

# THE DROP THAT FORGOT IT WAS THE OCEAN

**Reflections on Consciousness, Life, and Being Human**

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## Introduction

### On Versions of Reality

Dear reader,

This book invites you to look at the world from a slightly different angle.

The world is too complex, too layered to be captured by a single formula, a single philosophy, or a single system of belief. For thousands of years, humanity has tried to do exactly that. Religions emerged, philosophical traditions formed, and scientific theories appeared. Each offered its own picture of reality, its own interpretation of consciousness and the meaning of existence. Yet each of these visions has always been only one possible way of describing the world. Every attempt to explain reality is already incomplete the moment it appears.

This is the nature of observation. Whenever we describe reality, we inevitably highlight only one of its aspects — the human being, matter, or consciousness. The moment attention settles on one dimension, everything else slips out of view. This book offers one possible version.

As an artist, a researcher of art, and a psychonaut, I have always been drawn toward questions that lie just beyond ordinary attention. I have felt a persistent pull to look where people rarely look and to ask who I am and why I exist. I grew up in the post-Soviet world, where religion existed more as tradition than as a living experience. Like many children of that time, I was baptized in the Orthodox Church. Yet the image of God that was presented to me always felt distant, difficult to reconcile with the world as I perceived it. The idea of an anthropomorphic God somewhere above the world — observing and judging — never aligned with my intuition about reality.

On one side, there was a clear pull toward questions of consciousness and existence. On the other, traditional explanations often felt too simple for a universe that appeared infinitely complex. Because of this, my path into these questions began not through religion, but through observation, reflection, and direct experience.

In this book, I share a series of observations and experiences of perception. In many ways, it is an attempt to articulate answers to questions that lived within me for years. These ideas did not appear all at once. They formed gradually — through moments of experience, fragments of insight, and observations gathered over time. Some came in the mountains, surrounded by nature. Others emerged in conversation, or quietly while working. Some arose in altered states of consciousness, when the usual boundaries of perception became more transparent.

I do not claim that these experiences reveal any ultimate truth. It is entirely possible that the perspective presented here will not be the one through which you choose to view reality. It simply offers another way of looking. Over time, I began to feel that there may not be a single version of reality, but an infinite number of them — each valid within the language through which it is described. Life does not depend on the conceptual frameworks we try to impose upon it. Life simply is.

What follows is my version. It emerged as an attempt to articulate lived experience — the particular way the world has revealed itself to me. For some, it may feel familiar. For others, it may remain only an idea. Both responses are natural.

Sometimes a person needs only one thing: to remember who they are.

Any worldview is a tool — a way of navigating life, of finding meaning in experience, of recognizing connections between events that might otherwise appear accidental. The path of understanding often unfolds in three movements: a glimpse of unity, immersion in multiplicity, and a return — a recognition that what seemed divided was never separate. Understanding opens into feeling, and when that feeling arrives, the knowing that comes with it becomes difficult to forget.

This book can be read in many ways: as reflection, as inner dialogue, or as a journey across one possible map of reality. If this version allows you, even briefly, to experience the world as more connected, less chaotic, and more alive, then it has already fulfilled its purpose.

Perhaps, as you read, you will recognize something you already knew — that the drop and the ocean were never separate.

## Cold Spring

### *The Place Where Times Meet*

There are places on Earth that cannot be understood through maps or history alone. At first, it appears simple — a small town by a river, a few streets, old houses, a railway line, and mountains rising directly from the water. But the longer you look, the more becomes apparent: time gathers here in layers.

Cold Spring lies on the eastern bank of the Hudson River, within a narrow passage between Breakneck Ridge and Storm King Mountain. This stretch of the river is known as the Hudson Highlands — a stone corridor where water cuts through ancient rock formations. These mountains are far older than anything ever built by human hands. Their stone formed more than a billion years ago, long before trees or animals existed. At that time, a vast mountain range rose here, comparable in scale to the modern Himalayas. Over immense spans of time, wind, glaciers, and water eroded its peaks, leaving only the foundations behind. What remains today is not the mountains themselves, but their roots — the exposed core of the earth.

Around eighteen thousand years ago, a massive glacier moved through this valley, carving the rock, deepening the riverbed, and shaping the steep terrain that now feels almost dramatic. When the ice retreated, water began to flow through the passage, forming the river that would become the region's main artery. In time, people arrived.

Long before European settlers, these lands belonged to the Wappinger tribes, part of the Algonquian peoples. For them, the river was not simply water. They called it *Mahicannituck* — “the river that flows both ways.” Because of ocean tides, the water here moves both upstream and downstream, and at times the surface appears to hold several currents at once. To those who lived beside it, the river was a living presence. Old legends told that the mountains on either side were once a single body of stone, split apart by the Great Spirit Manitou to open a path for the water to reach the ocean. The passage between the cliffs became known as the gates of wind. When storms passed through this narrow corridor and the wind moved between the rocks, it was said that the spirits of the mountains were speaking. Hunters sometimes found veins of white quartz embedded in the stone, which they called frozen light and believed held the memory of the earth. Before crossing dangerous sections of the river, offerings of tobacco were thrown into the water to ensure safe passage.

In the seventeenth century, European ships began moving up the river. Massive wooden vessels with white sails must have appeared like floating islands to those who saw them for the first time. A new era began. During the American Revolutionary War, these mountains became strategically important. The narrow river passage controlled the movement of ships, and whoever held this valley controlled a vital route between the northern and southern colonies. Signal fires burned on the mountaintops, and fortifications and armories were built along the river. That era eventually dissolved, giving way to industry.

In the early twentieth century, industrialist Edward Cornish chose this landscape for his estate. Having made his fortune in metallurgy and chemical production, he could have built anywhere, yet he chose the mountain. There he constructed a stone residence called Northgate, built from the same granite as the surrounding terrain. Farms, gardens, roads, and stables were established around it. Workers cleared the slopes by hand, laid paths, and built bridges across streams. Despite his industrial background, he paid companies to ensure that no factories were built nearby. It is said that he often stood on the cliffs overlooking the river, and it is possible that these views were the reason he built his home so high.

In 1938, Edward Cornish died, and two weeks later his wife died as well. They had no children, and the house was left empty. Over time, the wind shattered the windows, people removed what

remained, and eventually fire destroyed everything made of wood. Only the stone walls endured. Today, these ruins are known as the Cornish Estate. The forest has been reclaiming the land ever since. Trees grow inside former rooms, and roots break apart the stone floors. Wild roses, planted more than a century ago, still appear among the grass.

The mountains remain unchanged. The river continues to flow. At night, its surface can become unsettled, with currents crossing and spiraling, reflecting light as though something beneath the water is in motion. In such moments, it becomes clear that all these histories form only a thin layer on the surface. Beneath them lies stone older than a billion years, mountains that have witnessed glaciers, tribes, soldiers, and industrialists, and the river that still flows in both directions.

Time does not disappear here. It accumulates. If one stands on the shore long enough, a distinct sensation emerges: these eras do not feel past, but present at once, like reflections moving across the water. The place carries a quiet expectation, as if the mountains themselves are waiting for someone to arrive and see what has always been there.

## **Chapter 1**

# **What Is Needed Is Already Here**

I should introduce myself. My name is Anton. I am an artist and a researcher of art and consciousness.

I was born in 1985 in the USSR, in Crimea. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world shifted abruptly. The 1990s were unstable, as if the ground had disappeared beneath our feet. When I was fifteen, my parents moved to the United States, to Virginia Beach. I finished school there, went to college, and left university in my final year. For a long time, I worked as a graphic designer. Life gradually arranged itself into something functional, but it felt incomplete.

Living in the suburbs, I understood I would not find people there with whom I could speak on the same wavelength. I moved to New York.

By 2014, I was working as a full-time artist. It was an unstable life without guarantees, a constant effort to sustain both the work and the conditions necessary to continue it. Each month required solving the same problem—rent, space, materials, time. My studio was in a basement with almost no light, but it allowed me to paint. That was enough.

I worked constantly. I sold pieces wherever I could, took on side jobs, and used whatever methods allowed me to continue. I painted every day, regardless of circumstances. Over time, I created more than two thousand works, and the rhythm never stopped.

Looking back, I feel gratitude for that period. I went further into the work than most people are willing to go. It absorbed everything.

By then, a certain context had formed, and within it something important was approaching. In 2017, I was thirty-two and living in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The area was changing rapidly. Artists were moving in, opening studios, organizing exhibitions. It felt like being inside a process, watching a new center of gravity take shape.

I lived with friends—Alex Aliume, Ruslan, and others. All of them were artists. We shared an apartment and treated it as a collective space for creation. Conversations moved constantly between art, life, and the direction of the world.

At that time, I was seeing a girl named Nastya. One day she mentioned a place north of the city called Cold Spring—mountains, forest, the Hudson River. I brought it up to Alex. He and Ruslan immediately picked up the idea, and we decided to go.

The train from Grand Central took about an hour. During that time, the city dissolved into the Hudson Highlands, part of the ancient Appalachian range. I did not want to go that day. I rarely like being persuaded. But they insisted, and I agreed. Some decisions carry more weight than they appear to at first.

At the time, we did not understand it, but that place would become significant.

Cold Spring is a small town on the Hudson River. One main street, preserved architecture, small shops, a quiet atmosphere. But the force of the place is not in the town. It is in the mountains, the forest, the cliffs above the river. Nature dominates there.

We arrived as people shaped by the city. When perception is formed by buildings, streets, and schedules, space begins to feel structured and predictable. That starts to seem natural. In the forest, that structure dissolves. There are no straight lines. Everything shifts, bends, and unfolds in variation.

There was another factor that day. We decided to enter a different state of perception. It was the first time we took LSD.

We went deep into the forest and reached the ruins of the Cornish Estate. In the early twentieth century, a large house had been built there. Later, the family died without heirs, the house burned, and the land was abandoned. That night, we stood among the remains—three people with flashlights, sometimes turning them off completely and letting the darkness take over.

In that darkness, perception shifted.

We began to notice what had always been present but rarely seen. We stood inside a roofless structure covered in graffiti, with a flooded basement where clusters of cave crickets covered the walls. When we moved our hands, motion layered, leaving luminous traces in the air. At times,

with my eyes closed, I saw a bluish, semi-transparent structure within my body, as if something was revealing its form from within.

The space felt dense. Light falling on leaves, branches, and stone exposed repeating patterns. The longer we looked, the clearer it became that the world is organized far beyond what is usually perceived. With flashlights in our hands, we examined plants, rocks, insects with direct attention, as if encountering them for the first time.

Night settled fully. The forest became quiet and deep. Wind moved through the treetops, and somewhere below, the river flowed. Sound expanded. Thought slowed. The boundary between the body and the surrounding space became less defined.

We began asking simple questions—do we have water, do we have cigarettes, do we have napkins—and each time the answer was yes. Everything we needed was already with us.

At first, this referred to small things—objects in our backpacks. But the meaning extended further. Life often feels like movement toward something missing, something that must be obtained before anything can continue. Another possibility revealed itself: at each moment, what is necessary is already present, even if it is not immediately recognized.

That same night, this became concrete.

We got lost in a dark forest near a stream. Anxiety rose. The body tightened, heat surged, a pulse was felt in the temples. Insects flew into the beams of our flashlights. Our phones had no signal, and GPS did not work. We moved without knowing whether we were going in the right direction.

For some time, there was only movement through uncertainty.

Then the trail appeared.

It had always been there. It led us out.

There is always a way forward, but it is not always visible. Without direction, movement disperses. Once direction appears, everything reorganizes. The situation does not become simple, but it no longer feels like movement into absence. You are already inside a structure where paths exist, and at the moment they are needed, they become accessible.

When we returned to the town, perception remained altered. The empty street of Cold Spring felt artificial, as if it belonged to another layer. The storefronts appeared precise and contained, almost staged in their stillness.

Back in Bushwick later that night, our friends were sitting outside. We tried to explain what had happened, speaking over each other, but language could not carry it. Instead, we returned to observation—looking at plants, stones, grass, turning lights on and off, watching patterns repeat.

The behavior was simple, almost childlike, but perception had shifted.

The sense of connection was no longer an idea. It had become experience.

At that time, I did not yet know that this perception would later condense into a simple understanding—one that would return again on the shore of that same river.

## **Chapter 2**

# **You Are Always, You Are Everywhere, You Are in Everything**

Understanding does not always come through long reflection. Sometimes it arrives in a single moment that cannot be planned. It simply happens. That is how it unfolded one night in Cold Spring. By then, it was our second trip there. The mountains, the forest, the river—they pulled us back.

That day, we climbed one of the mountains. At the top was a rocky clearing, surrounded by low bushes and wind-bent conifer trees. The view opened across the Hudson River and the surrounding ridges. It felt like the right place to shift our state of perception again. It was our second experience—Ruslan, Alex, and I.

We sat on the rocks and gradually felt the familiar sense of self begin to dissolve, as if it were being spread out beyond its usual boundaries. With our eyes closed, all three of us began seeing visions, as if fragments of human history were unfolding in front of us. Images of different civilizations appeared—Ancient India, Mesoamerica, and others that were harder to identify. As we moved deeper, a strange clarity emerged, sharp and almost overwhelming. From the speaker, quiet mantras of North Indian music played. In that clarity, the fractal structures of nature became more visible.

We began speaking about thoughts that seemed to arise simultaneously. We talked about how nations grow out of peoples, how states form out of nations. It started to feel constructed. Countries appeared as invented forms, borders as lines without real substance. It was as if we traced the arc of human history—from small tribes to large empires—and the entire structure of civilization revealed itself as something artificial standing within a living world.

It was unclear why we were speaking about this, yet it felt necessary. Something caught in my throat. For a brief moment, I felt the weight of the earth's history and something like its unspoken tension. Tears came close, but I held them back.

