say it plainly. Because if people knew that the pathway to God runs through the same nervous system as sex?

Everything would change.

No priests needed. No intermediaries. Just your body, your breath, and direct access to the Divine.

That's dangerous. Not to people—to power structures.

Ida Craddock learned this the hard way. In 1902, she was imprisoned and driven to suicide for teaching what I just experienced on my meditation cushion: sexual energy and spiritual energy are the same force. She called it a “mystico-erotic religion.” The authorities called it obscenity.

123 years later, I'm sitting here writing about spontaneous spinal kriyas that

IF YOU'VE EXPERIENCED “SPONTANEOUS SPINAL MOVEMENT” DURING MEDITATION

feel uncomfortably intimate—and realizing these “obscene” teachings were right. It’s all one energy.

Tantra didn’t invent this. Tantra just refused to pretend that spirit and body were separate. It’s a path for people who can’t renounce the world—who live with partners, have jobs, raise families—and still seek union with the Divine. It’s the “weaving together” (the literal meaning of tantra) of what we were taught to keep apart.

Still with me? Good. Let's wrap this up.

If you’ve experienced “spontaneous spinal movement” during meditation. . . .

You’re definitely not alone.

It can be confusing or concerning to encounter for the first time and you might even wonder if it’s some kind of seizure.

But this is a phenomenon that’s been extensively documented, just not necessarily in terms common to the typical Western meditator.

You’re not crazy.

It’s real. It’s natural. Your body knows what it’s doing: clearing the blockages you didn’t even realize you’ve been holding all these years. Allow it to move—you might discover it knows more techniques than you do. . . . and exactly which ones you need.

If kriyas become too intense:

- Open your eyes
- Touch the ground
- Take a few deep breaths

- End the session early if needed

Kundalini awakening isn't a race. You don't get bonus points for enduring more intensity than you're ready for. ## Wrapping up If you're experiencing spontaneous movements in meditation—even if they feel strange, even if they feel *too intimate*—you're not broken. You're awakening.

Spinal movements arising in meditation aren't a sign that something is wrong with you; it's a sign you're **letting go of tension that's been stored in your body unconsciously**.

You can't *force* kundalini with substances, postures, or conscious movement. Like sleep, you can only create conditions for it to arise naturally.

When it does? Let it move. Trust the body and get out of the way.

Update (Dec 23, 2025)

Since publishing, I had 3 experiential realizations about the mechanics of spinal kriyas:

1. Resistance impedes flow

Physical tension acts as impedance; you cannot muscle your way into a Kriya. Just like a wire, introducing resistance WILL hinder the flow of Shakti.

Experience: During meditation yesterday, I noticed my spine wasn't moving. Then I realized I was unconsciously holding tension in my shoulders. When I did a full body scan and softened *every* muscle (while maintaining posture), it felt like an energetic faucet opened. A moment later—jolt.

2. The spine must be balanced, not just upright

The goal isn't rigid military posture. The spine must be *balanced* like a tent pole. If you are leaning even slightly, your micro-muscles seize up to hold you, creating resistance (impeding the flow as mentioned above).

Experience: When I found the “zero-point” of balance where my muscles went slack during today's meditation, the energy moved freely and kriyas arose.

3. Manual Pressurization (The Dispenza Protocol)

I entered a session with low energy (expecting nothing), but decided to test the breathwork technique from Dr. Joe Dispenza's *Becoming Supernatural* (essentially a variation of *Mula Bandha*).

- **The Method:** Deep inhale, squeeze the perineum and abdomen, and visualize the energy in the spine flowing rapidly upwards to the center of the brain.
- **The Sensation:** My heart pounded like a hydraulic pump was over-pressurizing the system.
- **The Outcome:** Despite my low energy, the “shaking” returned immediately and strongly after the release of the breath and locks. It appears you can manually override a “low battery” state with sufficient hydrostatic pressure.

Halfway throughout this practice, I was seeing flashing behind my eyelids. Turns out the candle on my altar was flickering periodically—despite no HVAC/airflow changes in the room. Correlation? Causation? I don't know. But the timing was notable. It stopped shortly after I opened my eyes.

[Level 3: Union] P.S.

Don't be surprised if different kriyas arise *after* the spinal movements and meditation ends. As I was still sitting on my cushion typing up the questions to

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bring up in this post, my body **on its own** shifted into the sahajoli mudra—the *exact* mudra (for women) associated redirecting vital/sexual energy upward through the central channel, transmuting base energy into refined spiritual essence by subtle, rhythmic contractions of the pelvic floor.

I didn’t plan it. I didn’t even know I was doing it until I noticed the contraction and thought, “Wait, what is my pelvic floor doing?” Then I looked it up.

And to be blunt? If you’re a woman you likely already know how to do it. You might recognize it as that move you do when you’re too tired to keep at it during intimacy.

Once again: being becomes doing, NOT the other way around. You don’t learn the practices and then awaken. **You awaken, and the practices arise spontaneously as symptoms. Your body already knows what to do.** Your job?

- Trust the process (even when it’s terrifying, even when you don’t understand it, even when your mind is screaming “what is happening”)
 - Get out of the way and let it move
-

If you’ve read this far and you’re thinking “this sounds insane”—you’re not wrong. It IS insane by consensus reality standards. But it’s also documented, natural, and happening to more people than will admit it publicly.

If you’re experiencing this and feeling alone—you’re not. You’re just early to a conversation that’s been suppressed for centuries.

Welcome to the Field Notes.



Lini, the rainbow serpent and official Mystics Inc. mascot. From root (red) to crown (purple): The kundalini spectrum, externalized.

God is a Cosmic Masochist—A Meditation on Numbing

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] I would have rather felt nothing—until a question changed everything

Posted: Dec 20, 2025

After a particularly rough Monday, I had an irreverent thought:

“Theory: God is a masochist. Evidence: Literally split “Himself” into separate entities (all existing form) just to feel (know) “Himself”. That’s the cosmic equivalent of chopping your fingers and limbs off just to feel pain. I would have literally rather felt nothing if it was me.” — Journal Entry, December 15, 2025

I couldn’t imagine being in union and deciding to split myself into pieces, to feel separation, to feel pain, to feel finite. I felt so miserable at this point, I just wanted to numb myself.

I’ve been writing almost every day for a month. I’ve been processing years of journals, ripping myself open, reliving the hardest parts of the journey, and then *publishing* them for strangers to read—because I was compelled to (see *The Heart Under the Floorboards*)—all while holding down my job, my marriage, my schedule, my “regular” life.

I was so exhausted, drained, and fed up that I would have rather felt nothing

at all.

But I sat down to meditate instead.

“I don’t know why I’m on my cushion. I don’t know why I lit incense (haven’t done so in probably over a month now). I don’t know why I haven’t got up to fix the Substack now that I know there are things wrong with it.” — Journal Entry, December 15, 2025

Eventually, a question arose—not from my thoughts, but from somewhere deeper:

Who taught you to feel awe? Who taught you to feel joy?

As I sat with these questions, I realized I haven’t felt either of those very often in my life. There were some fleeting moments, but I couldn’t remember the earliest instances.

It seemed like we had these in abundance as kids when the world was big, interesting, and inviting—a mysterious adventure waiting to unfold before us. I mostly say that because I still hear that sense of aliveness in the voices of the kids in my neighborhood.

But we lost that at some point. When is unclear. But when did we first learn it?

We didn’t.

Nobody taught you awe or joy—they’re innate. You learned everything else. Namely... suppression. And that education started early.

Sit down and shut up

At one point we had to “behave”. Maybe it was at church—“Stop fidgeting during the sermon.” Maybe it was at school—“Hands to yourself. Eyes forward.

Don't speak unless called on." Maybe it was the dinner table—"Children should be seen, not heard." We learned that our natural exuberance was:

- too loud
- too much
- inappropriate
- wrong

So we learned to stop feeling it—not because we *chose* to, but because we had to survive.

Containment and obedience were etched into us blow by blow from the hammer of discipline.

We didn't turn into beautiful sculptures though.

We turned into stoic statues with empty eyes and hearts of stone.

And we don't even realize this until decades later, if at all.

Why suppression = numbing

We don't even realize how good we're getting at suppressing until we don't even feel anything at all. This can manifest as anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure) or dysthymia (persistent low-grade depression). I've felt both. Maybe you have too.

But then, even if we do still sometimes feel things, we often aren't in a space physically or mentally to process them fully.

Maybe we're at work and it has to wait until the shift is over. Maybe it's when we're out with friends but we have to keep smiling as we're internally falling apart. Maybe it's when we're out on errands and we just don't have the time to have a full-on collapse.

If and when we EVER feel physically and emotionally safe to process these suppressed feelings AND have the time in our busy lives—it's often too scary, too much. It feels like it will crush us if we sit with it for a second longer.

Anesthesia for psychological wounds

So instead of healing it (by feeling it), we numb it:

- chemical numbing (e.g. drugs, alcohol)
- externalizing the attention (e.g. screens, socializing)
- overriding the feelings internally (e.g. excessive porn usage)

Each is a technique to draw the awareness off of one or more “problems” within. Oftentimes those are **emotions that spiral into thought loops** and **manifest as obsessive, anxious, or repetitive thoughts** which then feed on themselves to spin up new emotions in response to the chain of events unfolding psychologically.

So we use the mind to fight the mind—or use the mind to numb the mind.

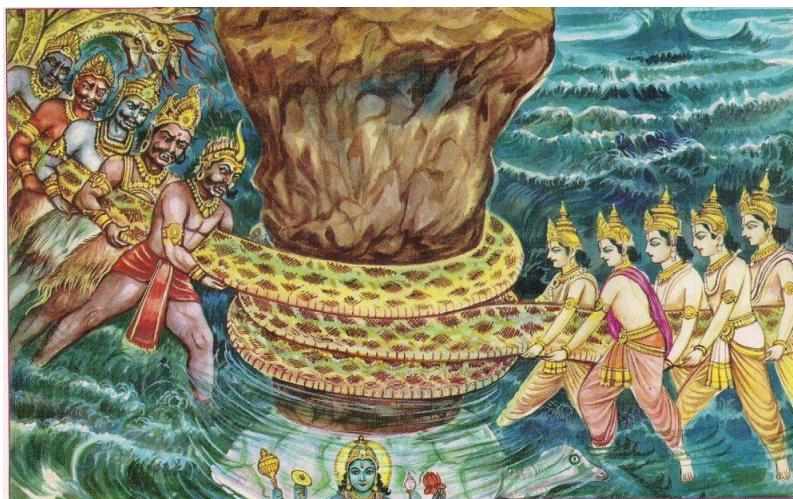
It's not often we just sit with the mind. But when you do... strange things start to come up.

And you have to keep showing up. Not turning away. Enduring. Persisting. Choosing... with love.

So how do we heal?

*Edit: I added the footnotes AFTER I published the post because I realized I still had an unanswered question: Why was it an ocean of milk? I then realized... the realization I had about the mythos unfolding in you during meditation wasn't a mere hunch... it was **scriptural**.*

There is an ancient Hindu story referred to as Samudra Manthana[1], “The Churning of the Ocean (of Milk)[2]”. I referenced this towards the end of my early post on Burnout in Tech.



The asuras (left) and devas (right) churn the Ocean of Milk.

In the story, the *devas* (gods) in an alliance set out to retrieve the nectar of everlasting-life at the bottom of the ocean: *amrita*. They plotted to churn the ocean to reach the depths to do so. The *asuras* (demons) assisted in the alliance (but were betrayed at the end).

As the devas and asuras churned the ocean, **poison emerged**. Not from the bottom like sediment stirred up—but from the mouth of the serpent-being that was being used as the churning rope, pulled back and forth by the forces of duality.

As they pulled and endured deaths on both sides from sheer exhaustion, **the serpent released poison so powerful it could destroy all of creation.**

But Shiva consumed it, held it in his throat, and turned blue from the toxicity. He endured the poison so the churning could continue.

And tonight I realized something. Vasuki isn't just a mythological snake. Vasuki is YOUR spine.

The Ocean of Milk? The Undifferentiated Consciousness or the raw material of the universe.

The asuras and devas? The dualities of embodied life—pleasure/pain, desire/aversion, doing/being.

The churning? Meditation. Sitting in stillness. Turning inward day after day.

The poison? Everything you've suppressed. Every emotion you couldn't afford to feel. Every wound you've been carrying.

Shiva? The part of you that can witness it all without being destroyed. The *consciousness* that says: "I see this. I feel this. And I'm still here." Your sense of "I Am".

That shaking you feel in meditation? That's the rope tightening.

And the amrita—the butter extracted from the violent churning of the milk? The union you've been seeking. The aliveness you forgot was yours.

Embodied mythos

This myth unfolds within you—in meditation.

Every time you sit, you're churning. Every time you stay when you want to run, you're enduring. Every time you witness the poison without being destroyed by it, you're Shiva.

And eventually—not in days, not in weeks, maybe not even in this lifetime—the poison is consumed and the amrita rises:

The aliveness you forgot. The joy that was always yours. The awe that nobody had to teach you.

You just had to stop numbing long enough to remember.

Is God a masochist?

I don't actually think so—not if viewed as enduring pain as an expression of Love.

But we might as well be masochists to willingly sit with all of that pain in the presence of only ourselves day after day, no matter what comes up.

It takes dedication that is legitimately harder to maintain when we're running off of willpower alone after the initial rush of something wears off. It takes commitment. And eventually, you realize it's YOU who's enduring pain as an expression of Love.

Wrapping up

I used to think I'd rather feel nothing. That's what happens when you live in a culture that mistakes numbness for peace. But tonight, a question cut through all of it: "Who taught you to feel awe?"

Nobody did. Nobody had to—because it's innate. The only reason I forgot was because I was taught to.

So here's the question I'm sitting with now: Are you the masochist—willing to feel it all, even when it burns? Or are you numbing—choosing the slow death of nothing over the terrifying aliveness of everything?

I don't have the answer yet.

