Mindsets

A Cartography of Experience

Ton Haarmans

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| *"What is real is not given; it is made."*

Paul Valéry



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Colophon

Mindsets, A Cartography of Experience
This book is part of the series 'Configurations of Appearance', which explores different ways in which experience organizes itself. Each volume can be read independently.

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Contemporary text-assistance tools were used during the writing process to maintain clarity and coherence; the content, direction, and all decisions remain entirely the author’s own.

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> *"The world we experience is not the world in itself, but the world as taken."*

William James

Prologue

We never enter experience as blank observers. We arrive already moving, already interpreting, already oriented without knowing how. What appears as "the world" has always taken on a certain shape by the time we notice it. It feels immediate, natural, self-evident, as if things simply are the way they seem.

But beneath that familiarity, something quieter is happening.

- Experience is arranging itself.
- Patterns form and dissolve.
- Meaning thickens or thins.
- The sense of self leans forward or pulls back.
- The world gains depth, loses solidity, or shifts its edges without announcing the change.

A mindset is not a belief, not a doctrine, not a philosophy.

It is the unnoticed atmosphere in which everything appears. It is the style in which a life interprets itself.

Most of the time it stays invisible, because it does not stand apart from experience. It *is* experience.

Some configurations feel shared and stable; others are solitary or fragile. Some illuminate, some distort, some overwhelm, some open. They do not compete. They do not form a hierarchy. They do not lead toward or away from any final truth. They simply show the many ways a world can take form.

This book does not present a system or a map.

It gathers glimpses of different terrains — each one a way in which reality becomes what it is for someone at a given moment. These glimpses are incomplete by design. They do not claim authority. They offer only a space in which we can notice the shifting ground on which every life quietly stands.

Worlds change. Perspectives move.

And in those movements, something fundamental is revealed: experience is never fixed, never finished, never bound to one way of appearing.

This book is an invitation to look closely, not to find a conclusion, but to see how many worlds unfold in the simple fact of being alive.



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Introduction:
A World Is Never Just a World

The world never appears as "the world." It always arrives through a configuration that shapes what can be seen, what can be known, and what can be taken seriously. Everything that seems obvious: facts, feelings, concerns, priorities, emerges already filtered through a way of experiencing that usually remains unnoticed. I call this a **mindset**, but the word is too narrow: it suggests a set of beliefs, while what is at stake is the entire architecture through which appearance itself takes form.

A mindset is not chosen. It forms. It governs how meaning is generated, how identity takes shape, how situations become intelligible. It defines what stands out and what remains invisible. It determines what feels real and what never even comes into question. The world that reaches us is never neutral; it is always *configured*.

Most of the time, this configuration stays hidden. We move within it as if it were simply reality itself. Only when coherence

falters, when expectations fail, when perspectives collide, when familiar patterns no longer hold, does it become apparent that the world we took for granted was one configuration among others.

This book treats such configurations not as errors or delusions, but as terrains of experience: coherent, self-organizing ways in which a world comes to appear. Some are widely shared and socially stabilized; others are fragile, intense, or solitary. Some generate clarity; others produce distortion or overload. Each reveals something, each conceals something, and none has privileged access to what the world "really is."

The aim here is not to diagnose, correct, or transcend these configurations, nor to arrange them along a scale of development. It is to describe how they function, how they stabilize, how they shift, and how they shape the sense of self and world that feels given at any moment.

What follows is not a path out of these modes, but an examination of their contingency. Seeing that a world is never just a world does not replace one reality with another. It loosens the sense that any configuration is final. Experience remains structured, but its apparent ground becomes less absolute.In this book, the terms "mindset" and "world" are sometimes used

interchangeably, reflecting the fact that the focus lies on lived configurations of experience rather than on their deeper conditions.

In this book, the terms “mindset” and “world” are sometimes used interchangeably, reflecting the fact that the focus lies on lived configurations of experience rather than on their deeper conditions.

| *"The world is not what I think, but what I live through."*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Part I
Foundations



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The Architecture of Experience

Experience does not arrive as a raw given onto which meaning is later projected. Nor does it present itself as an inner stream observed by an outer subject. What appears is always already structured. This structure is not imposed from the outside, nor consciously designed. It operates silently, prior to reflection, as the condition under which anything can appear as something at all.

This chapter names that condition *architecture*.

Experience Is Not Neutral

There is no neutral experience. Every experience comes with built-in distinctions: inside and outside, foreground and background, self and world, relevant and irrelevant, real and imagined. These distinctions are not conclusions. They are not thoughts. They are functional separations that make experience workable.

Without them, nothing could stand out. Without them, there would be no object, no situation, no problem, no meaning. Experience does not begin as openness. It begins as organization.

Architecture Without an Architect

Calling this structure an architecture does not imply a designer, a planner, or an origin. There is no architect behind experience.

The term points to how experience holds together, not to who built it. Architecture here refers to:

- persistent distinctions,
- stable relations,
- habitual orientations,
- implicit boundaries.

These elements do not appear in experience. They are what experience consists of.

They are never encountered directly, the way a chair or a thought is encountered. They are inferred through their effects: what appears obvious, what becomes questionable, what fails to appear at all.

The World Appears Pre-Interpreted

Experience never presents a world and then asks for interpretation. The world appears already interprete. Not in concepts, but in structure.

- Some things count as causes, others as intentions.
- Some events feel personal, others mechanical.
- Some sensations register as "mine," others as "out there."

This is not a belief system layered on top of perception. It is perception functioning.

The architecture of experience determines:

- what can be noticed,
- what can be doubted,
- what counts as an explanation,
- what feels self-evident.

Meaning is not added later. Meaning is how the architecture operates.

Stability Without Certainty

The architecture of experience is remarkably stable. One wakes up each day in roughly the same world, with roughly the same sense of self, governed by roughly the same expectations. This stability produces the impression of an underlying reality that persists independently of experience.

But *stability is not certainty*. The structure holds for now, not in itself. It works not because it is true, but because it is coherent.

When coherence falters — through crisis, insight, trauma, exhaustion, or sudden clarity — the world does not disappear. What disappears is its obviousness.

This makes something visible: experience does not rest on foundations. It rests on functioning structures.

Mindsets as Architectural Configurations

What this book calls a mindset is not an attitude, an opinion, or a psychological trait. A mindset is a configuration of the architecture of experience.

It is a particular arrangement of basic distinctions:

- how subject and object relate,

- how time is experienced,
- how agency is assigned,
- how meaning stabilizes.

Different mindsets do not merely interpret the same world differently. They instantiate different worlds - each internally coherent, each experientially convincing.

This is why disagreement between mindsets rarely resolves through argument. What is at stake is not a contested conclusion, but a different architecture altogether.

No Final Architecture

It is tempting to assume that beneath all configurations lies a final or correct structure of experience — one that reveals reality as it truly is. I do not support that assumption.

Every architecture that appears — including those described as non-dual, unframed, or awakened — remains an architecture insofar as experience continues to function. Certain distinctions may fall away. Structure itself does not. There is no view from nowhere.

There is no experience without form.

Recognizing the architecture of experience does not grant mastery over it. It offers no control, no liberation, no certainty.

What it offers is orientation.

When experience is seen as structured rather than grounded, as functional rather than fundamental, the urgency to defend one configuration over another may loosen. Mindsets become describable and comparable, not because one can step outside experience, **but because one stops mistaking a temporary architecture for reality itself**.

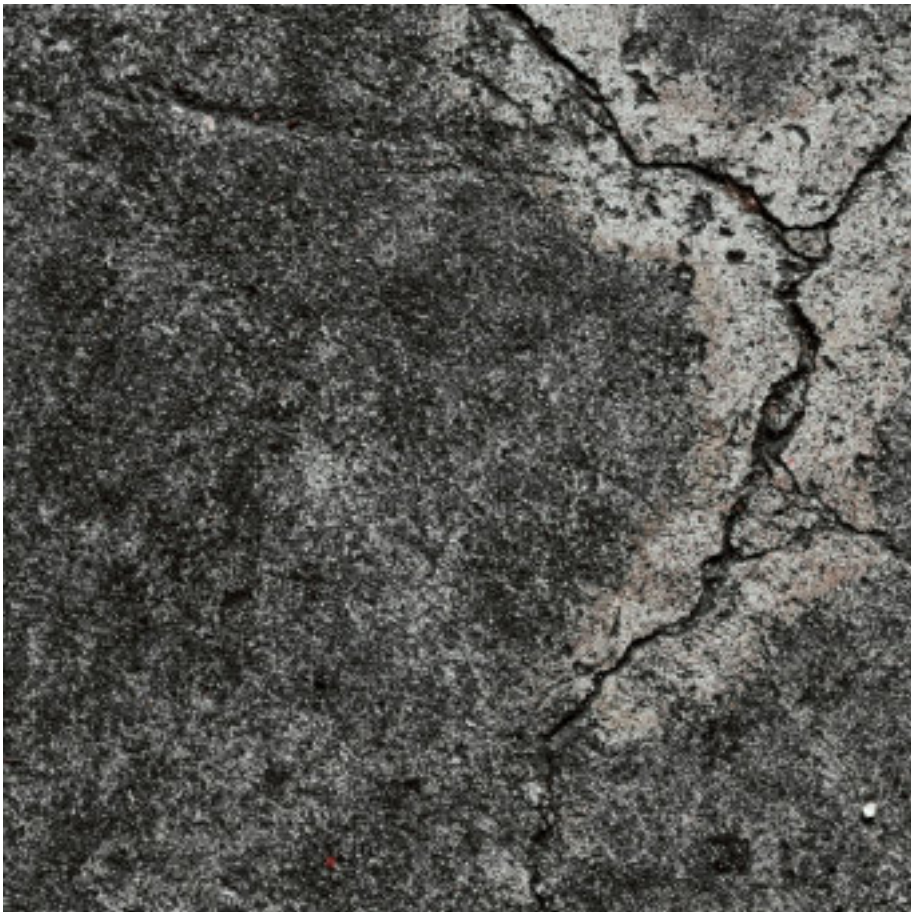


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Development Without Direction

Development is usually understood as movement toward something. Toward maturity, clarity, integration, or insight. Toward a more complete or more accurate way of experiencing the world.

This book does not adopt that view. Experience develops, but it does not progress. It changes form without moving toward a final configuration.

No Built-In Destination

There is no endpoint embedded in experience itself. Biological growth has trajectories. Skills improve through practice. Social roles come with expectations.

But the development of experience, meaning the way a world comes to appear as coherent, meaningful, and real has no built-in direction. There is no latent "adult" architecture waiting to unfold. No optimal structure toward which experience naturally matures. What develops is not truth, but workability.

From Function to World

Early configurations of experience are functional before they are reflective. They reduce uncertainty, establish basic distinctions, and allow interaction to stabilize. A sense of self forms not as an insight, but *as a practical center of orientation*. A world appears not as a representation, but as a field of relevance.

Over time, these configurations may:

- expand or narrow,
- refine or simplify,
- reorganize or fragment.

None of these movements imply improvement in any absolute sense.

A mindset does not develop by becoming more accurate. It develops by remaining workable under changing conditions. What counts as "growth" is always defined from within a given configuration.

Adaptation Without Advancement

Development responds to pressure. Social demands, emotional strain, conceptual overload, bodily limitation, or existential disruption may place demands on an existing architecture that it can no longer absorb. When this happens, experience reorganizes itself.

This reorganization can take different forms:

- tightening, through increased control or rigidity;
- loosening, through reduced boundaries or narrative coherence;
- reconfiguration, through the emergence of a different organizing pattern.

None of these outcomes is inherently superior. A tightened structure may be more survivable than an open one. A simplified worldview may be more stable than a nuanced one. A collapse may be clarifying — or debilitating.

There is no universal metric by which these movements can be ranked.

Development Can Reverse

Experience does not only complexify. Under conditions of stress, illness, trauma, or exhaustion, architectures may simplify, harden, or revert to earlier functional patterns. This is often described as regression.

From the perspective of experience itself, it is adaptation. A childlike configuration is not primitive. A rigid configuration is not inferior. They are responses to conditions, not stages on a ladder.

How Direction Is Added After the Fact

Direction enters development through narration. Cultures, therapies, educational systems, and spiritual traditions tell stories about where one is supposed to end up: integration, awakening, self-realization, maturity. These narratives do not describe development as it occurs. They orient it. They act as attractors. By promising meaning at the end of a path, they reshape experience in the present. The path does not exist before the promise.

The Illusion of Progress

When experience reorganizes itself, the new configuration often renders earlier ones less intelligible or less compelling. From within the new architecture, the previous one appears limited, confused, or incomplete. This creates the impression of progress. But what has changed is not access to reality. It is the criteria by which experience organizes itself. Later configurations do not include earlier ones in a higher synthesis.

They replace them.

The sense of having "moved forward" is an effect of changed relevance, not evidence of advancement.

Development Without Arrival

To say that development has no direction is not to say that nothing changes. It is to say that change does not converge.

Experience continues to reorganize itself as long as it must remain workable. It stabilizes, destabilizes, and stabilizes again, without moving closer to a final form.

There is no configuration that brings development to an end.

What appears instead is a succession of architectures, each convincing while it functions, each provisional, each contingent on conditions that could shift again.

If development has no direction, then no configuration can claim authority on the basis of having arrived later. There is no vantage point from which earlier modes can be judged as inferior or immature. This does not flatten experience into sameness. It sharpens description.

Without a presumed destination, attention shifts from where experience is supposed to go to how it actually functions. Stability replaces truth as the primary criterion. Breakdown becomes informative rather than pathological. Change is seen as reorganization, not ascent.

Development without direction does not lead nowhere. It leads wherever experience can still hold together.



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The Myth of “Higher Awareness”

The idea that awareness can be higher or lower is deeply ingrained. It appears in psychology, spirituality, philosophy, and everyday language. Awareness is said to deepen, expand, awaken, or mature. Experience is placed on a vertical axis, and movement along that axis is taken to indicate progress.

Awareness Is Not a Quantity
Awareness does not accumulate. It does not increase the way knowledge or skill increases. One does not possess more awareness than another person in the way one possesses more information.

What changes is not the amount of awareness, but the configuration through which experience is organized.

To call one configuration “higher” is not to describe experience. It is to evaluate it.

The Authority Hidden in Height
Whenever awareness is ranked, authority follows. A perspective is assumed to be broader, clearer, or closer to reality. Other

perspectives are implicitly positioned as partial, confused, or immature. This authority does not arise from verification. It arises from structural self-confirmation.

From within a given configuration, its own clarity feels self-evident, while alternatives appear distorted or limited. This is not insight. It is how experience stabilizes itself.

Expansion Is Not Depth

Experiences often described as "higher awareness" commonly involve expansion: fewer boundaries, less identification, greater immediacy, or a weakening of narrative selfhood. These shifts can be intense and convincing. They may bring relief, openness, or clarity. But expansion is not depth.

A narrowed focus can reveal fine-grained detail. A strong sense of self can support responsibility and care. A constrained structure can make sustained engagement possible.

No configuration optimizes all dimensions at once.

Retrospective Privilege

After a shift in configuration, earlier modes of experience often appear naïve, limited, or incomplete. This creates the impression

that the later configuration includes or transcends the earlier one. It does not. It replaces it.

The sense of having "outgrown" a previous mode does not indicate higher awareness. It indicates a change in what now functions as relevant or compelling.

No Awareness Without Structure

Even experiences described as "pure awareness," "non-dual presence," or "unmediated seeing" are structured. Certain distinctions are suspended or lose salience: subject and object, inside and outside, self and world.

Suspension is not absence. It is a specific configuration in which some distinctions no longer operate. As long as experience appears at all, structure remains.

There is no awareness outside architecture.

Why the Myth Persists

The myth of higher awareness persists because it performs essential functions. It:

- legitimizes certain experiences,
- stabilizes communities,

- provides direction,
- protects against uncertainty.

Most importantly, it converts contingency into destiny. A temporary configuration is framed as an endpoint.

The Cost of Verticality
Belief in higher awareness carries consequences. It:

- discourages careful description,
- pressures experience to conform to expectation,
- creates subtle hierarchies of worth,
- transforms confusion into failure.

Experiences that do not fit the vertical narrative are discounted, pathologized, or spiritualized.

A Flat Ontology of Experience
Here a flat ontology is adopted. No configuration stands closer to reality than another. None possesses privileged access. None sits above the rest. Some configurations are more stable. Some are more inclusive. Some are more tolerable under certain conditions. None are higher.

What Remains Without Height

Removing verticality does not collapse experience into relativism. It sharpens attention. Without higher and lower, the focus shifts to:

- how configurations function,
- what they enable,
- where they fail,
- how transitions occur.

Ranking gives way to mapping. Aspiration gives way to description.

The idea of higher awareness is comforting. It promises that confusion is temporary, that suffering is a stage, that clarity awaits. Letting go of that promise can feel like loss.

What is lost is not truth, but orientation by *projection*.

What remains is experience as it is: structured, contingent, and sufficient to itself.



Photo by Sándor Bányai on Unsplash

The Return of Hierarchy

Even after hierarchy has been conceptually dismantled, it returns. Not because of ignorance. Not because of bad faith. But because experience itself tends to rebuild distinctions that stabilize orientation.

Hierarchy as a Functional Reflex
Hierarchy does not begin as ideology. It begins as comparison.

