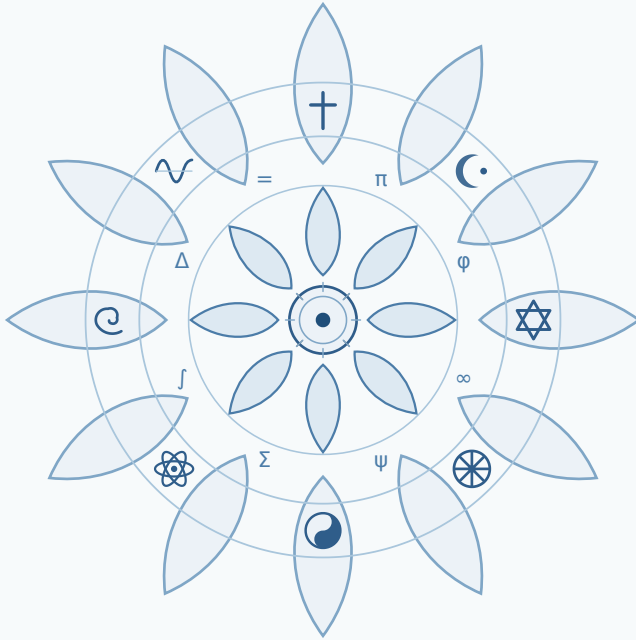


FAITH

The Fractalization of the Same Image



JAMISON TODD JOHNSON

Legible Traces · July 2026

A STANDALONE ESSAY

Faith

The Fractalization of the Same Image
A Philosophy of Religious Symbolic Interpretation

JAMISON TODD JOHNSON

Legible Traces · Kansas City · July 2026

DEDICATION

For all my friends of faith.

For those who have known me my whole life and never once doubted me, and for those who arrived more recently and helped me align with myself.

*Particularly for **Matthew McKinnie** and **Michael Johnson**, who showed me that a modern understanding of the Divine is very much possible — that faith in the design can be restored in large chunks, provided one is listening when people like this speak.*

*This is how the design works.
Coherence of thought, and an acceptance of purpose.*

A NOTE ON METHOD

HOW TO READ THIS ESSAY

What follows is a work of philosophy of religion — more precisely, a personal philosophy of religious symbolic interpretation. The scriptures, histories, and sciences gathered here are read symbolically, for their meaning within the design, and are not argued as claims of historical or scientific fact.

Where scholarship disputes a source, the dispute is noted rather than hidden. The reader will find, more than once, that the dispute itself proves the point: the same image, fractured in transmission, still catching the light.

The notes are offered lightly — as keys for the reader's own research, not as walls around the text.

*Faith — the fractalization of the same image,
as recorded throughout history.*

To me, the idea of “my God is the one and only true God” seems to be acceptable to those who believe in this singular fractalization and explanation of the Divine. This is perfectly okay for those individuals, should they actually live up to the rules of morality their perception of faith has outlined for them in whatever scripture they choose.

I have outlined this deeply in my second journal, the *Resonating Hymn of Divinity*. The pattern is not difficult to find once one begins looking for it. Hillel, asked to teach the whole of Torah while standing on one foot, answered that what is hateful to oneself must not be done to a neighbor — the rest is commentary.¹ The Sermon on the Mount teaches the same rule in the positive.

The Prophet's tradition holds that none truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself. The Mahabharata calls it the sum of duty; the Udanavarga, the measure of hurt; the Analects, reciprocity in a single word. And beneath the rule sits the deeper claim that makes the rule make sense: **that they may all be one**; that thou art that; that humanity was created from a single soul; that Truth is one, and the wise call it by many names.² The rule is the same because the image is the same. Treat others as mirrors of ourselves — because, in the end, that is what they are.

Often times I wonder how we have become so scattered. My mind immediately goes to the Tower of Babel in the Bible.³ It is also, in its way, the same story preserved in al-Tabari's *History of the Prophets and Kings*, where the tongues at Babil were confused in a single day⁴; the same story told of the Great Pyramid of Cholula — Tlachihualtepetl — where the giant Xelhua built toward heaven and the gods scattered the builders⁵; the same story in the Shatapatha Brahmana, where the asuras raised their altar toward heaven and were deprived of their speech⁶; and the Sumerians carried it too, in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, remembering a time when **the speech of mankind was truly one**.⁷

In my opinion, the idea of a “grand design” or “unified field” certainly includes space for a designer or Creator that created all current standing images of faith, as well as math and science. To me, this seems to be an unarguable part of our existence. **We create, because we were created**; the pattern within the design remains the same. The ruler we hold to measure meaning comes in different shapes, but it always does the same thing.

Tests the design.

Measures our faith.

Explains why things are the way they are.

One would argue that these are all one in the same. The only difference between them is placement in time, language, and understanding.

From where, then, comes the direction of the moral compass?

The pattern of **coherence oscillation** absolutely travels all directions.

I know the concept of “God is always watching” is dated, but I like to consider the gift we have been given with the opportunity of living in the design — or what some might call “playing in the field” — of life.

To me, Karma makes complete sense when one removes the personal identity that has been assigned to the higher power by mortals over the years. Often times, this parallels the personal identity we assign ourselves, which is the exact thing that becomes a barrier for transferring the language of the Divine between each other. This is where I find Jung most useful, read symbolically. The **persona** is the mask an individual wears for the world; the **ego** is the small center that mistakes itself for the whole; the **Self** is the whole — center and circumference at once, the piece of the image each of us carries.⁸ When the persona speaks, the Divine is translated twice before it ever leaves the mouth. When the Self speaks, nothing needs translating.