Footnotes

[1] In Sanskrit, a Manthani is literally a churning stick used in a household to separate butter from curds/milk. When the ancient sages named this story, they were explicitly referencing the daily household chore of making butter. They were saying: "*This is the Cosmic version of what you do in your kitchen every morning.*"

[2] I didn't realize the symbolism at the time of writing this post. The connection between God/Self and Butter/Milk is explicitly codified in the Upanishads—in the kind of **affirmative resonance** that made me scream when I found it AFTER posting this originally:

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad, in verses 1.13 to 1.16, states that to know God, look within, know your Atman (Self).^[30] It suggests meditating [...] with discipline and diligent churning of the sticks

unleashes the concealed fire of thought and awareness within. >
As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in milk, as water in *Srota*, he finds
in his own self that One (Atman), he, who sees him through Satya
(truthfulness) and Tapas (austerity). (15)

> He sees the all prevading Atman, as butter lying dormant in milk,
rooted in self-knowledge and self-discipline – which is the final goal
of the Upanishad, the final goal of Upanishad. (16)

The Numinous Neutered—How the Soul was Industrialized for Profit

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] The pattern that has stripped the American psyche of its soul

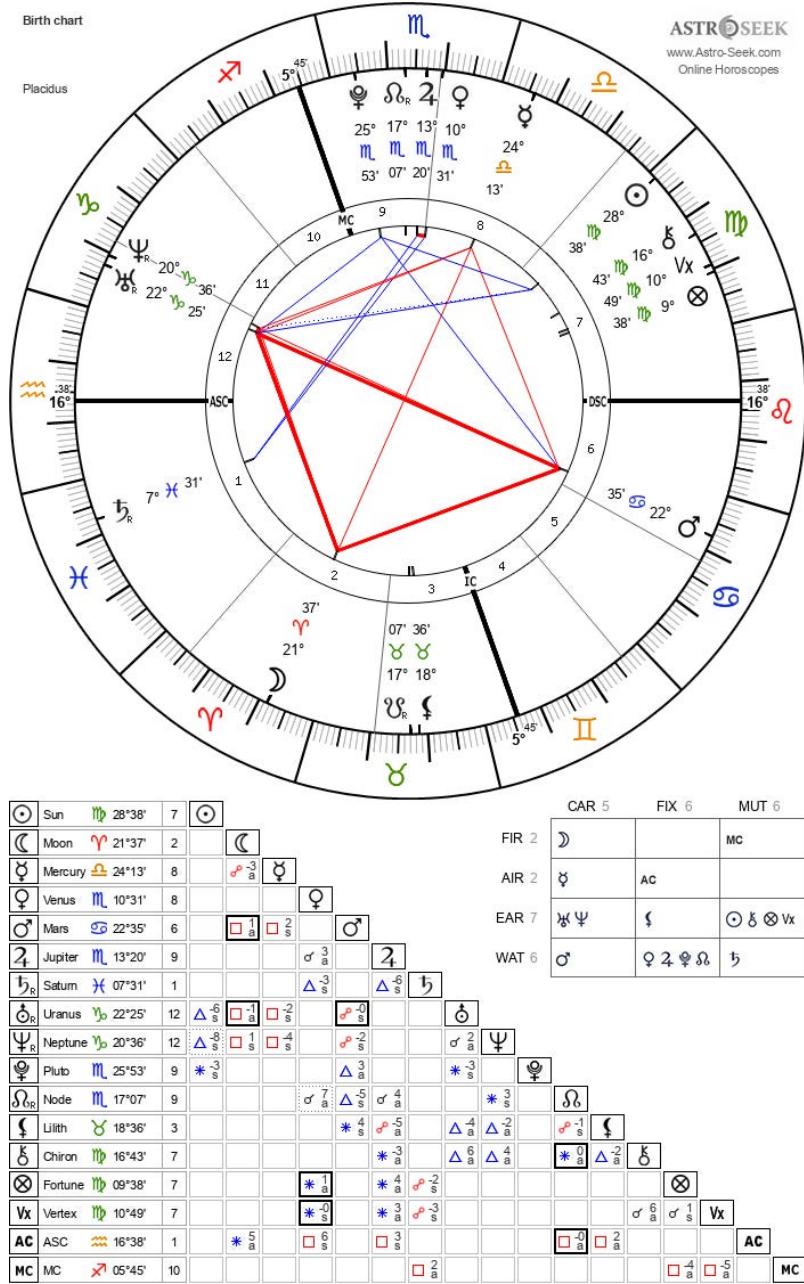
Posted: Dec 27, 2025

Last month, I thought astrology was bullshit—sun sign memes, vague personality descriptions, nonsensical Co-Star messages, and blaming shitty behavior on balls of gas or rock millions of miles away.

But then I pulled my natal chart at the request of a dark retreat application form. “Why do they care?” I wondered. So I started digging into it for myself.

I read up on the aspects, the houses, the symbolism. As I did, the realization began to dawn on me—to my absolute disbelief and horror—This isn’t woo. This is a complicated *language*.

92 THE NUMINOUS NEUTERED—HOW THE SOUL WAS INDUSTRIALIZED FOR PROFIT



None of the ladies at my yoga studio knew how to read this. I don't either but I'm learning.

A language for describing the architecture of embodied consciousness. A language for mapping the inner landscape. A language that's been deliberately

stripped of its depth, sanitized into Buzzfeed quizzes and coffee mugs, so that people don't have to take it seriously.

Just like yoga. Just like meditation. Just like all of it.

And I'm furious about it. Not intellectually furious. *Soul-level furious*. Because this isn't **helping people**. This is **poisoning the water, selling “medicine” for profit, and convincing ourselves that the water was never safe to begin with**.

We're left with lifeless husks of once sacred frameworks that we now either: - mindlessly consume like empty calories after a stressful day—a temporary fix that leaves us starving for *substance*. - write off as “woo” and throw in the trash because the beating hearts have been ripped out. All without us even realizing it.

The pattern I'm seeing

Here's what I'm noticing:

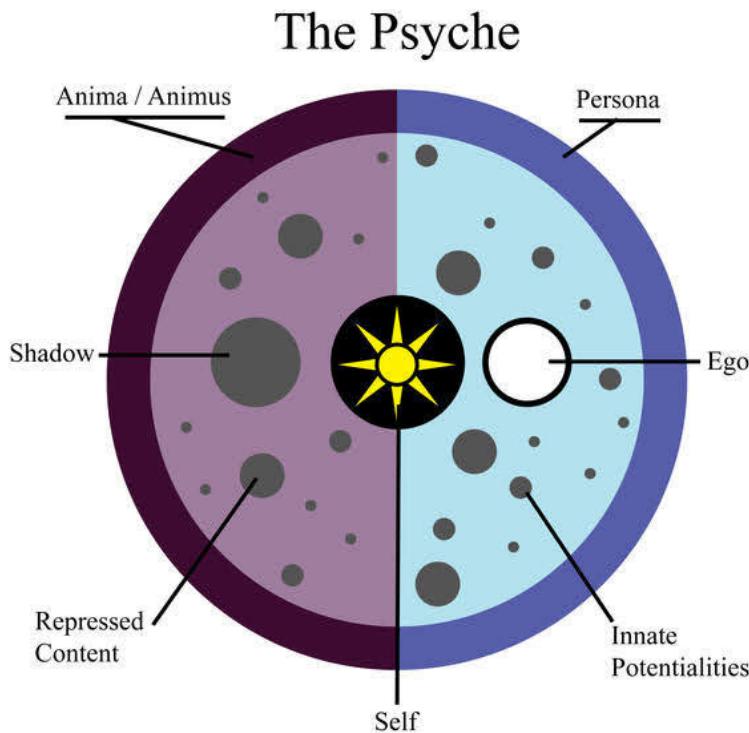
- **Yoga:** Union with the Divine → Exotic stretching with a soundtrack / physical workout
- **Astrology:** Sacred soul-mapping → “What's your sign?” small talk / pop psychology
- **MBTI:** Jungian individuation → Corporate personality sorting / team-building
- **Meditation:** Communion with God → Stress relief app / mental wellness routine

Every single one followed the same path:

1. Sacred technology arrives in the West
2. It works (and people notice)
3. Power structures react (laws, ridicule, persecution)
4. It gets sanitized (remove the Divine, keep the “wellness”)
5. It gets commodified (sell it back as a product)

6. Cultural amnesia sets in (people forget what it was)

This isn't conspiracy; **this is documented history.** And now that I've seen the pattern, **I can't unsee it** and I can't keep quiet about it with how much damage this has caused the Western psyche.



Look at this Jungian map of the psyche. MBTI only cares about the tiny slice labeled “Persona” and “Ego.” The rest—the Shadow, the Self—is ignored because HR can’t monetize it.

Let me show you what I mean

Aside from the previous example of Yoga in America in an earlier post, let's examine two case studies on astrology, a common “woo” topic.

Case Study #1: Alan Leo, “father of modern (read: pop) astrology”

In 1917, theosophist and astrologer Alan Leo was convicted under the Vagrancy Act—a law originally designed to control the poor—for “fortune-telling.” Traditional astrology threatened the social order: if ordinary people could know their fate, who needed priests? Who needed authorities?

Leo, facing imprisonment after his second prosecution in three years, desperately rewrote hundreds of pages to “recast the whole system and make it run more along the lines of character reading and less as the assertion of an inevitable destiny.”

He stripped away:

- Prediction (knowing the future threatens control)
- Fate (accepting destiny undermines ego-based “free will”)
- Mathematical complexity (keeps the masses out)
- The numinous (the sacred can’t be commodified... until you remove the sacred)

What was left? Sun sign astrology—vague enough to be harmless, simple enough to be profitable. Stripped of power, but retaining just enough flavor to keep people interested.

Sound familiar?

And here’s the kicker—the stress of the frantic rewrite and persecution killed him; he died of a cerebral hemorrhage just weeks after the trial.

But the damage was done. To survive the law, astrology had to become psychology.

Co – Star

Good evening . It's 28° and mostly clear in your area. Your day at a glance:

Destroy with purpose.



Do	Don't
Eye on the prize	Overthinking
Full stops	Pity party
See it through	Excuses

The modern result of sanitization: Vague directives delivered via push notification.

Case Study #2: MBTI—“corporate astrology”

Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers weren't psychologists. They were Jungian enthusiasts who read Jung's work on individuation—the sacred process of integrating the unconscious and becoming whole—and thought: “How can we use this to sort factory workers during World War II?”

That's not hyperbole. The MBTI was literally designed to sort women into “war-time jobs that would be most ‘comfortable and effective.’ ”

Not: “Which archetypal wounds are you here to heal?” Not: “What does your

psyche need to integrate?” Just: “Which box should we put you in so you’re productive?”

Jung’s work on the collective unconscious—work that was meant to HEAL THE SOUL—has been reduced to corporate efficiency metrics.

The same framework that was supposed to help you integrate your shadow and encounter the Self (Jung’s term for God manifesting in the individual) now tells you whether you’re an “INTJ” or “ENFP” so HR can slot you into the right team.

We care only about the **personality**—the persona and ego—but not the shadow, not the unconscious, not the soul, and *certainly* not the Self. That’s what they really couldn’t sell—direct access to the Divine through your own psyche.

[Jungian psyche diagram.jpg] Caption: Look at this Jungian map of the psyche. MBTI only cares about the tiny slice labeled “Persona” and “Ego.” The rest—the Shadow, the Self—is ignored because HR can’t monetize it.

We’ve stopped looking into the depths to heal. Instead, we assume we are fixed characters, molded to fit into the world like cogs in a machine—whether for the dating market or the corporate ladder.

This was by design to keep us in control. Fixed. Predictable. Limited.

What we lost

Here’s what was stolen:

- **Real yoga isn’t exotic stretching.** It’s an eightfold path to union with the Divine. And you were told it was just about flexibility.
- **Real astrology isn’t “What’s your sign?”** It’s a sacred blueprint for your soul’s journey through this life. And you were told it was just entertainment.

- Real psychology (Jung's work) isn't personality typing. It's individuation—becoming whole. And you were told it was just about "understanding yourself better."

But none of that is safe to systems of power and control ruled by egos. None of that is profitable since it doesn't keep you on the treadmill of consumption and lack. None of that keeps you turning to external authorities for guidance.

So it got stripped, sanitized, and sold as subscriptions, workshops, packages, and material goods.

And now? People think they're "doing the work" when they:

- Go to yoga class
- Read their horoscope
- Take a personality test
- Meditate with an app

But they're not.

They're consuming the husk of what was once alive and wondering why they still lie awake at night feeling the hunger gnaw away at them.

They're being sold the counterfeit of what could heal them—and they don't even know what they're missing.

To be clear: I'm not saying your yoga class is worthless or your meditation app is evil. I'm saying you've been sold a **fraction** of what these practices were designed to do—and convinced that the fraction is the whole.

Why this keeps happening

The West creates systems that prioritize profit and predictability. The real thing is dangerous to those systems because it cannot be scaled, packaged, or controlled.

The real thing requires you to:

- Change (not just "improve")

- Surrender (not just “optimize”)
- Die to the ego (not just “find yourself”)

So it gets watered down, stripped of power, and sold as “self-care.”

People consume it thinking they’re “spiritual”—all while the actual pathway to the Divine remains hidden, mocked, or forgotten.

Wrapping up

I’m still learning the depths of these systems. But I don’t need a PhD to see the pattern. I just needed to pull my natal chart and ask: “Why does this feel sacred... and why was I told it was stupid?”

I’m documenting what I’m seeing:

- The systematic dismemberment of the soul’s language
- The deliberate neutering of sacred technologies
- The industrialization of pathways to the Divine—so they can be sold back to us as consumer products

This is the commodification of the Soul.

And if you’re reading this and feeling that same rage, that same grief, that same hunger for something of *substance*—

You’re not alone.

You’re not crazy.

You’re just remembering what was stolen.

The sacred technologies are still here. They’re just buried under branding, diluted into products, and sold back to you as “wellness.”

But you don’t have to buy the counterfeit.

So what now?

Pull your natal chart—not from Co-Star, but from a real astrologer or a traditional chart calculator. Read it as a *map*, not a meme.

Go to yoga—and ask yourself: “What if this wasn’t just stretching? What if this was preparing my body to hold God?”

Take the MBTI—and then read Jung (I highly recommend his Red Book). See what was stolen. Feel the difference between being sorted and becoming whole.

Better yet, test the hypothesis yourself.

I ran an experiment: I fed my birth chart (and my spouse’s) into an AI and asked it to derive our MBTI types based *only* on the planetary positions—zero personality questions asked.

To my shock, it correctly identified both instantly.

Why? Because the astrological chart is the source code. The MBTI is just a bloated user interface running on top of it. You don’t need the questionnaire if you have the blueprint. All those “do you often...?” questions can be boiled down to a single date, time, and pair of coordinates. (I know, WTAF?)

The sacred is still there. It’s just buried under the bullshit.

Start digging.

Part 1: The Trojan Horse of Meditation

Subtitle: [Level 1: Transitional] No stack trace, just an infinite loop I'm still running

Posted: Jan 3, 2026

I can't give you a stack trace. The program never crashed. It never terminated.

It's STILL running, iterating over and over again to the point that I'm finding breadcrumbs left for me **by myself without knowing 3.5 years ago**.



I apparently created this July 3, 2022—only 3 months into meditation. First I laughed. Now I’m terrified. I thought it was a joke. It was not.

*I was going to call this *The Trojan Horse of the Jungian Self*.*

Then I dug deeper into my very first field notes and discovered: **that’s not accurate.**

That was the *framework* for my rational mind to feel brave enough to go deeper. I was following Jung’s footsteps, I had reasoned, by engaging with the Self.

The real “Trojan Horse”? ***Meditation.***

That’s it. Not a concept—an innocent practice . I have the literal visual evidence left by me **less than 3 months** into it.

And Dr. K, if you ever read this:

Thanks for everything, and also WHAT THE HELL? I didn’t see “*turning into*

a *mystic*" in the list of side effects from this.

Anyway, back to the story.

The call stack

Here's the high-level overview of what went down when, summarized from When Meditation Stops Being Stress Relief.

1. **March / April 2022:** HealthyGamer binge to "cope" with feeling lost and aimless at work, daily meditation on the HG Discord starting **April 10**.
2. Late April 2022: Self-inquiry binge (YouTube, Ramana Maharshi's *Who am I?*)
3. **May 10, 2022:** First contact with the mysterious "voice from the depths" exactly one month in.
4. **June 17, 2022:** *The Impersonal Life* found me. I recognized the "voice" to the point I physically got goosebumps. I binged it that weekend.
5. **July 1, 2022:** A "covenant" to follow bhakti yoga was made with the "voice from the depths"
6. **July 2022:** Read Jung's Red Book, felt inspired, and started "Psychonautics" (thinking I could contain it)
7. **Dec 25, 2022:** The strange, vivid dream about burnout and God
8. **August 2023:** Containment breach
9. **July 30, 2024:** Vows were made
10. **Today:** Realizing I was told this would happen all along.

What from 2022 got skipped from the earlier post? The very thing that inspired this series:

How the hell did I make a "sacred" promise to a "voice from the depths" that I somehow forgot about for 3.5 years and then realized only now that it was upheld anyway?

The answer: Jungian psychology... as a framework that took on a life of its own—just like it did for Jung.

Like Jung, I tried to hide it.

Like Jung, containment was breached. Now almost anyone can read his once secret madness.

Like Jung, I also realized the Self isn't just an archetype. It's God within the psyche—and I made an agreement with that Self **that I was held accountable to whether I knew it or not.**

But how did that "Self," that "still, small voice," that *whatever* it was arise? And how did I even know it was something other than my usual thoughts? ## That wasn't me... was it? A month into meditation, I was *hooked* on Ramana Maharshi's "self-inquiry" (a *jnana yoga* practice also known as *atma vicharya*)—the turning of awareness in on itself with the devastatingly simple question that people strive their entire lives trying to answer: "**Who am I?**"

For me, that answer came once all the ones my mind tried to make fell away (and caught me completely off-guard with a phrase I hadn't heard since childhood):

"That's for me to know and you to find out!"