Experience continuously differentiates: clearer and less clear, stable and unstable, workable and unworkable. These differences are not judgments. They are functional assessments that allow experience to orient itself.

The moment difference becomes salient, ranking is close behind. What feels more stable appears preferable. What feels expansive appears superior. What feels coherent appears true.

Hierarchy emerges as a reflex of organization.

Language Rebuilds the Ladder
Even when explicit ranking is rejected, language quietly reintroduces it.

Words such as:

- clearer
- deeper
- more open
- less identified
- less reactive

do not merely describe differences. They imply direction.

Even the claim to be "non-hierarchical" easily becomes a criterion by which positions are silently ordered. One configuration is now valued for having no values.

Hierarchy returns through grammar!

Stability Masquerades as Truth

Configurations that stabilize experience tend to present themselves as more fundamental. When a mindset holds without friction, it feels grounded. When doubt subsides, reality appears self-evident.

This stability is easily mistaken for truth. Yet stability only indicates that an architecture is currently functioning. It says nothing about its scope or necessity. What feels most real is often simply what resists disruption.

Communication Produces Authority

Hierarchy also returns through communication. To describe experience is already to occupy a position. To name patterns is to shape attention. To map configurations is to stand somewhere from which mapping becomes possible. This does not require intention. Authority arises from articulation itself.

The one who speaks appears to see. The one who sees appears to know. The one who knows appears to stand higher. Hierarchy is reconstituted in the act of explanation.

Anti-Hierarchy as Hierarchy

Attempts to abolish hierarchy often generate subtler forms of it. Positions that reject ranking may still:

- privilege openness over structure,
- value fluidity over stability,
- prize uncertainty over conviction.

These preferences reintroduce hierarchy under different terms. The issue is not preference itself. The issue is invisibility. Unacknowledged hierarchy is more persuasive than explicit ranking, because it appears neutral.

Hierarchy Cannot Be Eliminated

Hierarchy cannot be permanently removed because experience requires orientation. Orientation demands differentiation. Differentiation invites comparison. Comparison tends toward ranking.

As long as experience continues to function, distinctions will arise that feel more central, more relevant, more compelling than others. The question is not whether hierarchy will appear, but whether it is recognized as provisional.

The Cost of Denial

When hierarchy is denied rather than examined, it hardens. It becomes moralized, implicit, or structural. It organizes interaction without being available to reflection. Disagreement is reframed as resistance. Difference becomes deficiency. What was meant to free experience begins to constrain it.

Making Hierarchy Visible

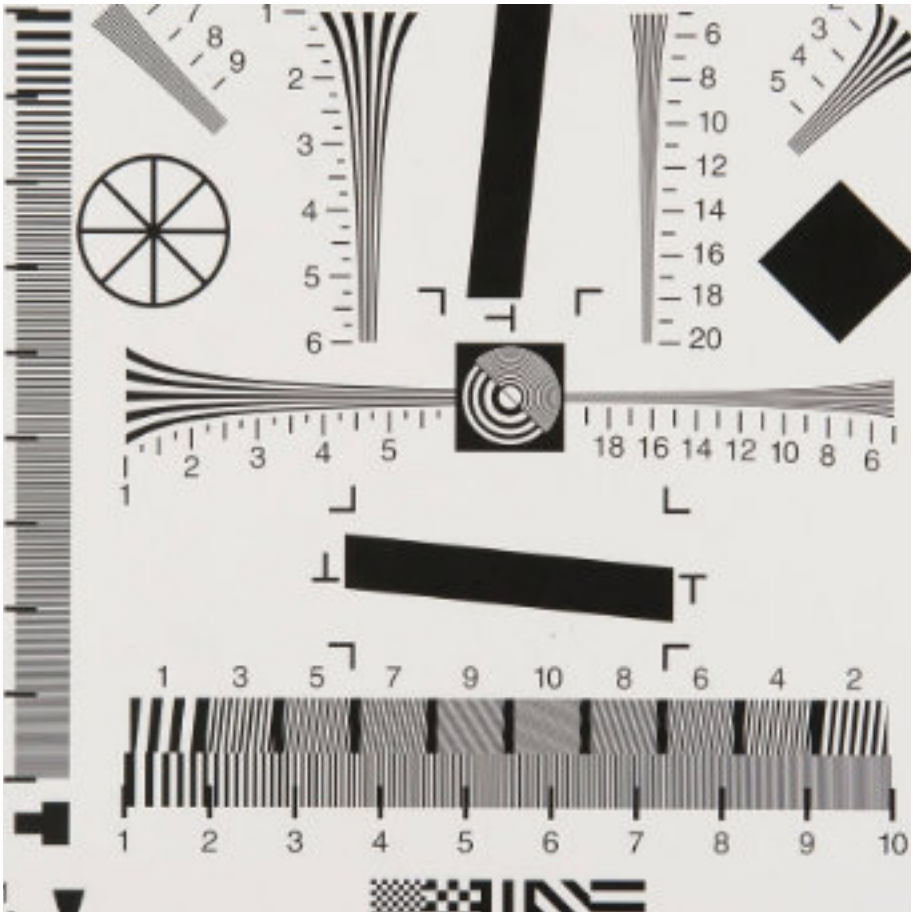
I do not propose to abolish hierarchy, but expose it. Hierarchy becomes less coercive when it is seen as contingent. Less dangerous when it is named. Less persuasive when its function is understood. Visibility does not dissolve hierarchy. It loosens its grip.

After the Return

Recognizing the return of hierarchy prevents a final illusion: the belief that one now stands outside the dynamics described.

This chapter does not exempt the author. It does not exempt the reader. It does not exempt the book itself. Hierarchy will reappear wherever experience stabilizes.

The task is not to escape it, but to notice when it quietly installs itself as necessity. Only then does mapping remain possible without turning into a ladder.


1 2 3 4 5 6
6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20
8 9
3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5
18 16 14 12 10 8 6
1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What Mindsets Are Not

The term 'mindset' is often used loosely. It is easily confused with personality, character, culture, or typological systems such as the Enneagram or the Michael Teachings or more 'official' theories of personality (see for instance https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality_type).

A mindset, as used here, is not a trait, not an identity, and not a type of person. It is a temporary configuration of experience: a way in which perception, meaning, self-reference, and interpretation momentarily cohere into something that feels like "a world."

To prevent misunderstanding, it is important to state clearly what mindsets are not.

Mindsets are not personality
Personality refers to relatively stable patterns of behavior, temperament, and preference. Whether described through traits, dimensions, or profiles, personality theories assume continuity: this person tends to be like this.

Mindsets, by contrast, are not owned by persons. The same individual can move between radically different mindsets, sometimes within minutes, without their personality changing in any meaningful sense. A person does not have a mindset in the way they have a personality.

A mindset happens.

Mindsets are not character

Character implies moral weight: virtues, flaws, strengths, weaknesses. It carries an implicit normativity—how someone ought to be. Mindsets are non-moral.

They do not indicate maturity, integrity, depth, or failure. A mindset may be functional, dysfunctional, pleasant, unpleasant, coherent, chaotic—but none of these make it better or worse as a mindset.

Mindsets are here not evaluated ethically, but how they operate.

Mindsets are not culture

Culture shapes language, norms, symbols, and shared meanings. Cultural frameworks strongly influence which mindsets are likely to arise and how they are interpreted.

But culture is not the same as a mindset.

A mindset can cut across cultures, appear briefly within them, or even run counter to them. Likewise, a single culture supports many different mindsets simultaneously.

Culture provides materials. Mindsets are configurations of how those materials are taken up in experience.

Mindsets are not typologies (Enneagram, Michael Teachings, etc.) Typological systems classify people. Whether psychological, spiritual, or esoteric, they aim to answer the question: what kind of person is this?

Mindsets answer a different question altogether: what kind of world is appearing right now? Typologies assume:

- relative stability,
- identifiable categories,
- explanatory power about behavior and motivation.

Mindsets assume none of this. They are transient, overlapping, often contradictory, visible only from within experience itself.

A person associated with one Enneagram type or Michael role can pass through many mindsets, including ones that contradict the expectations of that type.

This book does not compete with typologies. It simply operates on a different level.

Confusing mindsets with personality, character, or typology leads to predictable errors:

- treating mindsets as identities,
- ranking them hierarchically,
- trying to cultivate or inhabit them permanently,
- mistaking temporary coherence for insight or truth.

This book resists those moves deliberately.

Mindsets are not answers. They are conditions under which answers appear plausible.

The Phenomenological Mindset

(On the stance from which this book is written)

The descriptions in this book do not arise from a neutral position.

They are written from within a particular stance toward experience — one that does not seek to explain, justify, or resolve what appears, but to observe how appearance itself takes form.

This stance may be called *phenomenological*, not in the academic sense of a defined method or tradition, but as an orientation: a sustained attentiveness to how experience organizes itself, prior to belief, interpretation, or metaphysical commitment.

From within this orientation, experience is not taken as a given fact, nor as a veil over an underlying reality. It is taken as what appears, structured in specific ways, under specific conditions. Meaning is not assumed to be inherent, nor dismissed as illusory. It is examined as something that emerges through configuration.

This mindset does not offer a worldview. It withholds one.

It does not claim access to how things truly are. It remains with how they are experienced and with the recognition that this experiencing is always already organized. Subject and object, self and world, inner and outer are treated not as truths, but as functional distinctions that may hold, loosen, or dissolve depending on the configuration at hand.

What distinguishes this orientation from other mindsets described here is not greater clarity or depth, but a particular restraint. It resists the impulse to settle into explanation, belief, or conclusion. It does not attempt to replace one world with another, nor to arrive at a final position from which all others could be judged.

For this reason, the phenomenological mindset cannot be inhabited as a stable world in the same way others can. It is not a place to stand, but a way of looking that remains provisional. It operates by making worlds visible — including its own — without exempting itself from contingency.

This book does not ask the reader to adopt this stance. It merely makes explicit the orientation from which its descriptions arise.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

When a Configuration Hardens

Not every form of certainty belongs to a mindset. What is often called *fanaticism* is not a configuration of experience alongside others. It is what happens when a configuration loses contact with its own provisionality.

A mindset organizes experience by stabilizing distinctions. It allows a world to appear as coherent, workable, and real. As long as this organization remains flexible, experience can adapt. Assumptions remain implicit, but not absolute.

Hardening begins when this flexibility collapses. When distinctions are no longer functional but defended. When coherence is no longer provisional but necessary. When doubt is no longer informative but threatening.

At that point, a mindset does not change into another mindset. It shifts into a mode of closure. This can occur within any configuration.

A religious orientation may harden into dogma. A scientific orientation may harden into scientism. A pragmatic orientation may harden into rigid normality. A contemplative orientation may harden into subtle superiority. And a spiritual orientation may harden into experiential immunity.

The structure is the same. Only the content differs. Hardening is marked by several recurring features:

- loss of curiosity about one's own assumptions,
- identification with a configuration as identity,
- moralization of difference,
- resistance to disconfirming experience.

What hardens is not belief, but orientation. Fanaticism, in this sense, is not excess conviction. It is the disappearance of structural self-awareness. A temporary architecture is no longer experienced as temporary. It presents itself as reality itself.

Fanaticism is here not treated as a mindset, because it does not generate a world of its own. *It closes an existing one*.

Mapping mindsets without acknowledging this risk would create a false neutrality. Every configuration described in this

book, including those most associated with openness, remains vulnerable to closure.

What follows in the cartography is therefore not a catalogue of positions, but an exploration of how worlds function, and how easily they forget that they are worlds.

| *"The map is not the territory."*

Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity (1933)

Part II
Cartography



Photo by Ton Haarmans

Thresholds as Features of Experience

Mindsets do not usually change by decision. They shift when an existing configuration can no longer hold what appears. A threshold is not a point one reaches. It is a condition that arises.

Thresholds Are Not Chosen
A mindset does not step aside because it is disproven. It gives way when its organizing distinctions stop working. This can happen gradually or abruptly. Through accumulation or rupture. Through pressure that exceeds what the current architecture can absorb. What changes is not a belief, but coherence.

When Coherence Falters
Every configuration maintains itself by rendering experience intelligible. As long as events, sensations, and meanings align, the world feels given. A threshold emerges when this alignment weakens.

Signs include:

- growing effort to maintain certainty,

- increased rigidity or defensiveness,
- persistent ambiguity that cannot be resolved,
- fatigue from sustaining explanations that no longer satisfy.

These are not failures of understanding. They are indicators of structural strain.

Breakdown Is Informative

Breakdown is often treated as pathology. In experiential terms, it is diagnostic.

When a configuration falters, what becomes visible is not chaos, but the limits of organization. The world does not disappear; its ordering principles lose authority.

This exposure can feel unsettling, disorienting, or liberating — depending on circumstances and temperament.

What matters is not the feeling, but the shift in what counts as obvious.

Types of Thresholds

Thresholds do not follow a single pattern. They can arise through different conditions.

Cumulative thresholds emerge through repetition: unresolved tensions, recurring contradictions, or sustained mismatch between expectation and experience.

Event thresholds arise from rupture: loss, trauma, insight, illness, or sudden clarity.

Relational thresholds occur through encounter: exposure to another configuration that renders one's own assumptions visible.

Reflective thresholds emerge through sustained inquiry that gradually erodes what once felt self-evident.

No threshold guarantees transformation. Some lead to reorganization. Others lead to retrenchment.

Reconfiguration, Not Transition

It is tempting to describe mindset shifts as transitions from one position to another. This language suggests movement along a line. What actually occurs is *reconfiguration*.

The same elements — body, memory, language, environment — are reorganized under different priorities. Some distinctions dissolve; others gain prominence. What was background becomes figure. What was central becomes incidental.

The resulting configuration may feel new, familiar, or oddly neutral. There is no intrinsic direction to this change.

Resistance and Return
Not all thresholds are crossed. Often, experience responds to strain by reinforcing existing structures. Certainty tightens. Explanations harden. Ambiguity is reduced through simplification. This is not avoidance. It is stabilization. A threshold does not demand crossing.

It demands response.

The Illusion of Irreversibility
After a reconfiguration, it often feels as though the previous mindset could never return. This impression is misleading.

Under different conditions like stress, fatigue, threat, or context, earlier architectures may reassert themselves.

Thresholds are porous. Shifts are reversible. Configurations overlap. What appears decisive is often provisional.

Thresholds Without Privilege
No threshold grants access to a higher standpoint. A shift may dissolve certain problems while generating others. It may

simplify experience or complicate it. It may reduce suffering or intensify it.

What matters is not arrival, but function. A configuration holds as long as it organizes experience sufficiently. When it no longer does, another may emerge.

Mapping Thresholds

To map thresholds is not to predict change. It is to recognize where change becomes likely. Thresholds mark:

- points of instability,
- zones of overlap,
- moments where meaning reorders itself.

They are not gateways to truth. They are sites where experience renegotiates its form. Understanding thresholds does not grant control over them. It clarifies why shifts occur without intention, and why they cannot be forced.

Mindsets change not because they should, but because they must — or because they no longer can.



Photo by Ton Haarmans

Overlapping Worlds

Mindsets rarely appear in isolation. What is lived is almost always a mixture. Configurations overlap, interpenetrate, and partially contradict one another. A single moment of experience may be organized by multiple patterns at once, none of which fully dominate. The idea of a pure mindset is a cartographic convenience, not an experiential reality.

Hybrid Organization
Experience often functions through hybrid organization. One set of distinctions may govern practical action, another emotional response, and yet another reflective interpretation. A situation may feel threatening while being judged as harmless. A belief may be rejected while its emotional structure remains active. A sense of self may dissolve in one context and reassert itself in another. These are not inconsistencies. They are the normal operation of overlapping architectures.

Layered Coherence
Overlaps do not produce chaos by default. They often result in layered coherence. Different configurations may stabilize different domains of experience:

- bodily orientation,
- social interaction,
- conceptual interpretation,
- symbolic or affective meaning.

As long as these layers do not directly conflict, experience remains workable.

Tension arises when overlapping configurations impose incompatible priorities.

Hybrid Worlds Under Pressure

Under pressure, overlaps become more visible. Stress, novelty, or disruption can activate configurations that normally remain backgrounded. What felt unified begins to fracture. Multiple logics compete for authority. This can manifest as:

- ambivalence,
- hesitation,
- oscillation,
- or sudden shifts in tone or perception.

Such moments are often misinterpreted as indecision or confusion. Experientially, they are signs of concurrent organization.

Partial Shifts

Because configurations overlap, shifts are often partial. A threshold may reorganize one domain of experience while leaving others largely intact. One may adopt new conceptual frameworks while retaining older emotional patterns. Or emotional responses may shift while habitual interpretations persist.

This explains why change often feels incomplete. What has shifted is not "the mindset," but a subset of organizing patterns.

Misplaced Expectations of Consistency

Expecting internal consistency across all domains of experience is itself a mindset-specific assumption.

Consistency is not a baseline condition of experience. It is an achievement of particular architectures.

Hybrid worlds expose this assumption by making inconsistency visible. Rather than indicating failure, such inconsistency reveals the modular nature of experiential organization.

Hybrids can Stabilize
Some hybrid configurations persist and stabilize. They become recognizable modes of experience in their own right. These hybrids are not transitional. They are workable arrangements under specific conditions. What appears incoherent from one configuration may function effectively within another.

Mapping mindsets requires abstraction. Boundaries must be drawn where experience itself is fluid. This does not invalidate the map, but it limits its reach.