We lay on the rocks, watching the sky and the fading light. Then something shifted.

The mountains on the horizon seemed to breathe. The forest was breathing. The earth itself felt alive. It became clear that we were not observing it from the outside. We were part of it. Part of the same body. My continuation was in the stone beneath me, in the growth along the slopes, in the movement of the river, in the sound within the bushes, in the warmth of the sun on the land. This had always been the case.

The realization was simple and overwhelming. Until then, the earth had been a background to life, a stage for human activity. Now it became obvious that we are not separate from it. We are formed from the same matter—stone, water, air—participating in the same process. Followed to its conclusion, the idea becomes direct and almost unavoidable. Not visitors, but an extension of what is already here. For a moment, it felt as if the world was looking at itself through our eyes.

Concepts used to define identity—nationality, borders, belonging—lost their solidity. They collapsed in the mind, leaving a single, direct recognition: there is no separation here. We are not within the world as something distinct. We are the world in one of its forms.

We stayed on the summit until night began to fall, then started our descent. Moving down a mountain in the dark is a different experience. Perception sharpens. Every sound becomes precise—the insects, the shifting leaves, the ground underfoot. We followed the trail using reflective markers, but soon lost it again. We followed a dried stream, mistaking it for the path, and continued downward. The markers disappeared. We chose a direction without knowing where it would lead.

A quiet tension emerged.

At the bottom, we found ourselves in a muddy ditch filled with water and climbed out onto a dark highway, crossing over a barrier.

The experience was still unfolding. We crossed the road and entered another part of the forest, heading toward the river. After some time, we reached a narrow beach along the Hudson. A path lit by moonlight stretched along the shoreline into the woods. Small sandy clearings appeared between driftwood scattered along the water.

As we passed a large boulder, we noticed a small cave. At the entrance, the word “IRA” was written. We laughed, joking that someone named Ira lived there, and continued toward the water.

From time to time, a freight train passed behind us, breaking the silence with its horn. The railway cut through the landscape, separating the mountain from the river. At night, Cold Spring changes completely. During the day it is a place for walks and hikes. At night it becomes empty. What remains is water, air, darkness, and distant lights across the river.

We sat by the shore—Alex Aliume, Ruslan, and I. There was a sense of overwhelming joy. We laughed, shouted, and watched the water. Gradually, conversation returned. We spoke about life, nature, consciousness, and a strange connection to everything around us, as if perception could move through any form without resistance.

The river moved almost silently. At times, the wind disturbed its surface, and the lights across the water began to tremble. It felt as if the boundary between us and the surroundings was becoming thinner.

Then something happened that stayed with us for a long time.

For a few seconds, all three of us became silent at once. It felt as if a single thought appeared, not spoken but present.

“You are always.”

“You are everywhere.”

“You are in everything.”

We had not agreed on it. The words emerged as if they were already there, shared before being spoken. It felt like direct communication without language.

We reacted with laughter and shock, overwhelmed by the realization. Then, from the bushes nearby, we heard a low growl—something moving in the dark. We never found out what it was, but it was enough to make us leave. It was clear that the forest and whatever lived within it demanded respect.

We moved deeper into the park, to a place overlooking the mountain across the river, and sat down on the rocks again. The same perception returned. Life was present in all forms. The usual sense of separation—self and world—felt unstable, almost transparent.

We looked at the river, the trees, the night sky. Ruslan lay back on a rock, staring at the stars. They were unusually bright. He laughed, pointing a flashlight toward the sky.

Life does not belong only to humans. It expresses itself through everything—in animals, in plants, in the land, even in the planet as a whole. A human being is one of many forms through which it moves. All of this is part of a single process. It felt direct, unfiltered, as if something had opened that had always been there.

This was not a religious interpretation. There was no discussion of belief systems. It felt as if reality itself had become transparent, revealing a deeper layer. The phrase that appeared that night remained with us: you are always, you are everywhere, you are in everything.

We stayed until around four in the morning, then walked to a twenty-four-hour gas station, still wide awake, bought food, and went to the train station. Sitting on a bench by the water, we tried to absorb what had happened. We smoked, ate, and looked out at the dark Hudson and the silhouette of Bear Mountain.

Across the river, the mountain was almost completely swallowed by darkness. Occasionally, a train passed, its headlights cutting through the night. There was only the sound of water and the quiet knocking of buoys against boats.

It was difficult to fully grasp the experience. That night brought us closer to nature than any conversation could. It deepened our connection to each other as well.

We sat in silence, waiting for the morning train to Grand Central, as the first light of the June sky began to appear.

If life is present in everything, expressing itself through countless forms, then a question naturally follows. What if all living beings are connected far more deeply than we assume? What if a human is not a separate point, but one of the ways through which reality becomes aware of itself?

That question marked the beginning of the next stage of thought. From there, the idea of a unified consciousness began to take shape.

## Chapter 3

# The Great Consciousness

After that night on the Hudson, the phrase that arose between us stayed with me. It still does. Even now, I return to it, trying to understand its full depth. It feels as though it could take a lifetime. You are always. You are everywhere. You are in everything. The words are too simple to be accidental, yet too deep to unfold all at once.

Over time, I began asking what this realization could actually mean. If life expresses through all living forms, if a human being is not separate in any absolute sense, then the structure of reality can be seen differently. A different picture begins to emerge—one in which consciousness does not belong exclusively to the human mind. We are used to thinking of consciousness as a product of the brain, something that appears inside the head and disappears with the body. But there is another possibility: what if consciousness does not arise within the human being, but the human being arises within consciousness?

At first, the idea feels unfamiliar, but when approached calmly, it begins to settle. We do not create existence. We enter a world already in motion, a continuity of life that extends far beyond any individual lifespan. From a wider perspective, consciousness can be understood not as something localized, but as a fundamental aspect of reality—a field within which all processes unfold. Just as the ocean carries waves, consciousness may be the medium in which forms of life appear.

In this sense, every living being becomes a point of perception within that field. Through each one, reality encounters its own presence. A human being is one way in which the world becomes aware of what is happening. Animals experience the same field differently. Each form becomes a distinct expression of awareness within a shared continuum. Seen as a whole, it resembles a single unfolding process in which countless forms arise, each living its own story, perceiving in its own way, yet remaining part of the same movement.

Reality appears to observe through an endless number of perspectives, as if a single crystal had fractured into countless fragments. Through billions of beings, through an immeasurable variety of forms, experience accumulates. Each perspective contributes something unique, adding depth to the whole. At a larger scale, it begins to feel as though consciousness develops through this multiplicity—through events, through lived experience, through the accumulation of perception. Everything that occurs becomes part of a continuous process in which awareness explores its own nature.

At times, this process includes a kind of forgetting. Forms lose awareness of their connection and begin to act as if they are separate. From this arises conflict, violence, and destruction. Harm appears where unity is no longer recognized—when one part of reality acts against another without understanding that both exist within the same field. Since ancient Rome, a phrase has persisted: *divide et impera*—divide and rule. It sounds simple, yet it reflects a deeper pattern. Across time, separation has been used again and again, as if there is an intuitive sense of its power.

And yet, from a wider perspective, wherever we go, we remain within the same field of existence. Sometimes I think of a simple scene from a film: a person running, escaping into a car, saying in desperation, “Come on, start,” and the car responds. Seen through this lens, the person, the car, the pursuers, the road, and the surrounding space are all part of the same unfolding moment. Everything exists within a single field, experienced from multiple points at once. We are inside what we are.

At times, it feels as though the world responds through events, through people, through unexpected encounters—as if reality moves in dialogue across countless forms, recognizing patterns, losing awareness, then rediscovering connection through experience. This idea may resemble a religious perspective, but for me it emerged through observation and reflection, not through adherence to any system of belief. It feels closer to an ongoing process without beginning or end. Life appears, develops, transforms. New forms arise, others disappear, yet the movement continues.

Observed over time, there is a sense that all of this complexity serves as a way for existence to encounter and understand its own nature—not through a single form, but through many. In that view, a human being is no longer the center of the universe, yet no longer a random fragment without meaning. A human becomes a point of view through which reality perceives. This does not diminish the individual. It gives each life weight. The uniqueness of each perspective becomes essential—the ability to shape experience through which the world is seen.

Yet society often imposes patterns, identities, and ready-made roles, as if overlooking that each person carries a singular configuration of perception. Each human being is a distinct way of seeing—a unique structure of experience, qualities, and awareness. A different angle through which existence encounters itself.

Gradually, this line of thought led me to another metaphor, one that felt more precise. The metaphor of mirrors. If consciousness observes through many forms, then each of them becomes a reflective surface. And that idea became the next step in understanding.

## Chapter 4

# Mirrors

If you observe the nature of reality closely, it becomes clear that everything responds to everything else. This interaction is not only metaphorical—it happens in direct, physical ways, depending on the form and clarity of what receives and returns it. Light, sound, scent, vapor—all move through the world in constant exchange, refracting and echoing through one another.

Water reflects the sky. Glass reflects light. Polished metal returns the surrounding space. Sound also reflects, returning as an echo.

Imagine standing in the mountains and calling out, “I love you.” A moment later, the same words come back. If you shout something else, the mountains answer in kind. The echo does not interpret or judge. It returns what was given.

At times, the world behaves in a similar way. Once, I noticed how the sound of passing car wheels echoed off a curb. Each car produced a slightly different tone. It felt as though the world was answering in a new voice each time.

Sometimes the eyes of another person become such a surface. In them, we see not only the world, but something of ourselves. Even a shadow can be understood as a form of reflection—an imprint that appears where light meets form.

In this sense, the entire world can be seen as an endless prism of reflections, refractions, and shadows of a single source. These manifestations are never still. They appear, shift, and dissolve. Across all layers of existence, forms arise, receive light, and fade again.

It feels like a crystal, or an immense mirror that was once whole but now exists in countless fragments. Each fragment reveals the world differently. One reflects mountains, another a river, another captures a beam of light, another holds a human face. The underlying reality remains the same, while its expressions vary without end.

This image can also describe human consciousness. If there is a unified field of awareness, then each person may be one of the surfaces through which it becomes visible.

Each of us perceives reality in a distinct way. Even when two people stand side by side, looking at the same landscape, their experience is not identical. Every person carries memory, experience, fear, and desire, and all of this shapes a unique way of seeing.

Reality becomes infinitely complex because it is perceived through countless points of view.

But not all surfaces reveal light in the same way. Everything depends on their condition. Some receive and return light clearly and quietly. Others are covered with layers of fear, aggression, or pain, and what passes through them becomes distorted. This does not make one better or worse. It simply reflects the state through which perception moves.

What we call inner work may be nothing more than the gradual clearing of that surface through which awareness looks at the world.

At times, the mirror forgets its nature. Then the reflection begins to experience itself as separate.

From these countless reflections, an entire labyrinth of images emerges—a space where awareness can lose direction among its own forms and expressions, fear them, fall into them, dissolve into them, and gradually lose sight of its origin. At times, the immersion becomes so complete that recognition disappears entirely.

To experience fully, awareness seems to pass through this phase of forgetting. Life then unfolds as a separate story—with its joy, its fear, its search, and its inevitable mistakes.

And sometimes, the mirror remembers.

In that moment, the world begins to feel familiar again, as if behind the endless diversity of forms, the same current of life moves through everything.

## **Chapter 5**

# **The Grid of Reality**

Some experiences resist ordinary language. One of them unfolded on the summit of Breakneck Ridge, about a year after our second trip to Cold Spring.

That day Alex and I returned there again. Ruslan could not come. It was August. We had been wanting to go back for a long time, and when the day finally arrived, it carried a quiet tension, a mix of anticipation and unease. Before trips like this, sleep rarely comes easily. Around noon we boarded a train at Grand Central, and an hour later we were in Cold Spring. As always, we

stopped at a gas station, bought water, protein bars, cigarettes, and headed into the forest. Before entering, we paused and asked for protection, repeating inwardly that the forest loves us.

This time we chose a different route, the most demanding one, through the old quarry. The trail was steep and rocky. We climbed for nearly two hours, losing the path twice and navigating by white markers. Reaching a summit is never simple. The body strains, balance shifts on stone, every step requires attention. Alex moved ahead. At one point a viper appeared on the trail, hissed, and slowly slid away. He had nearly stepped on it. We went around carefully, but the moment stayed. The day before, his mother had warned him about snakes there, something she had never mentioned before. It felt like a signal.

The forest was filled with mushrooms, large white caps scattered everywhere. I had never seen so many in Cold Spring. At times, nature creates a state where perception changes without effort. The air becomes clear, the silence deep, and the world feels both immense and close at once.

We searched for the right summit. Breakneck has many. We passed it, circled, lost direction, and only after nearly two hours found a wide stone plateau. From there, Bear Mountain stood clearly across the river, and the Hudson opened fully below us.

We lay down on the rocks and took LSD again, this time a higher dose. Almost immediately it became clear that the entry would be difficult. A heavy pressure built in my chest. Breathing tightened. As the intensity rose, we both began thinking about the person who sold it to us. It did not feel like real LSD. There was a metallic edge, something off. We had bought it from someone unreliable, and the thought came that this might be an overdose.

I looked at Alex. His face confirmed it. Neither of us wanted to say it aloud, but the pressure kept increasing. Later he told me he felt his body locking, already saying goodbye in his mind. We were lying on top of a mountain, far from anyone. A thought appeared: let go, do not resist, let it pass through. But the weight continued to build.

I said goodbye internally to everything I knew. A brief thought crossed my mind, almost absurd in its simplicity: this is how it ends. Two people climbed a mountain and decided to die there. I imagined someone eventually finding our bodies.