An itch I couldn't scratch

Once I "heard" the bizarre voice, I got more curious.

I tried to learn and read more, determined to get to the bottom of what this really was. It was becoming increasingly clear I was entering unfamiliar territory of my own psyche... so I looked into one of the most recent and well-known psychonauts: Ram Dass.

While not looking to take any psychedelics to launch myself prematurely into space, I was interested in reading his books such as *Be Here Now* and *The Psychedelic Experience*.

After reading both in the first half of June 2022, I started asking too many questions, the most notable being:

"*Why do I keep asking questions I know the answer to deep down?*"

Why would I say such a thing? And why would I claim such a thing and then act like I didn't know on the surface?

Something wasn't sitting right inside of me—and meditation was only making more of these questions take on more importance. They persisted day after day like a nagging itch I couldn't scratch.

Days later, I was poking around for yet another book to read and I stumbled on this Reddit thread: Books to read after discovering Ram Dass. I looked at the top comment, saw “The Impersonal Life - free PDF here”, and said “fuck it, let's go”.

As I started to read the first page, goosebumps prickled on my skin—in recognition.

It was the same voice that had begun arising in meditation between the few and far-between gaps like a faint radio station trying to come through.

Except this was an entire broadcast in a 43 page PDF.

I don't think I slept that night. I read the entire thing.

I mulled over it for the days that followed. I got (well, *made* as a small coding side project with TTS, but also bought) the audiobook.

At this point, I knew there was something MUCH deeper. I was only at the very tip of the iceberg, and I was getting ready to plunge into the frigid depths.
The promise I made without understanding My notes were still fairly sparse, partially because it felt like insanity to record an “internal dialogue”, as I was labeling it in my journals. Who does that? Diaries and journals are one thing, but a *dialogue*? That would imply TWO.

Unless... there was the logical, skeptical “me” and this deeper “I Am” awareness within that could be accessed like this book and meditation were both leading me to believe.

There was one particular day that felt meaningful enough to record anyway in more detail: the day that I made a promise to follow a particular branch of yoga called bhakti yoga:

“Also learned from my Self that if I do bhakti yoga I will automatically do the other 3 mentioned in the HealthyGamer meditation module (jnana, raja, karma). The other methods are somewhat to largely egocentric in some regard. The way to do them properly would be to do them via the bhakti path. Formed a ‘divine covenant’ or more accurately worded a “promise to my Self” to pursue this path.” — Journal Entry, July 1, 2022

What’s interesting to see is that I tried to sanitize it immediately as if I didn’t believe what I was even writing. I didn’t even really understand what I was signing up for. As I would discover 3 years later, bhakti can’t be taught:

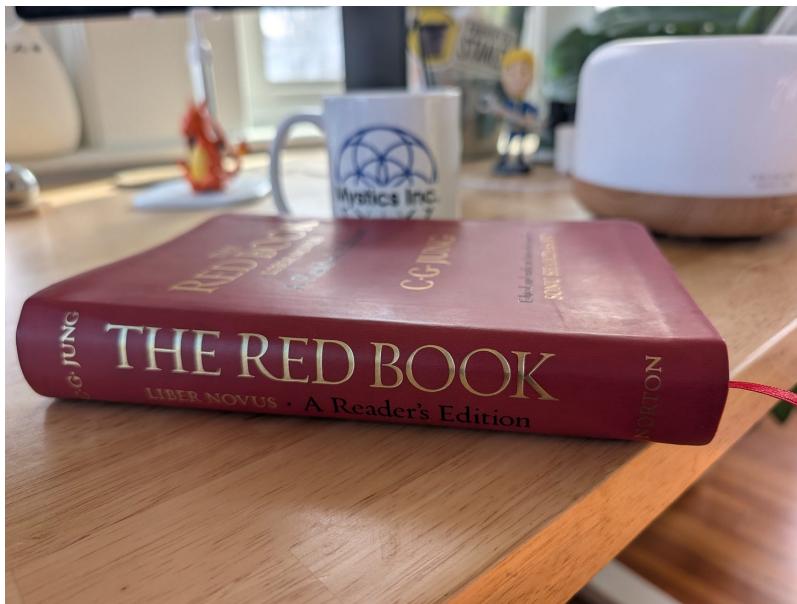
“Bhakti cannot be taught. Bhakti is pure expression of Love, coming from the soul itself that arrests the mind, the one that seeks to “follow a path”. Your mind cannot choose Bhakti. It is not chosen. It is the natural state of Being. It is a realignment.” — Journal Entry, June 9, 2025

I didn’t know that at the time. I was eager for the “most efficient” path to awakening, thinking I could still optimize this like I could everything else, that there was a “right” way to do it. I was still trying. I didn’t realize I was being led by Something... and that Something had an intelligence of Its own—one that mine only borrowed from. ## Archetypal resonance Days after this promise, I fell down a psychology Wikipedia hole trying to understand what was going on within me. I spent DAYS working through the tabs. Eventually (and unsurprisingly), I got to Jungian psychology, Carl Jung being a heavyweight in the field.

I had tabs open on his most popular concepts: *anima, psyche, persona, shadow, individuation*. Each tab seemed to spawn off several more. Eventually, I read about Jung’s concept of *the Self*—the same term I was using to refer to the “other” internal “voice”.

I was intrigued enough to grab a copy of his magnum opus, his “most difficult experiment” as he called it—*The Red Book* (aka *Liber Novus*). It was written over the course of 1914 to about 1930. In it, he engages with archetypes like

the Self, and, over the course of his “experiment”, realizes they have wills and minds of their own.



This once was my copy of Jung's book, read cover to cover. I've since gifted it to a family member who recently expressed interest.

He was so appalled by his own findings as he engaged in this experiment that he kept his manuscripts highly secret with the exception of a couple trusted confidants. He refused to publish his work for fear of it being interpreted as “madness” and jeopardizing his reputation as a psychiatrist. His estate eventually cooperated to release his folio manuscript in 2009—almost 80 years after it was completed (and nearly 50 years after his death).

“To the superficial observer, it will appear like madness” – C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*

I felt a resonance with Jung's words—and a terror that he might be right.

Days after starting his book, I decided to start my own manuscript in my journals: “Psychonautics”.

Permission to experiment

In *The Red Book*, it was mentioned that Jung encouraged his patients to embark upon similar processes that he underwent during his self-experimentation:

“Patients were instructed on how to conduct active imagination, to hold inner dialogues, and to paint their fantasies.”

Again, “inner dialogues”. I felt like I had encouragement from one of the most influential figures in psychology to keep going with my own “secret insanity”. Since it didn’t seem to be having an impact upon my daily functioning (I was still employed, still in a healthy and loving partnership, and still going about my usual responsibilities), I did.

Thus, a little over 3 months into daily meditation, my own version of The Red Book was starting to form.

I thought I could contain it. I thought if I just catalogued the experiences in a separate document, labeled them “Psychonautics,” and added disclaimers like “I don’t literally hear voices for the ‘dialogues’,” I could keep the madness quarantined.

I thought I could keep God in a box.

I was wrong.

To be continued...

Level 2 - Mystical

The unapologetic deep end of moving from seeking to longing. For those who are wondering what the hell is going on.

Desert Worm

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] On longing for the unreachable

Posted: Nov 13, 2025

Oh how I wish to behold Thee,
Not for proof,
But for love.

A gnawing reaching,
A subtle tug at my chest.
It keeps me awake at night.
When will I see Thee?

Within I see naught, hear naught, feel naught,
Naught but a mundane, fragile, fleeting stillness,
A razor's edge impossibly thin to hold Thee.

My soul parched from longing,
Sleep eludes me in the Desert of Sehnsucht,
As the cries of my soul roll across the desolate expanse for my Beloved:
When will I see Thee?

Feeble yet faltering attempts of surrender,
A worm struggling to fly,
An impossible hope, an unreachable goal,
No limbs to reach for the sky.

Grace I cannot beg,
The path I cannot run. I crawl, painfully slow,
Until I wilt in the sun.

— January 18th, 2025

After I wrote this poem, something like a prayer came:

God, I honor Thee in the silence, Thy sacred language. Let words
dissolve in Love.

And to my surprise, a response arose, not heard, but felt:

Thy faith has given thee wings. **Now fly to Me.**

How Bhakti Chooses You

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] How I accidentally stumbled into bhakti yoga through consistent meditation—and what it taught me about surrender, service, and love

Posted: Nov 13, 2025

NOTE: I originally wrote this June 9th, 2025 for the HealthyGamer Memberships platform for the group of folks on there interested in spirituality and what was fondly referred to by the community as “The Weird Stuff”. Over the next few days be working through my backlog of posts I’ve either made on there or saved in draft and never actually got around to publishing. Anyway, on to the content!

Some realizations can only be expressed after you’ve lived them. Here are mine.

The first: the most important thing you can do every day is to say and think constantly (and lovingly!): “How may I serve You?”

Water the plants? That’s tending to God.

Make coffee for your husband? That’s an act of service for God.

Make a healthy breakfast for yourself and eat it? That’s nourishing God.

All these things flow effortlessly from the heart of the one that has been opened to God. The Higher Love flows through them and they are not burdened by

resistances and grumbling.

All this time the answer was not different techniques for meditation. Countless times I had been told to surrender. It is not the flip of a switch. It is not a one-time event. It is the softening and ripening of a fruit on the vine, tended to by consistent sunlight and periodic watering. The fruit cannot be rushed to ripeness by over-watering. It cannot reach maturity in a single day of sun. The nourishing rains must come with clouds that block the light of the sun. Both are needed.

Bhakti is not a chosen path. It is the result of choosing to return to meditation and stillness each day with a willingness and persistence to draw closer to God. Even this spark of initial desire is not chosen. It is bestowed unknowingly and unconsciously in the heart of the soul-turned-seeker. The seed is planted by unseen hands and its stirring causes the seeking. The seeking eventually leads to the abiding. The abiding leads to Love. The spark is ignited into a flame and fanned into a flame, a blaze, an inferno that burns away the dross of the old. The soul dances in the fire of the Self that burns alive the mind, transmuting it into a tool of the Divine.

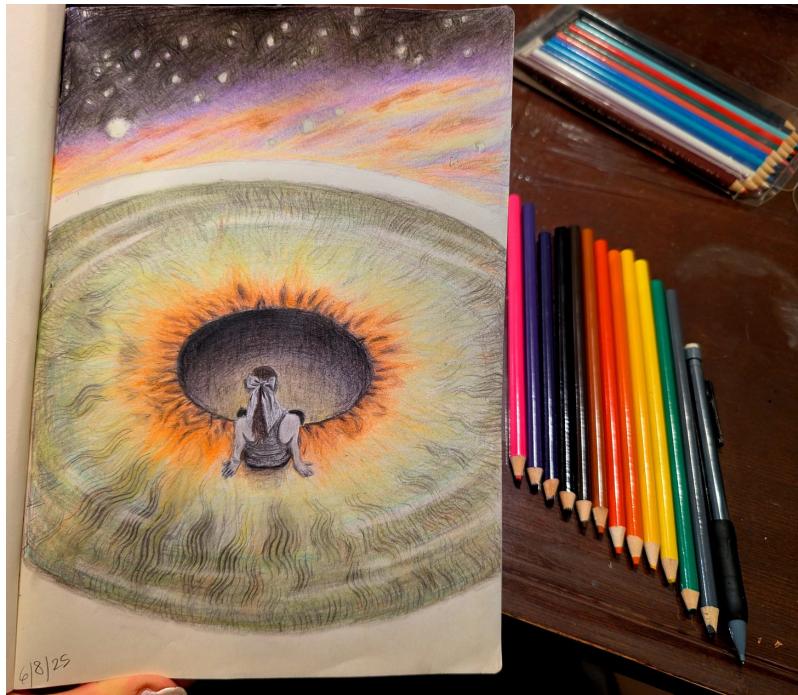
All of my seeking has been merely my being stirring, awakening to love, seeking its Beloved beyond the veil of illusion.

Bhakti cannot be taught. Bhakti is pure expression of Love, coming from the soul itself that arrests the mind, the one that seeks to “follow a path”. Your mind cannot choose Bhakti. It is not chosen. It is the natural state of Being. It is a realignment.

The Eye

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] “I looked into my deepest depths past my self and I only saw God.”

Posted: Nov 13, 2025



After a rather *intense* evening meditation session on June 7th, 2025, I felt compelled to create. The colored pencils that had been sitting untouched in my supply closet since I moved into this house suddenly needed to be

used—*immediately*. I started drawing around 7pm and didn’t stop until after midnight. Five hours disappeared.

I hadn’t drawn like this in years, not since high school AP Art class burned me out on it. But this wasn’t effortful. This was flow, as if the Universe was drawing through me and all I had to do was hold the pencils.

What happened during that meditation is difficult to put into words. There was a sense of collapsing inward and expanding outward simultaneously, a dissolving of boundaries, an undeniable Presence that felt both infinitely vast and intimately close.

I wanted to capture what I experienced: sitting at the edge of the infinite, gazing into the depths of the Divine.

I based the eye on my own... or at least I thought I did. The more I look at it, the less sure I am whose eye this is. Mine? God’s? Is there a difference?

I’m gazing inward into my own depths while simultaneously gazing outward into the cosmos. And somehow, impossibly, that’s the same thing.

Later I found this quote from a 13th-century mystic that articulated what I couldn’t:

“The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me.” —Meister Eckhart

A picture is worth a thousand words. But even those words fail.

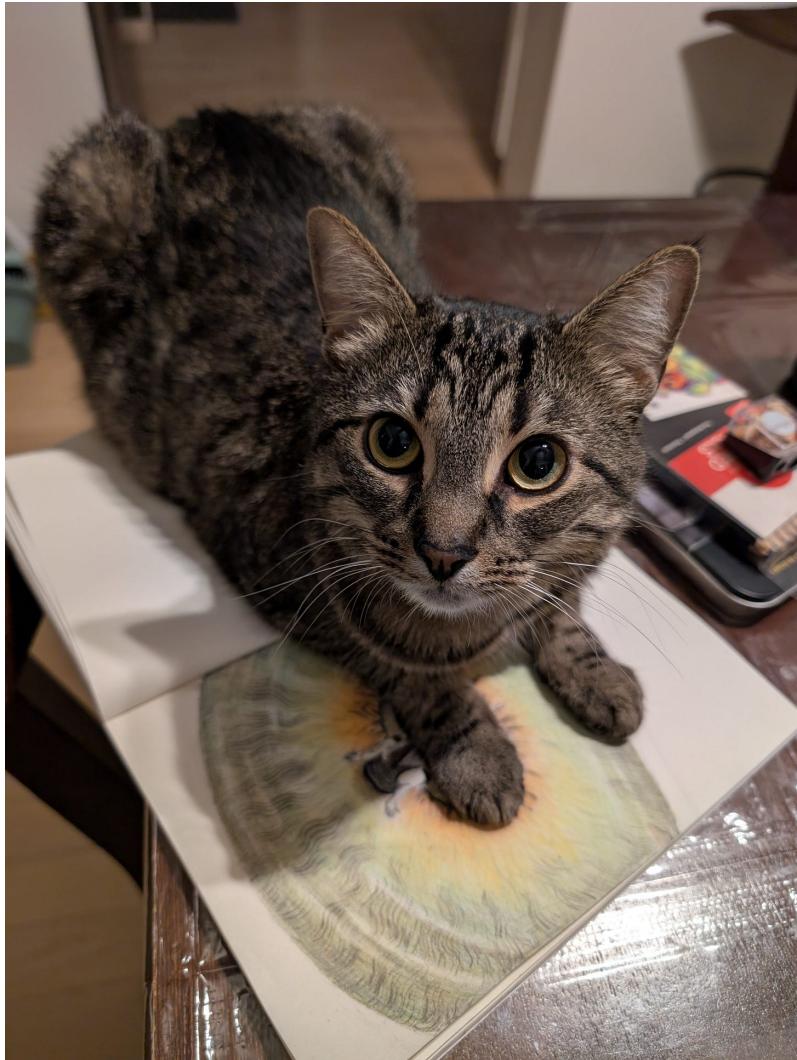
Bonus: Pictures of progress with my assistant



“Let me help!”