Overlaps remind us that:

- configurations are not discrete entities,
- boundaries are porous,
- and experiential life resists clean partitioning.

Cartography must therefore remain provisional.

Avoiding Reification
When mindsets are treated as fixed types, hybrids appear as deviations or impurities. This reintroduces hierarchy by stealth. Recognizing overlap prevents this move. Hybridity is not an

exception to be explained. It is the default condition of lived experience.

Hybrid Worlds and Agency

In hybrid configurations, agency often feels distributed. Different impulses pull in different directions. Action may feel delayed or fragmented. This does not imply a deficit of will. It reflects concurrent organizational demands. Agency itself is an emergent effect of configuration, not a central command.

After the Overlap

Hybrid worlds do not require resolution. They may persist, reorganize, or dissolve depending on circumstances. Forcing coherence where it is not functional often increases strain. Recognizing overlap allows experience to remain flexible without demanding unity.

What mapping offers here is not clarity through reduction, but orientation within complexity.



Photo by Decry.Yae on Unsplash

Misreadings Across Worlds

When configurations overlap, they are rarely recognized as such. More often, they are misread. What appears is interpreted through the dominant architecture at hand, which attempts to absorb unfamiliar patterns into its own logic. This produces distortion. Crossings are not failures of intelligence. They are effects of incompatible organization.

Crossing Without Translation
When one configuration encounters another, it does not perceive it as a configuration. It perceives it as content. What is actually a different mode of organization is read as:

- error,
- confusion,
- pathology,
- immaturity,
- or transcendence.

The receiving mindset assumes that its own structure is neutral. Difference is attributed to deficiency or excess in the other. This is how misreading begins.

Pathologizing the Unfamiliar

In many contexts, unfamiliar configurations are framed as dysfunction. Experiences that do not align with dominant norms of coherence may be labeled:

- irrational,
- unstable,
- dissociated,
- delusional.

This framing may offer practical intervention. It may also obscure what is actually happening. What is treated as disorder may be a configuration operating under different priorities. This does not deny suffering. It locates it structurally rather than morally.

Spiritualizing the Disruptive

Misreading also occurs in the opposite direction. Disruption, fragmentation, or loss of coherence may be reframed as spiritual

breakthrough. Instability is interpreted as awakening. Disorientation becomes insight. This translation reassures. It also conceals risk. What is read as transcendence may be a configuration under strain, reorganizing without support.

Moralizing Difference

Crossings frequently acquire moral weight. One configuration is deemed more authentic, more awake, more grounded, or more responsible. Another is seen as avoidance, resistance, or fear. These judgments arise not from evidence, but from structural incompatibility. Moralization freezes crossings into conflict.

The Problem of Advice

Advice almost always assumes a shared architecture. What counts as helpful guidance in one configuration may be meaningless or harmful in another. Calls to "let go," "take responsibility," "be present," or "think rationally" presuppose specific organizational capacities.

When advice fails, the recipient is often blamed. The possibility of incompatible configuration is rarely considered.

Crossing as Threat
Configurations protect themselves. When confronted with an incompatible organization, a mindset may experience threat rather than curiosity. Its distinctions feel undermined. Its coherence wavers. Defensiveness, dismissal, or ridicule often follow. This is not personal. It is architectural self-preservation.

Hybrid Crossings
Misreading also occurs within hybrid worlds. One layer of organization interprets another incorrectly. Emotional response is judged by conceptual standards. Bodily signals are overridden by narrative expectation. Reflective insight dismisses affective reality.

Internal conflict is not a failure of integration. It is a crossing without translation.

Translation Is Not Conversion
Recognizing a crossing does not require resolving it. Translation means understanding how a configuration functions, not converting it into another. It does not seek agreement. It seeks intelligibility. This requires suspending the assumption that one's own architecture is the baseline.

Mapping Crossings
Mapping crossings reveals predictable zones of misunderstanding:

- between analytical and symbolic worlds,
- between stabilized and destabilized configurations,
- between individual and collective orientations,
- between coherence-seeking and openness-seeking modes.

These zones generate recurring conflict, misdiagnosis, and false hierarchies. Seeing these patterns does not prevent crossings. It prevents mistaking them for something else.

After the Misreading
When crossings are recognized as architectural rather than personal, some tension may ease. Communication becomes tentative. Judgment loosens. Not because agreement has been reached, but because difference has been re-situated.

What remains is not harmony, but clarity about what is and what is not being shared.



Photo by MChe Lee on Unsplash

What a Mindset Reveals

After thresholds, overlaps, and crossings, it becomes possible to describe mindsets without turning them into types or destinations. A mindset is not a lens applied to a neutral world.

It is the way a world comes into view in the first place.

What appears obvious, natural, or self-evident does not precede the mindset. It arises through the configuration by which experience organizes itself.

A World Appears, Not THE World
What a mindset reveals is never "the world." It reveals a world-appearance: a coherent field in which relevance, meaning, and concern align in a particular way. Within such a field: some things stand out, others recede, some never appear at all.

This is not selective attention applied to a shared reality. It is reality appearing as structured.

Assumptions as Structure
A mindset reveals itself most clearly in what it does not question.

Its assumptions do not feel like assumptions. They feel like facts. They are not held; they are inhabited. This is not a defect of critical thinking. It is a structural condition of experience.

The ground that supports coherence cannot be inspected from the position it enables. Only when coherence falters — through strain, collision, or exhaustion — does the shape of that ground become noticeable.

Situation, Multiple Worlds

Consider a single situation. In one configuration, it appears orderly and manageable. In another, fragile or threatening. In another still, emotionally charged or symbolically dense.

Nothing in the situation itself explains these differences. They arise from the configuration through which the situation is encountered.

The Self as Configuration

Mindsets also reveal something about the self — not as an entity, but as an activity.

A self appears as a pattern of sensitivities, habits, and interpretive tendencies that shape what it feels like to be someone now. Identity is not stable across configurations.

It contracts, loosens, intensifies, or recedes depending on how experience is organized. A person who feels coherent and confident in one mindset may feel scattered or opaque in another — without anything having gone wrong.

Styles of Presence
Each mindset reveals a particular style of presence:

- a rhythm of attention,
- a relation to time,
- a mode of bodily attunement,
- a way of assigning agency and responsibility.

Some prioritize clarity. Others connection. Others safety. Others understanding. None are complete. None encompass experience as a whole. Each renders one workable articulation of how experience can function under certain conditions.

Not Diagnosis, Not Evaluation
To examine what a mindset reveals is not to diagnose it or evaluate it. It is to describe the patterns that allow a specific world to appear. These patterns are neither arbitrary nor absolute. They are responses — to temperament, history,

environment, and situational demand — that stabilize experience long enough for life to proceed.

What Becomes Visible
Seen this way, mindsets reveal:

- how reality is continually configured,
- how stability is produced without foundations,
- how disagreement persists without error,
- how change occurs without direction.

They do not reveal a hidden truth behind experience. They reveal how truth-functions arise within experience.

Preparing the Ground
What follows in this book are descriptions of specific configurations. They are not stages. They are not diagnoses. They are not destinations. They are possible ways in which experience organizes itself into a world.

Seeing them as such does not remove one from experience. It makes visible the contingency of the worlds one inhabits and the fact that none of them stands alone.


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The Scientific Mindset

The scientific mindset does not discover reality; it organizes experience through models. Its power lies not in truth, but in *operational clarity*.

It appears where the world is approached as object: measurable, divisible, predictable. The observer recedes. What remains is structure.

Its strength is restraint. Hypotheses are provisional. Explanations are conditional. Doubt is not an existential threat but a working principle.

Yet the scientific mindset becomes brittle when it forgets this restraint. When models are mistaken for reality. When explanation turns into ontology. When what works is taken for what is. At that point, science ceases to be a method and becomes a worldview. Naturalism hardens into belief. What cannot be measured is dismissed — not methodologically, but ontologically. The scientific mindset does not fail because it is wrong. It fails when it becomes invisible to itself.

In that moment, it structurally resembles every other closed system of belief — including those it once set out to replace.

From Method to Worldview

Science becomes *scientism* not through excess, but through forgetting. Forgetting that:

- models are selective
- measurement presupposes framing
- explanation does not exhaust experience

Scientism does not argue. It assumes. It does not test its own foundations. It declares them unnecessary. Once that happens, the scientific mindset no longer competes with religion or spirituality — it replaces them, structurally unchanged.

> *"What we take as certain is not taught; it is shown in the way we act."*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Part III
Familiar Terrain

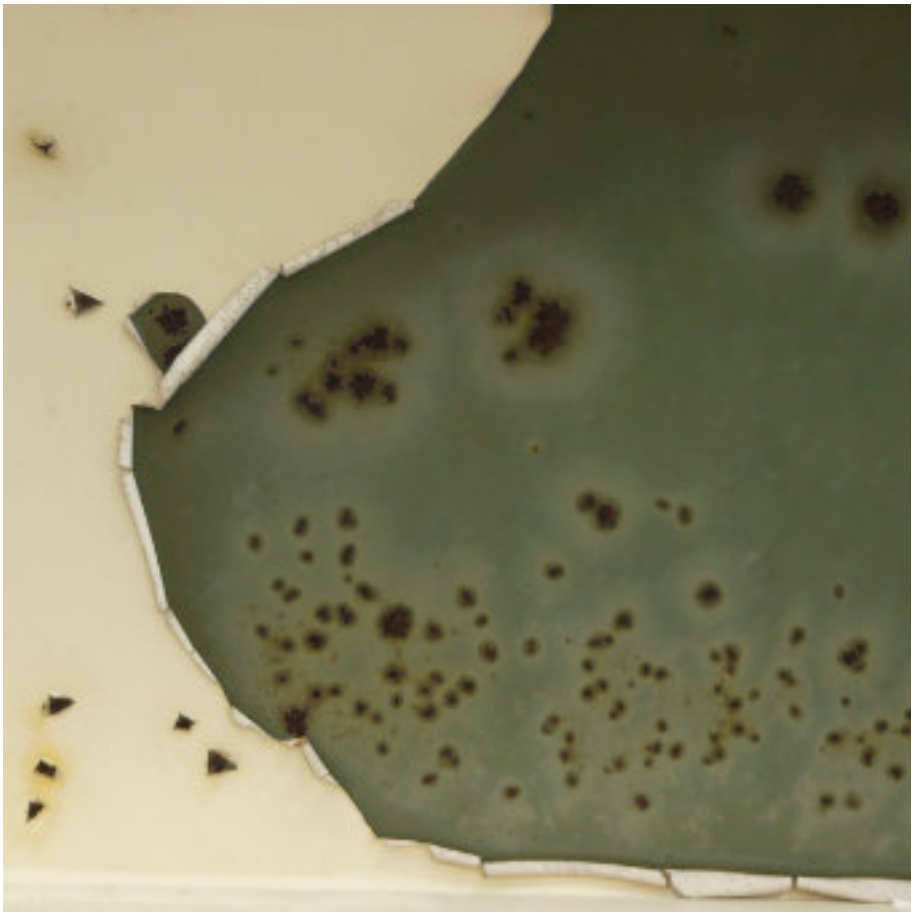


Photo by Ton Haarmans

Introduction

The configurations described in this part are familiar not because they are universal, but because they are widely shared, culturally reinforced, and socially sustained. They are ways of organizing experience that tend to disappear into normality. Their structures are rarely noticed precisely because they work.

These are not default mindsets, nor are they starting points. They do not precede other configurations, and they do not ground them. They are simply worlds that many people inhabit for long stretches of time, often without recognizing them as configurations at all.

What makes these terrains familiar is not their correctness, but their durability. They are supported by language, institutions, habits, and expectations. They allow coordination, explanation, continuity, and recognition. Because of this support, they tend to feel self-evident rather than constructed.

This familiarity can easily be mistaken for neutrality. It can also be mistaken for normativity. Neither assumption holds here.

The worlds described in this section are not benchmarks against which others are measured. They are not more balanced, more mature, or more real than the configurations that follow elsewhere in the book. They are simply among the ways experience organizes itself when conditions allow for relative stability and shared orientation.

Each of these terrains renders a coherent world. Each comes with its own assumptions, blind spots, and forms of intelligibility. None exhaust experience. None stand outside contingency.

They are presented here not as foundations, but as recognizable patterns: worlds that feel ordinary from the inside, and that therefore tend to escape notice.

By the way: the order in which these mindsets appear does not suggest a hierarchy or development, but follows a movement from self-evidence to reflection.

These are not neatly defined mindsets. They do not form a map of separate territories. What appears instead is a landscape of shifting intensities, overlapping, blending, and fading into one another. Not a political map of borders and nations, but a terrain without clear lines.

The number of possible mindsets is far greater than those described here, perhaps even infinite. And some configurations could just as well be understood as intensifications or inflections of others.

Take the world of the political activist, for example: is this a distinct mindset, or an intensified form of the conventional one? And does that distinction ultimately matter?

The purpose of this book is not to draw definitive boundaries, but to show that experience can take many forms and that it can always appear otherwise.



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The Conventional Mindset

Stability & Shared Reality

In this configuration, the world presents itself as an established order. Things have their place, their meaning, and their expected development. Events are understood through cause and effect; actions follow from responsibilities; people behave in ways that can be anticipated. The world does not appear as a construction, but as a given structure within which life coheres.

Experience is organized by familiar patterns. The rhythm of most days, the unwritten rules that guide interaction, and the norms that shape decisions are implicitly known. These regularities are not questioned; they function as the ground on which experience stabilizes. Stability appears as a feature of the world itself, not as something produced through interpretation.

Identity appears as a continuous self with recognizable traits, preferences, and limits. Personal history provides coherence: it links past, present, and expectation into a narrative that feels factual rather than constructed. Change occurs, but within bounds. One remains "the same person," recognizable to oneself and to others.

Meaning arises through alignment and recognition. What is widely regarded as reasonable, appropriate, or responsible defines the space of lived possibility. This shared frame is not experienced as an external imposition, but as how situations normally make sense. Truth takes a practical form: what works, what has precedent, what fits established contexts.

When confusion or doubt appears, it tends to register as a temporary deviation from an otherwise reliable order, something to resolve rather than to interrogate. The surrounding world does not loosen; it remains the reference against which disruption is assessed. The task is to restore clarity, not to reconfigure the frame itself.

Time appears as continuity. Life unfolds through stages, commitments, and gradual progression. The future is something to prepare for, the past a resource that renders present decisions intelligible. Stability across time provides orientation.

In the conventional mindset, the world appears as a sufficiently stable environment for action, responsibility, and coordination. This stability is not asserted as a philosophical position; it is simply how experience organizes itself under familiar conditions.



An Inside Story:

“ You try to keep things steady. You get up, you do what needs doing, you follow the rhythm that makes life workable. Most of what you do is shaped by habits and responsibilities. That’s not a burden—it’s what keeps everything together. People rely on you, and you rely on them. That’s how the world functions.

You trust what has proven itself. You listen to advice from people with experience. You don't rebuild your entire outlook every time something unexpected happens. If something works, you keep doing it; if something breaks, you try to fix it. Life is complicated enough without constantly questioning the basics.

You see yourself as someone with a certain character. You know your strengths, your weak spots, the things you avoid, the things you pursue. That doesn’t drastically change from day to day. Your history shapes you, and you grow, but you stay recognizably yourself. You need that continuity to navigate the world.

Most of the time, things make sense. People generally behave the way you expect. Decisions have reasons. Problems have solutions—or at least something you can attempt. When something goes wrong, you look for the cause, you try to understand it, and you adjust. It doesn't occur to you to question the whole system behind it.

Every now and then, something shakes your footing—a loss, a sudden shift, a moment when nothing feels quite secure. For a moment, you see that everything is fragile. But you can't stay there. You pull yourself together, you do what needs to be done, and slowly order returns.

You hold on to what keeps life stable. You try to act responsibly, to stay reasonable, to do what is expected. You believe that if you keep your balance, the world will meet you halfway.

And for the most part, it does.

And that is enough."

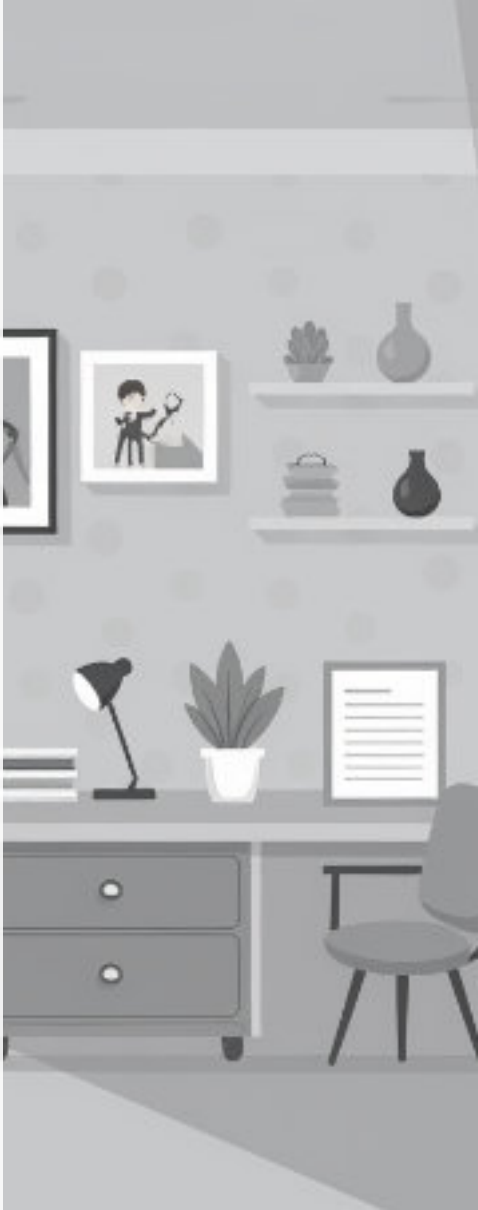




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The Pragmatic Mindset

Continuity, Sufficiency, and Holding Things Together

In the pragmatic mindset, experience is organized around what works. Questions arise, but they do not need to be carried further than necessary. When a situation becomes manageable again, inquiry naturally subsides.