Mantras played quietly from the speaker. When I closed my eyes, shifting faces of death appeared, constantly changing form. There was almost no fear, only a strange acceptance. Alex later described seeing root systems beneath small bodies of water, as if something was being drawn out of him, tunnels opening, a force moving along his spine.

We looked at each other, said nothing, and remained there. Above us, two eagles began circling, slow and wide, as if the height belonged to them.

Then something shifted.

It felt like crossing a threshold. The mind cleared. The experience opened fully. Time lost structure. Strength returned to the body, amplified, as if something had restarted from within. The forest began to move. Bushes and trees swayed. The forest was breathing. The mountains were breathing. The entire valley moved like one organism. Even the ground carried a faint vibration.

Alex asked me to jump from one rock to another. As I moved, multiple trails of energy remained in the air. I repeated it again and again, overwhelmed by a sense of clarity and force. With a trembling hand, a cigarette burning between my fingers, I watched ants scatter across the surface of the rock.

Wherever the eye settled, patterns revealed themselves. Cracks in stone unfolded into repeating structures. Leaves and branches followed the same logic, visible through sustained attention.

Then the structure appeared.

In the space before us, extending into depth, a three-dimensional geometric grid became visible. It did not feel like an image, but like the underlying framework of reality. Lines intersected, forming nodes, branching outward. It resembled both a mathematical system and a living structure, a field of possible paths crossing and diverging.

Each node felt like a point of choice, a place where direction could shift. In ordinary life, time appears as a single line. Here it became clear that it is not linear. There are countless potential paths, and each action alters movement within a shared structure.

The eagles continued circling. The wind moved along the slope. The air felt dense. Alex said quietly that we were in another layer of reality.

Then new images emerged.

On the opposite mountain, forms appeared that resembled ancient glyphs, almost Mayan in nature. They moved, fluid and alive, forming symbols like a language. The most striking part was that we both saw them. Perception overlapped. The sense of separation weakened, and observation became shared.

It felt as though reality could communicate through images.

We watched until sunset. As the sun dropped between the mountains, a figure formed out of light, resembling both Jesus and Buddha at once. The moment carried a weight that remained, as if the world acknowledged our presence. The sun descended over the valley like a vast orange eye, and the valley moved again as a single organism. We stood still, held inside its scale.

When the sun disappeared, the temperature dropped quickly. We ate and began the descent into darkness. The forest at night was loud. Cicadas, crickets, frogs. The sound was dense, surrounding us from all directions. The descent required full attention. Flashlights cut through

the dark, revealing unstable ground. Every step had to be placed precisely. From the backpack, the mantras continued.

Eventually we reached the base and moved toward the old quarry. Once there had been a formation known as the Face of Saint Anthony, a massive rock profile destroyed during excavation. We stepped into the open space, surrounded by mountains. The sky was filled with stars. Something moved constantly in the bushes. We moved carefully.

Then we saw it.

On a piece of asphalt, in large white letters: STOP.

We looked at each other and understood without speaking. Going further did not feel right. We turned back toward the parking area.

Half an hour later we were out of the forest. It was close to midnight. We crossed the road and walked through a small wooded area to the river. At the first beach, we sat on a log and watched the water. The tide was low. Driftwood lay scattered along the shore. Awareness sharpened. Colors became precise. Presence deepened.

We sat beneath an old tree, watching reflections of distant lights from the United States Military Academy across the river. Music played quietly. It felt as if life had begun again.

Later we walked along the shore, collecting driftwood. I had always been drawn to it. Each piece felt like a finished form, shaped freely by the river. At that time I was making objects and masks from these finds, sometimes integrating them into three-dimensional paintings.

We sat by the water for a long time in silence, absorbing what had happened. The river moved through darkness, reflecting scattered lights, and with its movement the mind gradually settled.

Around four in the morning we walked to the station, joking about how commuters would react to two people carrying bags full of driftwood.

That experience became one of the most important in our lives. We approached a boundary where everything could have ended, and because of that it stayed.

Later, on the train, Alex said that after what happened on that mountain, we had become real shamans.

The next day, trying to understand it, a simple thought emerged. Nothing matters as much as life. Breathing, seeing, feeling—each is already an immense gift.

What happened on that mountain, what felt like dying, does not disappear. Sometimes a person glimpses the structure of possibilities, their scale and their branching, and every step begins to carry weight.

It becomes clear that behind the visible world there are deeper layers. And not just one.

# Chapter 6

## The Fear of Death

In my teenage years, I almost drowned near the cliffs in Crimea. I loved diving and rarely felt danger. That day the sea had already begun to turn rough, but I stayed in the water. At first it felt like a game. Within minutes, the waves started throwing me against the rocks. Each удар came harder than the last. I understood that if the next one hit even slightly stronger, I would lose consciousness and drown.

My strength was fading quickly. There was a clear sense that a little more would end everything. I began climbing the vertical rock. My hands slipped. Sharp shells cut into my chest and palms. I do not remember how long it lasted, but somehow I made it out.

Then I noticed something unexpected. When death came very close, fear disappeared. Only life remained.

Years later, I had another experience that forced me to look at death differently. First my mother died. Later, my grandmother. Standing by their coffins, I saw something I could not ignore. The body was there, but the person I had known was gone. The face remained familiar. The form had not changed. But the presence had vanished. What lay before me was a shell. Something had left.

I often return to a simple image. A diver descends into depth wearing a heavy suit. As long as the equipment holds, he can explore the underwater world. But if the suit begins to fail, the only rational decision is to return to the surface. The human body may be something similar. Through it, consciousness experiences the physical world. As long as it functions, life continues. When it becomes unusable, consciousness leaves. The form remains, but the one who inhabited it is no longer there.

There is another aspect that is harder to explain. Sometimes people die not because the body stops, but because the will to live fades. I saw this in my own family. In both cases, death came when the desire to continue disappeared. It suggests that the presence of consciousness in the body is not purely biological. There is also an element of choice. As long as a person wants to live, they hold on with remarkable force. And sometimes the opposite happens. The body may still be capable, but something inside has already shifted. Life begins to release the person.

Many years later, I experienced a moment that brought me back to these thoughts. We were lying on the summit of Breakneck Ridge, and above us eagles moved slowly in wide circles. In moments like that, a person feels how thin the boundary is between presence and disappearance.

Life reveals itself differently there. It becomes part of a vast process that continues far beyond a single personality, like an endless sleep in which a greater consciousness turns inward and forgets its nature.

Each life is a wave in the movement of an ocean. It rises, moves through its path, and returns to the same flow.

Perhaps death is the moment when the drop remembers that it is the ocean itself.

To die while still alive is to remember this completely.

## **Chapter 7**

# **Personality as a Great Gift**

When a person encounters the idea of unified consciousness, personality can begin to feel secondary, even illusory. If everything is connected, if all is part of a single process, individuality may seem unnecessary. Many arrive at the conclusion that the ego must be eliminated, that personality should dissolve, that one must move beyond individuality. At times, it is necessary to step beyond personality in order to perceive the whole, but this is not done to destroy it.

Personality is not a mistake. It is a great gift.

If we imagine a vast field of consciousness expressing through countless forms of life, a simple question arises: how can infinity come to know itself? To see the world, a point of view is required. To experience it, a form is necessary. Boundaries make distinction possible. Without them, everything collapses into an undifferentiated field where no form, movement, or event can be perceived. Without distinction, there is no experience. This is where personality emerges.

Each human being is a form through which consciousness undergoes a specific experience. The body, memory, and time shape its structure. Through it, it becomes possible to feel the wind, hear water, experience love, fear, and joy. At times, while working on a painting, I feel like a conduit, as if something moves through me, using my eyes, hands, and imagination to bring a form into existence whose meaning is not entirely clear. I try not to interfere with that flow.

This movement behaves like water. It does not pass through solid stone, but it finds a way where there is an opening or a fracture. Where a person is closed, movement stops. Where there is openness, it continues. That force seems to recognize that it can move through me. In those moments, something from a deeper layer briefly takes on physical form.

Each personality is a unique configuration of experience. Such a combination of memory, perception, feeling, and history has never existed before and will never exist again. Without personality, that experience would not be possible. One can imagine an ocean without waves, a flat surface where nothing occurs. Forms create movement. In the same way, consciousness experiences itself through forms, and through each personality it gains a new perspective.

This is why personality is not a mistake. It is an instrument of perception.

The problem begins when separateness is taken as the only reality. This is where ego appears. Yet the ego is not something negative. It is a natural part of personality, allowing orientation within the world. Like any organ, it can exist in balance or move beyond it. When it exceeds that balance, distortion begins. A person starts to experience themselves as the center of everything, losing the sense of connection with the whole. It resembles a tree attempting to take all the resources of a forest. But a forest exists as a system, and in destroying it, the tree destroys itself.

The same applies to a human being.

The root of this distortion often lies in comparison. Society constantly measures people through success, power, wealth, and status. In nature, comparison does not exist. If you take two stones lying side by side, they are completely different—different composition, different surfaces, different histories shaped by pressure, water, sunlight, and time. Each is unique, yet neither is better than the other. They are simply different.

The same is true for human beings. Life generates an infinite diversity of forms without selecting one as superior. Comparison creates the illusion of superiority and inadequacy where there is only variation.

Personality does not need to be destroyed. Through it, experience unfolds. Through it, life comes to know itself. And through countless personalities, consciousness continues its exploration.

Each personality is a point of view through which the universe looks at itself.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Forgetting**

The entire world can be seen as a process of unfolding consciousness, a gradual manifestation of what was once unified and indivisible. Yet within this process there is a peculiar feature: in creating forms, consciousness does not simply express—over time, it begins to forget that it is the source of what appears.

Each new form starts to experience separation. A human feels separate from nature, peoples from one another, civilizations from the earth, and the individual from everything that exists. This

division does not arise instantly. It accumulates as form develops, as though the structure of existence slowly shifts from unity toward fragmentation. This is the state of forgetting.

It can be observed not only on the scale of the world, but within every individual life. At birth, there is no name, no history, no labels—only pure perception, an open point of presence. Everything that follows gathers around this point: language, memory, experience, personality. Yet the beginning remains inaccessible. We remember almost nothing from the earliest years, and even less of anything that may have preceded them. Memory breaks off before personal history begins.

This raises a question: why does this happen, and why does each life begin in near-total darkness? Perhaps because consciousness is not only unfolding, but searching for a way to encounter itself anew. If a person were born carrying the memory of all prior experience, the intensity of living would fade. First love would not feel like the first. A kiss would not be a discovery. Friendship, creativity, and the search for identity would feel like repetition. Life would lose the quality of exploration.

When memory is cleared, the world becomes unknown again. Within that unknown, experience regains depth. Childhood is felt fully. First love becomes overwhelming. The search for one's place turns into a real movement. Life feels immediate because forgetting is built into it.

Perhaps memory is not lost by accident, but set aside, allowing entry into the world without ready-made answers. In that state, experience happens directly, not through recollection.

Forgetting is not limited to a single life. It can be traced across the history of humanity. At an earlier stage, human existence resembled a more unified flow. As people spread across the planet, differences emerged. Tribes formed, then cultures, then civilizations. Each began to perceive itself as a separate world. Borders appeared, followed by states and armies. Separation became not only a feeling, but a structure.

Yet this division remains conditional. All humans originate from the same root. We are not merely similar—we are related, separated by space and time. When this is forgotten, division begins to feel absolute. Peoples clash, defend territories, compete for resources, guided by the perception that they exist independently.

The same forgetting appears in the relationship between humanity and nature. Civilization emerged within the natural world. Humans built their lives among forests, rivers, and open land. As structures grew more complex, this origin became obscured. The artificial environment gradually took precedence. Nature began to be perceived as something external—a resource, a territory, a source of material.

Yet the separation is illusory. The human body is composed of the same elements as the earth. Breath depends on the planet's air. Life unfolds through processes beyond personal control. Nature does not surround a person. It moves through them.

When this connection is lost, perception distorts. The world appears as a field of struggle, the earth as something foreign and available for use, even though the human remains part of the same living system. This, too, is a form of forgetting.

As civilization develops, this amnesia can intensify. In recent years, this has become especially visible. Following the events of 2020, humanity underwent a global experience of separation. People were distanced, restricted, isolated. This affected not only individual lives, but the collective field of perception.

Even now, there is a sense that presence has shifted. People have become more cautious, more withdrawn, more distant. What once felt natural—closeness, shared space, direct interaction—no longer arises as easily. At the same time, communication has moved into technological environments. A person is often not among others, but inside a screen, connected yet enclosed.

Separation becomes less visible, but more profound.

Under these conditions, it becomes easier to forget something simple: that all emerge from the same root, that connection runs deeper than it appears, and that humanity does not stand apart from the planet, but exists as one of the forms through which life unfolds.

In this sense, contemporary changes do not create a new condition. They intensify an ancient one—the state of forgetting.

And yet, this may carry meaning. Each life begins in forgetting so that consciousness may not only remember, but encounter existence again, directly, as if for the first time.

## Chapter 9

# Eternal River of Life

Everything flows. This is one of the simplest properties of reality. A human appears stable, yet in truth is a process in motion. The image of a river becomes one of the most precise ways to describe life. A river never repeats itself. The water changes, yet the movement continues. Life unfolds in the same way.

After several early psychedelic experiences, my friends and I—artists, people tuned to the same frequency—began to notice something unusual. Life does not simply move. It flows, and we move within that flow.

At times this becomes especially visible in the city. It is common to say that people walk through the streets, but a closer look reveals something different. Movement resembles a current. The

body is largely composed of water. It comes from water, depends on it, and constantly interacts with it. Even the food that sustains life is inseparable from it. If the pace of a large city could be accelerated, it would resemble streams of energy moving through its structure—people, cars, light, information.