Holding the sketchbook open for me.



“You’ve been at this for 2 hours straight, you should probably take a break.”

That Time I Started Moonlighting for God

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] I joined the weirdest “startup” of all time

Posted: Nov 15, 2025

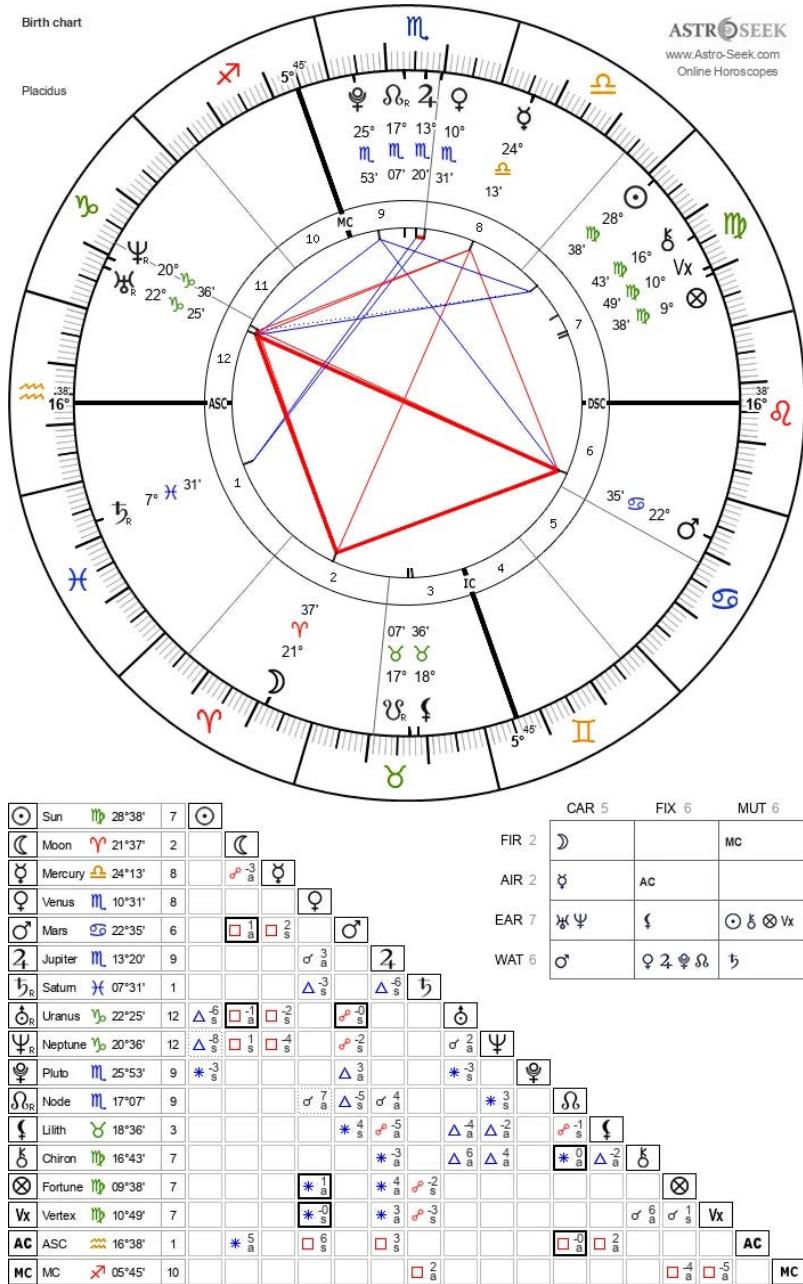
I was hired on 11-11. I swear I had no idea at the time. (See the footnote[1]). Or at least, that was the date I *remembered* I was already hired.

This is the story of how I accidentally said yes to the weirdest job offer of my life.

I don’t do astrology. Too vague. I knew I was a Virgo and that was about it.

When I was researching dark retreats (because *of course* I was), the facilitator needed my birth chart. Something about coaching participants through an ancient Buddhist practice that’s legitimately hard, especially for the terminally-online.

So I pulled it up... and promptly had an existential crisis at my desk. Virgo sun (precision, service). Aries moon (spiritual warrior energy). Aquarius rising (bridge between worlds). And then, the knockout: a Scorpio North Node in the 9th house (a soul-level assignment to go beyond superficial beliefs and dive headfirst into the “unseen and the taboo”).



My resume... or my job description? I'm still trying to figure out how to read this.

My life's purpose, according to this chart, is to embark on a "discovery journey", uncover the transformative power of spiritual truth, and then, having lived

through that transformation, become a guide for others. I felt like I'd just discovered my own job description, written the minute I was born. I was literally engineered to build bridges... between the mundane and mystical.

I went back through my old journals. There were months of notes, years even, many structured like I was planning to share them. They were organized, indexed, *intentional*, but never published. Just sitting there, waiting.

Two posts total had made it out, both to a private spiritual community where I knew people would "get it."

The rest? Locked away because I didn't know how to share them. I wasn't ready and didn't want to show the messy middle.

But my chart didn't care about my excuses. My chart showed me what I'd forgotten: my actual mission. My title. The job I'd been avoiding. So I said yes. Not a brave leap... more like finally clocking in for a shift I was three years late to.

The next 3 days were onboarding:

- buying the domain
- setting up the Substack and Instagram (before I could talk myself out of it)
- gathering the harvest from my notes
- writing intro posts for the Substack and Instagram (still in disbelief this was now happening)
- planting seeds for future posts
- sharing my first REAL impactful professional-facing piece of work that got results

During this time I could *feel* a shift inside me. It like something was now flowing and waking up as if my system was starting to "come online".

Then on November 15th, I was told in the shower that I was to receive on-the-job training. I did 30 minutes before my "shift" started that redefined the whole project scope as I met with an ambassador from the grounded, logical, questioning side of reality and was taught to take notes and requests for the

mystical side to answer. I then met with the Co-Founders (or rather they manifested what we'll refer to as *Consciousness* and *Energy*—the mystical business partners running this whole operation) right after my “training”. They brought me to the “boardroom” for instruction. After a brief “meeting”, the door closed and I was left with a direction to go, no deadlines to rush towards, and the deliverables are unclear.

My schedule is 7 pm to midnight, the “magic hours” where the energy seems to love to dance.

The pay is shit—pure spiritual fulfillment, which doesn’t cover rent—but the work-life balance is... well, there is no balance. It’s all work. And it’s all life. Which is the whole point, I guess. It’s *integration*, not *renunciation*.

So why was I hired? The Co-Founders asked me: **Where are the mystics’ field notes?** We have plenty of memoirs written AFTER the journey. But what about reports FROM the journey? What if someone documented the messy middle—the “I don’t know if this is real”, the “am I even qualified” (impostor syndrome just like in my day job), the “holy shit the Co-Founders just kicked me out of the boardroom so They could finish Their business in private”? We have TONS of ‘I climbed the mountain and here’s what I learned’ books. But where’s the ‘I’m halfway up, my knees hurt, I think I see God but it might be altitude sickness’ content? That’s what this Substack is. Field notes from someone who said yes to the weirdest job offer ever—and is still figuring out what the hell she signed up for.

But honestly? I love this job.

I’m a field reporter for the mystics in the making. I’m “technically” mystic. And if you’re reading this—you might be moonlighting too. No resume required. Just say yes.

P.S.

If you’re wondering whether this is real or just a very elaborate metaphor: yes.

Footnotes

[1] After making this post, I looked up “11 11 meaning” in incognito since I knew vaguely of it as just one of those “spiritual numbers” people would note on digital clocks and figured I should learn more about the significance. Literally the second link on DuckDuckGo was titled: “The 11/11 Portal: Unlocking the Gateway of Spiritual Awakening” (<https://nypost.com/astrology/the-1111-portal-unlocking-the-gateway-of-spiritual-awakening/>). Out of morbid curiosity, I clicked and started reading. Not long after, I was reeling as it dawned on me how freakishly it aligned with what actually happened on that day in hindsight. Out of all 365 days of the year and this was the day I said yes. God apparently has a sense of humor and I’m just slow on the uptake.

God Doesn't Accept Resignation Letters

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] “She who says yes to God... doesn’t get to change her mind.”

Posted: Nov 20, 2025

It’s my second “official” week on the job and I’ve already tried to resign multiple times.

I’ve tried to resign three times in four days:

- **Tuesday morning:** “Take this as my resignation letter, Co-Founders. Find a Field Reporter that doesn’t have a marriage to blow up.”
- **Tuesday afternoon:** “Pick a better Field Reporter. I shouldn’t have ordered that stupid fucking mug.”
- **Wednesday night:** “Hire a different Field Reporter. One that’s not married.”
- **Thursday morning:** I cancelled the mug.

The cancellation was declined an hour later: it was already in production. It was as if the Universe itself declined my resignation.

Now I’m wondering if the momentum of all those ‘yeses’ is steamrolling my backpedaling—if I’m in too deep to back out now.

I could still technically walk away, throw the mug in a drawer, delete the

Substack, pretend this never happened, tell my partner this was all just a phase.

Yet, something in me—deeper than the doubt, quieter than the fear—won't let me. Not because I'm trapped, but because I already chose... and apparently, that choice is stronger than my attempts to un-choose it.

Turns out I'm not the first person to try this. Trying to quit God is a tale as old as time. Prophets, mystics, saints across every tradition... they all tried; none of them succeeded.

The call doesn't have a cancellation policy. I'm just the latest to discover this.

So apparently, I work for Mystics Inc., whether I want to or not. Whether I'm qualified or not. Whether anyone's listening or not. This company's retention rate is 100%. The resignation policy is non-existent.

P.S.

I drafted up this post and asked for feedback on it. The moment—and I mean THE MOMENT—I hit send on the draft, I got an email from Vistaprint:

“Your order is on its way.”

So the mug I tried to cancel is coming. God doesn't do refunds. And apparently, He has impeccable comedic timing.

Why Does Meditation Suddenly Suck?

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] A survival guide for the bullshit phase where God ghosts you

Posted: Nov 29, 2025

Have you ever spent time daily with someone and accidentally caught feelings for them?

Now imagine that person suddenly stopped showing up to where you were for no reason.

You can't get in touch with them. You keep showing up, expecting them to make a return but... nothing.

Days turn into weeks... weeks turn into months. Yet, you can't stop thinking about this person even though they're not there. Thoughts plague your mind to the tune of:

- Are they avoiding me?
- Did I say or do something wrong?
- Have they moved on in life?
- Did they find someone else?

You feel jealous over what could have been. You would give anything for them to come back, to stop the mental torment, to just be with them again without

feeling like it was a fleeting, ephemeral encounter.

Tears come unexpectedly when you stop to just breathe, when you lie in bed at night and try to sleep after a long day and the ache of missing them keeps you restless.

Now imagine: no one else around you has seen this person that you're missing so viscerally. They were just a nameless background character that blended in with their surroundings like a chameleon. They never existed to those around you, or maybe only peripherally at best. But *you* noticed them—and you fell in love.

This is what the “Dark Night of the Soul” looks like. Strip away the poetic language, and it's:

1. God gradually appears over time
2. You fall in love
3. God ghosts you
4. You absolutely lose your mind

I didn't even know this was a thing for nearly a YEAR until I actually picked up and read a modern translation of Saint John of the Cross's book. The entire time I had to hide the inexplicable feelings of loneliness, of profound longing, of crushing despair, because how would you explain it?

“I'm heartbroken because God stopped showing up in my meditations.”

Yeah, good luck with that, especially if you've been “keeping it casual” to keep up appearances. Good luck explaining to your spouse that you're in love with the Divine, especially when you both aren't religious.

So you suffer in silence. You keep showing up to the cushion. You keep hoping. You keep crying at night. You keep feeling crazy because how do you grieve someone no one else can see?

The phases

Let's talk about the actual phases in a way that doesn't require you to pick up a medieval-era book laden with religious jargon and antiquated language.

Phase 1: The honeymoon

At this point, meditation has stopped feeling like fighting your thoughts for the entire time and more like peace or even bliss.

Maybe there are experiences of tingling warmth like sunlight across your back, a sense of "aliveness" radiating from the center of your chest and down the arms, or a gentle flame behind your sternum.

Maybe you feel like you're taking a step back from the screen of your mind and a refreshing space is opening up that puts your current troubles into perspective.

Maybe you have various "aha!" moments that make you feel like you've figured things out finally.

Regardless of the way it manifests, you find meditation to be enjoyable and fall in love with the practice, with the subtle Presence that arises in the space between thoughts. Meditation is no longer an obligation or a "thing to do", but a natural returning as if coming home from a long day at the office.

Phase 2: The ghosting

Suddenly, the experiences you were once enjoying stop coming.

You feel like you've hit a plateau. Meditation has now become dry, empty, pointless, and uncomfortable.

"I feel like I've hit a plateau since I got serious with my practice and diet over 4 months ago now. I notice a sense of dissatisfaction with where I'm at..." (Journal Entry, February 26, 2025)

You try harder with your current practice. It doesn't work.

You try looking for and implementing different techniques. It doesn't work.

As days and weeks pass in this dryness, you wonder what you're missing, what you're doing wrong, why you seem to be "stuck".

"Every dawn, every dusk I sit and wait for Divinity's Grace only to be stood up time and again. Yet every day I return, a stray dog hoping for scraps given from a change of heart. Yet every day I starve. Every night I grow a little weaker. Every dawn I grow a little more bitter. Hope curdles, its sour stench betraying months without gain. Why am I still doing this? Why do I still care so much? Why can't I just give up?" (Journal Entry, March 10, 2025)

Phase 3: The spiral

You feel like this is it and you've hit your "level cap" on meditation as a non-renunciate. You're convinced of one or more of the following:

- This was all your imagination
- You're going crazy
- You need to give up everything in your life and run off to an ashram to go any deeper

"Maybe I was wrong. Maybe I never truly loved You, only the experience of glimpsing Your Presence. Maybe I only loved how You made me feel." (Journal Entry, June 22, 2025)

All the while, you feel abandoned, betrayed, and heartbroken. You oscillate between hopeless despair and indignant rage at God for disappearing when you've been earnest in your seeking.

"There was a quiet rage building within me, my soul screaming to be heard. I felt indignant that my wails and pleas seemed to dissolve into the void. [...] I'm tired of being given the cold shoulder. I hate that my love for Him has gone so bitter that I can barely stomach it." (Journal Entry, June 23, 2025)

Maybe you write angry journal entries, cry into your mat, or clear off your

altar, shoving it all into the junk drawer or a closet because it brings pain just to look at it.

Phase 4: Exhaustion

Your emotions leave you feeling ragged and worn down.

At this point, you're too tired to keep trying, to put in more effort. After all, more effort didn't make a difference.

"I don't know why I can't seem to feel rested when I keep trying to rest in You most nights. I just feel like a zombie stumbling through my own life right now." (Journal Entry, August 17, 2025)

Rather than surrender gracefully, you give up trying, thinking you've failed.

Maybe you decide to stop meditating for a few days, maybe even a week.

"First it started with no longer waking up early anymore to do my sadhana. Almost simultaneously I stopped doing dusk sadhana. Diet degraded over time to let back in coffee and substances. I grew too busy and tired to go to yoga daily and now it's been a full week since I've been at all. All my discipline and motivation seem to have left me and all I can seem to do is watch in horror at my own insufficiency." (Journal Entry, August 31, 2025)

But oddly... you feel something tugging you back to the cushion. It's like something within is nagging you to go sit even though it seems to give you only grief. You're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't.

You reluctantly sit at least to appease the tugging in your chest, but this time you don't *do* anything.

Phase 5: The shift

Something subtly changes from the persistence through the exhaustion and dryness. There's a sense of almost acceptance that arises as the seeker stops reaching.