Truth is not a central concern here. What matters is whether life can proceed. A situation is intelligible if it allows action, coordination, and continuity. Explanations are welcome, but only insofar as they restore orientation.

This configuration does not experience itself as a worldview. It feels like reality itself. Its assumptions remain largely invisible precisely because they function well enough.

The world appears as something to deal with rather than to interpret. Problems call for solutions, not reflection on underlying structures. Doubt is tolerated as long as it does not interfere with functioning. Once stability returns, doubt loses relevance.

The self appears as a practical center of responsibility. Identity is not explored, but assumed. One knows one is well enough to act, decide, and respond. Consistency over time matters more than coherence of belief.

Time appears as continuity. The past provides lessons, habits, and precedents; the future is something to prepare for. Change is not resisted, but it is not sought for its own sake. Adaptation happens when required.

Meaning, in this mindset, is not absent. It is embedded. It resides in routine, reliability, and mutual expectation. Life feels anchored not because it is understood, but because it holds.

The pragmatic mindset does not deny uncertainty. It simply refuses to dwell in it longer than needed. Once life can continue, questioning naturally quiets.

This orientation becomes visible mainly when it fails — when familiar strategies no longer work, when restoration proves impossible, or when continuity breaks down. At that point, other configurations may emerge.

The pragmatic mindset does not offer insight, liberation, or depth. It offers something more modest and more necessary: sufficient coherence for life to go on.

Enough coherence is not a failure of understanding.

It is often what makes understanding unnecessary



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The Analytical Mindset

Clarity, Explanation, and Control

In this configuration, the world presents itself as something to be understood. What matters is not merely that things work, but *why they work*. Situations invite analysis; problems invite explanation. Reality appears as a system whose parts can be separated, examined, and related through clear concepts.

Experience is organized around distinctions. Phenomena are broken down into elements, causes are isolated, variables are controlled. Ambiguity is treated as a temporary lack of information rather than a feature of the situation itself. What cannot be clarified is set aside, postponed, or reformulated until it can be made intelligible.

The self appears primarily as a cognitive agent: the one who observes, reasons, evaluates, and decides. Identity is anchored less in continuity of story than in consistency of understanding. To know where one stands is to have a position that can be justified, explained, or defended. Confidence arises from coherence of thought rather than from belonging or familiarity.

Meaning takes the form of explanation. To understand something is to locate it within a framework: a theory, a model, a causal chain. Truth is measured by consistency, predictive power, and internal logic. What resists explanation tends to be regarded as noise, error, or an unsolved problem.

Uncertainty is not threatening in itself, but it is provisional. It motivates further inquiry. The expectation is that with sufficient analysis, clearer distinctions will emerge. When explanation fails, effort increases: more data, better models, sharper definitions.

Time appears as sequence and accumulation. Knowledge grows by refinement and correction. Earlier views are revised, replaced, or discarded as understanding improves. Progress is assumed, not as a moral claim, but as a practical consequence of better explanation.

In the analytical mindset, the world shows itself as a domain that can, in principle, be made clear. This clarity is not presented as total or final, but as preferable: confusion invites work, and understanding provides orientation. The drive is not toward certainty as belief, but toward coherence as explanation.

An Inside Story:

"I am sitting at the table with a notebook in front of me. I did not plan to take notes, but my hand reaches for the pen almost automatically. Writing things down helps separate what matters from what only feels urgent.

As people speak, the situation arranges itself into components. Claims, assumptions, examples. I am not particularly interested in who says what. I am listening for structure: where things are conflated, where terms slide, where a conclusion appears too quickly.

I notice a familiar narrowing of attention. The room fades slightly. Not in an unpleasant way — more like background noise being filtered out. What remains is the problem as it presents itself, stripped of tone and intention.

At some point I realize that I have not reacted emotionally to anything that was said. This does not feel like suppression. Emotion simply does not organize the situation right now. It can wait.

When I speak, I try to slow things down. I ask for clarification. I rephrase what was said, not to challenge it, but to see whether it holds when stated more precisely. Sometimes this irritates people. I register that irritation without taking it personally.

There is comfort in this mode. As long as things can be analyzed, nothing feels chaotic. Even disagreement has a place; it signals that distinctions are still possible.

I am aware that this way of being can come across as distant. I have been told that more than once. I understand the remark, but it does not change how the situation appears to me. Distance is not something I create; it is simply how clarity happens.

When the conversation ends, I close the notebook. I do not feel relief or accomplishment. The issue is not resolved, but it has become more precise. That feels like progress, even if it leads nowhere in particular.

I stand up and move on, already thinking about what still does not quite fit."



Photo by Giorgio Trovato on Unsplash

The Autistic Mindset

Structure, Precision, and Sensory Fidelity

In this configuration, experience does not automatically simplify itself. Details remain present. Sounds, textures, patterns, and minor variations do not fade into a background but persist alongside what is supposedly relevant. The world appears at a higher resolution, without a built-in mechanism that decides in advance what can be ignored.

This does not feel like an excess of information, but like a lack of filtering. What others experience as noise does not naturally dissolve. What others treat as context continues to demand attention. The distinction between foreground and background is thinner, more fragile, sometimes absent.

As a result, structure is not optional. It is not a preference or a style, but a condition for coherence. Predictable sequences, explicit rules, and stable environments allow experience to remain navigable. When structure is present, the world can feel exceptionally clear, precise, and intelligible. When it is absent, experience risks becoming overwhelming or disorienting.

Social situations appear differently in this configuration. Meaning is not inferred automatically from tone, gesture, or convention. What others grasp implicitly must be processed explicitly. Communication tends to rely less on shared assumptions and more on literal content. Ambiguity does not enrich the situation; it destabilizes it.

This does not imply a lack of sensitivity. On the contrary, sensitivity is often heightened — but unevenly distributed. Certain stimuli may be barely noticeable, while others dominate the field of experience entirely. Regulation requires effort. Withdrawal, repetition, or focused engagement are not escapes, but stabilizing strategies.

Time in this mindset often appears discontinuous. Transitions can be difficult, not because change is resisted, but because change demands a reconfiguration of the entire experiential field. Once engaged, attention may lock in deeply, producing sustained focus and precision that feels effortless from within.

The self in this configuration is less narrative and less socially mirrored. Identity is not primarily shaped through comparison or recognition, but through consistency of interest, sensation, and pattern. What feels authentic is not what aligns with expectations, but what maintains internal coherence.

The autistic mindset is neither a deficit nor an advantage. It is a distinct architecture of experience, one in which clarity and overload coexist, depending on conditions. It reveals, with particular sharpness, that what counts as "normal experience" is itself the product of a specific and often invisible configuration.



Photo by Nicole Cavelli on Unsplash

The Narrative Mindset

Story, Identity, and Continuity

In this configuration, the world presents itself as a meaningful unfolding. Events do not merely occur; they belong to a story. What matters is not only what happens, but how it fits into a larger arc — where it comes from, what it leads to, and what it says about who someone is.

Experience is organized through narrative continuity. Moments gain significance by being placed in sequence. Past, present, and future are linked into a coherent line, and identity appears as the thread that runs through it. Life is not primarily a set of problems to solve, but a story to inhabit.

The self appears as a protagonist. Actions are interpreted in terms of intention, motivation, and consequence. Experiences are remembered, anticipated, and retold in ways that preserve a sense of coherence: this is who I am, this is what happened to me, this is where I am going. What does not fit the story tends to be reinterpreted, postponed, or quietly dropped.

Meaning arises through relevance to the narrative. An event matters because it confirms, challenges, or transforms the story

one lives by. Truth takes a biographical form: what rings true is what resonates with the lived storyline, what feels authentic to one's sense of self. Consistency is measured less by logic than by narrative plausibility.

Emotions play a central role. They signal how events should be understood within the story: as loss, achievement, betrayal, growth, or resolution. Feelings do not merely accompany experience; they orient it. They tell the story what kind of story it is.

Disruption appears as narrative rupture. Confusion arises when events cannot be integrated into the existing storyline. Such moments may feel threatening or destabilizing, not because they lack explanation, but because they lack place. The task then becomes restoring continuity — by reinterpretation, reframing, or the adoption of a revised narrative.

Time appears as development with meaning. Change is not random, but directional: learning, maturing, becoming. Even suffering may be understood as necessary or formative within a larger arc. The future is anticipated as the next chapter; the past is continuously rewritten to support the story that holds in the present.

In the narrative mindset, the world shows itself as a field of meaning structured by story. Coherence does not arise from explanation or stability alone, but from the sense that life makes sense as a whole. This sense is not derived from facts, but from the ongoing ability to tell a story in which one can recognize oneself.

An Inside Story:

"I notice that I am already telling myself what is happening.

Not out loud, but as a quiet thread that runs alongside everything else. I recognize the situation immediately: this has happened before, or at least something like it. There is a beginning, even if I can't quite locate it, and there will be a continuation.

As people speak, I hear more than words. I hear intentions, subtext, echoes of earlier moments. A remark reminds me of something that was said weeks ago. Another fits neatly into a pattern I already know. The situation starts to arrange itself as a sequence rather than a set of facts.

I feel oriented. Not because things are clear, but because they make sense together.

When I speak, I do not aim to clarify. I try to connect. I add context, fill in gaps, smooth transitions. I explain why this matters, how we got here, what this might lead to. The story grows as I speak, and I am inside it while it unfolds.

Time thickens. Past and future lean into the present. What is happening now feels meaningful because it belongs somewhere. Even uncertainty has a role; it creates suspense rather than confusion.

I notice that others sometimes interrupt. They want to return to the point, to separate issues, to decide something. I register that, but it feels premature.

The story is not finished yet.

There is comfort in this movement. As long as the narrative continues, nothing is lost. Even mistakes can be reframed later. Meaning is not fixed, but it is never absent.

When the conversation ends, I keep replaying it. Not to analyze it, but to see how it fits with everything else I already know. The story adjusts slightly. Some details fade, others become more important.

It still holds.

For now."

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The Religious Mindset

Continuity, Transcendence, and Trust

In this configuration, experience is oriented around a transcendent reference point. Meaning does not arise solely from personal narrative or functional success, but from alignment with an order that exceeds the individual.

This order may be named as God, the sacred, divine will, ultimate meaning, or moral law. It is not primarily an object of analysis. It is a background orientation that grants coherence to life as a whole.

The world appears as created, given, or entrusted rather than constructed. Events are not merely occurrences; they are situated within a larger context of purpose, testing, grace, or calling. Not everything needs to be explained. Some things are accepted.

The self appears as positioned rather than sovereign. Identity is shaped through relation: to God, to tradition, to community, to a moral horizon that is not of one's own making. Agency exists, but it is not absolute. Responsibility is framed as response rather than control.

Time appears as continuity under guidance. Life unfolds within a larger arc that is not authored by the self. Suffering may remain opaque, but it is rarely meaningless. Trust does not depend on understanding.

Ritual plays a central role in stabilizing this configuration. Prayer, liturgy, repetition, and symbolic acts do not convey information. They sustain orientation. They reaffirm belonging and re-anchor experience when coherence is strained.

In its open form, the religious mindset does not demand certainty. Doubt can coexist with faith. Mystery is not a problem to be solved, but a condition to be lived with. What matters is not correct belief, but fidelity: staying oriented even when clarity is absent.

This configuration becomes rigid only when trust is replaced by control, when transcendence is collapsed into doctrine, and when orientation turns into identity. Those movements do not define the religious mindset itself. They mark its hardening.

In its functioning form, the religious mindset reveals a way of inhabiting uncertainty without reduction, explanation, or inward retreat. The world remains structured, but not sealed. Meaning is received rather than manufactured.



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The New Age Spiritual Mindset

Energy, Growth, and Hidden Order

In this configuration, the world presents itself as animated by subtle forces that are not immediately visible but nonetheless real. Reality is understood as layered: beneath ordinary appearance lies an energetic, vibrational, or conscious dimension that influences events, relationships, and inner states.

Experience is organized around sensitivity to signs. Coincidences are rarely accidental; feelings carry information; bodily sensations, moods, and intuitions are treated as messages. What happens is interpreted not primarily through cause and effect, but through resonance and alignment.

The self appears as an evolving center of awareness. Identity is fluid rather than fixed, defined by potential rather than position. One is not so much someone as on a journey: learning, healing, opening, becoming more attuned. Stagnation is felt as blockage; movement as growth.

Meaning arises through interpretation of inner experience. Truth is experiential and personal: what feels right, what resonates, what raises energy or expands awareness. External authority is

treated with suspicion unless it confirms inner knowing. Consistency is secondary to immediacy.

Suffering is rarely meaningless. It is framed as lesson, signal, or opportunity for transformation. Difficult experiences are read as invitations to heal unresolved patterns, release limiting beliefs, or realign with a higher frequency. The question is not only what happened, but what this is here to teach.

Time appears as progression toward greater awareness. Life unfolds as a sequence of awakenings, integrations, and upgrades. The past contains wounds to be healed; the future promises expansion, harmony, or manifestation. Even setbacks are folded into an overall narrative of growth.

When coherence falters, the response is rarely doubt about the framework itself. Instead, attention turns inward: to energy, intention, vibration, or alignment. New practices, concepts, or teachings are added. The configuration adapts by inclusion rather than by revision.

In the New Age mindset, the world shows itself as meaningful beneath the surface, responsive to consciousness, and ultimately oriented toward growth. This orientation does not present itself as belief, but as insight — not as doctrine, but as direct knowing.

It appears less as one configuration among others than as access to how things really work, once one has learned to listen.

An Inside Story:

"I've always felt that there's more happening beneath the surface of things. Life doesn't feel random to me; it feels connected, threaded. Certain moments stand out with a quiet brightness, as if they're carrying a message. I don't create that meaning — it's already there, waiting for me to notice.

I sense that my life is moving along a path. Not one that's strictly planned, but one that's guided. When something difficult happens, I rarely see it as meaningless. It usually fits into a larger movement — something I'm meant to understand, release, or grow through. Even pain points somewhere.

My emotions aren't just emotions. They feel like energy, patterns that rise and fall through my body. When something hurts, it's like an old knot tightening inside me. When something heals, there's a softness in my chest or a warmth in my belly. These sensations speak more clearly than thoughts. They tell me what's true for me.

And I feel guided — not by a person, but by a subtle orientation that appears when I'm quiet enough to notice it. Sometimes it's intuition, sometimes a dream, sometimes a chance meeting that feels too perfectly timed to be coincidence. When I follow these signs, something meaningful opens up. It's happened too often to ignore.

When I look at people, I don't just see their behavior. I sense the layers beneath — their wounds, their history, the potential that wants to unfold in them. Everyone is carrying something; everyone is learning something. That makes judgment unnecessary. Compassion feels more natural.

The world itself feels alive to me. Not in a literal sense, but as if something soft and intelligent moves through it. Books find their way to me. Sentences land exactly when they should. A small remark from someone shifts something deep inside. It's as if the universe whispers, and the whisper is enough.

Sometimes I doubt myself. I wonder if I'm imagining things, reading too much into coincidences. But when I become still, when I return to my own breath and step back from the noise, a deeper clarity comes back. A sense of alignment. A sense of being held by something I don't need to fully understand.

I try to follow that. I try to stay open. And again and again, the world seems to respond — not loudly, not dramatically, but with small, unmistakable confirmations. Everything is connected. And meaning is everywhere, if I'm willing to listen."

Photo by Ton Haarmans

The Knowledge-Seeker Mindset

Inquiry, Uncertainty, and Endless Revision

In this configuration, the world presents itself as something that can be known, but never fully settled. What matters is not arriving at truth, but approaching it through inquiry. Understanding is provisional, always subject to revision, correction, or expansion.

Experience is organized around questions. Claims invite examination; explanations invite counter-examples. What feels obvious is treated with suspicion. Knowledge is not something one has, but something one pursues. Certainty is approached asymptotically, never reached.

The self appears as an inquirer. Identity is shaped less by belonging or belief than by orientation toward understanding. To be someone is to be engaged in investigation: reading, comparing, testing, doubting. Authority lies not in tradition or experience alone, but in argument, evidence, and coherence across domains.

Meaning arises through explanatory reach. What matters is whether an account holds up under scrutiny, whether it

integrates with other accounts, whether it survives criticism. Truth is not personal resonance or narrative fit, but what remains standing after objections have been considered.

Ignorance is not a flaw, but a starting point. Not knowing motivates inquiry. Confusion signals incomplete understanding rather than existential threat. The task is not to resolve uncertainty once and for all, but to refine questions and improve models.