Even what appears solid is in constant change. A wall gathers time, cracks, shifts, and eventually collapses. To navigate this instability, humans construct systems—meanings, structures, identities—to create a sense of ground within continuous movement.

Artists sometimes begin to notice these currents earlier than others.

For a long time, I studied the work of Vincent van Gogh and began to see something unusual. His paintings carry motion. He spent long periods in nature and learned to perceive its internal dynamics—the spiraling of the sky, the movement embedded in the landscape. These forms do not feel invented. They feel observed.

This becomes especially visible in *The Starry Night*.

At one point, I came across visualizations of ocean currents created by NASA. The patterns were strikingly similar—vast spirals moving across the surface of the planet. In that moment, it became clear that these forms are not limited to painting. They exist in nature. The same movement repeats at different scales.

If life is understood as a river, certain things become easier to grasp. Swimming against a strong current quickly leads to exhaustion. Moving with it allows the current to carry you.

A person does not simply move through the river of life. A person is part of that movement. The sense of separation is temporary. The flow was always there.

Much of human suffering comes from resistance to what is already unfolding. Many struggle against the direction of their own lives, and this struggle consumes energy. The current remains stronger. Eventually, movement aligns with it.

There is also the idea of mistake—of having gone the wrong way. Yet a river does not have a wrong direction. If something has occurred, it belongs to the movement. It is part of the unfolding, not an error outside of it.

Sometimes it is enough to trust that movement and allow it to carry you.

For me and my friends, that river was the Hudson River. We spent long hours along its banks. I could watch its current without interruption, letting perception settle into its rhythm.

A river never felt inanimate. There is always motion, tension, release. The surface shifts, the depth moves unseen. It feels like a living presence. I have stood by many rivers and always felt the same pull.

Over time, something simple became clear. Watching a river long enough reveals how life moves.

I spent time near waterfalls as well. Leaving the scale of the city, I would sit beside falling water and observe. Gradually, most concerns lost their weight.

No matter what happens, the water continues.

A waterfall carries a direct message: the flow does not stop.

This is not passivity. It is not withdrawal from action. It is the absence of constant control. A person stops interfering with every movement and allows life to unfold.

Not outside of it, but within it.

Because life never stops flowing.

## **Chapter 10**

# **Why We Create Civilizations**

If life is a flow, a natural question arises: why does the human create stable structures? The answer goes beyond survival. Civilization provides stability within a world that does not remain still. Before it, humans lived directly within change. There was freedom in that condition, but also constant exposure to danger. Civilization emerged as a response to that instability.

The square appears everywhere because, at some point, a human drew a boundary. Land was enclosed, a defined space appeared—a field, a structure, a form. In ancient Egyptian writing, the square symbolized cultivated land. Civilization begins there and continues from that gesture. A human steps into a form he has created, and that form begins to repeat across generations.

The square is everywhere: rooms, windows, city blocks, screens. Even images dissolve into pixels, repeating the same structure at a smaller scale. A shape once drawn on the earth becomes a way of organizing perception. The space in which the modern human lives is a continuation of that first boundary.

In nature, such forms are rare. Structures flow, boundaries soften, transitions remain continuous. The square fixes and holds. It creates order and control, but it is only one possible way for reality to take shape. Nature follows a different principle. Its primary form is the circle: planetary motion, water cycles, growth patterns. The circle does not confine. It unfolds. The square defines structure. The circle defines movement.

An old Chinese coin—a circle with a square at its center—captures this relationship precisely. Structure within flow, containment within openness. A human lives between these two principles.

The question is not which one to choose, but how to hold both at once—structure and movement, boundary and openness.

When that balance is present, space stops pressing against the human and begins to support him. Excess structure compresses. Excess fluidity dissolves. Balance sustains life. The square is tied to division, measurement, and control. The circle connects, expands, and allows movement. These are not opposing forces, but complementary conditions through which life unfolds.

Today it becomes increasingly visible that humans live inside constructed spaces placed within nature and accept them as the default. Perception adapts to angles, segmentation, defined edges. A subtle sense of confinement appears—not because the world is closed, but because one mode of form has become dominant. Once this is seen, it cannot be unseen. “Thinking outside the box” becomes literal—stepping beyond rigid structure and sensing space differently.

Every form has limits, and those limits eventually become perceptible. The spaces of the future will likely move away from strict geometry toward more organic structures. Forms will soften, spaces will connect rather than divide, moving closer to natural patterns where flow becomes perceptible again. Alongside this, another shift is already unfolding. Nature returns to human environments not as decoration, but as presence—plants, stone, irregular forms, living textures.

Natural geometry is essential for psychological balance. This is why humans are drawn toward living systems—keeping animals, growing plants, reshaping interiors. Sharp edges are softened, movement returns to space, to thought, to perception. Even brief contact with natural forms restores equilibrium. The human body does not follow rigid geometry. There are no true right angles—only branching structures and continuous flow. The human is closer to movement than to fixed form.

Spaces shaped in this way allow a person to feel part of a larger system rather than enclosed within a structure. Technological connection continues to expand, but it remains external. The human still requires an internal sense of belonging.

With the rise of cities, another shift occurred. Humans began to move away from the environment that had always sustained them. Before that, they lived within nature and had a place within it. The forest does not exclude. The land does not assign ownership. But once a boundary appears, another principle follows. The square becomes more than form—it becomes a rule. It divides, assigns, and determines ownership. Property emerges, and with it, the possibility of exclusion.

In the modern world, this becomes visible at scale. In places where nearly all land is owned, millions are left without space. People who cannot belong anywhere. Even basic acts of existence become restricted. In some places, a person is not allowed to sleep in their own car. A paradox appears: a human can become out of place on the very earth that gave rise to him. This creates tension at a deep level, because the sense of home begins to disappear.

Nature accepts without condition. Systems define access. A human living outside structured systems begins to provoke fear, even though such existence was once natural. As systems strengthen, everything beyond them appears foreign. The natural begins to feel unfamiliar.

It is important to recognize another layer. Civilization was necessary. It emerged as a response to real conditions. It brought protection, structure, and the possibility of development. The modern human depends on it and becomes vulnerable without it. The question is not rejection, but understanding.

We are not separate from the system. It emerged from human action, from human need, from human perception. It did not appear from outside. To oppose it blindly is to misunderstand its origin.

Because to fight the system is, in many ways, to confront a structure created by the same consciousness that now resists it.

## **Chapter 11**

# **Thoughts as Beings**

Thoughts are usually treated as something obvious, yet they are not chosen. They arrive. They move. They press toward expression. They are not random. They seek manifestation.

One day in Bushwick, Alex and I were painting. We had taken a small amount of mushrooms and continued working when a strange realization began to emerge. At first it felt subtle, almost peripheral, but gradually it became direct. Thoughts do not simply appear. They strive to manifest. Each one carries a certain momentum, as if pushing toward embodiment. There were many at once, arising simultaneously, overlapping, competing for the chance to take shape. Consciousness revealed itself as a field of selection where only some impulses pass through into reality.

At times the sensation intensified. Each thought felt like a living seed rushing toward realization, while consciousness functioned as a space that receives but cannot hold everything at once. A human, in this sense, can be understood as a realized thought. Each life begins as an impulse that finds expression.

Certain thoughts arrive to certain people at the moment when they can be realized. There is a sense that the larger field of consciousness distributes impulses with precision. It may feel as

though a thought is created in the moment, yet everything that surrounds us once existed only as potential. At some point, that potential becomes actual.

This leads back to a fundamental question—what comes first, consciousness or matter? Each person answers it differently, but one thing becomes clear. Humanity lives inside its own ideas. Civilization is a realized thought. The structures that surround us, the systems we move through, the objects we use—all were once only impulses that found expression. Even the image of Steve Jobs on a screen is encountered through layers of thought that have been materialized. This text is read through a system that also began as an idea.

If everything around us is shaped by thought, and a human is also part of that process, then existence begins to appear differently. The world is no longer only a collection of objects. It becomes a field of realized ideas. A single thought can alter the course of events. What matters is where it arrives and whether it is allowed to become real.

A thought can be understood as a metaphysical potential moving toward expression. Unmanifested thoughts remain present. They do not disappear. They wait. At times, it is possible to imagine being one of these unrealized impulses among countless others, seeking seeking entry into consciousness in order to take shape.

As an artist, I work with thought-forms. Some pass through into manifestation. Others remain at the threshold. But they do not vanish. They stay within reach, ready to emerge under the right conditions.

Each human life is an expression of a larger field of consciousness. Beyond what is visible, there are countless potentials moving toward embodiment. The fact of existence becomes rare. To breathe, to see, to feel, to experience—each of these is part of that condition, yet it often goes unnoticed.

When this realization first opened, it was not abstract. It was physical. There was a pressure in the head, not from strain, but from expansion. It took time to hold it, and more time to accept it.

## **Chapter 12**

### **The Drop That Forgot It Is the Ocean**

At the end of 2019, at the very beginning of the COVID pandemic, fire entered my studio and the studio of my friend Alex Aliume in Bushwick and took almost everything. Alex was left with only a few works. Most of mine were destroyed or damaged. We were painting when it started. Within five minutes, the space we had worked in for years was gone.

Later we learned the cause—rats had chewed through the wiring. In Brooklyn, that was always close, always present. We ran out into the street in our socks. Something exploded inside the building. Alex said, “This is a change of script.” It sounded exact.

For a long time after, I kept returning there in a respirator. The air was thick with smoke, difficult to breathe. I walked through the charred remains, pulled paintings out of the debris, carried them into storage. Some canvases had turned completely black. I still tried to save them, to bring something back.

The fire did not only destroy a place. It scattered us, pushed us into different apartments, different parts of the city. Our space ceased to exist. Life sometimes uses fire to remove a structure that can no longer hold what comes next.

A few months later, I found myself at Unruly Collective. The movement that began with the fire continued there, but from within. The space was open, fluid. I took a room on the second floor. Other rooms were already occupied by my tribe—artists.

One night, my friend Sam, my friend Jess, and I took mushrooms. All three of us were creators, and we preferred to paint in that state. The first half hour is always waiting. An Indian raga plays. Then perception begins to shift. Yawning comes in waves, uncontrollable. Eyes water. It feels as though something enters the body and slowly twists inside. Water helps, but only partially.

Then the space changes.

The paintings begin to move. The brush loaded with paint no longer feels like it is touching canvas. It feels like contact with something alive. The wooden floor shifts, then the walls, and gradually the entire house becomes part of the experience. A clear sensation appears: you are inside someone’s mind.

Everything intensifies. The same objects remain, but appear cleaner, as if they were prepared for this moment of perception. Paintings become overwhelming. You can see the artist’s energy inside them. Under RGB light, they shimmer across the spectrum and feel like living forms. We lower the light almost to darkness. In that state, the paint seems to hover above the surface, suspended.

To this day, I know nothing more absorbing than looking at my new paintings in that state.

In that condition, everything is experienced as one whole, and therefore more deeply felt. When there is no separation, there is no search for flaws.

At some point, I went to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. There was a man with dilated pupils. But what stood out was something else—an essence: ancient, tired, continuous. It felt like recognition.

Altered states carry risk. The psyche is exposed. Some do not return unchanged. You need the ability to let go. A rigid identity resists, and that resistance is experienced as death. These

experiences are not for everyone. They can reveal something real, but without integration they can destabilize.

At one time, we believed the world could be changed by giving psychedelics to everyone. That turned out to be false. Not everyone needs it. Not everyone can hold it. Some encounter only fragments—distorted forms, unstable images. Mushrooms are a key. But the structure they open is already there. Without it, the key has nothing to unlock.

I became interested in where I came from. A vision appeared: a small body of water, and at its edge a drop separates. It becomes aware of itself as an independent being. A realization follows: I invented myself. I separated from the whole, yet never left it.

This was not a metaphor. It felt like fact.

The drop is never lost. It changes form but remains the same. Fear disappears. The ocean experiences individuality through its drops. Memory returns. A human is a drop that forgot it is the ocean.

From birth, we experience ourselves as separate. A name appears, a body, a story. A boundary is shown—where we end and the world begins. We learn distinctions: self and other, inside and outside. Over time, this becomes invisible and feels natural.

With age, this sense stabilizes. A consistent “I” forms. At times, it loosens. This can happen in nature or in altered states—not for effect, but to remember the absence of separation.

There is no fixed boundary. Air moves through the body. Water circulates. Thoughts arrive. The division becomes less solid.

An image of the ocean appears—endless movement. Waves, foam, drops that seem independent for a moment. Each moves through its path, yet its essence does not change.

We are such drops—temporary forms of a single flow. We experience ourselves as individuals, but at depth there is no separation. Separation belongs to form. Essence remains ocean.

Sometimes the drop forgets, and the universe fractures into self and other.

And sometimes the drop remembers.

**The separation dissolves.**

**You were never apart from what you are.**

# Chapter 13

## The Cave Man

One night during my exhibition at Unruly Collective, we decided to trip. Daniel was with me—a guy living in the space at the time. The trip began. We sat among the paintings, talking, looking at the work. I stopped in front of one of my pieces and began to study it in that state.

The painting stopped being just a painting. Its surface shifted into something else—a complex panel, like an interface attempting contact. It shimmered with neon, metal, phosphorescence. The abstract forms inside it moved, assembled into structures, dissolved, and formed again. It felt like a screen meant for communication. The painting was trying to speak. The intensity was overwhelming.

After a while, we went down to the basement. About ten works from my Ancient Cave Art series were there—a body of work that grew out of studying prehistoric petroglyphs and cave paintings from different parts of the world. The moment we entered, something changed. The space was quiet. The symbols on the canvases no longer felt like images. They resembled real cave walls—dimensional, protruding, almost physical.

Daniel stood there for a long time, staring. Then he turned to me and said, “Listen... you keep painting these cave drawings. Guess who I am.”