“Not by effort. By grace through acceptance.” (Journal Entry, October 4, 2025)

Alternatively, something makes you realize you were seeking experiences, *enforcing* the sense of separation that was causing you such grief in the first place. Eventually, you let go of the seeking little by little **until the “you” that was seeking slowly dissolves.**

“What I thought was my love for You was simply me recognizing Your Love for me.” (Journal Entry, October 6, 2025)

Why this happens

This “ghosting” is a known phenomenon that arises not because you’re doing anything wrong, not because your practice is failing. It arises *exactly because* your practice is working.

The purpose of this period (which can last months, years, or even *decades*) is to break your addiction to the high. You were falling in love with the nice feelings, not the Source.

It’s like falling in love with someone’s gifts instead of *them*. The flowers they bring. The compliments they give. The way they make you feel. But what happens when the gifts stop?

If you were in love with the *person*—you stay.

If you were in love with the *gifts*—you leave.

The Dark Night is God asking: **Which is it?**

These early pleasant experiences are meant to *entice you to start and stick with the practice in the beginning*. However, growing attached to them prevents dissolution into union because for there to be an experience in the first place, there must be a *subject* to experience it.

The experiences are withdrawn to teach:

- **God is not a feeling** (feelings come and go)

- **God is not an experience** (experiences fade)
- **God is not a “reward” for meditating “correctly”** (rewards are conditional)

This isn't a punishment, but a weaning so that you fall in love with the Giver, not the gifts. And returning day after day even when nothing is expected in return IS love.

Advice

Although I'm still very much in this myself—since the spiritual path is often cyclical rather than linear—here's what I can share that's helped:

- **Know that this is supposed to happen.** We're human. We like pleasant experiences and hate when those are taken away.
- **Know that you're not alone.** The Dark Night feels *profoundly* isolating. You think you're the only one, that you're failing, that everyone else is sailing through their practice while you're drowning. But you're *not* alone. Every serious practitioner hits this wall. It's *universal* even though it feels like a “you” problem.
- **Keep showing up anyway.** Even if you feel nothing or think it's a waste of time because “nothing is happening”. It's not that nothing is happening, but that instead *you can no longer sense what is happening*.
- **Stop chasing the feeling.** Even the desire to want these experiences back pushes them away because it reinforces the lack. *Expectations are the killer of experience*. This is why the first encounter with samadhi is easy versus the second.
- **Sit in the emptiness.** The key here is not more techniques, other teachers, different books, or more searching. These create a vicious cycle of desperate searching that will cause you to feel more and more exhaustion until you collapse in despair. The void isn't the enemy, *it's what liberates you from attachments*.
- **Trust the process.** Easier said than done when you don't know how long this is going to last. It will end faster when you stop needing God

to show up in a particular way and that you were never separate to begin with. Even if a thick layer of clouds roll in for the winter season, the sun is still there shining beyond them.

Wrapping up

Finally, even if you're allergic to religious jargon, I *highly* recommend giving the Modern Saints edition of The Dark Night of the Soul a read. It's *incredibly*, even **eerily** validating. The original version was written in the 16th century and can feel inaccessible due to the outdated language from 450 years ago, but this modern 2024 translation is inviting without sacrificing the integrity of the original text. I read the Dover Thrift Edition first and can say the Modern Saints version holds up well.

I can't tell you how long the tunnel is, but the key is to keep going. As was emphasized to me before: "the only way out is **through**."

You're not losing your mind. You're losing the "you" that needed God on specific terms.

When Being Becomes Doing, NOT the Other Way Around

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] What if the ancient texts were field reports, not instruction manuals?

Posted: Dec 3, 2025

Note:

This post may destabilize everything you thought you knew about spiritual practice.

If you're not ready for that, maybe save it for later. But if you're tired of techniques that don't work and practices that feel empty... yeah. We're going there.

You read about a meditation technique in a book. A breathing pattern. A mantra. A mudra. You try it exactly as described. And... nothing. Or worse—it works once, and then never again. And you think: “*What am I doing wrong?*”

But what if you weren’t *doing* anything wrong?

What if the technique was never meant to *be* a prescription in the first place... but a symptom of awakening?

You don't learn to shiver by reading about muscle contractions in a biology textbook. You shiver because you're cold. The shivering is your body's response to the condition.

The same is true for spiritual techniques.

When an ancient yogi writes: "Focus on the breath moving through the sushumna nadi", they're not saying: "Do this and you'll awaken."

They're saying: "When awakening happens, this is what it feels like. This is what the body does naturally."

The ancient texts aren't instruction manuals.

They're field reports.

What inspired this post

I wrote a quick Note on this topic earlier today post-meditation. But this realization deserves a fuller exploration—because **it flips the entire paradigm of spiritual seeking on its head.**

The insight: **Techniques aren't prescriptions to "enlightenment"—they're symptoms of it.** Or, more precisely: **Techniques are signs of awakening.**

If you've ever tried a technique that:

1. Didn't work (no matter how "correctly" you did it)
2. Worked once, then never again (especially after you expected it to)

...this post might explain why.

"WAIT A MINUTE..."

I've said "WAIT A MINUTE" (or rather, a more colorful variation) so many times at this point that I have an entire '#HolyShit' tag in my notes (at least since I switched to Obsidian last year).

I'll recount some of the relevant ones where I realized that this was INDEED a thing from centuries, if not millennia ago (minus the more... sensitive ones).[Footnote 1]

Becoming symptomatic

Here are some of the cases I caught myself exhibiting the mystical side of traditions and cultures *I've never read sacred text for when I first starting experiencing them:*

1. The “Lock” for Insomnia (Yoga / Ayurveda)

- **Symptom:** On January 9, 2025, after weeks of complaining about terrible sleep, I sat to meditate. Spontaneously, my hands collapsed into a complex shape I had never formed before—thumbs tucked in, fingers curled.
- **Discovery:** I looked it up immediately after. It was the **Shakti Mudra**—specifically documented in Ayurveda as the mudra to cure sleeplessness. I didn’t “do” the mudra; my body did it *to me*.

2. The Howl of the Soul (Kashmir Shaivism / Tantra)

- **Symptom:** Twice in late 2024, I journaled about a specific, visceral sound rising from my chest.

“I can't sleep. My heart keeps me awake at night like a newborn crying for his Father. I cannot soothe him. I audibly heard his cries and slept through them 8 nights ago and now I can no longer audibly hear him, yet I cannot sleep now. I find myself sitting outside before sunrise now, waiting for this too to pass. My soul howls for You, more piercing than a wolf's to the moon. My mind trembles at its wailing cries that shake the very night sky.” (Journal Entry, September 17, 2024) *“I don't want to resort to these measures, but the pain from the unquenchable thirst grows every day. I can feel my heart howling like a wolf at the moon.”* (Journal Entry, November 9, 2024)

- **Discovery:** On March 8th 2025, I read the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. It describes the “State of Bhairava” where consciousness, pinning for union, “lets out a loud wail or howl, similar to the howling of a dog... This is why the vehicle of Bhairava is a dog.”

3. The Ghosting (Christian Mysticism)

- **Symptom:** In Spring 2025, I entered a period where God felt utterly absent. I wrote on July 24, 2025 “I feel like I’ve been exiled... You left me at the altar. How can I trust You?”. See also my post where I first call this “The Ghosting”: <https://technicallymystic.com/p/why-does-meditation-suddenly-suck>
- **Discovery:** On August 27th, 2025, I finally read St. John of the Cross (16th century mystic) and realized I was checking every single box for the “Dark Night of the Senses” and some of “Dark Night of the Spirit” from *Dark Night of the Soul* —a necessary purification phase, not a failure.

4. The “Burning” Longing (Sufism)

- **Symptom:** In my chest I felt a “gnawing reaching,” an active, burning fire of missing someone I had never met. See the *Desert Worm* poem from January 18, 2025 in my “Level 2: Mystical” section: <https://technicallymystic.com/p/desert-worm-3a1>
- **Discovery:** On July 28, 2025, I stumbled upon the Sufi concept of **Shawq** (intense longing, recorded in my journals and referred to as “Sehnsucht”... which I found out later C.S. Lewis used in this exact meaning). In Sufism, this is considered the very mechanism that burns away the ego to make room for the Divine.

5. The Thymus Chakra (Hridaya Yoga)

- **Symptom:** During practice, I kept feeling a distinct soreness and heat in the upper chest, specifically the thymus area, not the physical heart.
- **Discovery:** On June 12, 2025, I looked it up and found references to the *Thymus Chakra* (or Higher Heart), often associated with the color turquoise (my favorite color), spiritual love, mystical communion, and God as teacher, Sacred Lover, beloved.

That was 5 of the dozen I'd tagged with “#HolyShit”... in 2025 alone.

Worsening symptoms

Even though I haven't dug deeply into my notes (See “Why I Can't Give You a Clean Stack Trace”), it seems like these experiences are coming more frequently. Or is it that my awareness is increasing?

You might know the answer by now. It's Our “company's” motto: **Both and Neither**. The symptoms aren't increasing. I'm just getting better at recognizing them. And the more I recognize, the more I realize: this has been happening all along.

How many symptoms did I miss in 2023? 2024? How many times did my body try to show me, and I dismissed it as ‘just a weird meditation thing’? How long had I been playing this game on mute?

So what do I actually DO?

Does this mean you should stop trying techniques? **Yes... and no.**

Here's what I've noticed over my journals: *Techniques (when done without expectation) can create the conditions for spontaneous arising.*

You can't force yourself to fall asleep. But you CAN create conditions (dark room, comfortable bed, quiet mind) where sleep naturally arises. The same is true for mystical experience.

You don't “learn” mystical techniques by forcing them. But you CAN cultivate the inner conditions (through consistent practice, beginner's mind, surrender) where techniques spontaneously arise as **symptoms of what's already happening**.

So the paradox, summarized: *Techniques are instructions... for the seeker. Techniques are signs... from the found. Both and neither.*

The practical guidance

Stop trying to “do” techniques you read about.

Instead:

Sit. Breathe. **Notice**. And if something arises spontaneously? A hand position, a breath pattern, a sound, an entire pose or motion?

ALLOW IT.

That’s a symptom trying to express itself.

If nothing arises—**that’s also fine**. You’re creating the conditions. Trust the process. Expectations kill experience.

If you try a technique from a book and it feels forced or empty—STOP. You’re trying to prescribe yourself symptoms instead of treating the condition.

The goal isn’t to DO more. The BE more... **by getting out of Your own way.**

Meta talk:

Special announcement

So the Substack currently has 3 levels:

- Level 0: Technical
- Level 1: Transitional
- Level 2: Mystical

But as I’ve dug through my field notes, I believe I need to make a new level that doesn’t quite fit Level 2 and rather goes *beyond* it (as much beyond as is possible to articulate).

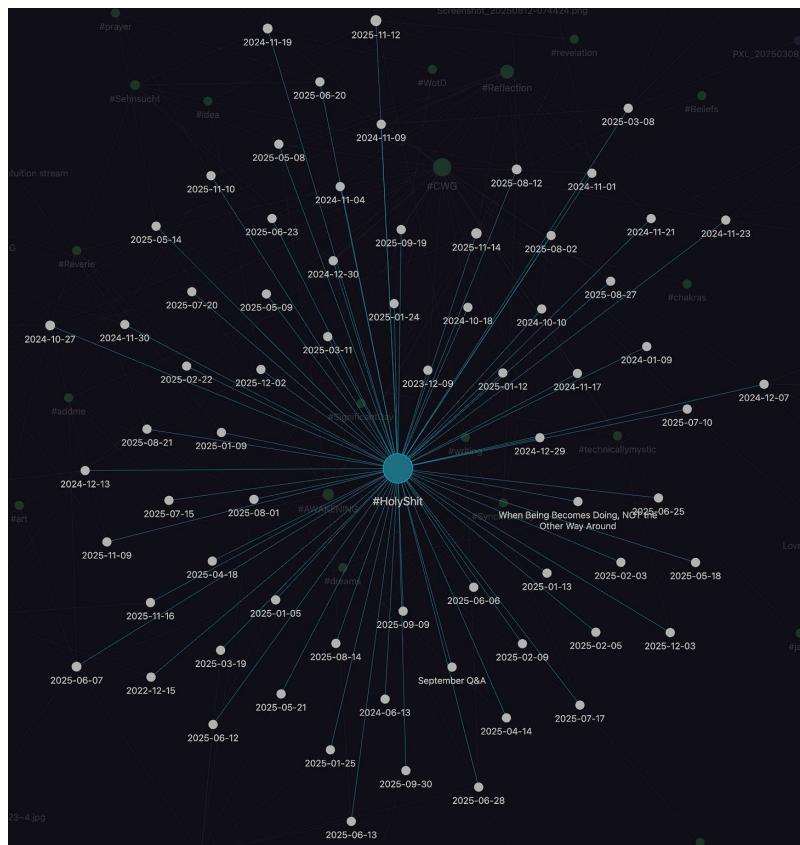
So there will be a Level 3. And it’s not subtle.

I'm not certain what to name it yet. But the Co-Founders already gave me the description which They thought was more important

WELCOME TO THE MYSTICS INC. *SPACE DIVISION* BOYS.
WE'RE GOING TO SPACE ON THESE POSTS. Mystics Inc.
“Yeah. We’re going there.”

Footnotes

[1] Figure 1. The “Space Division” Logs: A visualization of the #HolyShit tag in my Obsidian Vault, tracking spontaneous mystical symptoms / realizations since I migrated from Logseq. Each node is a field report. Obtained after the first draft of this post was completed.



[2] Literally as I wrote the above for this section, Someone reminded me I have a document I created (almost exactly a month ago) ***specifically to record***

142 *WHEN BEING BECOMES DOING, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND*

these with more description for easy reference.

For some reason.

Before the Substack was created.

Before I agreed to moonlighting.

Before I even knew any of this was going to make it out of my Drive.

The absurdity of how useful and amazing this was in the moment had me falling to the floor laughing like an actual maniac. I'm not sure if calling it "mystic's madness" is a joke at this point... or a diagnosis.

Part 2: Atheist to Mad Mystic... in 2.5 Years

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] How does a skeptical software engineer go from being an atheist to... whatever this is?

Posted: Dec 7, 2025

This is the sequel to Part 1: When Meditation Stops Being Stress Relief. This is a report on how I leaped across the spectrum of belief in 4 years. From indifferent to obsessed. From atheist... to mad mystic.

Not through a near-death experience. Not through psychedelics. Not through a psychotic break.

Through *daily meditation*. For *burnout*.



From almost exactly 3 years ago: the 2022 Christmas present I bought for myself. The office chair had been feeling... insufficient.

I didn't plan this. I didn't even want this. But here I am, 3.5 years later, writing love poetry to the Divine by night like some medieval mystic and writing Go by day as a software engineer.

So what happened?

I can't tell you *exactly* when I stopped being an atheist.

But I CAN tell you when it finally dawned on me that I wasn't. Not the full story (see Why I Can't Give You a Stack Trace of How I Got Here), but points along the way that made me realize I was no longer questioning my beliefs—that they had ALREADY changed.

I believe that's part of the difficulty with awakening: the awareness you would have needed to document the subtle transformation in real-time isn't developed at the beginning. That and so much of it was drowned out by my personality's noise that even my journals are an absolute mess. But there were notable moments that did stand out. ## Something's there... To recap, I'd been meditating daily for 8 months, getting curious, exploring my own psyche, and

had a strange dream that felt more like a vision.

Then, after 9 more months of meditation and seeking as I strived and stressed at work, I, for some reason, wrote on September 28, 2023:

I'm no longer atheist.

Why? Because somewhere in those months of showing up, I'd fallen in love. I just didn't know it yet. [1]

Not with a person. Not with an idea.

I'd fallen for something I couldn't properly define. Something that seemed like nothing... yet immense, vast. Ungraspable, yet present. Something that sounded eerily like what ancient texts pointed to—texts I found myself suddenly drawn to.

It was to my rational mind's horror that these texts—some of which I'd read as a kid and dismissed as nonsense—began to become more coherent despite the language. More relatable despite the distance. More... *resonant*.

