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## Part I

# Part I - Orientation



*Where This Is Coming From*

I didn't start here because I was curious about consciousness.

I started here because my life wouldn't fit the story it was given.

I grew up in a strict Muslim family. God, morality, gender, the future — all of it arrived pre-labelled:

- This is right.
- This is wrong.
- This is who you are.

Inside that, there wasn't much slack.

At the same time, I was attracted to men.

I didn't have theory for it. It was just a simple, persistent fact in my experience. A pull. A way my body and feelings oriented around certain people. And it clashed hard with the story I'd been handed.

If I borrow language from later in the book: the “compressions” I had around self, gender, and morality didn't match what was actually showing up in my field of experience. Story said one thing. Life said another.

You can't live like that forever without something breaking.

My first fix was to burn the story down.

If the official picture says I'm wrong, and I can't stop being what I am, maybe the picture is wrong. So I swung into atheism and “be rational, don't be fooled again.”

That move gave me:

- A way to say “no” to a structure that was crushing me.
- A sense of integrity: I'd rather be honest and damned than obedient and fake.
- A simpler world: no God, no sin, just matter, brains, and social games.

In the language I'll use later: that was a **stabilising move**. I tightened around a new “I” and a new world-model that felt more trustworthy. It worked — up to a point.

Even inside that flat, atheist frame, some things wouldn't stay flat.

Moments in nature, music, connection, intense emotion — they felt *bigger* than “atoms and social conditioning”. Not as proofs of God, just as data my map didn't really explain.

Then came LSD and mushrooms.

I'm not selling them as an answer. But they did blow holes in my maps: - The usual "me" went weirdly transparent or rearranged.

- Reality felt more fluid and constructed than I'd thought.
- There was a wide, non-personal clarity that didn't fit my current story.

They didn't hand me a new religion. They did something more annoying: they made it impossible to fully believe the old *or* the new story.

I couldn't go back to a personal, mythic God handing down rules.

I couldn't fully believe in a flat, emotionally antiseptic materialism either.

Meanwhile, my day job is software engineering / architecture. My brain is trained to think in terms of:

- systems and layers,
- interfaces and invariants,
- messy reality compressed into something usable.

So while all this was happening — religion cracking, atheism cracking, altered states happening — there was also this very nerdy background process running:

What's the *architecture* here?

How is experience wired?

What's stable? What's an implementation detail?

I didn't want a new spiritual "app". I wanted to understand the runtime.

This book comes out of that mix:

a queer ex-Muslim, ex-atheist software architect trying to write one semi-sane systems doc for lived experience, after several failed designs.

At some point I stopped asking:

"What is ultimately real?"

and started asking:

"What is **appearing, right now**, and how is it organised?"

Not as metaphysics. Just as a way to stop fighting my own experience and to understand why certain patterns of suffering kept repeating.

This book is my current best answer to that question.

## Chapter 1

# What This Is (And What It's Not)

Before we go further, I want to set some boundaries around what this project is.



## Chapter 2

# What this is not

This is **not**:

- **A religion.**  
No commandments, no special group, no faith requirement. I'm not asking you to believe in a new invisible thing.
- **A scientific theory.**  
I care a lot about science, but I'm not doing physics or neuroscience here. I'm not claiming to describe the ultimate furniture of the universe.
- **Therapy.**  
Some of this might land in a psychologically helpful way. Some of it might not, depending on where you are. It's not a replacement for actual mental-health care.
- **A promise.**  
I'm not promising enlightenment, peace, or a fixed, coherent self. I'm describing patterns and offering experiments.

If you're in acute crisis, suicidal, or traumatised, you deserve real humans and solid support. A book — especially this one — is not emergency equipment.



## Chapter 3

# What this *is*

You can think of this as:

A user’s manual for “what appears” — written by someone who’s had to rebuild their firmware more than once.

If you’re technical, you can also read it as an architecture document for experience. Not *the* design, but *a* design that seems to match a certain kind of mind that’s crossed:

- religious certainty,
- anti-religious certainty,
- altered states,
- and the need for things to actually make structural sense.

A few core ideas that will show up:

- **The field** – a simple way of talking about the whole situation of experience at once: room, body, sounds, thoughts, feelings.
- **Structure** – how some parts of that field feel nearer, more important, or more “me” than others.
- **Compressions** – how things like “tree”, “friend”, “future”, “my personality”, “sin”, “trauma” show up as manageable chunks rather than raw chaos.
- **Two basic moves** the system can make when things are painful:
  - **Stabilise** – tighten around a trustworthy “I”, values, boundaries.