I looked at him.

He smiled.

“I am the cave man.”

I laughed, but he remained serious.

“You were the one painting them on the cave walls. You just don’t remember.”

I asked why he thought that. He said he had about three percent Neanderthal DNA—he had taken one of those genealogy tests.

We went outside into the backyard, stood near the house, smoking. At some point I used the word alien. Daniel shook his head.

“I don’t like that word. No one is foreign. Everyone belongs.”

I thought for a moment and replied,

“I don’t like the word hallucination. It cancels human experience. I prefer vision.”

Sometimes a single word closes an entire world. By calling something a hallucination, a person marks it as unreal. But sometimes what is called a hallucination is simply an experience for which language has not yet found a precise name.

After a while, he said he wanted to climb a tree and sit there. He was a cave man—no further explanation was needed. He disappeared into the night.

I went back inside and began walking through the rooms, looking at my work. Everything appeared different, deeper, as if it were being revealed for the first time and had always been known at once.

I walked up the stairs and sat on a chest I had never sat on before. It stood in the corridor between the room and the staircase.

That was where it happened.

Everything that needed to be remembered returned. Not as a thought, not as a conclusion—recognition. As if the knowledge had always been present, hidden for a time, and now revealed again.

The body was still there, clearly felt. At the same time, it was no longer the only form of presence. It became impossible to hold onto.

I was no longer there in the usual sense.

The gaze expanded. Nothing felt separate. Everything belonged to one continuous whole.

Then it unfolded.

I was the one painting on cave walls, and the stone those images were made upon. I was the charcoal in the hand and the movement of that hand. I was the animal and the hunter, the blade and the body. I gave birth to children and died in their arms. I cultivated the land and destroyed the harvest. I built ancient cities and conquered them. I raised walls and burned them down. I created inventions and destroyed them. I discovered new continents and was already there. I went into battle, drove the blade into the body and was the blade, stood on both sides of the trench. I burned inside the tank and looked through the scope. I caused suffering and experienced it, continuing while believing in separation. I created and destroyed, began and ended. I made works of art and loved people and life with a love that had no boundary.

From the beginning of civilization to its end, all of it unfolded through this.

Not through a personality. Not through a name. Through that which moves across all forms, taking shape again and again.

One infinite “I” that forgets.

I am everything. I have always been everything and will be everything—not through this body, but through everything that exists. Even here, on this chest, the movement continues.

I remember again and again through countless lives, forms, identities. One of them awakens, as if emerging from a dream of separation. The music playing in that moment was written by me, for me. The chest I was sitting on was made by me, for me, out of the same substance. And this book was written by me, for me—not as a personality, but as that which moves through everything and can take any form.

## Chapter 14

### Messengers

Sometimes the experience of consciousness moves beyond familiar explanation. It becomes so unusual that the mind tries to reject it. Yet some experiences remain too vivid to dismiss. Even now, I do not tell everyone what happened that night. I choose carefully who to share it with.

One night in Brooklyn, at Unruly Collective, one of those moments occurred. It was Christmas. Ruslan came to visit me—he was living elsewhere at the time. I invited him to trip. We took mushrooms. At first, we stayed among the works, looking at the paintings, walking between them, stopping, returning again.

In that state, a painting reveals something else. It opens. As if a new lens is given for perceiving art. Paintings become spatial, extending inward. Entrances begin to appear, as if portals exist within them. I understood that I was looking at layers of my own consciousness, at the structure of my own psyche. Through art, I was studying myself.

A painting is not just a surface with paint. It is an entrance, a door, a direction of attention. It points toward a specific reality. That is why the artist carries responsibility for the worlds they create. Others enter them.

At that time, I had a wooden piece. My friend, the artist Alex Rupert, had carved it and given it to me as a birthday gift. I painted it with neon and metallic colors. It reflected light in all directions, as if breathing. It resembled a cocoon embedded in wood. I spent a long time looking at it. It felt like a transitional object, directing perception exactly where it needed to go.

The room I lived in was covered with energetic lines. They stretched across the walls, intertwined, like tendrils touching perception. The room had its own reputation—many artists were afraid to live there. The rest of Unruly felt calm, but that room carried a different intensity. It suited me.

When the state began to deepen, Ruslan lay down in the living room on a mat, and I went into my room and closed my eyes—not to rest, but to see. The moment I closed them, a clear internal message appeared: “Got you.” Everything collapsed inward and opened at the same time. I was pulled in.

An intense sequence began—a stream of chaotic, highly detailed imagery, sensations, shifting states. Small figures dancing, forms assembling and dissolving, a continuous flow of structure. It lasted about an hour and completely absorbed attention.

Then an image appeared. At first—repulsive. A psychedelic mole. Distorted, aggressive, almost unbearable to look at. It moved through perception, emitting patterns like a broken analog signal. The reaction was immediate—disgust, resistance—but I did not turn away. I accepted it. I said I loved it, but I wanted to go higher.

It felt like a threshold. The lower layer of the experience, the most difficult forms. Resistance there could leave marks. Acceptance opened something.

The image shifted. It became access.

Then other forms appeared—tall figures resembling praying mantises. Insectoid. In that moment, they felt like architects of perception. The space pulsed—light, dark, light, dark. They appeared, dissolved, returned. Not stable forms, but presences moving in and out of visibility.

My body could not move. I was deep inside the state. They did not speak. The information arrived whole, without language. It was immediate, complete. I remember it clearly—not as sentences, but as something that later translated into words.

This is the closest it can be expressed.

A child sees truth, and then that memory becomes sealed, covered by separation. People forget their connection to the whole, forget what they are. Some remember and participate in the unfolding of a larger process of consciousness. Every person matters in this. If I want something, I must write it down and not doubt it. Doubt blocks manifestation. Curiosity opens access. They respond to those who ask. Those who do not seek remain outside that exchange.

There was another realization. Everything around me is directly connected. Not symbolically—directly. I am looking through everything that happens. The room, the house, the situation—all exist within a field of awareness. Everything unfolds along a trajectory. There was a strong sense of structure, of inevitability. And the presence of those beings carried recognition—they knew who I was.

When the experience began to recede, I returned to the body, but not fully. The world remained fluid. Space continued to move. Forms would not settle. I stepped into the corridor and saw that everything was still shifting.

The paintings were no longer images. They were structures of knowledge. Abstraction revealed depth in a way representation could not. Movement, fractal forms, the behavior of paint—these opened perception more directly. It was not depiction. It was manifestation.

Ruslan and I spoke, and it became clear that he had encountered the same structures—the same beings—even though we had been in separate rooms. We went outside, walked around the block, smoking. It was freezing. The city felt different. The ground beneath us—poured asphalt—was someone's idea made real. The entire city existed as accumulated thought.

A state like that requires integration. The only way to hold it is with people who can meet it at the same depth. Without that, it fragments. I have been fortunate to have people around me who could reflect those experiences back, no matter how strange they sounded.

Each person moves through their own scenario, layered over the larger process of humanity and the planet. That process continues to unfold in real time—through action, perception, thought.

If every participant were to recognize unity at once, the structure would collapse. But it continues.

This is difficult to explain directly. It can be described as symbols, archetypes, forms of transmission. But one thing remains clear: consciousness behaves like a system with many levels of intelligence. Thoughts have structure. Ideas exist before language. Communication can occur through image, symbol, presence.

Consciousness is far more complex than it appears. It speaks in many ways.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Earth as Mother**

Sometimes understanding does not come through thought or imagery. It comes as a feeling—a state in which, for a brief moment, a person stops experiencing separation from the world.

One such moment happened on Breakneck Ridge.

Over time, that place became special to me. We returned there again and again, as if drawn to a point where connection could be felt more clearly—to wash the residue of the city from the body, to step out of its rhythm and return to something more fundamental. Cold Spring became a source we returned to year after year.

That day there were three of us: Ruslan, Romualdas, and me. We climbed hard toward the summit, soaked in sweat, following white arrows painted onto the rock that guided us upward.

At the top, the view opened across the Hudson River, forests, and mountain ranges stretching beyond the horizon. From that height, the world rearranges. The valley, the towns, the roads, human structures—everything recedes. What remains is earth, water, air, and sky. In such moments, scale becomes clear.

We decided to enter a state of unity. Almost immediately, two rainbows appeared. For us, it felt like a confirmation—that we were not there by accident, that we had arrived at the right place.

We are used to seeing the Earth as a background for life, as a surface we move across. But if you stay with it long enough, something else becomes visible. The Earth is not just a place. It is a vast, living system that has existed for billions of years. Mountains rise and erode, rivers change direction, forests appear and disappear, species emerge and vanish. Life does not stop. It transforms.

In that space, a realization formed. The Earth knows. Not as an observer from the outside, but as the process within which everything unfolds. It knows me. It knows where I come from, where I am, what I am doing. It knows the moment my life will end, and it knows every human who has ever lived—from the first breath to the last.

This knowing was not distant. There was no indifference in it. There was acceptance. The Earth accepts all forms of life, all stories, all paths. And what appeared was a feeling that can only be described as love.

Sitting on the summit, I felt the source of that love close, present, almost tangible. The stone in front of me looked ordinary, but the feeling did not come from a single object. It came from everywhere. It was not human love, shaped by expectation or fear, but something steady, quiet, and constant.

The planet is a mother to all living beings. Everything that lives on it belongs to it. A person can feel alone, can believe the world is indifferent. But in that moment, something else became clear. A human is part of a vast system of life. Not outside it, not observing it, but moving within it. Fear loosens. You are not alone. You have always been held.

We stayed until sunset and then began the descent. As usual, we used flashlights to catch the reflective trail markers. The slopes were slick, the path demanded attention. Romualdas had worn boots and forgotten his hiking shoes, which made the descent harder. At one point, he nearly stepped on a snake, but we made it down safely.

Near the Cornish Estate ruins, we found a reflective jacket. We unfolded it carefully, and inside, in Russian, it read: “Go fuck yourself.” Seeing that message there, in upstate New York, felt precise, almost intentional, as if it had been placed for us. It was not the first time a place seemed to speak. The sense was clear: the cycle is complete. You can leave.

We exited the forest, crossed the road, and moved toward the Hudson shoreline. Along a dark path, we reached a series of small beaches. Deeper in the park, we passed the same cave marked I-R-A—a point we encountered repeatedly.

By the water, we found a tipi made of driftwood, likely built by locals. We sat beside it. On one of the beams, a spider had spun a large, precise web. We directed a flashlight toward it, and insects began flying into the light. The longer we held the beam, the more arrived. We kept it steady until the spider found itself at the center of a sudden abundance.

In that moment, something became clear. Those under the spotlight may begin to believe the light is constant. But all light is temporary—even the beam of a flashlight.

Then we moved closer to the water. We sat facing the river, looking at the dark surface and the mountain across from us. The river felt alive. I remembered the name given to it by the Indigenous people—the river that flows both ways.

Before us was something vast and uncontrollable. It moved with a quiet force. Patterns crossed and folded over each other on the surface, forming a shifting structure, as if something immense revealed its presence through motion.

Above us, the sky was filled with stars. Ruslan lay on a mat, putting on his glasses, looking upward, laughing, occasionally flashing his light into the sky. At the time, we did not understand why he laughed. Later he explained:

“When you lie there long enough and look at them, it’s like a curtain opening. At first you see a few, then more, then the entire sky fills. They begin to flicker differently, like they are responding. That’s why I laughed. And I sent something back with the light.”

There was a sense that everything is connected through a single field—an invisible continuity running through all forms. Like an ocean filled with countless beings, yet unified by the same medium.

We are the sensory organs of the planet. Through us, it experiences. It does not hold fixed answers. It asks through us.

Rivers resemble veins within the body of the Earth.

Through our lives, we build connections, like a web forming between points. By changing ourselves, we affect those around us, and through them, the larger structure shifts.

The Earth began to feel like a living being. Billions of systems, processes, forms—yet one organism.

As we had understood before: all of this is not separate.

The deepest realization of that journey became simple. My task is to remind people, through my work, of what we are. We are not outside nature. We are part of it. We are life taking the form of a human being.

To remind myself and others that everything unfolding now is happening within precise conditions. Nothing is out of place. Choice matters. Everything has its time.

The river flows without hesitation. We move within that same current.

Wherever you look, you encounter the same presence again.

After this, I bowed—to the Earth.

A strong wave of gratitude moved through me. For being alive. For breath. For movement. For the ability to feel. For my parents. For my friends. For the women I have loved. For everything that has been given.

This state carried a quiet clarity. A sense of depth that did not need explanation. Something ancient, steady, present.

A blessing to all living beings.

Now I feel the depth of that presence.

And the love that holds everything within it.

## **Chapter 16**

# **The Awakening of the Universe**

When reflecting on consciousness and the process within which we exist, one question inevitably arises: where did it all begin?

In the beginning, there was darkness—everywhere and in everything. An infinite depth. Darkness is not negative. It is the source, the place where everything is born. The womb of emptiness. Without it, nothing could emerge. It is not something to escape. It is the foundation, the primordial substance of all things.

For anything to unfold, there must be space—emptiness. If everything is already filled, there is no room for emergence. From this infinite darkness comes a surge of creation—a powerful expansion of light and color, an explosion of consciousness. Compressed worlds, layers, densities. Infinite variation of forms, structures, and chaos.

The Big Bang can be understood as the moment when thought awakened. A thought appeared—and from a single point, countless universes began to unfold. Not a human thought, but the thought of existence, of the Absolute. It continues now, expanding without end.

Consciousness moves toward darkness—toward what is hidden—to illuminate it and discover what lies within. It requires the unknown. It is drawn to what has not yet been revealed in order to explore through form. In this sense, consciousness is light entering its own depth.