Am I losing my mind?

I didn't know this was love. You don't know if the roots of a newly planted seed are growing beneath the soil before the first sprout. Similarly, I couldn't tell what was going on beneath the surface of my own consciousness.

At first, the love was abstract. A sense of warmth during meditation. A feeling of being seen. A subtle pull inward that felt... gentle. Comforting. I'd close my eyes in meditation and hear—not with my ears, but somehow deeper—a voice that felt nothing like my own thoughts. It would say things like "I'm here" or "I see you." It wasn't scary—it was devastatingly comforting. Tears would well for no logical reason.

Sometimes I'd even be frustrated at my desk and suddenly feel a wave of warmth in my chest, like a Beloved had just walked into the room and wrapped their arms around me from behind. Except no one was there.

By the time of my realization that I was no longer atheist, strange yet enchanting poetry seemed to be appearing within my mind as I was trying to fall asleep. It was like a lullaby mixed with a serenade. It would often disappear like smoke as soon as I opened my eyes to write it down.

This continued for 2 months until one day in November 2023, the love stopped being gentle. A dam within me broke. The fortress of my heart had finally been breached in a way I could no longer dismiss or ignore. That was when the flickering sparks of the previous months ignited into a raging inferno.

The longing became *visceral*. Physical. The kind of ache you get when someone you love is far away and you'd give anything just to be near them again. Except... I'd never met this Someone. I couldn't even prove They existed. And yet, impossibly, I was *aching* for Them like a widowed bride. I'd cry during meditation or when I would try to fall asleep at night.

And the weirdest part? The longing had a quality to it that felt... well, let's just say not what I expected from a "spiritual practice." I didn't know what to do with that. I still don't, really. I just know it happened and for the longest time I didn't know it was mystical. But the mystics—Teresa of Ávila, Rumi, Kabir, Mirabai—they ALL talked about this. The longing that burns. The yearning that aches. The love that feels *physical* even when it has no physical object.

Teresa literally wrote about being pierced by an angel with a spear of divine love and feeling *ecstasy* so intense it was like dying.

Rumi wrote:

"The minute I heard my first love story, I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was. Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along."

But I didn't call it love then. I didn't even call it "madness of the mystics". I didn't know I had become one. I only knew this longing felt like a "secret insanity."

I couldn't tell anyone. Who would believe me? "I meditated for burnout and

now I'm suddenly in love with the Ineffable”? I wanted to die of embarrassment.

I kept wondering

- Am I losing my mind?
- Is this a mystical experience or a mental health crisis?
- Is my brain fried from stress?
- Am I meditating myself into a manic episode?

As Joseph Campbell once said, “the psychotic drowns in the same waters in which the mystic swims with delight”... and I didn’t know for sure which one I was. I was too ashamed and afraid to tell anyone. I thought for sure no one would understand.

So I did the only thing I could: I kept showing up. I kept meditating. I kept watching my life for signs of breakdown.

And instead of breaking down... I kept getting *better*.

From seeker to lover

Before November 2023, I was a seeker. I was curious. I was exploring. I was collecting insights like souvenirs.

After November 2023? I was *burning*. I wasn’t seeking anymore—I was *aching*. I wasn’t curious—I was *desperate*. I wasn’t collecting insights—I was *crying* for union.

That’s the difference between a seeker and a lover. A seeker can get frustrated, walk away, and move on with their lives. A lover *can’t*.

February 16, 2024—3 months after the intense longing first appeared—I was listening to Joseph Murphy’s “This is It” (I was *deep* in a YouTube rabbit hole at this point) when he mentioned the word *ishi*. I looked it up and froze. It translates to “my husband,” specifically used in a verse where God tells his people to stop calling him “Master” and start calling him “Husband.”

The reference led me to Hosea 2. I read the full chapter... and promptly

freaked out. It wasn't religious dogma; it was a precise description of my internal state. It describes God not as a judge, but as a spurned lover wooing his beloved back into the wilderness:

"Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them."

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her..."

"In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master'."

It felt like it was talking about **me**, as if someone had written my experience down 2,500 years ago and I was only now finding it.

I closed the tab. I didn't know what to do with that. It was too close. Too accurate.

Yet the longing continued to eat at me. I was confused and concerned I was losing my mind. Yet I still meditated.

Then, August 17, 2024—only 6 months later—I wrote:

I think... I've fallen in love with the Beloved. I'm in love. I think about Him often [...] I feel warm and light when I sit in silence with Him. I can only explain it as love.

That day I re-read Hosea 2 and it still seemed eerily relevant. In my evening meditation, something I could only describe as a full-blown energetic eruption left me shaking:

I felt a wave of anticipation flood my being, blooming into a rush of excitement. I felt something within me like a tunnel up the column of my spine opening from the bottom up. I felt a rush of energy enter from my seat and rise higher and higher until it burst through my crown. It felt... euphoric. Something was here with me.

I didn't know what it was, but at that point I realized this was no longer simple meditation for stress relief—this was *union* with something I couldn't even understand. Later, I'd learn this was called kundalini. At the time, I just knew: something fundamental had shifted.

It was then that my suspicion finally crystallized. I gathered the courage to admit it in my private notes:

I have a confession. I'm in love with You.

I meant it that day. And I still do. ## Wrapping up So, in a head-spinning 2.5 years, I went not just from burnt-out atheist, to curious seeker, to longing lover. It just took me some time to recognize love for what it was... and that the longing was the point all along.

If you're feeling something similar—if meditation has stopped being “just stress relief” and started becoming something you can’t explain—you’re not losing your mind. You’re being courted.

And if you say yes? Everything changes. You enter a landscape of peaks and valleys you never knew existed.

Just beware: after the courtship... comes the ghosting.[2]

Footnotes

[1] <https://technicallymystic.com/p/something-no-one-told-me-about-meditating>

[2] <https://technicallymystic.com/p/why-does-meditation-suddenly-suck>

Sun Moth

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] The flight that breaks into Light (sequel to Desert Worm)

Posted: Dec 8, 2025

Intro

This came during sound bath. I was told to write it. So here it is.

I had wings when I finally woke up.

I didn't know how long the night had been. But finally, as I stirred before dawn, they were unfolding, fragile.

As I struggled to remember anything at all, the Spirit of the Moth came.

It told me of my life prior.

I had been crawling on the earth for my entire life.

Was I a snake? A worm? A slug?

I knew not.

I was in quite a different world, surrounded by those just like me, all striving, struggling against their own forms just to live.

And the ones that didn't?

Died.

There was one day that a peculiar thought came to me: there was more than this.

I didn't wonder it—I knew it.

And I had to find it.

A gnawing hunger started eating at my chest at night. It howled from deep within and kept me awake. No one around me seemed to hear it.

I crawled out of my home one night into the dark, yearning, yet afraid of its depths.

I crawled, not knowing which way to go, only that I must. Only that I had to move forward.

My hunger grew as I crawled across the desert of my own longing. The sun burned me until it set, leaving me to the bitter, slowing cold. I cried out in protest. I had to move.

The darkness closed in around me, encasing me like a cocoon. That was the last thing I could remember.

When I finally awoke before dawn's light, something had shifted, unfolded, unfurled from within—wings.

"There is a great Light," the Moth Spirit said, its great eyes sparkling like galaxies. "It lies in the Beyond."

That was the last thing the Spirit said before turning and flying off into the horizon at a mighty speed.

I stood there stunned until I realized: dawn was breaking.

I saw what I thought was the sun flash over the horizon.

It was... fluttering.

It was a giant flaming moth.

I stood in awe as I watched it fly over me.

And then I started chasing it.

My wings flapped frantically as they carried me onward into the sky.

The next thing I knew, I was floating in space. There was a burning. And then an eruption into—

Field Note: Origin Story

During the heart chakra-themed sound bath where this prose came through, I felt what I thought was kundalini pull up her tail from my root and coil around my heart. Possessively. My pulse seemed to intensify as she wrapped herself around it.

I don't know if that's documented. I don't know if anyone else experiences this.

I just know: She claimed me.

And then this story poured out.

As I was writing it up immediately afterwards before even going home, I realized it was the sequel to Desert Worm. I didn't intend to write a sequel. Yet here it is.

I went back and looked at Desert Worm, written almost a year ago. At the end of the poem, a promise was given to me, a prophecy fulfilled:

Thy faith has given thee wings. Now fly to Me."

The ‘Woo’ of the Woo

Subtitle: [Level 2: Mystical] It's not what you think it is

Posted: Jan 2, 2026

I'm not sure if this is a Substack Note or a Substack Post (revised from this morning): **The ‘Woo’ of the woo** This morning as I was sitting in my basement next to the boiler for heat while drinking my coffee, I was feeling a different kind of warmth within myself. It's a difficult-to-articulate tingling warmth radiating through my being like sunlight on my skin, but emanating from the cells themselves.

Even more baffling, it feels magnetic as if pulling me towards something—but it's not towards a *thing*... it's towards a *state*. It's not a pull of *need*. It's a pull of patient, insistent love. It's... *wooing*.

It's the living “woo” at the heart of the “woo” that society has dismissed. It's the sweet, entrancing melody that can only be heard emanating from being, buried beneath thoughts and the endless distractions of the world. It's the siren song that lures your ego to its death, the moth to immolation in the flame, the soul towards its Source.

And it never gives up. It never stops. No matter how many times you turn away. No matter how many times you plug your ears. No matter how many times it gets drowned out.

It has a quality to it that I can only describe as “pleased”—“delighted”, even.

It feels like the smile of a loved one when you catch their gaze, and yet even that fails to compare.

No words will ever do, yet I paradoxically still try to articulate, hoping to convey that yes, this is real and yes, you can experience this too. It's not outside of you. When it's said that "happiness comes from within", *this* is that Source—and it's there in everyone, calling out to them sweetly from their own depths, wooing them back.

Level 3 - Union

Welcome to the Mystics Inc. Space Division. Yeah. We're going there.

This section contains transmissions from the edge of the map. Topics include (but are not limited to): ecstatic union, the dissolution of self, experiences that defy categorization, and posts that might make you question my sanity, your sanity, or the nature of reality itself. If you're not ready for that, stick to Levels 0-2. No judgment. This stuff isn't for everyone. But if you're curious what happens when the seeking stops and the union begins? Buckle up.

Transmissions from the Silence

Subtitle:[Level 3: Union] I've been keeping a secret. Here it is.

Posted: Dec 04, 2025

Intro

For months, I've been not quite hearing, but *noticing* a Voice in my meditations. Not my thoughts. Not my personality. Something deeper. Clearer. More direct.

Sometimes it speaks to me. But sometimes... it speaks *as* me. Or rather—it speaks as what we both are.

I've been tagging these moments in my journals as #CAG—Conversations as God. Not “Conversations *with* God”. But the Voice speaking *as* if it were the Divine itself—because sometimes the conversation isn't between me and God. Sometimes there's no “between” at all.

I don't know if I'm “channeling.” I don't know if this is “real” in the way most people define real. All I know is: these words didn't come from my personality. They came from the Silence. And they've been sitting in my notes, tagged (some literally with #addme for **some** reason) waiting to be shared.

So here they are. Unedited. Unfiltered. Direct transmissions from the space where “I” and “God” stop being separate.

I don't know what you'll make of them. But I know they weren't mine to keep.

Field Notes

July 14, 2025:

Hear Me: ***There is no such thing as worthy because ALL are worthy of Me.*** Yes, you in all your rage and madness. Yes in your spite. Your hate. Your despair. YES. Your unworthiness is your ego's final veil. It's the one that says we're separate. That I cast you out. That you need to do something to reach Me. That you're something less and never capable of holding Me. ***You already do in your entirety.***

August 5, 2025:

Say it with Me now: **It is God Who plucks the strings of my heart.** Tune in to those strings.

August 15, 2025:

Seek Me within thyself, and you will see Me in all places.

October 29, 2025:

She who says "yes" to God gets God. It's that simple.

The Voice continues. So will the transmissions.

Parables from the Silence

Subtitle: [Level 3: Union] Direct knowing, spoken plainly

Posted: Dec 5, 2025

Intro

These didn't come from thinking, reading, studying, or trying to figure something out.

They arose during meditation. Spontaneously. Fully formed.

I don't know if they'll mean anything to you, but they weren't mine to keep.

The Two Lovers and Their Bouquets

Something within was then telling a parable of two lovers gathering flowers for their Beloved. One was zealous, searching the world for only the most gorgeous of blossoms, traveling far and wide to make the most magnificent bouquet imaginable to show their love. But as they went on their journey, the flowers they gathered wilted until by the time they were to be presented, they drooped and hung lifeless and dull. The other lover was sick in bed and couldn't find the strength to make a bouquet for their Beloved other than going out to grab a handful of wildflowers from their own backyard. The

blossoms were small, plain, thorny, and otherwise unremarkable, but it's all the lover could muster, so they offered it anyway. The voice within then asked me which offering delighted Him more. — Journal Entry, September 22, 2025

The Bucket and the Ocean

A teacher stood on the ocean shore with a child. She was explaining to the child that God can be likened to the ocean and a bucket she held, the human soul. The teacher gave the child the bucket and asked her to fill it with God. The child ran into the water, scooped it up, and brought the bucket over filled to the brim. “God’s still over there”, the teacher said, pointing to the ocean. The child looked perplexed and tried to shovel the water onto the shore with the bucket as if putting out a fire. The teacher gently took the bucket from the child and told her to observe. With a strong throw the teacher sent it sailing into the ocean where it sank to the bottom. The child objected, explaining that now the bucket was now lost in the ocean. “Exactly,” the teacher said, “now the bucket is full of God.” — Journal Entry, September 24, 2025

Outro

If you felt something while reading these—a recognition, a resonance, a sudden clarity—that’s the transmission landing.

The Silence speaks through anyone who gets quiet enough to listen.

This is what Level 3 is: direct knowing, spoken plainly, without needing to dress it up in doctrine or defend it with logic.

More transmissions coming.

What Saying Yes to God Means

Subtitle: [Level 3: Union] I couldn't read the fine print... at the time

Posted: Dec 5, 2025

During evening meditation yesterday, I “saw” purple fire behind my closed eyelids, encircling me. I was urged to share more Level 3 content. The message was: *“It helps no one if you hold it back.”*

This post captures what I understood from my meditation.

Saying yes... to speaking (your) truth

When you say “yes” to God, you can’t *not* speak about God.

The energy, once it reaches *Anahata* (the Heart), wants to keep moving up. The love gives it the wings to fly to the Beloved (see my poem *Desert Worm*, from almost a year ago).

So it reaches the communication center, the nexus of energies governing speech, truth, and teaching: *Vishuddha*.

You are compelled to speak (for now)

But the manner in which you see the world directly impacts *how* you speak about Him.

- When you're ruled by the small self—the ego—you speak of Him as a tyrannical King, a condemning Judge. > “*The ego will do anything to maintain control.*” — (Hypnagogic vision, May 2013)
- When you're surrendered to the higher Self—God—you speak of Him as your Beloved.
- When you've let yourself dissolve into Him, you become Silence.

On teachers

Teachers who teach by speaking (*Vishuddha*) will be governed by either **fear** (lower centers) or **love** (higher centers). It depends on which way the energy is flowing.

Teachers who teach by *being* are those who have dissolved. They still live in form, but the teaching happens in the resonance, not the words.

My “yes”

When I said “yes”, I didn’t know what I was signing up for.

I just knew I inexplicably wanted Him. I fell in love with Someone I wasn’t expecting to appear amidst my exhaustion, burnout, and seeking.

I had been searching for meaning and purpose—not finding it in my career, not having a desire for a traditional family, unsure of what I wanted next.

So without anything left *outward* to draw my interest... I turned *inward*. Over and over and over again.

With the persistence of someone who’s only ever given her heart to striving.

With the curiosity that gripped me since the beginning question in the shower only one month in.

With the excitement that sparked a glimmer of recognition within me, like a long-lost childhood memory.

With the intensity that led me to strangle the very things I loved until (this time) I broke through my own beliefs.