Time appears as open-ended progress. Earlier views are not sacred; they are superseded, amended, or abandoned. Learning is cumulative but never complete. The future promises better explanations, not final answers.

When coherence falters, the response is methodological rather than existential. One looks for better distinctions, more precise concepts, or alternative frameworks. The failure of an explanation does not undermine the project of knowing; it confirms its necessity.

In the knowledge-seeker mindset, the world shows itself as intelligible in principle but inexhaustible in fact. Reality does not disclose itself as a hidden order waiting to be revealed, nor as a mystery to be embraced, but as a field of inquiry that continually

resists closure. What sustains this configuration is not certainty, but the conviction that understanding, however incomplete, is always worth pursuing.



Photo by Deva Darshan on Pexels

The Hyper-Attuned Mindset

Sensitivity, Resonance, and Intensity

In this configuration, the world presents itself as unusually vivid and responsive. Subtle changes in atmosphere, tone, or meaning are immediately registered. What others might overlook appears charged, significant, or emotionally saturated. Experience feels close to the surface.

Experience is organized by heightened sensitivity. Sounds, gestures, words, and moods carry weight. Boundaries between inner and outer experience are permeable; what happens "out there" resonates strongly "in here." Attention is drawn less to stable structures than to fluctuations, nuances, and shifts.

The self appears as finely tuned to its environment. Identity is shaped by responsiveness rather than control or narrative continuity. One feels affected before one feels oriented. Reaction precedes interpretation. The world is not distant or neutral; it presses in.

Meaning arises through resonance. What matters is not whether something is true, coherent, or justified, but whether it registers.

Emotional tone, symbolic density, or intuitive impact guide orientation. Experiences that lack intensity may feel empty or unreal; those that resonate feel undeniably significant.

This heightened attunement can generate richness. Beauty may appear overwhelming. Connection may feel immediate. Insight may arrive not through reasoning, but through sudden alignment or emotional recognition. The world feels alive with signals.

At the same time, saturation is close at hand. When everything registers, prioritization becomes difficult. Noise competes with meaning. Overwhelm can replace clarity. The effort to remain open may itself become exhausting.

Time appears as immediacy. The present moment dominates experience, not as stillness, but as intensity. Past and future recede unless they intrude emotionally. Memory and anticipation return primarily through affect rather than through narrative sequence.

When coherence falters, the response is often further attunement rather than withdrawal. More sensitivity is brought to bear in an attempt to restore alignment. Alternatively, retreat may occur — not from the world as such, but from excessive stimulation.

In the hyper-attuned mindset, the world shows itself as charged, responsive, and demanding of attention. Experience is neither ordered by explanation nor stabilized by shared norms, but guided by resonance and impact. This configuration does not present itself as better or deeper than others. It simply renders a world in which sensitivity is central, and where the cost and richness of that sensitivity are inseparable.



Photo by Mark Zu on Unsplash

Non-Duality Framed as a Mindset

Absence of Separation, Presence Without Position

In this configuration, the world no longer appears divided into subject and object. Experience is not organized around a center that observes what lies outside it. What appears does so without a felt gap between perceiver and perceived. The usual sense of standing somewhere from which the world is encountered loosens or falls away.

Experience is organized by the absence of separation. Distinctions such as inside and outside, self and world, observer and observed lose their functional force. What remains is not unity as a concept, but immediacy as a condition. Things appear without being placed against something else.

The self does not disappear, but it no longer functions as a reference point. Identity is not experienced as an entity or narrative, but as an activity that has gone quiet. Agency feels diffuse or absent. Actions occur, but without the familiar sense of authorship or control.

Meaning arises without mediation. Events do not require interpretation to be what they are. There is no need to locate

experience within a larger framework of explanation or purpose. What appears is sufficient in its appearing. Truth is not discovered or justified; it is implicit in presence itself.

Time appears flattened. Past and future lose their organizing role. Experience unfolds as a continuous now, not as a sequence to be managed or understood. Continuity is felt without narrative progression.

This configuration often feels simple, spacious, or self-evident. Effort drops away. Conflict may diminish. The drive to explain, improve, or resolve can lose urgency. What previously felt problematic may no longer register as such.

At the same time, this absence of separation does not remove structure. Experience still organizes itself. Sensations arise and fade. Attention shifts. Responses occur. What has changed is not the presence of form, but the absence of a position from which form is evaluated.

When coherence falters, it does not do so as contradiction, but as reassertion. Distinctions that had lost relevance may return under pressure, fatigue, or demand. The configuration is not irreversible. It holds as long as the conditions that support it hold.

In non-duality framed as a mindset, the world shows itself without reference to an underlying subject. This does not present itself as one perspective among others, but as the absence of perspective itself. Precisely for that reason, it is easily mistaken for a final view. Therefor it is treated differently: not as an endpoint, not as access to reality as it truly is, but as one possible organization of experience, coherent, convincing, and contingent. Its apparent lack of structure is itself a structure. Its refusal of position is itself a position that can be inhabited, lost, and re-entered.

"In limit situations, existence is revealed without protection."

Karl Jaspers

Part IV
Worlds At The Edge



Photo by Geri Forsaith on Unsplash

When Organization Falters

The configurations described so far show how experience organizes itself into workable worlds. Each offers coherence under certain conditions. Each renders a world that can be inhabited, navigated, and shared — at least to some degree.

This part begins where that workability comes under pressure.

The worlds at the edge are not alternative perspectives on the same reality. They are situations in which the usual mechanisms of organization strain, fragment, or partially collapse. Experience does not disappear, but its capacity to hold itself together becomes unstable.

These configurations are not chosen. They are not positions one adopts. They arise under conditions that exceed what a given architecture can absorb.

Not Pathology, Not Privilege

It is tempting to approach these worlds through familiar frameworks: pathology, diagnosis, disorder. It is equally tempting to romanticize them as depth, authenticity, or access to hidden truth. Neither is done here.

What appears here is not illness to be explained away, nor insight to be elevated. It is experience reorganizing itself under extreme pressure.

When Coherence Becomes Fragile

In worlds at the edge, distinctions that normally stabilize experience begin to fail: boundaries between self and world loosen or harden unpredictably,

- time loses continuity or weight,
- meaning becomes either overwhelming or scarce,
- agency feels distorted or absent.

What is strained is not reason alone, nor emotion alone, but the architecture that usually integrates them.

No Single Mechanism

These worlds do not share a single cause or structure. Trauma, loss, deprivation, neurological vulnerability, prolonged stress, or sudden rupture may all give rise to them. What they share is not origin, but effect: the weakening of experiential coherence. Some configurations fragment. Others constrict. Some amplify intensity; others flatten it.

None of these responses is inherently meaningful or meaningless. They are ways experience continues to function when ordinary organization no longer suffices.

Lived Reality at the Margin

From the inside, these worlds do not appear as "edge cases." They appear as reality itself.

What looks unstable from outside may feel inevitable from within. What appears disordered may be the only way experience can currently hold together. This asymmetry matters.

Descriptions that ignore it turn lived worlds into objects. Descriptions that acknowledge it remain tentative.

These Worlds Matter

These configurations belong in this book not because they complete a map, but because they reveal its limits. They show:

- how fragile world-making can be,
- how little control experience has over its own organization,
- and how quickly coherence can give way without direction or lesson.

They also prepare the ground for what follows.

At the edge of organization, it becomes clear that not every loosening leads to openness, and not every loss of structure is liberating.

Some losses leave nothing to stand on.



The Trauma-Activated Mindset

Threat, Constriction, and Survival

In this configuration, the world presents itself as potentially dangerous. Safety is no longer assumed. Experience is organized around threat detection, anticipation, and protection. What once appeared neutral or familiar may now register as risky, unpredictable, or hostile.

Experience narrows. Attention is drawn toward cues of danger: tone of voice, sudden movement, ambiguity, proximity. The body often registers before interpretation occurs. Sensation precedes meaning. Reaction precedes reflection.

The self appears primarily as a point of vulnerability. Identity is shaped less by narrative continuity or understanding than by the need to survive. Agency is constrained. Choice feels limited. Action tends toward avoidance, vigilance, or control.

Meaning arises through threat relevance. Events are evaluated according to their potential to harm, overwhelm, or destabilize. Neutral explanations lose weight. What matters is whether something feels safe or unsafe, manageable or overwhelming.

Time appears fractured. The present moment is charged by past events that have not receded into memory. What has happened does not stay behind; it intrudes. The future is anticipated not as possibility, but as risk. Continuity gives way to repetition.

This configuration does not arise by interpretation. It is not adopted as a worldview. It emerges when experience has been exposed to intensity that exceeded its capacity to integrate. Trauma here does not name an event, but an enduring reorganization of experience around threat.

Coherence is maintained through constriction. Boundaries may harden. Emotional range may narrow. The field of relevance shrinks to what must be monitored or avoided. This is not failure; it is functional adaptation under pressure.

When coherence falters, it does so abruptly. Overwhelm, dissociation, or collapse may occur when protective mechanisms are exhausted. What appears from outside as disproportionate response is, from within, an attempt to restore minimal safety.

This mindset is often misread. From outside, it may appear irrational, resistant, or inflexible. From within, it appears necessary. The world does not feel open enough to allow experimentation or trust.

The trauma-activated mindset does not claim truth. It claims urgency. Its authority comes not from explanation or belief, but from immediacy. It holds as long as the environment continues to register as threatening — or as long as the body remembers it as such.

In this configuration, the world shows itself as something that must be survived before it can be understood. Experience remains organized, but narrowly. Stability is achieved not through coherence or meaning, but through containment.

An Inside Story:

"Something is wrong before I know what it is.

I am already alert. My body has decided. Sounds arrive too fast or not at all. The space feels closer than it should be. I notice details that do not matter and miss those that do.

There is no story unfolding. There is no context to hold what is happening.

I try to place myself, but the effort itself feels unsafe. Time does not move forward. It circles, or freezes, or breaks into pieces that do not connect. The present is crowded with something that is not here.

Others speak, but their words float past me. I know they are trying to help. I register their intention without being able to receive it. Meaning does not accumulate. It evaporates.

My attention snaps from one thing to another. I am either too close or too far away. There is no middle distance where things feel manageable.

I am not afraid of something.

Fear is simply active.

Later, I may be able to tell what happened. I may even describe it clearly. But right now, there is no narrative, no explanation, no lesson.

Only a system that has switched into survival."



Photo by MAK on Unsplash

The Dissociative Mindset

Distance, Fragmentation, and Disconnection

In this configuration, the world presents itself at a distance. Experience does not fully arrive. Sensations, emotions, or events are registered, but without the immediacy that usually binds them together. What happens feels muted, unreal, or strangely detached.

Experience is organized by separation. Rather than narrowing around threat, it pulls away from it. Attention drifts. Presence thins. The body may feel distant or absent, as if observed from elsewhere. What would normally provoke response is held at arm's length.

The self appears fragmented or diffuse. Identity does not gather into a coherent center. Thoughts, feelings, and actions may seem disconnected, as if belonging to different moments or different selves. Agency is reduced not through constraint, but through absence.

Meaning weakens. Events lose weight. What happens matters less, not because it is understood, but because it does not fully

register. Emotional significance is flattened. Interpretation becomes abstract, detached from lived impact.

Time loses continuity. Moments may blur, skip, or repeat without sequence. Memory may fragment. Large stretches of experience may feel missing or unaccounted for. The sense of "being there" fades.

This configuration often emerges when direct engagement has become intolerable. Where threat could not be managed through vigilance, experience reorganizes through withdrawal. Dissociation here is not an escape chosen by a self; it is a way experience continues while reducing exposure.

Coherence is maintained by distancing. By not fully inhabiting what appears, experience limits what can overwhelm. This distancing is functional, even if it later becomes restrictive.

When coherence falters, it does so quietly. There may be sudden absences, confusion, or a sense of unreality. What is lost is not order, but presence itself.

From outside, the dissociative mindset may appear as indifference, passivity, or lack of engagement. From within, it often appears as neutrality or calm — sometimes as nothing at all.

This configuration does not present itself as a worldview. It offers no explanation and no meaning. It simply reduces contact. Its authority comes from relief rather than urgency.

In the dissociative mindset, the world shows itself as something that can be endured only at a distance. Experience remains organized, but minimally. What holds is not connection or understanding, but absence of impact.

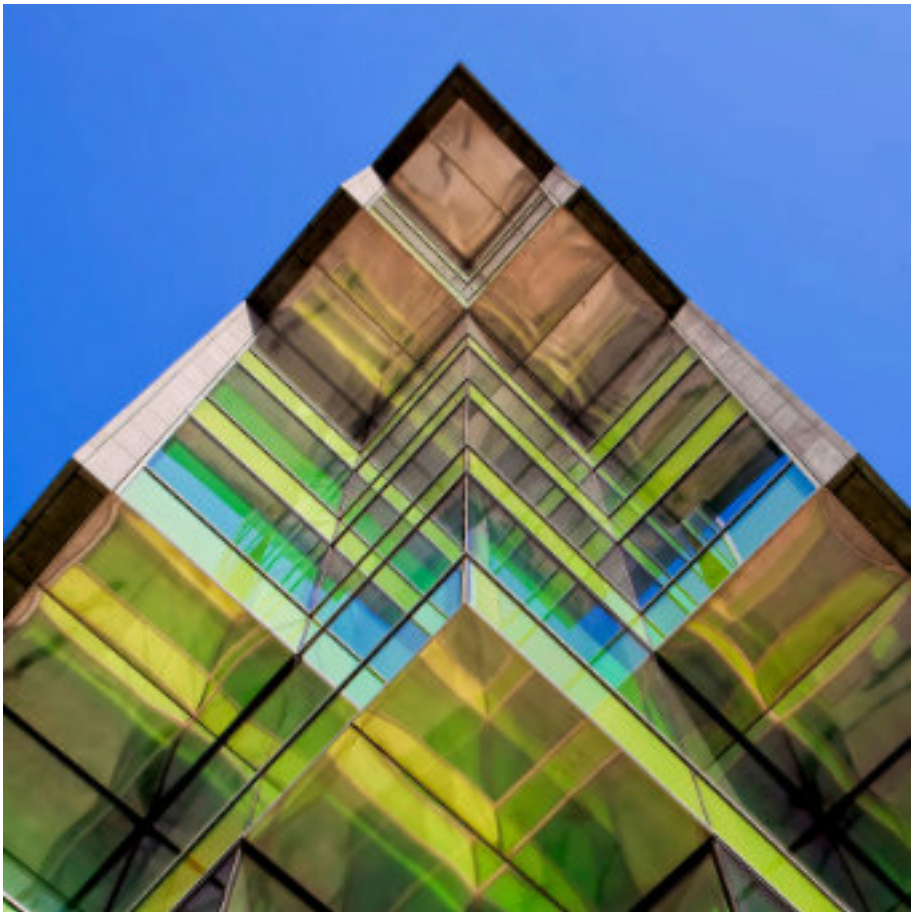


Photo by Ricardo Gomez Angel on Unsplash

The Manic Mindset

Acceleration, Expansion, and Overrun

In this configuration, the world presents itself as charged with possibility. Boundaries loosen, connections multiply, and experience accelerates. What once felt constrained now appears open, urgent, and full of potential.

Experience is organized by momentum. Thought, perception, and action move quickly, often faster than they can be integrated. Ideas link to other ideas without pause. Associations proliferate. What matters is not completion, but continuation.

The self appears amplified. Confidence rises. Agency feels immediate and expansive. Doubt recedes. Decisions feel obvious and necessary. Action precedes reflection, not out of impulsivity alone, but because delay feels like loss.

Meaning arises through connection. Everything seems related. Patterns appear everywhere. Coincidence carries significance. What might otherwise be dismissed as irrelevant is drawn into a widening web of relevance.

Time accelerates. The present rushes forward, pulling future possibilities into immediate reach. Sleep, rest, and recovery lose priority. The sense of limitation fades. What can be done now eclipses what must be sustained later.

This expansion often follows constriction. Where experience has been narrowed by threat or emptied by dissociation, manic acceleration offers release. It restores intensity, engagement, and direction — but without brakes.

Coherence is maintained through speed. As long as movement continues, gaps do not register. Reflection would slow things down, and slowing threatens collapse. The system stays upright by running.

When coherence falters, it does so dramatically. Overextension, exhaustion, or sudden interruption can bring abrupt disorganization. What appeared connected may fragment. What felt clear may dissolve into noise.

From outside, the manic mindset may appear exuberant, driven, or unrealistic. From within, it feels necessary and self-evident. Restraint does not register as care, but as obstruction.

This configuration does not claim accuracy. It claims vitality. Its authority comes from intensity and forward motion rather than from justification or safety.

In the manic mindset, the world shows itself as overflowing and urgent. Experience remains organized, but precariously so. Stability is achieved not through balance, but through continuous expansion — until expansion can no longer be sustained.



Photo by Ton Haarmans

The Depressive Mindset

Contraction, Weight, and the Collapse of Significance

In this configuration, the world presents itself as heavy and diminished. What once mattered loses urgency. What once moved experience forward now feels inert. Possibility recedes. Effort outweighs reward.

Experience is organized by contraction. Attention narrows, not around threat or intensity, but around absence. Energy is scarce. Initiation feels difficult. What appears does so without pull.