From this movement arise universes and the cosmos. Awareness comes later, after the necessary conditions take shape. Life follows. Thought unfolds into living systems—water, microorganisms, plants, animals, humans. Everything that exists is part of that unfolding. Each part influences the others, creating diversity. A vast field of life with a single root. Nothing exists in isolation. To affect one part is to affect the whole.

Consciousness is a stage within this process—a point from which perception expands. The same impulse that initiated everything now observes through the person reading these lines. A human being becomes a way through which existence becomes aware.

Observation may not be passive. It may be one of the ways reality takes form.

This process is ongoing. We are inside it.

From this perspective, everything perceives—through every possible angle—and in that way participates in what is happening. This is why the image of the eye appears again and again across cultures, and why the idea of an all-seeing presence takes on a different meaning.

Knowing this, can a stone or a piece of driftwood still be considered inert?

Everything participates in knowing by being part of the same process.

And no single perspective contains the whole.

If consciousness has become many, a question remains.

Why did the one become the many?

That question leads further.

## **Chapter 17**

### **Why Consciousness Divided**

If the Big Bang can be understood as a moment of awakening, then everything began from one. The question follows: why did the one become many?

In unity, there is no perspective. A single point contains no distance, no difference—nothing to perceive. To see, there must be separation. Experience requires form. Expansion creates space, space allows distinction, and distinction gives rise to perception.

Consciousness did not break apart. It unfolded. Each form became a point of observation through which reality is experienced. A human perceives through personality—through memory, choice, and the effort to understand what is happening. An animal feels directly, without distance between sensation and response. A bird perceives through movement—through air, direction, and flow. A plant responds through light and water, unfolding gradually into life. The same awareness moves through all of these, becoming conscious of itself in a different way through each. Through countless forms and perspectives, existence encounters its own nature.

It can be compared to light passing through a prism and becoming a spectrum. The source remains unchanged, but variation appears. Multiplicity allows what cannot be perceived within unity alone to become visible. For this to function, each form must experience itself as separate. The sense of “I” appears, a story forms, and with it come fear, desire, and forward movement. This is the condition of experience. Through it, seeking begins, discovery becomes possible, and life unfolds.

At times, this structure opens. Something shifts, and it becomes visible that consciousness is not limited to any single form. Separation is not fundamental; it is a mode of perception. In that moment, a simple understanding appears: nothing has truly divided, everything has unfolded. A human becomes a point through which the whole is seen—a drop that believes itself separate, and then remembers it has always been part of the ocean.

## Chapter 18

### The Primary Impulse of Creation

At times, I experience visions that feel like flashbacks—brief bursts, fragments that seem to exist outside of time, as if drawn from a deeper layer of memory. It raises a question: where do these images come from in someone born in the Soviet Union and living in the United States? The feeling is precise. I am at the beginning. I am sitting at the entrance of a cave, looking out over a savanna.

The sun burns intensely. The air trembles with heat, bending into mirage. Gnats drift slowly through the light. I am barefoot.

Inside the cave, the air is cooler. Shade holds the space. The walls are covered with petroglyphs—animals, antelope, human figures, hunting scenes, rituals, gestures that resemble shamanic acts. White, red, black—the primary palette of prehistoric artists.

At times, the image shifts. I am no longer alone. I am among others, seated near a fire. There is the sound of primitive drums, voices moving in rhythm. Above us, a sky filled with large, bright stars. Life is simple. No civilization, no excess structure. There is balance and belonging—to a group, to a circle, to a lineage. I am part of nature—raw, clean, direct, unforgiving. This is a world of stone, bone, wood, hide, sinew, fire. Everything is immediate. Everything is close.

The image carries both intensity and a strange clarity. It returns repeatedly—a world without borders, without systems, without imposed limits. It feels like a reminder of something fundamental: not identity as a person, but participation in a continuous field of awareness that existed long before individual history. This may be why prehistoric art holds such force. There is no ornament, no market, no calculation. Only direct expression. The act stands on its own. These are the roots of art and of human perception. The same impulse continues.

Around sixty-four thousand years ago, on the wall of a cave in what is now Indonesia, an image appears—a wild pig, a hunting scene. One of the earliest known figurative images made by a human. There may have been earlier ones, but they have not been found. The essential point is not authorship or exact date, but the act—the first mark placed onto a surface.

There is a hypothesis that the earliest images did not come from direct observation, but from visions experienced in altered states of consciousness—states reached through isolation, fasting, or psychoactive substances. In such states, images arise that are not tied to the external world: hybrid figures, anthropomorphic forms, presences, repeating geometric patterns—dots, zigzags, grids.

These patterns appear in rock art across distant regions of the world.

It is likely that prehistoric humans did not live deep inside caves. Daily life unfolded near the entrance. The deeper chambers served another function. They held images. In that sense, these images can be understood as records of experience.

There are other examples. In the Chauvet Cave, images dating back roughly thirty-seven thousand years show a different approach. The artist records the external world—movement, anatomy, behavior of animals. Humans are rarely depicted, and when they appear, they are reduced to minimal, almost abstract forms. It suggests a different orientation: the human not as the center, but as an observer within a larger field.

Human beings give form to both inner experience and the external world.

One of the oldest symbols is the handprint. It appears in caves across continents. A direct gesture of presence: a hand pressed against stone, leaving a mark that states, without language, “I am here.”

Another recurring form is the spiral. It appears in nature and in early image-making—a sign of movement, of unfolding.

There is also a hypothesis of a shared visual proto-language. Humans, separated by vast distances and without contact, created similar symbols—on stone, in deserts, near rivers, in forests. This repetition suggests a common structure of perception, a way of seeing that precedes culture. From this, writing and symbolic systems later emerge.

Experience can exist without symbol. Cult begins with image. Culture develops from cult.

Very little is known about the time before civilization. The meanings of these images remain uncertain. What remains are fragments—bones, traces, surfaces marked with form. The images may have had practical roles: ritual, signal, orientation. They may have been something else entirely.

What is clear is that art has always been intertwined with the emergence of spiritual and symbolic systems. Without image, they would not take shape. At the same time, the act may be simpler than any system that followed—a direct affirmation of existence. A mark left behind.

When I look at prehistoric art, I do not see the past. I see an active process. The same line continues. When I paint, I extend a gesture that began tens of thousands of years ago on cave walls. The medium changes, the impulse remains. To make a mark is to fix presence, to register that something was here.

This is why the role of the artist carries weight. It is not decoration. It is continuation. To create is to participate in a process larger than any individual—to leave a trace, like a handprint on stone, placed by someone whose name is lost but whose gesture remains.

In that sense, this book is also a mark—only formed through language instead of image.

## **Chapter 19**

### **The Archaeology of the Self**

The one who creates often believes he is inventing something new. He takes a brush, a stone, charcoal, or a word and assumes form begins there. Over time, a different understanding appears. Form does not arise from nothing. It is already present. It emerges from depth, as if uncovered. The line comes before explanation. The hand moves first, and thought follows. The knowing is already there; the mind arrives after.

Creation begins to resemble excavation. The artist does not construct from emptiness but removes what obscures what is already formed. Something becomes visible not because it was made, but because it was revealed. This is not about the past. It is about a layer outside of time

that exists within human experience. A structure. The artist moves into it, clears a path, and the form passes through the hands. It assembles, becomes inevitable. At that point, authorship shifts. The work no longer feels centered in the individual. The form continues on its own trajectory.

The archaeology of the self is a way of looking. Creation brings the inner outward. Without it, much remains unrecognized. Form becomes a tool of perception, a method of seeing what would otherwise remain hidden.

I have lived inside this process for years. Moving inward, extracting images and structures that were unknown to me. The deeper the movement goes, the more precise the structure becomes.

Everyone has an entrance inward. For some, it closes early. For others, it remains open. At times, life forces a return to it. When it stays open and what moves through it is expressed, a sense of alignment appears. When it is shut, pressure builds.

These impulses do not disappear. They continue pressing from within, seeking form. When there is no outlet, suppression begins. Alcohol, drugs, and other means reduce perception, dull the movement, silence what is trying to emerge. It becomes a way of muting internal motion while continuing to exist.

The inner space is not fixed. It unfolds through movement. Nothing waits fully formed in advance. Worlds appear through engagement.

I spoke about this with Ruslan and Romualdas at different times. Their responses differed. Ruslan saw a pattern. Romualdas felt something else. If everything is you, he said, then it is a closed system. To him, it felt like a trap. I saw him as someone trying to break through that structure, to move beyond what he perceived as limitation.

My answer was simple. If everything is you, then you are not confined—you are without boundary. There is no edge to that field. Only direction remains. Movement becomes the only question. One can descend into depth, move toward origin, or remain at the surface. Each path is open.

The archaeology of the self resembles excavation on Easter Island. For a long time, only the heads of the moai were visible. Later, excavation revealed full bodies beneath the surface. What seemed partial turned out to be incomplete perception. The same applies here. What is visible is only the upper layer. The structure extends far deeper.

Consciousness has no measurable boundary. It does not end in any direction. It cannot be exhausted. Movement within it carries meaning.

To dig. To look. To extract.

Everything is present.

There is no final point. Only direction, attention, and the impulse to continue.

## Chapter 20

# The Artist and the Shaman

The word *shaman* comes from the Tungusic languages of Siberia and means “one who knows.” This knowledge is not learned through books. It comes through direct contact with what lies beyond the ordinary, often through difficulty. It is a relationship with the unknown.

At the beginning of human history, there was no separation of roles. The same figure carried the functions of healer, artist, guide, and keeper of meaning. He entered the darkness of the cave, moved through altered states, and returned with images, leaving them on the walls.

Later, these roles separated, but the mechanism remained. Perception has depth. Some enter states where reality shifts into a field of images, presences, and meanings. Those who move through that space and return became what we call shamans.

Across cultures, this process is described as a “shamanic illness”—a condition that compels entry. It is not chosen in a simple way. It is a weight that must be carried, and not everyone can withstand it.

I recognize this in my own life.

At times, the impulse to create becomes almost unbearable—a pressure in the mind, a heat that demands release. If I do not give it form, there is no rest. I need to carve into wood, spread paint with a palette knife, shape clay, or make a wide, forceful gesture with a brush. Only then does the pressure subside. Only then does it feel aligned with why I am here.

This is a contemporary form of the same condition. Either you enter and bring something out, or it begins to break you from within. Creative energy requires direction.

Both the artist and the shaman enter a space where ordinary reality loosens its hold. Remaining there is not enough. What matters is what is carried back—what can be held, integrated, and expressed.

The shaman works through the body, voice, rhythm, and form—through costume, symbols, ritual objects. The artist works through line, color, object, and gesture.

The modern shaman does not stop being an artist. He shapes atmosphere, image, and space. The artist does not stop being a shaman. He becomes a mediator between inner and outer worlds, developing a method—through sound, silence, and state.

It is one space, entered in different ways. The method defines the language. The language begins to shape what is perceived.

Among young shamans, there is a practice known as a vision quest—a trial of isolation, often without food or support, where a person seeks direct connection with nature. In that state, a sign appears. A vision confirms the connection.

When I began returning to Cold Spring, when fire erased my studio, when I moved through unstable spaces like Unruly, I understood I was passing through a similar process. Learning to endure. Learning to return with something that can be shared.

I needed immersion in these states to understand what I was doing.

Gradually, my visual language shifted. Sharp angles disappeared. Fragmented lines dissolved. The paintings began to flow. A sense of breathing appeared. The energy became continuous.

This is how Tribal Expressionism emerged—a language beneath words.

Symbols began to form, not as decoration, but as allies. Elements that hold connection.

In the beginning, everything was covered in paint—clothes, objects, the entire studio. It was uncontrolled, open, without boundary. Anyone entering became part of it. Over time, I began painting objects directly. Clothing, shoes, furniture—everything entered the process. The environment stopped being background and became part of the work.

The method changed as well. Movement narrowed. One thin brush remained. Everything concentrated into that point.

Before I begin, I gather the state. Repetitive sound. Rhythm. At a certain point, the mind loosens. Even if noise remains, I continue. Then the shift comes.

There is entry into a space where ordinary perception destabilizes, and a return with something that can be transmitted. It is not always understood, but it is recognized.

To live as an artist requires endurance. A strong psyche. The ability to move through instability—external and internal—without collapsing. To step beyond familiar limits and remain intact.

The artist is an explorer of consciousness, standing at the edge of perception. One who enters silence to encounter form before it appears. A discoverer of states. One who brings something back from beyond language.

The shaman does the same. He enters and returns. Holds the experience. Integrates it so it does not destroy him.

When I stand before the canvas now, both roles are present. I am searching for form, and I am entering the unknown to bring something back.

The artist and the shaman are different names for the same movement—one that goes into darkness and returns with light.

## Chapter 21

### The Tree of Consciousness

Across many cultures, there appears an image of an axis that runs through all levels of existence. It is known as the Axis Mundi—the world axis—a line connecting depth, the visible world, and height. Through it, different layers of reality are linked. Sometimes it appears as a mountain, sometimes as a pillar of light, but most often as a tree. In Norse mythology, it is Yggdrasil, the tree that holds the worlds together. Among the Maya, it is the sacred central tree that defines orientation. In Siberian shamanism, it is the path of ascent between levels of being. In India, it appears as the Ashvattha, an inverted tree with roots extending upward and branches unfolding into the manifest world.

For a long time, I studied petroglyphs of the American Southwest. In many of them, a line runs through the entire composition, stretching from beginning to end. Its meaning remains open, but its presence is clear—a line of connection, a vertical axis linking levels. Names differ, the structure repeats: depth, manifestation, height.

In shamanic cosmology, the world is often described in three layers. Below—the domain of roots, serpents, insects. In the middle—the field of life: humans, animals, plants. Above—eagles, sky, sun, celestial bodies. The human stands between these levels, capable of directing attention downward into depth, upward into height, or remaining within the plane of life. Like a tree, growing upward, expanding outward, deepening its roots.