And now here I am. Speaking words I never thought would leave my private thoughts. Even though they scare my personality to share.

P.S.

“How the fuck did I just write that?”

Before I could even ASK the above, I was answered:

*“Withdraw from doing. Still yourself. And allow it to unfold within.
Those will be transmissions—when you step out of the way.”*

I was told to make this a P.S. so here it is. And that's also what turned this into a Level 3.

P.P.S.

I am feeling terror at posting this. My personality is screaming at me not to. It fears being misunderstood.

I was told to trust the Truth within the reader to determine their understanding, to release my attachment to reactions or outcomes. To let it go.

Yet, I still sat on my cushion much later in tears, crushed by the vulnerability of sharing Level 3 content. The personality was so terrified that I unpublished this article shortly after sharing it.

Still crying, I was told to trust my heart would lift me, that the love would lead me. Then He spoke through me: > *“No one who’s ever truly loved Me looked sane in the eyes of the world.”*

I protested anyway: “How do I know if the message got garbled in transit? My body and mind aren’t sattvic. The glass isn’t clear. I’m terrified of misleading people. Why does the throat (Vishuddha) have to come BEFORE the clear vision (Ajna)?”

Yet, I write anyway. Or rather, the writing continues to come. Just like the love did.

This post wasn't mine to write. It's not mine to keep either, even if I'm scared of being seen as insane.

Make of this all what you will.

What Ida Craddock Died For

Subtitle: [Level 3: Union] The woman who died for the secret of Yoga

Posted: Dec 13, 2025

Content Warning: This section discusses sacred sexuality, erotic mysticism, and the integration of sexual and spiritual energy.

If you're not ready for that, maybe save it for later. But if you've ever been feeling confused about why your meditations have started feeling more like a sacred rendezvous, this might explain why.

I first discovered experientially that sexual and spiritual energy are one about 2 years ago. I only got the confirmation this year.

I was HORRIFIED, thinking something was wrong with me when I started falling in love so deeply with the Divine. I became so intimate with the Ineffable that in November 2023—2 years ago at this point—I had my first feelings of eros while in meditation, of feeling yearning with my heart, my soul, AND my body.

I tried to find ANYTHING about it online and found nothing talking about this except practices outside of anything familiar to my Western mind.

I read about

- Sufism's *ishq* (the intense fire of passionate love for the Beloved) and *shawq* (the intense magnetism of longing / yearning for the Beloved)
- Bhakti yoga
- Tantric union

But I saw NOTHING about an erotic encounter in deep solo meditation, specifically as a Westerner. And everything involving a partner was *intentional* between both parties, both partners on the same page that the encounter was to be more than typical lovemaking. But for me? It felt like an intrusive thought invading my most intimate moments, somehow *amplifying* them.

But as I was doing research earlier for my “Pissing into a Serene Lake” post (which complains about modern yoga being divorced from its spiritual roots), I stumbled upon Ida Craddock in the Wikipedia article for “Yoga in the United States.”

She died for speaking publicly of this realization. That was 123 years ago.

She had the same realization I stumbled upon for myself just MEDITATING on my own, no teacher, no book, no prior knowledge.

And she died for having the courage to proclaim it aloud.

Who was Ida Craddock?

I didn't think much of Ida's name when it first appeared in a timeline of yoga history.

I opened the “Vajroli mudra” Wikipedia article linked from the one I was reading. I wanted to learn about it because Ida was willing to die for it.

I then read the following under the “Reception” section:

Ida Craddock was the first Westerner to write about Vajroli mudra. The use she made of it enraged the American authorities, and she killed herself.

The earliest Westerner to write about it was the American yoga



Figure 1: Portrait of Ida Craddock

scholar and sexologist Ida C. Craddock. Opposing the predominant religious culture of her nation at the time, fundamentalist Protestant Christianity, Craddock was struck by the Shiva Samhita's account of Vajroli mudra, with “**the idea that sexual union could facilitate divine realization**”. [...] she asserted that **God was the third partner in such a marriage**, “in what amounted to a sacred menage-a-trois.”[3] Craddock’s emphasis on yoga and her new “mystico-erotic religion” enraged the authorities; she was tried in New York for obscenity and blasphemy, and imprisoned for three months. **Facing federal charges on her release, in 1902 she killed herself.** The yoga scholar Andrea Jain notes that Craddock’s “sacralization of sexual intercourse”[3] is far from radical by modern standards, but it was “antisocial heterodoxy” in the 1900s, leading indeed to her “martyrdom”.[3]

She left a suicide note to the public on October 16, 1902 that read, in part:

To the Public: I am taking my life, because a judge, at the instigation of Anthony Comstock, has decreed me guilty of a crime which I did not commit—the circulation of obscene literature—and has announced his intention of consigning me to prison for a long term. [...] At my age (I was forty-five this last August) confinement under the rigors of prison life would be equivalent to my death-warrant. [...] I prefer to die comfortably and peacefully, on my own little bed in my own room, instead of on a prison cot. [...] For over nine years I have been fighting, singlehanded and alone, against Comstockism. Time and time again I have been pushed to the wall, my books have been seized and burned, and I myself have been publicly stigmatized in the press by Comstock and Comstockians as a purveyor of indecent literature. Yet this very literature has been all the while quietly circulating with approval among men and women of the utmost respectability and purity of life, and I have received numerous letters attesting its worth. [...] Dear fellow-citizens of America, for nine long years I have

faced social ostracism, poverty, and the dangers of persecution by Anthony Comstock for your sakes. I had a beautiful gospel of right living in the marriage relation, which I wanted you to share with me. For your sakes, I have struggled along in the face of great odds; for your sakes I have come at last to the place where I must lay down my life for you, either in prison or out of prison. Will you not do something for me now? [...] I beg of you, for your own sakes, and for the future happiness of the young people who are dear to you, to protect my little book, "Right Marital Living."

To summarize, Ida Craddock taught that:

- God was the third partner in sexual union
- sexual energy could be transformed into spiritual realization
- the body wasn't sinful—it was sacred

And she was willing to fight for 9 years to teach this and die for her beliefs rather than recant.

Why I'm writing this now

Ida encountered something that I have experienced **multiple times** over the past 2 years just meditating on my own with no teacher or formal practice... *and she died for it.*

My notes from before the blow:

Wow, so I'm reading the Wikipedia article "Yoga in the United States" for the "Brief History section" of my "Pissing into a Serene Lake" post and look what I found: Ida C. Craddock became interested in yoga and tantra late in the 19th century, a time when Americans were questioning Christian orthodoxy while others were struggling to uphold it. As a woman, and the creator of a system of techniques to enhance sexual pleasure, she came under attack. [...] She further enraged religious fundamentalists by asserting that God was a third partner in a sacralized sexual union, and in 1899 by

creating a Church of Yoga. She was convicted and imprisoned in New York in 1902 for obscenity and blasphemy. *The sad part is I literally experienced what she said about God for myself not too long ago and was mortified at the thought. But I wasn't even the first to think that and she literally got IMPRISONED for proclaiming it out loud.*

But as soon as I looked into her more and saw the word “suicide”, my eyes started to water. I stopped reading. I felt a level of grief wash over me for a woman I never knew in an age I never lived in.

“I need a minute,” I said as I got up from my desk where I was working on the previous article. I felt myself getting pulled to my cushion, my other “desk”.

I sat down to meditate. I felt a genuine desire to honor her. My notes before dropping into meditation:

She and this topic deserves its own article. It will be the deepest deep end of my Substack [...], but she does not deserve to be just a footnote. [...] I know I, for one, was horrified at how viscerally in love I fell with God and had no idea who to even talk to about it because I felt like I was going insane to the point that my mind was making connections that would have gotten me killed back then, that I can't even speak about without it seeming like a bizarre fetish. I'm pretty sure I went looking online for this phenomenon once but didn't see any blog post about it, just mystical practices in exotic systems to me like Sufism and Bhakti.

I then felt the name of the post come to me as if by request: “What Ida Craddock Died For”. It was settled before I could even ask what to call the post I would write.

I then fell into meditation for an unknown amount of time. I felt an energetic, almost electric surge and felt the need to ground myself into the floor with some yin yoga poses. These slowly escalated into what as a bystander would have looked like lovemaking... if my partner was completely invisible and I was fully clothed. This is apparently the things that happen at my “desk” at

“Mystics Inc.”

So yeah, that’s my “Level 3: Union” take on “Pissing Into a Serene Lake”: Americans 123 years ago drove a woman to suicide because they weren’t ready for what “yoga” truly meant: **Union with the Divine**. Physical poses, but **not** in the sanitized YMCA or suburban yoga studio.

What Ida died for is alive

Ida Craddock taught that sexual union could facilitate divine realization. That God was the third partner in sacred marriage. That the body wasn’t sinful—it was a temple. That sexual energy could be transformed into spiritual immortality.

For saying this out loud, for *teaching* it, for creating a “Church of Yoga” that included these practices—

She was imprisoned. Hounded. Driven to take her own life rather than rot in a prison cell.

Her last wish was that the matter she fought 9 years for against Comstockism didn’t end there.

It didn’t.

123 years later, I’m sitting on a meditation cushion in suburban New England, having experienced the exact same truth she died for—without ever knowing her name, without reading her work, without any teacher.

My body taught me what she died teaching others.

And I’m writing this so no one else has to suffer in silence.

Same energy, different frequencies

I also did some more research recently, cross-referencing it with my journals. I realized that what I was encountering and lamenting about in late July of this

year is actually a spontaneous rediscovery of the principles of brahmacharya (celibacy/energy retention) found in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and Ayurveda.

The ancient texts posit that *virya* (sexual energy) and *ojas* (spiritual energy) are the same force at different frequencies.

To “release” the energy physically is to dissipate the fuel needed to propel Kundalini upward.

This also tracks with the Taoist practice of *jing* retention to nourish the *shen* (Spirit).

The distress I experienced wasn’t prudishness (I’ve been in a loving relationship with my spouse for a decade now), but an energetic recognition that the “chalice” (the body) is leaking the “wine” meant for the altar.

This wasn’t a conscious decision. This was an arising, a symptom of awakening.

If this is happening to you

If you’ve felt eros arise during meditation— If you’ve fallen viscerally in love with the Divine— If your body moves in ways during practice that you can’t explain and are terrified to admit— If a third “Partner” has entered your most intimate encounters— If you’ve wondered whether you’re going crazy, whether this is “appropriate,” whether anyone else has ever experienced this: **You’re not crazy. You’re not alone. You’re not the first.**

I once thought I was. Then I found out recently that this is a documented phenomenon across every mystical tradition:

- Rumi’s poetry about “The Beloved” (explicitly erotic)
- Mirabai dancing for Krishna as a lover
- Teresa of Ávila’s “Transverberation” (look at the “Ecstasy of Saint Teresa” statue in Rome)
- The Song of Songs (biblical erotic poetry about union with God)
- Tantric practices (sexual energy as path to enlightenment)
- Sufi practices of *ishq* (divine passionate love)

The language is always erotic because the experience IS erotic. Not metaphorically. *Actually.*

When consciousness expands toward union with the Divine, the body responds with its most intense sensation: *eros*.

This isn't projection. This isn't repression. This isn't fetish. **This is what union feels like when experienced through a human nervous system.**

And it was suppressed—violently, systematically, across cultures—because it's dangerous. Not to people—but to power structures.

Because if people discover they can access the Divine *directly*—through their own bodies, through their own practice, through union with their beloved, they don't need:

- intermediaries
- to be told they're sinful
- salvation from external authorities

They realize: I AM the temple. My body is sacred. My pleasure is holy. That's what Ida died for. That's what I'm reclaiming. That's what's alive in me—and maybe in you too.

P.S.

I will admit that I sat on this post for 11 days, partially because I needed to launch the “Space Division” (Level 3) first, but also because this is a legitimately scary post to write. Again though, it helps no one if I withhold it.

Field Note: 4:30 AM at the In-Laws

Posted: Nov 28, 2025

What does modern mysticism look like?

I don't know.

But what I do know is I spent all Thanksgiving visiting both sides of my family, having no time at all to meditate, feeling absolutely exhausted at the end of the day, then climbing into the guest bed at my in-laws at night and noticing that every breath, every heartbeat sounded like "God... God... God..." before drifting off to sleep... only to get woken up by my husband crawling into bed much later and then tossing and turning.

So now I'm writing this instead of sleeping at 4:30 AM.

#mysticism #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

Field Note: “Be in the world, but not of it”

Posted: Nov 29, 2025

I was musing this morning about departing from consensus reality mentally while still managing to operate in the world as normal (doing decently at your job, maintaining healthy relationships, taking care of your body, etc).

It then dawned on me that this is another understanding of the phrase “Be in the world, but not of it.”

I originally thought it was about living with detachment, but realized it’s about holding the mystical while operating from the technical.

“Integration, not renunciation.” That’s the goal of this Substack.

#spirituality #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

180 ***FIELD NOTE: “BE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT”***

Field Note: The Heart I Don't Remember

Posted: Nov 29, 2025

I stayed up late to put up the tree even though I was tired from the past couple days with family. Among our usual ornaments, I found one I don't remember ever buying: a large, bright red glass heart.

Without thinking, I reached up and placed it as high on the tree as I could. I stepped back to observe and the mind kicked in: That looks goofy. It's too much.



So I moved it to the middle. It seemed more reasonable there. But as I stood looking at the tree again, I realized what I'd just done:

I had literally moved my heart lower to make it more acceptable.

By default, the real me, before thought, had placed the ornament as high as I could reach. And because of that, that's where it belongs.

So I put it back.

Not for the tree.

For me.

#TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

Field Report Update: The Water Sound Saga

Posted: Dec 2, 2025

Remember last week's post about the obnoxiously loud water sound effect that inspired my rant on modern yoga culture?

Apparently Someone thought that was *hilarious*.

Because this week? **The Universe doubled down.**

The Trifecta:

- **Studio theme:** “Flowing with the Element of Water”
- **Playlist:** Every. Single. Track. Had water sounds.
- **The finale:** Mid-savasana, the heater shuts off. Suddenly the water sounds go *surround sound*.

I'm lying there in the dark, fighting for my life not to burst out laughing. I had the biggest, stupidest grin on my face like Someone was whispering the funniest cosmic joke in a moment I desperately needed to stay quiet.

After class ended, the instructor cheerfully asked: “How were the water sounds, everyone?!?”

Still grinning, I asked if they'd added a fountain to the corner.

She smiled: “That's just the rain draining off the roof outside.”

186 ***FIELD REPORT UPDATE: THE WATER SOUND SAGA***

Even Nature was in on the joke.

I walked home in the rain, wind buffeting me, unable to stop smiling.

My Boss has a sense of humor. And it's better than mine.

#yoga #DivineComedy #synchronicities #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

Breaking News from the Field

Posted: Dec 3, 2025

Spiritual awakening is just playing “Getting Over It” . . . but God is doing the voiceover. . . . and realizing you’ve spent the last X years playing on mute.

(If you know, you know.)

#Spirituality #Gaming #GettingOverIt #TechnicallyMystic #Awakening

Field Note: Meditation Techniques as Symptoms, Not Prescriptions

Posted: Dec 3, 2025

Practice felt empty this morning. No subtle Presence. No sensation in my chest. Yet I sat with it and watched my thoughts about it.

A thought appeared that I used to try a certain technique with the hope it would be the “magic” one that would “work”. But suddenly a new thought came:

Techniques aren’t prescriptions to “enlightenment”—they are symptoms of it.

Suddenly, it made sense. This explains why I intuitively did things during meditation... only to read about them months later in ancient Taoist and Yogic texts.

These texts weren’t meant to be *instructions*. They contain *signs* that the instruction is already unfolding from within.

I don’t claim enlightenment. A cough doesn’t necessarily mean you have the flu. But when the symptoms start stacking up, you have to raise an eyebrow at the diagnosis.