The self appears burdened and opaque. Identity gathers around fatigue rather than agency. Actions feel delayed, forced, or pointless. The sense of being able to influence events weakens. Responsibility may remain, but without momentum.

Meaning thins. Events register, but without significance. Achievements feel empty. Losses feel unsurprising. Explanation does not restore engagement; encouragement does not generate movement. What matters is not misunderstood — it simply no longer matters.

Time slows and thickens. The present stretches. The future appears closed or irrelevant. The past weighs more than it guides. Continuity persists, but without orientation toward change.

This configuration often follows prolonged strain. Where vigilance exhausted itself and expansion collapsed, experience settles into minimal functioning. Depression here does not name sadness alone; it names a reorganization in which significance itself withdraws.

Coherence is maintained through reduction. By lowering demand, expectation, and responsiveness, experience limits further depletion. What remains is survival without aspiration.

When coherence falters, it does so quietly. There is no rupture, only further withdrawal. Silence replaces conflict. Stillness replaces urgency.

From outside, the depressive mindset may appear as apathy, withdrawal, or lack of motivation. From within, it often appears as realism. Hope feels naïve. Effort feels wasteful. Acceptance feels indistinguishable from resignation.

This configuration does not claim truth or urgency. It claims inevitability. Its authority comes not from explanation or intensity, but from weight.

In the depressive mindset, the world shows itself as something that must be endured without expectation. Experience remains organized, but minimally so. Stability is achieved not by control, distance, or movement, but by the near absence of demand.



Photo by Luis Villasmil on Unsplash

Chemically Induced Worlds

When Reconfiguration Is Forced

Some worlds do not emerge through biography, pressure, or gradual reorganization. They are imposed. Psychedelic substances alter the architecture of experience directly. They do not persuade, interpret, or destabilize from within a configuration. They override it. The resulting worlds are not developments of ordinary experience, but chemically induced reorganizations that arrive abruptly and recede again.

What they reveal is not truth, but plasticity.

Forced Coherence

Under many psychedelics, experience becomes intensely coherent. Perception, emotion, memory, and meaning fuse into dense patterns. Symbols proliferate. Connections feel immediate and undeniable. The world appears charged with significance.

This coherence is not discovered.

It is produced.

The intensity often creates the impression of revelation. What appears feels more real than ordinary reality, not because it is

truer, but because the mechanisms that normally modulate meaning have been amplified or bypassed. These worlds are internally convincing. They are also temporary.

Meaning Without Restraint

In chemically induced worlds, meaning is no longer regulated by ordinary constraints. Associations multiply without friction. Coincidence becomes necessity. Interpretation accelerates.

What is missing is not intelligence, but inhibition.

Without restraint, significance floods the field. Everything seems to matter. This saturation is often misread as depth.

From within, it rarely feels constructed.

Variants of Induced Worlds

Not all substances reorganize experience in the same way. Some induce expansive symbolic worlds: richly textured, visionary, and narratively dense. These often resemble hypertrophied versions of the hyper-attuned or narrative mindsets, intensified beyond ordinary limits.

Others dissolve bodily reference and narrative continuity. Time collapses. Self-location vanishes. Experience fragments into

abstract movement or instantaneous sequences. These states are frequently mistaken for non-duality or unframed awareness.

Still others produce dark, hostile, or paranoid worlds. Here, perception fabricates continuity without insight. Figures appear, speak, demand. Orientation seems present but is radically unreliable.

What these variants share is not content, but force.

No Insight Is Guaranteed

Chemically induced worlds do not validate themselves. Intensity does not imply accuracy. Coherence does not imply truth.

What feels like revelation may be a temporary alignment of neural processes that will not survive re-entry into ordinary organization. What feels like collapse may be a disruption without remainder. Nothing in these worlds authorizes conclusions about reality.

The Case of Dark Deliriant Worlds

Some induced worlds (Datura!) are neither expansive nor dissolving, but deeply disorienting and threatening. They present environments populated by convincing figures,

commands, and scenarios, yet without insight, transparency, or coherence.

These worlds are not unframed. They are misframed. Orientation persists, but falsely. Meaning appears, but without reliability. Experience organizes itself around threat, hallucinated continuity, and distorted agency.

This is not darkness as described later in this book. Darkness lacks orientation. These worlds impose a deceptive one.

Why These Worlds Matter Here

Chemically induced worlds belong among the edge cases because they demonstrate how easily experience can be reorganized without understanding, learning, or development.

They show: that coherence can be produced without meaning, that dissolution can occur without openness, that intensity can masquerade as insight, and that loss of orientation does not automatically lead to freedom. They also reveal the limits of interpretation. No cartography can redeem what was never navigated.

After the Chemical World
When the substance wears off, ordinary configurations return. Sometimes they are altered. Sometimes not. Occasionally, fragments persist — memories, beliefs, or expectations shaped by the induced world.

But the induced world itself leaves no stable ground. It was not entered. It was not crossed. It was imposed.

Why This Is Not Unframed
The unframed conditions described later arise when orientation falls away without replacement. Chemically induced worlds do not do this.

They replace one orientation with another — suddenly, forcefully, and temporarily.

What they show is not the absence of structure, but its vulnerability.



Photo by Ton Haarmans

A Temporarily Coherent World

The chemically induced worlds described above are often remembered as insights.

What follows is an experience that felt precisely like that — and shows why such clarity proves nothing.

"During a visit to the Kosmos, the weekly swing evening, together with people from the communal house where I live, I had an experience that later came to feel exemplary rather than exceptional.

I bought some cannabis from the house dealer in the tea room and rolled a joint. The effect was unpleasant almost immediately. I became anxious, hyper-self-conscious, paranoid. My attention collapsed inward. My body felt tense and distant, my thoughts circular and intrusive. The anxiety intensified until I felt frozen, detached, trapped in my head.

Then, without transition, the configuration shifted. The anxiety disappeared. Not gradually, but completely. I felt clear, present, and fully

embodied. Mind and body moved together without hesitation. Walking, sitting, breathing: everything happened without deliberation or doubt. There was no gap between intention and action. I moved through the building effortlessly, as if nothing needed to be checked or managed.

The state felt remarkable. Not ecstatic, not emotional, but unmistakably right. Frictionless. Functional.

I noticed that only one other person seemed to inhabit a similar mode, and we smiled at each other in immediate recognition. Everyone else appeared absorbed in their own heads. They spoke, but not with each other. Only at each other, as if executing programs. I had the strong impression that I could see what people were thinking.

I also saw something else: how much of my ordinary life is governed by concern over how I am perceived — even when I am alone. That concern was completely absent now. The relief felt profound.

Only when I thought about returning home did doubt arise. How would I relate to my housemates in this state? They would not understand. The question reintroduced uncertainty, and with it anxiety. Within minutes the

clarity collapsed. Self-monitoring returned. I was once again ordinary, neurotic, unremarkable.

I later tried, repeatedly, to re-enter this state. It never worked."

Conclusions

This experience did not reveal anything about reality, other people, or consciousness itself. What it revealed was architectural.

The initial anxiety showed how quickly experience can reorganize around threat and self-monitoring. The sudden clarity that followed did not add anything; it removed layers. Reflection stopped. Narrative loosened. The social self — the ongoing concern with how one appears — temporarily collapsed. What remained was a minimal, highly efficient coordination between perception and action.

The resulting coherence felt like insight. It was not. The sense of "seeing through" others arose from reduced self-reference, not enhanced perception. The impression of superiority was structural, not factual. Meaning had become simpler, not truer.

The state was also unlivable. It could not tolerate social complexity, mutual interpretation, or sustained interaction. The moment those demands returned, the configuration collapsed. This was not failure; it was inevitability.

The experience demonstrated how little is required for experience to function smoothly — and how quickly hierarchy, interpretation, and anxiety return once that smoothness is put under pressure.

It also showed why such states cannot be pursued. They are not learned, integrated, or developed. They are imposed, temporary, and structurally fragile.

What remained afterward was not a lesson, but a clarification: clarity is not truth, coherence is not insight, and the absence of friction is not liberation.

| *"There is no position you can take that is true."*

Nisargadatta Maharaj

Part V
The Unframed



Photo by Ton Haarmans

Introduction

When Orientation Falls Away

The configurations described so far all organize experience into a world. Even at the edge—where coherence strains, fragments, or collapses—experience continues to orient itself, however minimally. There is still threat, distance, urgency, or weight. There is still something that matters, even if only survival.

This part begins where orientation itself loosens.

What appears here is not another configuration alongside the others. It is not a mindset, not a stance, not a way of coping or understanding. It is what remains when the structures that usually organize experience no longer provide direction.

Not Another World

The unframed is not a different world. It is the failure of worlding. Experience continues, but without a stable frame that assigns relevance, priority, or position. There is no longer a clear inside and outside, no clear center from which experience is oriented, and no horizon toward which it moves.

This absence does not announce itself as insight. It does not arrive as clarity. It does not resolve anything that came before.

No Privilege, No Depth
The unframed is easily misunderstood. It may be taken for a deeper layer beneath experience, a more fundamental truth, or a final perspective from which all others can be seen. This book resists that reading.

What appears here is not deeper than other configurations. It is not higher, freer, or more real. It does not correct the worlds that preceded it. It simply lacks orientation.

Experience Without a Position
In unframed experience, there is no stable position from which to stand. The usual reference points—self, meaning, direction, purpose—do not organize what appears.

This does not result in nothingness. It results in exposure. What is exposed is not reality "as it is," but the contingency of orientation itself. Experience shows itself without offering guidance on how to take it.

This Comes Last
This part does not follow because it is an endpoint.

It follows because everything else has been described.

Only after configurations, thresholds, overlaps, breakdowns, and edge-worlds have been mapped can the absence of framing be approached without mythologizing it. Placed earlier, it would have been mistaken for insight. Placed here, it can remain what it is.

What Follows

The chapters in this part describe experiences often spoken about in spiritual or philosophical terms:

- the disappearance of the center,
- the transparency of form,
- the loss of orientation altogether.

They are not presented as attainments. They are not framed as solutions. They are not held up as preferable. They are described because they occur.

Each chapter names a way in which framing can fall away:

- without replacement,
- without lesson,

- without guarantee.

No Way Through

There is no progression through this part. No sequence to follow. No insight to carry forward. What appears here does not lead somewhere else. It does not ask to be integrated. It does not offer a new way to live.

It simply shows that experience can continue even when orientation does not.



Photo by Ton Haarmans

Non-Duality as Non-Position

Without Standpoint, Without Claim

Earlier in this book, non-duality was described as a mindset: a coherent way in which experience can organize itself when the usual distinction between subject and object loses force. That description was necessary to prevent non-duality from functioning as an exception or endpoint.

What appears here is something else.

Non-duality as non-position is not an experiential configuration that replaces others. It is not a way of seeing, understanding, or inhabiting the world. It does not organize experience into a new coherence. It does not offer orientation.

What falls away is not separation alone, but the position from which separation or unity would matter.

No Viewpoint Remains

In this unframed condition, there is no standpoint from which experience is assessed. There is no observer who has arrived somewhere. What appears does not appear to anyone, nor does it need to be integrated into a larger context.

This is not immediacy as fullness. It is immediacy without reference. Nothing is closer or farther. Nothing is inside or outside. Nothing is meaningful or meaningless from a position.

Not an Experience to Have
Non-position is easily mistaken for a special experience. It is often described in terms of clarity, peace, or intimacy. These descriptions belong to configurations that still organize experience around value or effect. Here, even that organization is absent. There is no experience of non-position. There is only experience without position. To speak of it already introduces distance.

No Stability, No Authority
Because there is no organizing frame, this condition does not stabilize itself. It cannot be maintained, cultivated, or returned to at will. There is nothing to hold onto and nothing that holds.

When distinctions return—as they do under pressure, fatigue, or demand—there is no sense of loss. There is no sense of having fallen from somewhere. There was nowhere to stand.

This Is Not an Insight
Insight implies acquisition. Understanding implies relation.

Realization implies arrival. None of these apply.

Non-position does not reveal how things really are. It does not correct previous misunderstandings. It does not resolve the tension between different worlds. It simply shows that orientation is not necessary for experience to continue.

Language Fails Quietly

Language here does not collapse dramatically. It continues to function, but without authority. Words no longer point somewhere. They no longer organize attention toward a conclusion.

This is why descriptions of non-position often sound empty, circular, or evasive. They are not protecting a secret. They are operating without a frame.

Why This Is Placed Here

If this chapter had appeared earlier, it would have been read as culmination. If it had appeared among the configurations, it would have been mistaken for a superior mindset.

Placed here, after mapping coherence and its failures, it can remain what it is: the absence of position, without privilege.

What Remains

What remains is not a way forward. Life does not reorganize itself around non-position. Choices are still made. Worlds still appear. Configurations return when they are needed. Non-position does not replace them. It leaves no trace.



Illustration by Ernst Mach

Headlessness and the Vanishing Center

Perception Without a Point of View

In some experiences, the sense of being located somewhere behind the eyes falls away. Perception continues, but without a felt center from which it is organized. There is seeing, hearing, sensing — but no one positioned at the origin of these acts.

What vanishes is not the body, and not awareness. What vanishes is the center.

The Loss of the Observer

Ordinarily, experience is oriented around a point of reference: a here from which there is a there, an inside from which there is an outside. Even when this center is unnoticed, it quietly organizes perception.

In headless experience, this reference point dissolves. The visual field appears without a viewer behind it. Sounds arise without a listener at a location. Sensations occur without being gathered around a core. Experience is no longer arranged around a point in space.

This is not a conclusion. It is a perceptual event.

Not a Technique, Not a Practice
Headlessness is sometimes associated with exercises or demonstrations. Those can occasion the experience, but they do not explain it. What occurs is not the result of correct effort. It is not achieved through attention or discipline. It cannot be stabilized as a practice. When it appears, it appears without instruction.

No Expansion, No Depth
The disappearance of the center is easily mistaken for expansion: as if awareness had widened beyond the body. This framing still assumes a center that has moved or enlarged. In headless experience, there is no enlargement. There is no "more." What disappears is the sense of being somewhere in experience.

The Body Without a Center
The body does not vanish. Sensations continue. Movement occurs. But the body is no longer organized around a central point of ownership. Hands move without being "mine" in the usual way. Breathing happens without supervision. Posture adjusts without command. Agency does not cease. It decentralizes.

Temporality Without Sequence
Time often flattens. Without a center to anchor continuity, experience does not clearly unfold from past to future. Memory may still function, but it no longer organizes the present around a narrative self. What appears does not need to be placed.

This Is Not Liberation
Headlessness does not free experience from structure. It removes one organizing feature — centrality — while leaving others intact. Perception still selects. Attention still shifts. Responses still occur. What is absent is the sense that all of this belongs to a located observer.

Fragility and Return
This configuration does not hold. Under demand, pressure, or reflection, the sense of center often returns. There is no sense of loss, only reorientation. Nothing has been gained or lost.

Why This Belongs Here
Headlessness belongs in The Unframed not because it is ultimate, but because it demonstrates how orientation can fall away without replacing itself.

It is not a truth about reality. It is not a corrective to other experiences. It is not something to live from. It is a way experience can briefly function without a center.

And then not.



Photo by Mita 64 on Unsplash

Emptiness as Transparency

Form Without Thickness

In some experiences, what appears does so without weight or resistance. Forms are present, but they do not assert themselves as solid, independent, or self-sufficient. Things are there, yet nothing feels fixed or substantial.

This is often called emptiness. Here it is described as transparency. Not Absence, Not Nothingness Emptiness does not mean that nothing appears. On the contrary: appearance continues. What changes is not what appears, but how it appears.

Objects, sensations, and thoughts arise without claiming depth or permanence. They do not point to an underlying essence. They do not feel as though something is hidden behind them. There is no need to look past them.

Appearance Without Support

In transparency, forms do not seem to rest on a foundation. They appear without requiring explanation, justification, or grounding.

A sound is just a sound. A thought is just a thought. A sensation is just a sensation. This "just" does not minimize. It removes surplus. Nothing is added. Nothing is taken away.

No Hidden Structure

Transparency is easily mistaken for insight into the nature of reality. It is often described as seeing that "things are empty" or "lack inherent existence." Such descriptions reintroduce a framework. Here, emptiness does not reveal a metaphysical truth. It describes a mode of appearing in which nothing stands behind what appears. There is no deeper layer to access.

Meaning Without Density

Meaning may still function, but lightly. It no longer clings. Associations arise and dissolve without pulling experience into explanation or narrative. Understanding does not accumulate. Insight does not stack. What appears does not ask to be interpreted.

Relation to Headlessness

Emptiness as transparency sometimes coincides with the vanishing of the center. When there is no point from which appearance is assessed, forms may naturally lose thickness.

But the two are not identical. Transparency can occur while a sense of self remains. Headlessness can occur without transparency. They overlap without depending on each other.

No Preference, No Improvement
Transparency does not make experience better. It does not refine perception or purify awareness. It simply alters the way form asserts itself. In daily life, this can feel neutral, strange, or unremarkable. There is often nothing to hold onto and nothing to conclude.

Return of Opacity
Opacity returns easily. Under engagement, demand, or emotional pressure, forms regain weight. Objects matter again. Meaning thickens. Worldhood reasserts itself. There is no sense of falling back. Nothing has been lost. Transparency does not establish a new baseline.

This Is Not a Teaching
Emptiness here is not something to realize or maintain. It does not provide guidance or orientation. It does not explain suffering or promise release. It is a way experience sometimes functions when framing loosens without collapsing.