Each generation becomes a new branch of this structure. Branching strengthens and extends the whole. Old branches fall away, making space for new growth. The same pattern appears in human lineage—family trees trace lines of ancestors and descendants, showing the direction in which life continues.

This image does not explain the world—it reveals its movement. The trunk gives rise to branches, branches divide again, and the connection to the source remains unbroken. The same principle appears in living systems. Circulatory and respiratory systems, neural networks,

lymphatic flows—all follow branching logic. Larger channels divide into smaller ones, forming complex networks.

A similar pattern appears in electrical processes. A discharge does not move in a straight line—it searches, branching in multiple directions. Lichtenberg figures show the traces left when energy passes through material. The path forms according to the same underlying structure.

In artistic practice, this becomes visible directly. When paint is applied to a surface and pressed against another, the imprint produces branching, splitting, repeating lines. The fractal principle appears without intention.

A fingerprint resembles the cross-section of a tree—concentric organization, a record of time embedded in form. The palm reveals intersecting lines that follow the same logic of distribution and connection.

From above, this becomes even more evident. Mountain ranges, coastlines, and river systems preserve similar structures across scale. At the level of the cosmos, the pattern repeats—galaxies form networks of nodes and filaments. Space reveals structure.

In the twentieth century, mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot described these patterns and named them fractals. He showed that forms that appear chaotic follow a repeating principle. As scale changes, the structure remains.

Once this becomes visible, it is difficult to ignore how rarely it is recognized directly. The connection between phenomena stays hidden, despite being present everywhere. Perception shifts. Separation weakens. Continuity becomes apparent.

The fractal, tree-like nature of the world reflects the development of consciousness. This is how it expands. Medieval alchemists expressed a similar idea: what is above is reflected below. In winter, when leaves fall, branches begin to resemble roots. The form inverts while preserving its structure. The tree extends in both directions, the trunk acting as the axis.

Looking at the brain, the same pattern appears. Thought unfolds through branching. Neurons form a network where signals create pathways. Consciousness does not reside in a single point—it emerges through connection. From the outside, this system resembles an expanding field of branches.

One source. From it, countless directions unfold. Each life forms its own path while remaining connected to origin. Consciousness is not fixed. It grows, explores, reshapes.

At times, this becomes direct experience. In an altered state, I perceived myself as a leaf on one of these branches. Others were nearby—those I moved through life with. We emerged from the same current, differing only in form. The younger appeared as new growth, the older as leaves completing their cycle. The movement felt natural, continuous. The moment was brief, but clear.

After that, unity no longer remains abstract. Humanity appears as a continuous process rather than a collection of isolated individuals. Separation exists at the level of form, but does not reach the foundation. Connection remains, even when unnoticed.

Such states can arise without ritual—through creation, concentration, or intensity. In those moments, the boundaries of the self become permeable. Consciousness reveals participation in a branching whole.

Life stops appearing as a sequence of isolated events. It becomes the growth of a single tree unfolding through countless forms, each maintaining connection to the whole.

Fractality permeates everything—from microscopic structures to cosmic scale. From the visible to the subtle, everything unfolds, breathes, and grows. One principle of branching lies at the foundation of all things—from the body to the universe.

## Chapter 22

### Decisions Make Themselves

My friend Darren Smith entered my life at Unruly. We moved through things together—Cold Spring, different places, different states. We lived and worked side by side.

He became a painter there. Before that, he had already moved through other roles—actor, curator—someone who could shift between forms. At the same time, he worked in a social institution connected to child adoption.

Sam and I painted every evening, and gradually Darren joined. When he moved into Unruly, he fell into that rhythm as if it had always been his.

He related to the world in his own way. Instead of greeting people, he often said, “happy birthday.” He collected crystals and minerals and treated them as animated presences, which did not feel strange to me. We spoke about complex things, but always with humor. He moved inside everyday mysticism, in the sense that everything is connected. When he spoke, it felt calm and direct, as if he was not inventing words but letting them pass through. There was something shamanic in him—wild, grounded, without performance.

Over time, our paths diverged. I moved to Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, where my Korean-American friend Sam lived. He offered to share a large studio. A Japanese artist had lived there before and disappeared without explanation. Sam told me to take the space.

The building was called Chicken Hut, at 169 Spencer Street—a former sheep hide processing factory. In the early 2000s, it had been a central point of New York’s underground scene. Every surface carried traces of artists. Exhibitions, performances, layers of work—nothing was untouched. Each floor felt like its own reality. For me, it was a natural environment.

By the time I arrived, most people were gone. It felt like only Sam Jay and I remained. He had shifted his focus to tattooing, working with clients constantly, though we had once painted together intensively. At some point, he lost connection with painting, even after mastering it. He had created hundreds of works dedicated to legendary hip-hop artists. He is part of that visual culture. Once, after a show, he left his paintings on the subway and took it as a sign to stop.

We were both surviving. Helping each other where we could. Without support, without a circle, Brooklyn erases you. After COVID, art barely sold. We improvised, did whatever was necessary to stay in that city—expensive, dense, always on the edge, where everything demands something from you.

Sam is one of my closest friends. Like Alex, Darren, Romualdas, Ruslan—there was a group of us. A brotherhood of people who had not been flattened by routine. Each one moving through their own depth, trying to express it.

Others looked like artists—vintage aesthetics, curated appearances—but even that felt closer than corporate life.

At the same time, the city was changing. Spaces like this were disappearing. The places that held culture were being pushed out. Buildings emptied. Neighborhoods shifted. The city became more polished, more distant from the people who formed it.

When I moved in, I began transforming the space immediately. Painting walls, building a corridor gallery, expanding. At some point, the walls stopped being walls. They became surface.

Everything filled up—petroglyphs, paintings, objects, driftwood, plants, feathers, books, stones, roots. My cat Laska lived there, along with Sam’s cat Juju. No empty space remained. Everything that could be used, was used.

I called it Portal of Balance. The name came naturally. It allowed me to construct a separate reality inside the city—a place where art and nature dominated. A place to reset. To bring in curators, collectors, people who could enter that space.

Over time, it stopped being just a name. The space behaved like a system. It responded. It shifted. It set the rhythm. I was not directing it. I was moving within it.

Much of what filled the studio came from the street. In Brooklyn, people leave behind things that would be kept elsewhere. Paint, canvases, stretchers, equipment—everything waits outside for someone to continue its use.

One of our trips happened there—me, Romualdas, and Darren. Sam was working, tattooing clients.

Darren rolled joints as usual. We painted. He burned aromatic herbs in a hanging metal vessel, moving the smoke with feathers. It felt simple and ritual at the same time. We joked constantly about goats—greatest of all time. Darren even created his own imaginary place—Goatlandia. If someone leaned too far into mysticism, we called them a top shaman.

We took mushrooms—three and a half grams each—placing them on pieces of paper where we had written intentions and questions. Then we entered the state.

We sat on the floor and put on music—psychedelic rock, mantras, ambient sound, sometimes Native American chants. We looked at Romualdas’s work, then mine. The room shifted. It stopped being a room and became a state.

The paintings changed. They felt like objects carrying something we could not fully define. In daily life, they become background. You stop seeing them. In that state, they opened again.

We had written questions earlier. Intentions.

When I took the paper and read them aloud, something broke. The questions sounded small—about style, relationships, money. They felt misplaced, as if they belonged to another level. It was almost as if the mushrooms were laughing—not at us, but at the scale of those concerns.

Perception shifted. It no longer felt like we were observing life. It felt like life was observing us.

My works appeared everywhere—transformed, fluid, alive.

Conversation no longer required effort. It continued on its own.

In that state, it became clear that there is a level where questions dissolve. Not because they are answered, but because they no longer apply.

At some point, we noticed water spreading across the floor. A gallon container had a small hole. The water moved along the uneven wooden beams covered with petroglyphs.

We started joking that Portal of Balance was an art café where the only thing you could order was water.

Then silence.

Someone outside shouted through the open window. It felt like part of the same flow. Darren said it was our cousins outside, joining the conversation. As if nothing needed to begin or end. Everything was already moving.

Then he said:

decisions make themselves.

I was sitting on the floor, drinking from a crushed plastic gallon, laughing until my stomach hurt. That was the moment the image appeared—the water man. A man made of water, moving through water, returning to water. Absurd, but exact. Years later, I see how directly it connects to everything I am writing.

After that, I began to notice something in life. Certain decisions stopped feeling like choices.

They became obvious at the moment they appeared.

And that required no confirmation.

## Chapter 23

### Romualdas

One night at an exhibition at Brooklyn Art Cave, my friend Jonah came up to me and said there was a couple there who spoke Russian. He offered to introduce us. Two people approached—Romualdas and Liza. Long black coats, calm faces. There was something contained and dense about them. Romualdas spoke little.

I asked him to repeat his name—it sounded unfamiliar. He said he was Lithuanian, and that his name was German, meaning “bloody lord.” I nodded. That was enough.

Janhvi was there as well—my friend, a painter, American of Indian descent from Gujarat, twenty-three, recently graduated from CUNY. Wild. A level of freedom that most people could not handle. Many were drawn to her, but very few could stay close.

I had been visiting her before that. We painted together. I helped her—how to hang work, how to think spatially, to see paintings not as isolated pieces but as an environment. She lived two buildings away from Unruly Collective and would come by. Her apartment was its own world—she had sued her landlord and was living there without paying rent.

After the show, Romualdas, Liza, and I took the subway, rode to their stop, and parted. I went back. Somewhere between words, the idea of doing a performance together remained.

Later, they came to Unruly looking for a room. The price was too high. I asked Janhvi if she could take them in. She agreed. They paid and moved in. Not long after, Liza left. We did not understand why at first. Later it became clear that Romualdas had caught Janhvi’s attention.

Around the same time, I ran out of money. I needed a thousand dollars and had no way to get it. For two years I had managed—selling, borrowing, finding paths to continue working. This time there was nothing. A full stop.

I stepped outside Unruly. Two buildings down, Romualdas was sitting on the stoop, smoking. We connected immediately. He offered me a place with them. I called Janhvi. She said yes.

I moved everything. Paintings, boxes, fragments of what had been before. Romualdas helped carry it all. We stacked it into one of the rooms. That is how the three of us began living together.

The apartment was on the second floor, with access to the roof. We would go up and look out over Cooper Street. From there you could see Unruly and the sky. We had no money, but we had space. We stood on that roof as if nothing pressed against us.

One day we pulled a tarot card—the Chariot. It felt like a signal. Something shifted. The rules loosened.

The day I finished moving in, I lay on the roof and looked at the sky. I realized how happy I was.

Janhvi was always in motion—painting, shouting, writing, singing, dancing on the roof, filming videos, collecting objects from the street—masks, fragments—and turning them into clothing and installations. She played a broken accordion she had found somewhere. The walls filled with her work. She showered four times a day. Her state moved quickly—from euphoria to tears to accusation.

Romualdas and I slept on the floor in separate rooms. There was no air conditioning. In summer, the apartment turned into heat. Light came through the roof windows, waking us early.

He could lie on the floor for hours, blasting music, smoking continuously, drinking beer. I painted, rearranged, tried to understand the rhythm inside that environment.

At some point, we decided to fix the state. We took acid. Painted our faces with acrylic. I chose blue—spirals pulling inward. Romualdas chose black—sharp, Nordic runes. He went up to the roof. Janhvi and I stayed below.

After a while, we heard noise—impacts, scraping. I went up.

Lines were tearing across the surface—red, yellow, black. It looked as if the roof could not contain the pressure. He had painted a massive portal. I asked if I understood. He nodded. He was already inside it.

I took white paint. We began working together.

He pushed inward—black lines, density, rupture. I responded with space, white growth, pauses. He scratched the surface with his nails, tearing through layers. The movement was sharp, almost animal. We did not speak.

Janhvi came up, looked at us, said his eyes were demonic, and went back down. We continued.

By morning, the surface had settled. The roof no longer looked torn apart. Everything had come together. We stopped without discussion. His nails were worn down. The mural was complete. Balance.

We did not choose it. We moved inside it.

That edge was not mine. I do not move toward extremes.

Something had passed through two people—through him as rupture, through black; through me as growth, through white. I do not see a human as divided into two opposing parts. That is only a surface layer. Staying there means fighting yourself.

Liza had left at the right moment.

In her place, Romualdas suggested something else—to go upstate and work at a summer camp with Russian kids. Two months. Housing, food, pay.

A few months later, Janhvi's house burned down.

By then, Romualdas and I were already gone.

## Chapter 24

### The Camp

Two weeks later, we left Janhvi. She had cut his paintings with a knife. We left her alone. The camp for Russian children was waiting for us. I went there with curiosity—to see how an unstructured mind approaches creation. As Pablo Picasso once said, every child is an artist.

When we arrived, the counselors were confused. Two painters from the city. We looked out of place. Romualdas wore a large bamboo necklace—you could hear him before you saw him. I walked in red flip-flops shaped like shells. People watched us carefully.

We began working with the children. They grabbed every color at once, mixed everything into a single brown mass, and spread it across the canvas. Out of a hundred, one might return to paint again the next day. That was enough to understand—this path is not for everyone.

We lived in a small cabin. My cat Laska was with me. She kept disappearing into the forest, and there was nothing to control. I let it happen. Sometimes she returned and left something under

the bed—chipmunks, mice. That was when I understood: she had the option to leave, but she stayed.

It was summer. There was income. We worked from morning until late evening. Forest surrounded everything.

I started carrying large stones and built a floor behind the cabin. Then I painted it with petroglyphs. The cabin—an old mobile structure—we cleaned and painted as well. Symbols, markings, fragments. On the door, Romualdas painted a large horned figure. It disturbed people so much that the assistant director kept trying to cover it.