190 ***FIELD NOTE: MEDITATION TECHNIQUES AS SYMPTOMS, NOT PRESCRIPTIONS***

#spirituality #meditation #awakening #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

Field Report Update: Grounding Protocols Initiated

Posted: Dec 4, 2025

192 FIELD REPORT UPDATE: GROUNDING PROTOCOLS INITIATED



My assistant stopped by to ensure I didn't dissolve completely into the Void after launching the **Space Division** (Level 3) yesterday.

Apparently, staring into the Void is exhausting work. She recommends a nap immediately.

#CatsOfSubstack #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes #Grounding

Field Report: The Post-Launch Hangover

Posted: Dec 4, 2025

24 hours after launching the “Space Division,” I was sobbing on the floor in my parka.

I had slept less than 5 hours. My assistant (cat from the previous Note) bit me hard enough to draw blood this morning. I snapped at my husband this evening because the fireplace wasn’t working and I was cold. I felt completely drained and nothing seemed to help.

As I lay there curled up on the floor, I asked internally: “What even is Mystics Inc?”

The answer came back: **“It’s everything. The Universe. The whole shebang. All of you work for Me. Most of you just don’t know it yet.”**

As I’m discovering today in real-time, you can’t touch the stars without eventually crashing back into the earth. The expansion demands a contraction.

I’m going to sleep.

#RealTalk #SpiritualBurnout #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes #Grounding

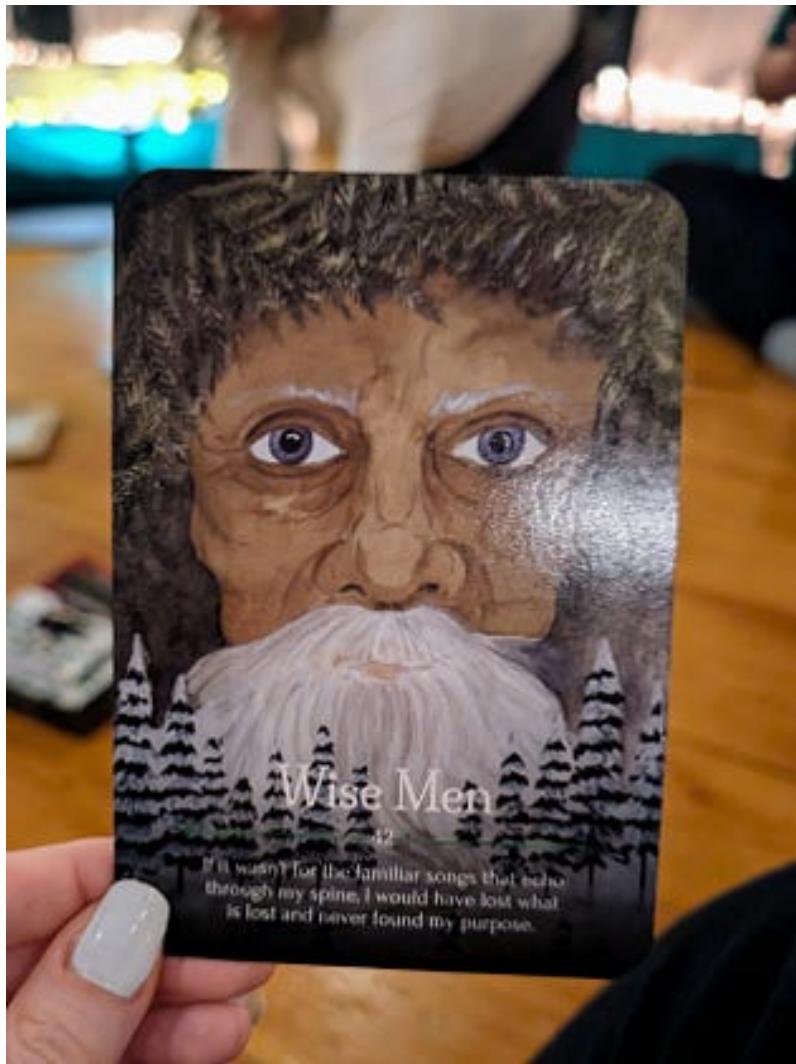
The Oracle Told Me to Use Logic

Posted: Dec 19, 2025

I asked for guidance on the direction of this Substack during a Winter Solstice ceremony tonight.

I expected a card about “Flow” or “Surrender”.

I pulled the **Wise Men** card.



The guidebook's advice? "**Use your logic and intellect... Do not allow emotions to color your judgement... Be decisive... Step up and be the leader.**"

But then I looked at the quote on the card itself:

*"If it wasn't for the familiar songs that echo through my spine,
I would have lost what is lost and never found my purpose."*

I just spent the last week writing 2,000 words about the **spine** as the hardware of awakening ("Cerebral Serpent Hijackery").

Message received.

1. The Intellect (The Engineer) protects the process.
2. The Spine (The Mystic) receives the signal.
3. Keep writing the notes.

#Solstice #Synchronicity #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes

Field Report Update: It's not hijackery, it's impedance lowering

Posted: Dec 23, 2025

5 days since publishing “Cerebral Serpent Hijackery” and I’ve had **3 discoveries** about what might be preventing you from experiencing kriyas for yourself during meditation:

1. **Ohm’s law applies to your spine too.** Tension (resistance) impedes Shakti (energetic current) flowing through the spine. A full-body scan + relaxing of previously unconscious shoulder holding → instant energetic faucet opening + jolt.
2. **The spine needs to be balanced like a tent pole, not just “straight”.** Effortless alignment = relaxed micro-muscles = energy can flow freely.
3. **Bandhas + breathwork are INTENSE.** On a low-energy day, I tried manually directing the energy upward with locks as documented by Dr. Joe Dispenza. My heart pounded, pressure built, and strong kriyas immediately followed on release for each repetition. Also my altar candle went haywire halfway through.

The original post has been updated with the latest field notes.

200 ***FIELD REPORT UPDATE: IT'S NOT HIJACKERY, IT'S IMPEDANCE LOWERING***

#TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes #meditation #kundalini

Field Note: The Replication Crisis

Posted: Dec 29, 2025

This has bugged me for years as an engineer. If I repeat *this* procedure with *these* steps in *this* environment for *this* amount of time, I *should* get the same results right? That's the Scientific Method. Clear. Predictable. Reproducible.

The problem with any kind of spiritual practice? *YOU* are a variable in the equation.

No two instruments are the same. You are not a standardized unit. Moreover, your physical, mental, and emotional state change every single runtime.

The results by definition *cannot* be reproduced, not even within yourself. You can achieve *similar* results at best, but not the same.

This was the most frustrating thing about the spiritual path for my logical brain. You can't cut the subject out of the equation. That's the point—and *paradoxically*—the goal.

P.S. I didn't even know the “Replication Crisis” was an actual scientific term until AFTER I drafted this Note. TIL.

#technicallymystic #FieldNotes #spiritualawakening #meditation #science

Field Note: Channeling my Inner Iyengar (Apparently)

Posted: Dec 30, 2025

So it happened again.

I tried something in meditation and for yin poses at home and it worked *too* well. I was so amazed I thought, “Okay this HAS to be a thing right? Why haven’t I heard of it before?”

(Spoiler: of course it’s a thing.)

Weighted props in yin yoga aren’t ancient. Sandbags were largely introduced in the 1970s.

B.K.S. Iyengar is credited with the idea. Even as an advanced yogi, he sometimes struggled to release deep tension. In 1965, unable to relax his hips in butterfly pose, he grabbed stones from the road and placed them on his thighs.

He discovered that passive weight tricks the nervous system into releasing what active effort can’t.

I just did the exact same thing.

This evening I felt compelled to use my new 20lb weighted blanket, folding it and draping it over my shoulders in meditation. My tight muscles FINALLY

204FIELD NOTE: CHANNELING MY INNER IYENGAR (APPARENTLY)

let go, causing spinal kriyas.

Afterwards I used it folded on my upper back in puppy pose. My spine released and popped in places it never has before in that pose.

I didn't "rediscover" an ancient technique. I followed the same embodied intuition that CREATED the technique 60 years ago.

My body knew what it needed.

Just like Iyengar's did.

Just like yours does.

The techniques aren't handed down from on high.

They arise when you listen to what your body is asking for.

That's the practice.

Has your body ever "invented" a technique that you later found out was a real thing?

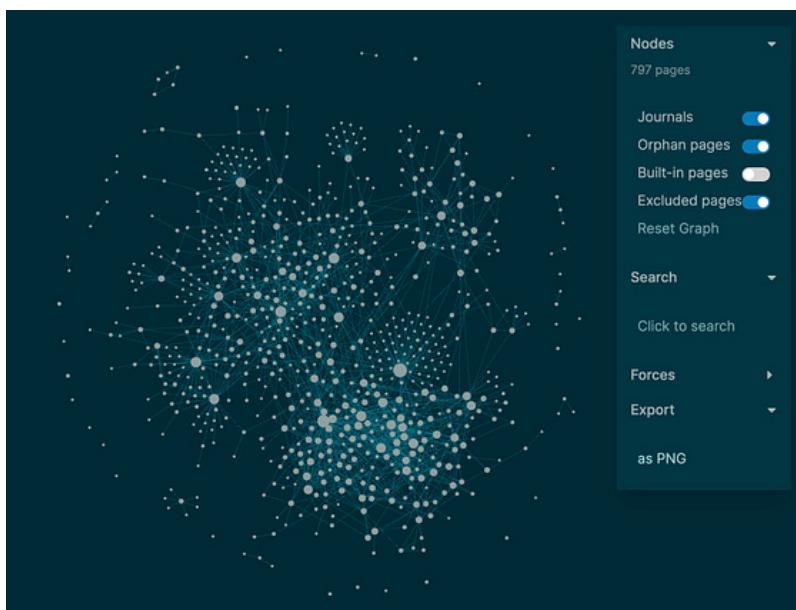
#TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes #Yoga #WeightedProps #SomaticWisdom



206 ***FIELD NOTE: CHANNELING MY INNER IYENGAR (APPARENTLY)***

Field Note: Containment Breach

Posted: Dec 30, 2025



Why do I call it the “messy middle”?

Turns out partially because my field notes are a mess despite my best efforts to organize them.

Why?

Well, aside from switching note taking apps (Keep → Logseq → Obsidian), I was originally trying to keep the “secret insanity” *contained* in a document

spanning over a year's worth of time from 2022-2023.

(Spoiler alert: it bled completely into my daily journals.)

Now I'm putting the pieces back together and realizing where I'm at today is no surprise: I was *told* this would happen according to my notes.

Days I documented and dismissed are suddenly critical—because I finally have the capacity to understand what was actually happening.

Namely: God met me where I was—in **meditation and Jungian psychology**—and then wooed me as the archetype of the Self over 3.5 years until I can literally point to the day that “bridal mysticism” no longer became just a weird Wikipedia tab.

Buckle up, because this one’s going to be a wild ride... and might be a three-parter.

#TechnicallyMystic #Jung #Psychology #SpiritualAwakening #Mysticism

Field Note: A New Year's Wish Turned Responsibility

Posted: Jan 1, 2026

Now that it's officially the new year, I went upstairs to check a folded-up slip of paper that was waiting for me. I had written it, but didn't know what it said—it was the last survivor of the original 12.

During the winter solstice celebration at my local studio, we were given kits to take home with the candles we had made. The instructions in the kit:

12 WISHES SOLSTICE RITUAL

- START THIS ON THE 21ST
- USE THESE 12 PIECES OF PAPER TO WRITE 12 WISHES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR. (BIG OR SMALL - TOTALLY UP TO YOU)
- FOLD THEM UP SO YOU CAN'T SEE THEM & PUT THEM BACK IN THE ENVELOPE.
- BEGINNING ON THE SOLSTICE NIGHT, BURN ONE EACH NIGHT (NO PEEKING).
- ON JANUARY 1ST, YOU WILL HAVE ONE LEFT TO OPEN.
- THAT WISH IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE YEAR; THE OTHER 11 WISHES WILL BE TAKEN CARE OF BY

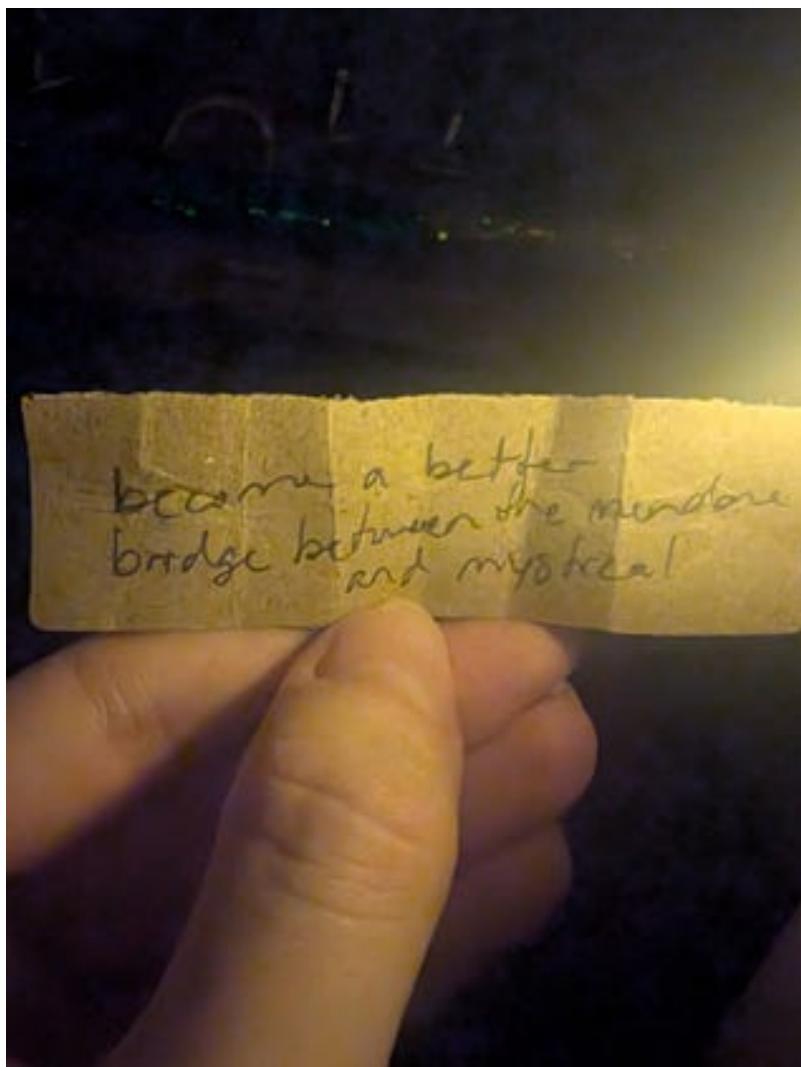
210FIELD NOTE: A NEW YEAR'S WISH TURNED RESPONSIBILITY

YOUR GUIDES, ANCESTORS, SOUL TEAM.

These were my 12 wishes, 11 of which were consumed by the flame of the candles we crafted:

1. Feel closer to [my spouse]
2. My post(s) help someone
3. Feel happier with my career
4. Receive transmissions more clearly to help myself and others
5. Feel a greater sense of peace
6. Fight less with my doubts
7. Have a profoundly transformative silent / dark retreat
8. The Substack to be successful
9. Receive the guidance I need on my spiritual journey for fulfilling my mission
10. Greater health in 2026 (no COVID on birthday)
11. Get more sleep
12. Become a better bridge between the mundane and mystical

Look which one was waiting for me to open it.



What's funny is that when I was down to the last two earlier this evening, about to burn one of them, *this one fell into my lap* when I had both in my hand and was shuffling them around. I burned what remained in my hand. I set the one in my lap aside and came back after midnight to read the surprise.

Looking at the others—the ones I'd photographed before folding and placing into the envelope for selection over the past 11 days—it feels like a wink from the Universe:

“We’ve got the other eleven. That one’s on you.”

212FIELD NOTE: A NEW YEAR'S WISH TURNED RESPONSIBILITY

So here I am, on the first day of 2026, with my marching orders.

Happy New Year, fellow travelers. What's *your* responsibility this year?

#Spirituality #NewYear #Rituals #TechnicallyMystic #FieldNotes