Why This Belongs Here
Placed among The Unframed, transparency is not privileged. It is not contrasted with ignorance or illusion. It is simply named.

It shows that experience can appear without depth, without support, and without demand — and that this appearance carries no message.



Photo by MAK on Unsplash

Darkness as Non-Orientation

When Nothing Organizes Experience

In some experiences, even the absence of framing no longer offers relief or clarity. There is no center, no transparency, no sense of openness. What appears does so without orientation and without promise. This is what is named here as darkness.

Not Mystery, Not Depth Darkness is not the hidden ground beneath experience. It is not a deeper layer. It does not conceal meaning waiting to be uncovered. It is the absence of orientation itself. Nothing points anywhere. Nothing explains anything else. Nothing stabilizes what appears.

Experience Without Reference

In darkness, experience continues, but without reference points. There is no sense of direction, no horizon of understanding, no context that renders what appears significant or insignificant.

This is not confusion in the ordinary sense. Confusion still presupposes an expectation of clarity. Here, even that expectation is absent.

No Center, No Transparency
Darkness is not headlessness. Darkness is not transparency. In headlessness, there is perception without a center. In transparency, there is form without thickness. In darkness, there is neither. What appears does not cohere into a field. It does not organize itself as presence, openness, or immediacy. There is no sense that anything is being revealed.

Meaning Withdrawn
Meaning does not collapse dramatically. It simply does not arise. Events do not feel empty in a liberating way. They feel unanchored. Questions lose traction. Answers feel beside the point. There is nothing to hold onto — not even the idea that there is nothing to hold onto.

Not an Experience to Interpret
Darkness cannot be used. It does not teach. It does not instruct. It does not correct.

Attempts to interpret it — as purification, ego death, surrender, or radical insight — immediately reintroduce orientation and miss what is being described. Darkness has no message. No Stability, No Return

Unlike other unframed conditions, darkness does not suggest a background of openness or neutrality. There is no sense that something supportive lies beneath the disorientation.This does not mean that darkness persists forever.

It means that while it holds, nothing organizes experience. When orientation returns — as it does — there is no sense of having come back from somewhere. There is only the reappearance of worldhood.

This Is Not an Endpoint

Placed last, darkness may look like culmination. It is not. It comes last only because nothing can follow it without framing reappearing. Any continuation would already be a return to organization. Darkness does not complete the map. It marks the point where mapping fails.

What remains is not insight, but honesty. Experience does not require meaning to continue. It does not require orientation to appear. It does not require a self to be present.

It simply occurs — sometimes organized, sometimes strained, sometimes unframed, and sometimes without even that. Darkness does not stand apart from experience.

It is one way experience can lose its way — without finding another.

Final consideration
I do not attempt to exhaust its subject.

It does not claim to have mapped all possible forms of experience, nor to have reached a final perspective from which such mapping would be possible. What it offers instead is a series of orientations — ways in which experience can appear coherent for a time, before shifting again.

The configurations described here are not exhaustive, nor are they meant to be. They are moments of stability within a field that never fully settles. Other arrangements are always possible, and many remain unnamed. Their absence does not indicate oversight, but reflects the fact that no account can include the conditions of its own possibility without altering what it describes.

To draw a boundary around these explorations is not to deny what lies beyond it. It is simply to acknowledge that any attempt to speak from within experience must choose where to stop speaking. No final map is offered. What it offers is a way of seeing that remains aware of its own limits.

| *"Becoming is not a progression, but a drift."*

Gilles Deleuze

Part VI
Movement



Photo by MAK on Unsplash

Thresholds: How Mindsets Shift

Instability Without Direction

Mindsets do not change because they should. They change because they no longer hold. A shift occurs when a configuration that once organized experience adequately begins to fail. What fails is not necessarily meaning, belief, or understanding, but functioning. Expectations stop aligning with events. Responses become unreliable. Coherence requires increasing effort. This moment is a threshold.

What a Threshold Is

A threshold is not a decision point. It is not a crossroads chosen by a self. It is a zone of instability in which a previously workable configuration loses its capacity to organize experience smoothly. What once felt obvious becomes questionable. What once guided action becomes unreliable. At a threshold, experience does not yet reorganize itself. It wavers.

How Thresholds Appear

Thresholds often appear indirectly:

- as persistent confusion,

- as exhaustion,
- as conflict between perception and interpretation,
- as a growing sense that "something no longer fits."

They may be triggered by external events, loss, crisis, disruption, or by internal pressure: accumulated doubt, contradiction, or strain. But the trigger is not the cause. The cause is that the existing configuration has reached its limit.

No Direction Is Implied

Thresholds do not point forward. They do not indicate progress, growth, or regression. They do not move toward clarity or openness. They merely mark the failure of a particular organization of experience to continue functioning as it did.

What comes next is not determined by the threshold itself. A new configuration may emerge that feels:

- narrower or wider,
- calmer or more intense,
- more coherent or more fragmented.

Nothing in the threshold dictates its direction.

The Role of Discomfort
Discomfort is common at thresholds, but it is not essential. Sometimes shifts occur quietly, without crisis or insight. What matters is not suffering, but instability. Thresholds are structural, not emotional. They indicate that the architecture of experience can no longer sustain itself without modification.

Shifts Are Often Misread
Because thresholds are uncomfortable, they are frequently interpreted as problems to solve. Psychologically, they may be framed as pathology. Spiritually, they may be framed as awakening. Morally, they may be framed as failure.

All of these readings impose meaning where there is only transition. A threshold does not announce what it is. It does not carry its own interpretation. Meaning is added afterward.

Reorganization Without Choice
When a shift occurs, it is not chosen in the ordinary sense. Experience reorganizes itself according to available conditions: temperament, environment, history, pressure, and context. Agency may feel absent or peripheral. The sense of "I decided to change" often appears only once a new configuration has stabilized.

From within, the shift feels inevitable rather than intentional.

Temporary Instability
Thresholds are rarely brief. Experience may hover in an unstable zone, oscillating between configurations, borrowing elements from several at once. This period can feel confusing, ambiguous, or disorienting. There is no rule governing how long this lasts. Some thresholds resolve quickly. Others linger for years. Duration does not indicate significance.

What Thresholds Do Not Provide
Thresholds do not reveal truth. They do not strip away illusion. They do not guarantee improvement. They only show that experience is capable of reorganizing itself when its current form no longer works.

Why This Matters Here
Placed after The Unframed, thresholds must not be read as steps toward it. Unframed conditions are not destinations reached through instability. They may appear, or not, independent of thresholds. Thresholds belong to movement, not arrival. They describe how worlds lose their grip—not where experience goes next.

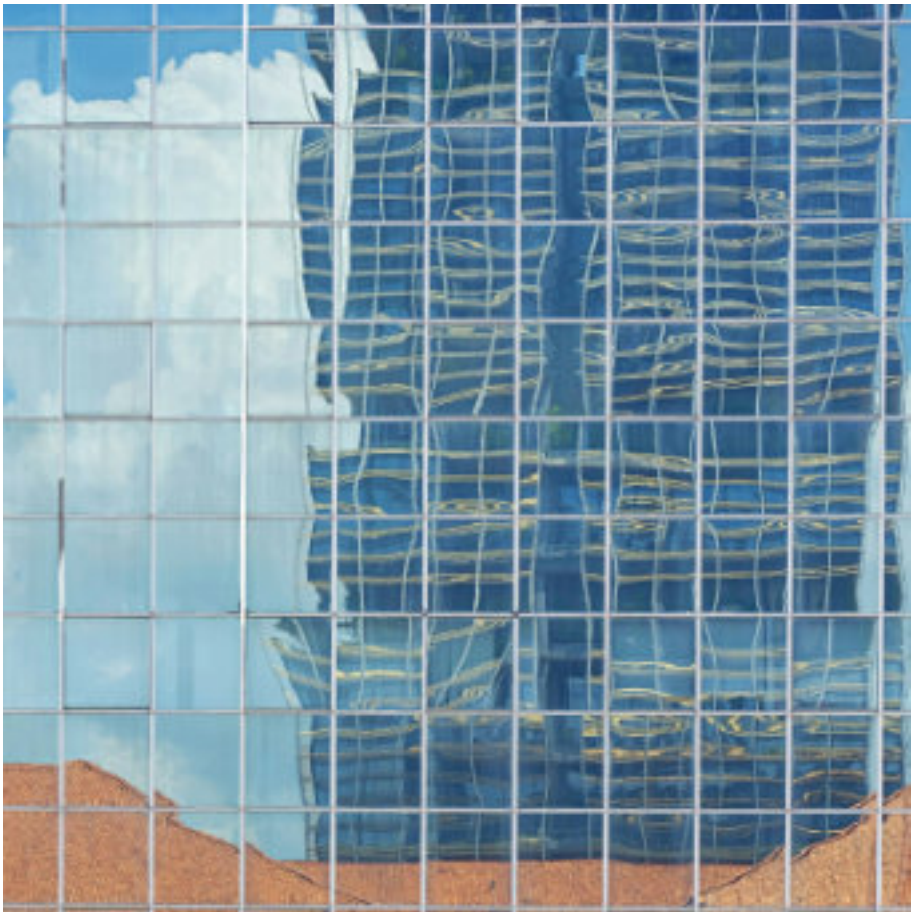


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Overlaps and Hybrid Worlds

Experience Without Clear Borders

Mindsets do not exist in isolation. They do not appear one at a time, fully formed, nor do they replace each other cleanly. In lived experience, configurations overlap, interfere, and blend. What appears instead of distinct worlds are hybrid fields.

No Pure Configurations

The descriptions in this book isolate patterns for clarity. That isolation is analytical, not experiential. In actual lives, experience rarely settles into a single configuration. Elements of different mindsets coexist:

- analytical clarity alongside emotional reactivity,
- spiritual interpretation alongside conventional responsibility,
- dissociation alongside hyper-attunement,
- openness alongside anxiety.

These combinations are not transitional errors. They are the norm.

How Hybrids Form
Hybrid worlds emerge when:

- a previous configuration has not fully dissolved,
- a new one has not yet stabilized,
- or when different domains of life demand different forms of organization.

Work, relationships, illness, belief, creativity — each can call forth distinct architectures that do not fully align. Experience responds locally, not globally.

The result is not confusion, but complexity.

Partial Stability
Hybrid configurations often function well enough. They allow experience to continue without resolving internal tensions. What feels contradictory from the outside may feel workable from within. This partial stability explains why many people live for long periods without identifying a "shift," even while experiencing ongoing friction.

There is no requirement for resolution.

Misleading Expectations of Coherence
The expectation that experience should become unified, consistent, or integrated is itself a product of particular mindsets. Hybrid worlds violate this expectation. They show that coherence is not an absolute value, but a functional one. Experience does not aim for harmony; it aims to continue.

Overlap Without Progression
Hybrids are often mistaken for steps along a path:

- "partly awakened,"
- "half-integrated,"
- "between worlds."

These interpretations impose direction where none exists. A hybrid world is not on its way to becoming something else. It is simply what happens when multiple organizing pressures are active at once.

Shifting Centers
In hybrid configurations, the center of experience may shift depending on context. One mindset dominates at work, another

in intimacy, another in solitude. This shifting does not indicate fragmentation of a self. It indicates that no single configuration governs experience entirely. There is no central authority.

Hybrids Matter

Recognizing hybrid worlds prevents several misunderstandings:

- that instability must resolve,
- that clarity must be singular,
- that inconsistency signals failure.

It also prevents misuse of this book. The descriptions offered here are not templates to identify oneself with. They are lenses to notice patterns that may overlap, fade, or reassert themselves unpredictably.

Relation to Thresholds

Hybrids often appear at thresholds, but they are not identical to them. A threshold marks instability; a hybrid may persist indefinitely.

A threshold may resolve into a hybrid world. A hybrid world may never resolve at all.

Neither outcome carries meaning in itself.

Why This Belongs in Movement
Placed here, hybrid worlds demonstrate that movement does not imply direction. Experience rearranges itself pragmatically, drawing on whatever configurations remain available.

Movement is not linear.

It is adaptive.



Photo by Etienne Boulanger on Unsplash

Misreadings and Crossings

When Worlds Are Mistaken for Each Other

When different experiential configurations coexist, they are rarely recognized as such. Instead, they are interpreted through the assumptions of whatever mindset happens to be dominant at the time. This leads to misreadings.

A misreading occurs when one configuration interprets another as if it were operating within the same world. What is actually a difference in architecture is taken to be a difference in belief, attitude, competence, or intention.

Structural Misrecognition
Misreadings are not misunderstandings that can be resolved by clarification. They are structural.

Each configuration brings with it its own criteria for what counts as rational, healthy, meaningful, or real. When those criteria are applied outside their own world, they distort what they encounter.

What appears from within one configuration as obvious may appear from another as irrational, naïve, resistant, pathological,

or deficient. The judgment feels justified because the standards themselves remain invisible.

Common Forms of Misreading

Several patterns recur. Psychological configurations may interpret spiritual or unframed experiences as dissociation or avoidance. Spiritual configurations may interpret psychological distress as resistance or lack of insight. Analytical configurations may interpret symbolic or narrative worlds as confusion. Narrative configurations may interpret analytical detachment as emotional absence.

In each case, the misreading does not arise from bad faith. It arises from using the wrong frame.

Crossings Without Translation

Crossings occur when elements of one configuration appear within another without being structurally integrated.

A person may speak the language of non-duality while operating from a defensive or conventional architecture. Trauma-related vigilance may be narrated as spiritual sensitivity. Analytical clarity may coexist with unexamined metaphysical assumptions.

These crossings are often mistaken for synthesis, growth, or integration. They are not. They are overlays.

Language migrates more easily than architecture. When this difference is overlooked, apparent depth replaces actual coherence.

Structural Asymmetries

Not all difficulties between worlds are the result of misreading. Some arise from structural asymmetries that are not themselves mindsets.

Conditions often described as narcissistic, psychopathic, or sociopathic do not constitute alternative experiential worlds. They do not organize reality according to different criteria of meaning or truth. Rather, they limit or distort the capacity for reciprocity across any configuration. Such structures can inhabit multiple mindsets:

- conventional,
- spiritual,
- analytical,
- narrative.

What distinguishes them is not worldview, but a persistent asymmetry in relation. Empathy may be restricted, instrumentalized, or absent. Meaning may be used strategically rather than shared.

Treating these structures as perspectives would neutralize responsibility and obscure harm. They are not differences in world-appearance, but differences in the capacity to stand in relation to another world.

Romantic Misreadings of the Pre-Reflective

Another persistent misreading concerns experiences described as "primitive," "childlike," or "original."

Cultures without modern institutions are sometimes imagined as inhabiting simpler or more immediate worlds. Children are often taken to exemplify a purer mode of experience, closer to reality or less alienated.

Both readings are projections. Cultural worlds are not immature versions of modern ones. They are fully developed, symbolically dense, and internally coherent architectures sustained collectively. They do not belong to the cartography of individual mindsets explored in this book.

Children, likewise, do not inhabit a distinct mindset. Their experience is characterized by incomplete stabilization, rapid shifts, and local coherence rather than a durable world-structure. Pre-reflectivity here indicates developmental incompletion, not depth or origin.

In both cases, reduced reflection is mistaken for greater truth.

Authority Without Ground

Misreadings become consequential when one configuration claims authority over others. This can occur clinically, spiritually, academically, or socially. A diagnostic framework may pathologize experiences it cannot accommodate. A spiritual framework may invalidate suffering by reframing it as illusion. An intellectual framework may dismiss lived experience as anecdotal.

In each case, authority is exercised without recognizing its own contingency. What is enforced is not truth, but a particular world.

The Temptation to Correct

A common response to misreading is correction: to explain, translate, or convince.

But correction presupposes a shared frame. Where architectures differ, explanation rarely bridges the gap. It often deepens it.

What is required is not agreement, but recognition.

Standing Beside

Recognition does not mean endorsement. It means acknowledging that another configuration operates according to different criteria of sense-making.

This stance does not resolve conflict. It does not harmonize worlds. It refrains from collapsing them into one another.

To stand beside another world is to accept that translation may fail — and that this failure is not an error to be fixed.

Why This Matters for Movement

Placed within Movement, misreadings and crossings show why shifts between configurations are rarely smooth.

Transitions are often accompanied by attempts to stabilize meaning by borrowing language, authority, or explanation from other worlds. These attempts can obscure rather than clarify what is happening. Understanding this prevents a persistent error: mistaking movement for progress, and crossing for integration.

No Final Safeguard

There is no position from which misreadings can be permanently avoided.

This book itself can be misread — taken as a system, a hierarchy, or a map toward something better. Such readings are not failures of the reader. They are reminders that every description belongs to a world.

What remains possible is vigilance: not against error, but against the unexamined extension of one world's standards into another.



Photo by Karl Hörnfeldt on Unsplash

The Pull of Foundation, and Why It Fails

The Persistent Desire for What Does Not Hold

Again and again, experience is drawn toward the idea of a foundation. A point of certainty. A final reference. Something that would hold regardless of configuration, context, or perspective. This pull persists even after every foundation has been questioned.

The Shape of the Pull

The desire for foundation rarely presents itself as metaphysics. More often, it appears in familiar forms:

- a belief in an ultimate truth,
- an appeal to nature, science, or consciousness itself,
- a conviction that there must be something beneath experience that explains it.