- **Dissolve** – let the situation breathe, soften hard splits like “in here vs out there”.

None of these are sacred words. They’re just handles I’ve found useful.

The point isn’t that you end up believing “**there is a field and compressions**” as dogma. The point is that **looking at experience in this way** might make some of your tangles more understandable and a bit less punishing.

## Chapter 4

# Why I'm leaving this trace

I'm mostly writing for people whose lives have been split across big fault lines:

- Religious vs secular.
- Straight vs queer.
- Rational vs mystical.
- Cynical vs hopeful.

The kinds of minds that have tried on several total stories, found each one too small, and are left with weird experiences, old guilt, and no stable lens that doesn't insult some part of them.

This book is a trace of one lens that eventually stopped tearing me apart.  
If your mind rhymes with mine, some of it might be reusable.



## Chapter 5

# How to Read This

This isn't meant to be consumed as doctrine. It's meant to be played with.  
Here are a few ways to do that.



## Chapter 6

# Basic stance

### 6.1 1. Compare, don't believe

Whenever I describe something, don't ask:

“Is this ultimately true?”

Ask:

“Does anything like this actually happen in *my* experience?”

If yes, good — now we have shared ground.

If no, also good — now we know we're different somewhere. You don't have to force it.

### 6.2 2. Stay close to your own field

Especially in Parts I–III, it'll help if you literally look up from the page sometimes and check:

- What's in my visual field right now?
- What's the sense of “here”?
- What's the emotional weather?
- Where do thoughts, memories, plans show up?

Let the text point back to **what appears for you**, not to an abstract diagram.

### 6.3 3. Treat models as tools, not laws

When I talk about “field”, “compression”, “awareness-mode”, “world-level”, and so on later in the book, I’m not describing cosmic laws.

I’m saying:

“If you look at experience *as if* it were organised like this, some things might hurt less and make more sense.”

If a lens doesn’t help — or makes you feel more broken — you can put it down.  
No loyalty oath required.

## Chapter 7

# Noticing when a lens hurts

Sometimes clever frameworks turn into weapons:

- “If there’s no real self, why am I still suffering? I must be doing it wrong.”
- “If everything is just appearance, then nothing matters, so I’m an idiot for caring.”

If you notice this kind of thing happening while reading, treat that as valuable information:

- Maybe this particular lens is too sharp for this moment.
- Maybe you need more stabilising (clearer “I”, clearer boundaries) and less dissolving.
- Or the reverse.

You can always slow down, skip ahead, or close the book. That’s not failure; it’s the system protecting itself.



## Chapter 8

# Roadmap

Here's the rough flow of the book:

- **Part I – What Appears**

We start from right now: what's showing up in experience? Field, world, body, self, time, story — described from the inside, without heavy theory.

- **Part II – How Feelings Appear**

We bring in sensation, emotion, mood, and especially uncertainty. How do anxiety, shame, anger, and numbness actually show themselves in the same field?

- **Part III – Working With Difficulty**

We look at what difficult feelings tend to point at, and introduce two basic moves:

- stabilising around a trustworthy “I”,
- letting the situation breathe and soften.  
There are concrete walk-throughs.

- **Part IV – Architecture**

This is the nerd layer. We revisit everything through the lens of field and compression and sketch one possible “architecture of appearance”. Optional but connected.

- **Part V – Epilogue**

Where this overlaps with religious, contemplative, and scientific traditions, and some suggestions for further experiments that don't turn this into a new dogma.



## Chapter 9

# Who I'm imagining as I write

I'm imagining readers who:

- have lived inside a strong, total story (religious, ideological, whatever),
- have parts of themselves that story couldn't digest (sexuality, doubt, strange experiences),
- have gone or are going through the rebel phase,
- maybe have touched altered states or nondual language and don't quite know what to do with them,
- and often have at least a bit of "engineer brain": they want things to actually hang together.

If that's you, you don't need to become "spiritual" or "rationalist" to make use of this. You just need enough curiosity to look at your own experience a bit more closely — and enough self-respect not to force yourself into compressions that don't fit.

From here, we start where we actually are:

not in theory, not in memory, not in someone else's authority — but right now, in what appears.