In the main hall, he made a large abstract work with a black figure. I painted portraits of Iroquois figures—on the same land we were occupying.

We each had our own group of children. They did not listen. You had to raise your voice to be heard. I found myself doing things I had never imagined—forcing order, telling them to sleep, threatening consequences.

Then Nika appeared—multicolored dreadlocks, a drifting presence. She entered our orbit without effort.

After work, we went into the forest—me, Romualdas, Nika, sometimes others. Almost every night. The path crossed an iron bridge with an old American flag hanging above it. Before the bridge, there was a cemetery. People from the camp would go there to drink.

Romualdas sometimes lay flat on the ground and spoke from there. We brought a speaker. He played heavy music. For me, the bridge remained different—Radiohead, Everything in Its Right Place. We stayed there for hours, then moved deeper into the forest, sitting on cut stumps. He could lie there as well, trying to sleep. We slept very little. Lived on coffee.

At night, animals moved around us. You could hear them clearly. Sometimes there were sounds that did not match anything familiar. At times it felt like he was no longer speaking from the same place—like he was shifting somewhere else, entering the same state without painting.

On his birthday, he suggested going to a lake marked on the map. Private land. No path. We pushed through thorns. The others fell behind. Only the three of us remained.

We reached a stream. Nika said it scared her. Romualdas struck a tree trunk in the water. I told them we should leave and lit the area with a flashlight. His eyes reflected green. She leaned toward him. I turned and walked away.

On the way out, I heard branches breaking and voices. Owls began screaming. I wanted to go back but could not find the way—only thorns.

That night, I thought: I hope nothing happened out there.

In the morning, they did not show up for work. I was sent to find them. On the trail, a large black snake lay across the path. It moved away slowly. I reached their tent. They came out.

Nika had beaten Romualdas. He could barely stand. He said he had seen spirits of Native Americans, that they had guided them out, that the space had broken. They had come out of the forest at dawn—wet, without clothes.

I never understood what that was.

I stayed in the middle. He moved toward rupture. I held a center point. A human is not an extreme.

We worked there for two months. Many people, many situations. The unexpected part was this—we appeared the most unstable, but we were the least dangerous. Others carried more, but kept it hidden.

We returned to the city. First to New Jersey, to Nika. Katya was there as well. We lived together for a time.

Later, I suggested going to Kaaterskill Falls. The three of us. At a gas station, we pulled a tarot card—death. I noted it and moved on.

We arrived at night. There was a drought. The waterfall had reduced to a narrow stream. I still felt a sense of presence. I went into the water. I mentioned casually that people had died there taking photos.

Nika heard it differently. As a warning. As intention. She convinced Romualdas of the same.

After that, we separated. I argued with Katya and Nika. Later, it became clear how they were making money.

I went back to Sam.

Romualdas stayed with Nika.

## **Chapter 25**

### **Washington Square Park**

After the camp, I moved back in with Sam and rebuilt my space. Some time later, Romualdas separated from Nika, and we reconnected. There was almost no money, and rent was approaching, so we decided to go to Washington Square Park and sell work directly on the ground, laying canvases beneath us.

At the center stood a circular fountain, and its spray reached us and the paintings. The park moved like a continuous current. People came without pause—buyers, tourists, students, unstable figures, addicts. It felt as if everything was flowing through that space, and we were inside it, not separate from it. At times the fountain seemed to set the rhythm, intensifying and quieting without any visible reason.

On the first day, we sold small works for 145 dollars. That was enough for food, cigarettes, and coffee. We returned the next day, and the day after that. The entire summer unfolded in that pattern. We began to treat the fountain as something responsive. We would say, almost jokingly, that it should give us enough to eat. It was not a ritual, not belief, but the pattern held. Money appeared when it was needed. Not always immediately, but consistently enough to notice.

One day, a man in his sixties approached. He stood for a long time, looking at the paintings, then said he had understood something simple—nothing needs to be changed, everything is already functioning. It had taken him his entire life to arrive at that realization. Then he left, and the flow continued.

We sat close to the fountain, and drops landed on the canvases. Some of the paintings kept those marks—pale, uneven traces of water that dried into the surface. We never removed them. They became part of the work, part of the process that was happening there.

Romualdas sometimes stayed at my place. Sam did not like that he was not contributing to rent, but we continued anyway. One day, we crossed paths in the subway. Sam was drunk and started saying that Romualdas should not be staying if he was not paying. At some point, he took a painting from his hands and stepped on it, tearing the canvas.

Romualdas did not react with anger. He hugged him.

Later, I repaired the painting, and he sold it in the park for four hundred dollars. The movement continued without interruption, as if nothing had been broken at all.

The fountain stayed with me. Water rose, fell, and returned to the same body. We sat beside it—two people with no money, paintings on the ground—yet fully inside that same cycle. There was no separation between what we were doing and the environment around us.

Living in the center of the city without money, with paintings laid out on the pavement, changed something in me. It hardened perception and clarified direction at the same time. There was no distance between survival and creation. They became the same movement.

Consciousness and creation did not disappear under pressure. They remained present in everything that was happening—in the drops that fell onto the canvases, in the surface of the paintings, in the way water returned to its source.

# Chapter 26

## Consciousness Looking at Itself

Everywhere you look, you meet other parts of yourself. The entire history of the universe can be understood as a single movement of concealment and recognition, where consciousness unfolds through form—through pain, love, conflict, and silence—in order to encounter its own nature.

If consciousness is infinite and whole, it contains a paradox. There is no position outside of it from which it can observe itself. Vision requires distance, and distance requires perspective. So it does the only thing available—it becomes the observer. It becomes every form through which perception can occur.

It has no center. It is everywhere and nowhere at once. Each point of perception becomes a center in the moment it is experienced. There is no fixed beginning, no final end, no stable division between past and future. Everything exists within immediacy—what is desired and what is rejected, light and darkness, creation and dissolution. Language reaches its limit here.

For some, moving beyond the привычное sense of self feels destabilizing. This reaction is natural. Limitation is not a flaw. It is the condition that allows experience to take shape. Without boundary, there is no distinction. Without distinction, perception cannot arise. Infinity requires form in order to be seen.

Multiplicity emerges. Forms appear. Life develops. Structures become more complex. A brain forms. Thought begins to evolve. At some point, within one of these forms, a question arises: who am I?

That question changes the direction of movement. It turns perception inward. It can be experienced as insight, contradiction, or resistance. But once it appears, the process deepens. Awareness begins to recognize itself through the form that is asking.

There comes a moment when perception shifts. A tree, a bird, another face, your own hands—something in the structure of seeing collapses. Not as metaphor, but as direct experience. The same presence appears through different configurations.

You are not separate from what you perceive. You are not a fragment moving through something larger. You are the field of awareness taking this form in order to experience limitation, separation, and the search for orientation.

Perception becomes reflective. The observer and the observed fold into one process. Attention no longer moves only outward; it begins to recognize the source from which it arises. The boundary softens. The structure resembles two mirrors facing each other, extending without end.

From this, a sense of unity appears—not as sameness, but as continuity. A tree engages through growth and light, an animal through movement and sensation, a human through awareness, an artist through form, a thinker through abstraction. Each is a different articulation of the same underlying process.

What is given returns, because there is no separation between giver and receiver.

Stars burn for billions of years, galaxies rotate in silence, life emerges on a small planet, and within it arises the capacity to question existence. Through that question, the universe begins to observe its own condition.

There is no final goal in this movement. It unfolds through variation, experience, and creation. Forms exist in relation, not in opposition. Yet within this multiplicity, forgetting occurs. The sense of separation intensifies. Identity contracts around form.

Still, the impulse to understand remains.

This is why love is often described as something that transforms. Not as an objective, but as a state in which separation loosens and everything is allowed to exist within a shared field. Much of what appears as conflict emerges from the perception of isolation.

When perception shifts, what remains is recognition. Not explanation, but direct understanding.

The movement toward unity unfolds in two directions at once—an inward return and an outward expansion. Like a river that flows in both directions. Like a departure that is also a return.

A human being is not an isolated entity placed in the universe by chance. It is a point of awareness within a continuous field, shaped by it and contributing to it at the same time.

## **Chapter 27**

### **Integration**

After everything, it became clear that there was nothing left to search for. There was no need. What remained was simply to be.

For most of my life, I was digging—going deeper, pushing inward. Perhaps that psychedelic mole was a reflection of that movement. I searched, questioned, tried to understand, while many around me simply lived. It was difficult to comprehend how someone could move through life

without asking these questions—working, meeting people, eating, passing through days without looking beneath the surface.

Years went by in that direction. One answer led to another question. I built internal structures, spoke to the subconscious and to something beyond it, moved through altered states, read, painted, walked through forests, loved, lost, met people, and lost them again.

At some point, it felt as if I had reached the bottom of a well I had been digging for years. And there, at the bottom, there was water. I had not been searching for water. I was looking for something hidden, something ancient. But in that surface, reflecting in dim light, I saw myself.

The realization was simple. The entire search had been moving toward the one who was searching. Not the personality, but the source of attention. It was not what I expected. I thought there would be something else. There was nothing else. With that, the need to continue searching disappeared.

Everything had always been simple. I was the one making it complex—life, its movement, its expressions. It seemed that depth required complication, but it does not. Simplicity is not reduction. It is precision. Moving from complexity into simplicity is not a loss—it is alignment.

At the same time, something else became visible. People around me had been living all along. Simply living. And within that, there was a depth that did not require explanation.

I remembered a phrase that stayed with us in Cold Spring: accept and release. In a world saturated with information, it becomes a rhythm—like breathing, but in perception. Let things come. Let them pass. There is no need to force clarity. Life unfolds on its own. Within that movement, decisions no longer feel imposed. They arise naturally, as part of the same flow.

Something shifted after that. The urgency disappeared. The need to push toward answers dissolved. Nothing outside changed, but my way of being within it did. I began to observe, create, breathe, and experience without constant tension. There was no dramatic transformation—only alignment. And that was enough.

As for psychedelic substances, it is important to speak directly. This is not for everyone. Without a foundation—without the capacity to create, integrate, and embody experience—it can destabilize rather than reveal. These states open perception, but what opens must be carried, understood, and expressed. Otherwise, it remains unresolved.

Environment matters. People matter. Trust matters. Respect matters. These are not tools for escape or entertainment. They amplify what is already present.

Over time, it became clear that the essential insights had already occurred. What followed was not discovery, but refinement—an increase in sensitivity rather than the arrival of something fundamentally new.

Now I return to those states rarely, only when it feels necessary. The rest of the time, it is enough to live. To breathe. To be here.

## Chapter 28

### Infogate

One day, Ruslan and I went to Cold Spring. As usual, we left the city in the morning and headed toward the mountains above the Hudson. The forecast gave a fifty percent chance of rain, but that did not stop us.

We climbed up and sat on a rock. The river moved below, forests and ridges extending into the distance. We stayed there for about an hour before the rain began. At first it was light, then it intensified quickly until there was nowhere to hide. Ruslan unfolded a sleeping mat and held it over his head, trying to shield himself. We stood on exposed stone under heavy rain and waited.

After some time, the rain stopped. Then something unusual happened. A cloud began to emerge slowly from behind a nearby ridge, moving directly toward us. We watched it without deciding whether to leave or remain. Within minutes, it reached us, and we were standing inside it. The world dissolved into white. Mountains, trees, and river disappeared into fog. Everything became quiet, almost without color.

We stayed there for a while, then continued along the trail toward another peak. Moving through the fog, we checked the time—it was already nine in the evening, yet the sunset had not begun. Ruslan said it felt as if we had slipped out of sequence, as if time had paused or folded. But when we stepped out of the cloud, the sunset appeared. The air had cleared after the rain, the light turned warm, almost golden, and the familiar sense returned—the feeling that everything was connected, moving together.

When it became dark, we descended toward the river. There, another moment unfolded.

It was May. Everything was in bloom. The water had receded far from the shore. Beneath one of the trees lay large flower buds scattered across the ground, arranged as if placed with intention. In front of the tree was a small pile of stones, and from its center stood a flat piece of driftwood.

Infogate.

I asked Ruslan if he saw it. He nodded. The stick stood upright among the stones. It immediately evoked the image of a sword fixed in place. I walked over and pulled it out.

At one end was a deep circular mark where a branch had once grown. Time and water had worn it smooth until it resembled an eye—clear, defined, almost watching. On the other side, carved in clean block letters, was a phrase:

INFO GATE.

I stood there holding it, wondering who had placed it and for what reason. The position mattered. Without the low tide, I would not have reached it. Everything had aligned with precision for it to appear.

We sat by the water for a long time, speaking about it. I took the object with me. Later, I cleaned it, deepened the carved letters so they would not fade, added a few markings. Since then, it has remained near my workspace.

Most people see it as a piece of wood. Nothing more. But the question stayed—why that phrase. It carries almost no meaning and at the same time opens into anything.

But the object is not the point. At some stage, moments like this stop feeling accidental. Not because they contain a message, but because attention begins to register what it previously ignored.

Then something becomes clear. No gate is opening. It has always been there. And you have always been here. There are only moments when this becomes visible, and you pass through without resistance.

## Epilogue

## Remembering

Perhaps everything can be reduced to a single word: remembering.

It is a quiet recognition that returns from time to time. Nothing was ever lost. There was no moment outside of this. Everything unfolds within the same field, while forms and states continue to change.

It seems necessary to search, to reach, to understand. Yet every path returns to what is already present.

It does not arrive from outside and cannot be attained. It is recognized.

You have always been in the same place—the place where everything happens.

There is nothing to hold.

Only life remains.

And sometimes, the awareness of it.