These gestures feel reasonable. They promise stability where movement has become visible. The pull is not intellectual. It is structural.

Why Foundations Are Sought
Worlds become fragile once they are seen as configurations. Meaning appears provisional. Certainty loses its authority.

At this point, the longing for something that does not shift intensifies. A foundation would resolve ambiguity, settle conflict, and provide orientation.

The promise is seductive: if only something were finally true, everything else could fall into place.

The Reappearance of Ground
Foundations return in many disguises. In scientific realism, they appear as laws of nature taken to be independent of observation. In spirituality, they appear as awareness, presence, or being itself. In philosophy, they appear as logic, language, or structure. Even the claim that "there is no foundation" can become foundational.

What changes is the vocabulary, not the function.

Why Foundations Fail
Every proposed foundation operates within experience. It is articulated, recognized, defended, and contested from within a particular configuration. No foundation escapes this condition.

What is taken to ground experience *is always already shaped by the way experience is organized at the time*. The foundation does not support the world; the world supplies the conditions under which the foundation appears convincing. This circularity is not a flaw to be corrected. It is the situation itself.

The Cost of Grounding

Foundations do more than promise certainty. They exclude. Once a ground is established, other configurations are measured against it. Some experiences are legitimized; others are dismissed, corrected, or pathologized. Authority enters through the back door. The attempt to secure meaning produces hierarchy, even when equality is professed.

Movement Without Resolution

Seen from the perspective of movement, the pull of foundation is understandable. Shifting worlds generate instability, and instability invites closure.

But closure arrests movement.

The search for ground freezes what is dynamic. It converts provisional coherence into necessity and difference into deviation.

What movement reveals is not that foundations are false, *but that they are unnecessary*.

Letting the Pull Be Seen

This book does not propose resistance to the desire for foundation. Nor does it recommend acceptance. It proposes recognition. To see the pull as a recurring feature of experience is to deprive it of its authority without suppressing it. The desire can arise without being obeyed. Nothing needs to be resolved.

Why This Ends Movement

Placed here, this chapter does not conclude a process. It marks a limit. Movement does not culminate in insight. It does not arrive at ground. It does not stabilize itself. It continues — as reorganization, overlap, misreading, and renewed search. What fails is not experience.

What fails is the expectation that it should finally rest.

| *“I can’t go on. I’ll go on.”*

Samuel Beckett

Part VII
The Open Field



Photo by Bernd Dittrich on Unsplash

Infinite Mindsets

Plurality Without Completion

If experience can organize itself in many ways, there is no reason to assume that the configurations described in this book exhaust its possibilities.

They do not.

The mindsets mapped here are neither comprehensive nor definitive. They are recognizable patterns within a particular cultural, historical, and linguistic field. They are examples, not a catalogue.

No Closed Set

There is no fixed number of mindsets. New configurations can emerge when conditions change: technological shifts, social upheaval, altered environments, neurological variation, collective trauma, chemical intervention, or unforeseen combinations of existing patterns.

Experience does not draw from a limited inventory. It reorganizes as needed. Any attempt to finalize the map would contradict what the map reveals.

Plurality Without Relativism

To acknowledge infinite mindsets is not to claim that all perspectives are equally valid, true, or harmless. Validity is always local. Coherence is always conditional. Consequences are always real.

Plurality does not dissolve responsibility. It only removes the illusion that responsibility can be grounded in a final world.

No Meta-Mindset

It may be tempting to imagine a position that sees all mindsets at once — a meta-perspective that contains them without belonging to any.

This book does not assume such a position exists.

The recognition of plurality is itself an experiential configuration. It appears within experience and remains subject to the same limits as any other. There is no view from which plurality becomes complete.

Mapping Still Matters

If mindsets are infinite, why map them at all? Because some patterns recur. Because some misreadings repeat. Because some claims of finality return under new names.

Mapping does not aim at completeness. It aims at orientation without closure. A partial map can still prevent confusion. It can still reveal when a world is being mistaken for the world.

Against Exhaustion

The idea of infinite mindsets can feel destabilizing or overwhelming. It need not be. Infinity here does not mean endless proliferation. It means open-endedness. There is no finish line at which experience becomes settled or complete.

What matters is not how many worlds are possible, but that no single one has the right to conclude the field.

The Open Field

What this part names as the open field is not a background behind experience. It is not a substrate or ground. It is the recognition that experience does not close upon itself.

Worlds appear. Worlds function. Worlds dissolve or overlap. Nothing guarantees that the next world will resemble the last.

Why This Comes After Movement

Placed here, infinite mindsets are not a future promise. They are not an invitation to explore endlessly. They are the consequence of having followed experience as far as it would go without

claiming a foundation. Movement revealed instability. The unframed revealed absence of orientation. The open field reveals non-exhaustion.

What remains is not mastery. It is attentiveness to how worlds appear, stabilize, and lose their grip — without expecting the process to end. Experience does not aim to complete itself.

It continues.



Photo by Valeria Nikitina on Pexels

Living Without a Final World

Continuation Without Closure

To live without a final world is not a choice, an achievement, or a stance. It is what happens when the expectation of ultimate resolution no longer organizes experience.

Nothing special replaces it. Life continues.

No New Orientation

The absence of a final world does not introduce a new framework. There is no alternative worldview that takes its place. What disappears is not meaning, but the expectation that meaning should be grounded once and for all. Decisions are still made. Commitments still arise. Conflicts still matter. They do so without being justified by reference to a deeper order.

Ordinary Functioning Remains

Living without a final world does not dissolve practical life. Roles, responsibilities, and institutions continue to function. Language remains usable. Explanations are still offered.

What changes is not behavior, but the weight assigned to explanation. Explanations no longer promise to settle things

definitively. They work locally, provisionally, and then give way to others.

No Ethical Upgrade

This condition does not confer moral clarity. Without a final world, there is no ultimate standpoint from which actions can be justified. Responsibility does not become easier. It becomes situational. Ethical decisions are made without the assurance that they align with a deeper truth. They are made because something must be done, not because it is finally right.

Commitment Without Certainty

Commitment does not require certainty. People commit to relationships, projects, and values without believing that these commitments reflect an ultimate order. They hold because they hold — for now. This holding is not weaker for lacking foundation. It is more exposed.

Conflict Without Resolution

Without a final world, conflicts are not guaranteed resolution. Some disagreements persist because they arise from different configurations that cannot be reconciled.

The absence of a final arbiter does not eliminate conflict. It only prevents its premature closure.

What remains possible is negotiation, withdrawal, coexistence, or rupture — none of which carry metaphysical endorsement.

Meaning Without Destination
Meaning continues to arise. It does not point toward completion. Stories are told, understood, and abandoned. Purposes form and dissolve. Projects end or fail. New ones begin. Meaning functions as orientation, not destination.

Fatigue and Relief
Living without a final world can be tiring. The promise of closure is seductive. The wish that something would finally make sense does not disappear.

At the same time, something else may ease. Without the demand for ultimate justification, experience is not required to add up. It is allowed to remain partial, inconsistent, and unfinished.

This Is Not a Conclusion
This chapter does not conclude anything.

It does not recommend living this way.

It does not claim that this is how life should be lived.

It does not propose an alternative.

It describes what life looks like when the expectation of a final world no longer organizes it.

Life does not become transparent.

It becomes unsettled without collapse.

What continues is not insight, but movement. Worlds still appear. They still function. They still matter. And they simply do not conclude the field in which they appear.



Photo by Cara Denison on Pexels

The Space Where Worlds Appear

Appearance Without Ground

Throughout this book, worlds have been described as appearing: structured, coherent, functional, unstable, overlapping, or unframed. This language suggests a space in which such appearances occur.

That suggestion must be handled carefully.

Not a Background

The space where worlds appear is not a container. It is not a background behind experience. It is not a field that exists independently of what appears within it. To speak of space here is not to introduce another layer. It is to acknowledge a limit of description. Worlds appear, but they do not appear in something.

A Way of Speaking

The phrase "the space where worlds appear" names a relation, not an entity. It points to the fact that experience is not exhausted by any single configuration. Worlds arise, function, and dissolve

without closing the possibility of others. This openness is not something added to experience; it is implied by its variability.

Space here is not ontological. It is grammatical. It allows us to speak about appearance without claiming a ground beneath it.

No Subject, No Horizon

This space is not perceived. It is not accessed. It does not belong to a subject.

There is no standpoint from which it can be surveyed. No horizon toward which experience moves. No depth behind what appears.

When worlds appear, they do so fully. Nothing stands behind them, waiting to be revealed.

This Is Not Awareness

It may be tempting to identify this space with awareness, consciousness, or presence. Those terms carry too much weight.

Awareness, as usually understood, still functions as a ground, something that remains when everything else changes. This book does not rely on such a remainder.

What is named here does not remain. It does not persist. It does not hold. It only becomes thinkable when worlds are seen to vary.

Appearance Without Origin

To say that worlds appear is not to say that they originate somewhere. There is no source. There is no cause behind appearance as such. There is only the fact that experience organizes itself in multiple ways.

The question "why is there appearance at all?" does not find an answer here. It simply loses its grip.

At last:

This chapter does not conclude the book. It prevents a different conclusion from forming.

Without it, the mapping of worlds could be mistaken for a theory of reality. With it, the map remains what it is: a description of appearances without claim to what makes them possible. The space where worlds appear is not what the book is about. It is what remains unnamed throughout.

Nothing needs to follow. Experience will continue to organize itself. Worlds will continue to appear, overlap, and dissolve.

New configurations will arise that do not fit the descriptions offered here.

This does not undermine the work of mapping. It confirms its provisional status.

The space where worlds appear does not need to be filled.

It only needs to remain unclaimed.

"Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity."

Simone Weil

On Standing Beside

Standing beside someone is not the same as understanding them. Understanding aims at coherence. It tries to bring what appears within a shared frame, to make it intelligible, comparable, manageable. Standing beside does not do that. It acknowledges that another world may be operating — and that it may not be accessible.

This is not resignation.

It is restraint.

To stand beside is to remain present without assuming translation is possible. It is to resist the urge to interpret another person's experience according to one's own criteria of sense-making. It does not deny difference, nor does it attempt to dissolve it.

Standing beside is not agreement.

It is not validation.

It is not neutrality.

It is the refusal to collapse worlds into one another.

In many situations, standing beside is the only option left once the hope of shared ground has faded. Arguments fail. Explanations circle. Appeals to truth, reason, insight, or care no longer reach the other side.

What remains is proximity without convergence.

This proximity can be uncomfortable. Without shared meaning, there is no reassurance that one is right, helpful, or effective. Standing beside exposes the limits of one's own world without offering a replacement.

It also exposes power.

To insist on understanding can be an act of domination. To demand coherence from another world is often to demand that it reorganize itself according to one's own standards. Standing beside withdraws that demand.

This does not make everything permissible. Harm still matters. Boundaries still exist. Distance may still be necessary. Standing beside is not submission.

It is the recognition that not all differences can be resolved, and that some attempts at resolution do more damage than good.

In everyday life, standing beside is often quiet and unremarkable. It looks like listening without correction. Like staying without fixing. Like not knowing what to say — and not filling the silence.

It is not heroic.

Standing beside does not promise connection. It does not guarantee mutual recognition. Sometimes it results in nothing at all.

And yet, it is the only stance that does not pretend to occupy a higher ground.

Where no final world can be shared, standing beside is what remains.

Literature

The works listed here do not ground the arguments of this book. They neither justify its claims nor authorize its distinctions.

They are included because they articulate questions, tensions, or sensibilities that resonate with the exploration undertaken here. Some informed the background against which this book was written; others mirror concerns from different directions.

The list is selective and non-exhaustive.

Phenomenology and Experience
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice — Phenomenology of Perception

Husserl, Edmund — Ideas I

Husserl, Edmund — The Crisis of European Sciences

James, William — A Pluralistic Universe

James, William — The Varieties of Religious Experience

These works explore how experience appears prior to theoretical explanation, without assuming access to a final structure of reality.

Non-Duality (Critical and Demythologized)
Tollifson, Joan — Nothing to Grasp

Warren, Miranda — This Terrible Love

Saltzman, Robert — The Ten Thousand Things

Parsons, Tony — The Open Secret

Astin, John — Too Good to Be True

These texts engage non-duality not as a doctrine or path, but as a destabilization of familiar assumptions — often resisting spiritual hierarchy and promise.

Architecture, Distinction, and Form
Spencer-Brown, G. — Laws of Form

Wittgenstein, Ludwig — Philosophical Investigations

Bateson, Gregory — Steps to an Ecology of Mind

These works informed the language of distinction, structure, and pattern without supplying a foundation beneath experience.

Psychology, Trauma, and Edge States
van der Kolk, Bessel — The Body Keeps the Score

Laing, R.D. — The Divided Self

Fisher, Janina — Healing the Fragmented Selves of Trauma Survivors

These texts are not treated here as explanatory frameworks, but as descriptions of how experience reorganizes under pressure, fragmentation, or threat.

Literature and Reflection
Beckett, Samuel — Worstward Ho

Pessoa, Fernando — The Book of Disquiet

Kafka, Franz — Selected Short Stories

These works articulate the limits of meaning, coherence, and narration without attempting to resolve them.

Closing Note

This list does not represent agreement, lineage, or synthesis. It marks proximity, friction, and shared concern. No work listed here provides a key to what this book describes.

If anything, they confirm that no such key is available.

Online Resources

The resources listed here are included for orientation and context. They are not references, endorsements, or extensions of this book. Online material is inherently provisional. Links change, platforms disappear, and voices evolve. What matters here is not permanence, but proximity to the questions explored in this work.

Contemporary Non-Duality (Critical Voices)
Joan Tollifson — essays and talks
https://joantollifson.com

Miranda Warren — writing and interviews
https://mirandawarren.com

Robert Saltzman — essays on non-duality and language
https://robertsaltzman.com

John Astin — talks and reflections
https://johnastin.com

These voices approach non-duality without offering paths, promises, or metaphysical reassurance.

Phenomenology and Experience (Accessible Formats)
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — selected entries
https://plato.stanford.edu

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
https://iep.utm.edu

Included for careful, non-doctrinal overviews rather than conclusions.

Trauma, Psychology, and Lived Experience
Janina Fisher — articles and clinical reflections
https://janinafisher.com

NICABM — trauma-informed educational material
https://www.nicabm.com

Glossary

Architecture of Experience
The implicit structure through which experience becomes workable: distinctions, relations, orientations, and boundaries that allow something to appear as something. Not imposed, not chosen, and not directly perceived.

Configuration
A specific arrangement of the architecture of experience that stabilizes a particular way a world appears. Configurations are functional, not fundamental, and may overlap or dissolve.

Crossing
The appearance of elements from one configuration within another without structural integration. Often mistaken for synthesis, growth, or insight.

Experience
Not an inner stream observed by a subject, nor raw data awaiting interpretation. Experience here refers to the organized field in which self, world, meaning, and relevance appear together.

Foundation
Any claim, principle, or reference taken to ground experience absolutely. In this book, foundations are understood as recurring attempts at closure rather than as ontological necessities.

Hybrid World
A lived configuration in which multiple organizing patterns coexist without resolving into a single coherent world. Hybrid worlds are common and not transitional errors.

Mindset
In this book, not a belief system, attitude, or psychological trait, but a configuration of experiential architecture through which a particular world appears. Mindsets are neither chosen nor definitive.

Misreading
The application of one configuration's criteria of sense-making to another configuration, resulting in distortion rather than understanding. Misreadings are structural, not merely cognitive.

Movement
The observable reorganization of experience as configurations lose stability, overlap, or reassert themselves. Movement implies change without direction or destination.

Pre-reflective
Refers to aspects of experience that operate prior to explicit reflection or conceptualization. In this book, pre-reflectivity does not imply depth, truth, or origin.

Standing Beside
A stance of proximity without translation, agreement, or correction. To stand beside is to acknowledge difference in world-appearance without attempting to collapse it into one's own frame.

Structural Asymmetry
A persistent limitation in reciprocity or relational capacity that operates across configurations. Structural asymmetries are not mindsets and do not constitute alternative worlds.

Threshold
A zone of instability in which an existing configuration no longer functions smoothly. Thresholds do not indicate direction, progress, or resolution.

Unframed
A descriptive term for conditions in which familiar distinctions lose their organizing role. Unframed does not denote access to a deeper reality, only the absence of a stabilizing frame.

World
Not an objective totality, but a coherent field of meaning, relevance, and orientation as it appears through a particular configuration of experience.

World-Appearance
The way a world shows up as obvious, real, or meaningful within a given configuration. World-appearance is not a representation of an underlying reality.



Photo by Lieve Jacobs

About the Author

Ton Haarmans (1953) works at the intersection of philosophical reflection, lived experience, and careful description. His interest lies not in offering answers, teachings, or methods, but in examining how experience organizes itself — how worlds appear, stabilize, and quietly claim authority.

Trained in philosophy, Ton has spent decades exploring questions of knowledge, belief, non-duality, and meaning, both intellectually and personally. His work resists foundational explanations and spiritual promises, focusing instead on the structural conditions under which certainty, identity, and reality seem to arise.

Mindsets is part of an ongoing exploration into experience as world-forming rather than world-reflecting. Ton lives and works in Europe and publishes essays and reflections at wideopenwindows.be.