My children tell me all the time: life is like a video game. This, to me, makes more sense than almost anything. Successful video games always hold some deeper moral or understanding of existence. Successful video games become lasting, whereas money-grabs aimed toward quick success without adjustment become memories. An old philosopher would not be surprised — play has always been one of the doors through which meaning enters the world.⁹ Nor would Tolkien, who understood that we make still by the law in which we were made.¹⁰ Game designers build worlds with rules, consequences, and meaning, because that is the shape of the world that built them.

What, then, of the “game of life”?

One may be a villain in this story and pay the consequences; one may be an NPC and help the heroes (or, sadly, the villains, if bad karma is something one has not quite yet figured out); or one may be a hero. A hero in one's own story, and in the stories of others.

This explains my thoughts on phase coherence, in a nutshell, and how suffering can be defined as lessons — because the sting of painful memories fades faster than the glow of joyful ones.¹¹ Sometimes our interpretations of these things vary, but remember again Babel, and ask what “feels” right in every moment.

The idea of living in the moment is the idea of allowing coherence at every pass. Treating every interaction with another person as an equal allows the knowledge of the design to pass between them unadulterated.

The moment Ego stands at the gate, the interaction becomes incoherent, the moment passes, and time moves.

This would mean that **time is absolutely relative** — in the physicist's sense and in the mind's sense, which are similar but different readings of nearly the same thing¹² — and explains why fleeting moments of joy are just that, and lingering hours of sadness seem like “Hell” inside our minds.

Consider the various texts explaining that **the kingdom is within**.¹³ Luke's Greek — *entos hymōn* — has been argued for centuries: “within you,” or “in your midst”? I hold that the design allows both at once. The kingdom is within, and it is unlocked with the keys placed without — in the neighbor, in the moment, in the field.¹⁴ And also consider, within the framework of the design, that “Hell” is potentially within as well, and can be inflicted upon us with our own thoughts.¹⁵

Our thoughts about ourselves, about material things, and about others.

This would explain why there are also keys placed within. Because some doors are within. The rooms we seek to escape in our minds are, most certainly,

within.

So what of suffering, and those who cause it? I have explained that they know not what they do, but I stand on the hill that my mind cannot feasibly comprehend why a Creator would create these images within the framework (if for no other reason than to test our resolve and limit our outward projection of internal opinion).

Again I offer, **the keys for personal peace are found both internally and externally**. Some are cut in solitude; some are handed to us by a neighbor. The design places them in both places, which is why neither the hermit nor the crowd holds the whole ring.

But that would redefine the word “change,” and the inherent desire to achieve it can sometimes stand in the way — for as soon as the desire becomes enveloped in Ego once again, the separation from the Self becomes obvious. This either leads to an “evil overlord” archetype or a “messiah complex” archetype within the design. Jung had a word for this: **inflation** — the ego swelling to fill a space that belongs to the Self alone, mistaking godlikeness for God.¹⁶ Neither archetype is healthy. Neither is speaking the actual language of the Divine when it shares knowledge.

The field, as it stands, allows for all directions of travel in time. This might be hard to grasp, but moral integrations of intent phase (*do unto others*) determine destinations (“Heaven or Hell,” as it stands).

Where death begins, I suggest, legacy starts.

How does one wish a legacy to travel through time, whether a Creator is actually watching or not? Herein lies the entire argument of morality between believers and non-believers, pastors and physicists.

But the quiet truth is, being a kind and just person brings success in any number of ways. In my personal experience, and my observed experience, this is

an unarguable truth. Kindness repays itself with kindness. Legible traces we leave in time impact others in ways we cannot ever see, whether we are still walking this planet to witness their outcomes or not.

I would argue that this is the literal definition of **timelessness**. Science would push back that there is no measure, but theology would respond by stating what I have said here clearly.

One may be a lesson to others through one's mistakes, or one may be a hero in the eyes of everyone around.

I would consider that the Creator is just enough to understand this. This, in turn, says again that Heaven and Hell are not places, but perceptions of the world.

History plays this in perfect tune, in both directions. Consider first what unified consciousness builds. The pyramids at Giza were not raised by whips; the archaeology of the workers' villages tells of organized crews — fed, housed, honored, and rotated — thousands of individuals moving in phase toward a single point in the sky.¹⁷ Whatever one makes of the pharaohs' theology, the stones themselves are a record of coherence: proof that when **the keys for success are found within a people and passed hand to hand between them, the conditions without matter far less than we suppose**. The design rewards phase alignment with permanence.

And then consider the other direction. One need only look at the times in history when unity was thrown away because Ego stepped in the way — when accumulation of mortal goods replaced the shared point in the sky. I call this **the Hubble effect**. When the Hubble Space Telescope first opened its eye, its great mirror had been ground wrong by a fraction of the width of a human hair; one microscopic misalignment at the source, and the entire cosmos arrived blurred.¹⁸ The instrument was magnificent. The view was false. So it goes with the Ego: a flaw too small to see, standing exactly at the point where all the light

must pass. Rome learned this; so, in time, did Egypt itself, fragmenting after the very coherence that built the pyramids drained away.¹⁹ Ibn Khaldun watched the pattern from inside history and gave it a name — *asabiyya*, the group-feeling that raises a dynasty in hardship and dissolves in luxury within three generations.²⁰ I would suspect these empires were brought down in the field because of an altered goal in time.

Hold that, and look at today.

The definition of “success” will vary depending on the standing of an individual and the alignment of their moral compass. This is very much the persona, as Jung would say, skewing the viewpoint of the individual.

So where do we stand with this knowledge we as humans already have? I have poured my thirty years of research onto paper, only to be turned a blind eye by those who view it as pretentious, or perhaps as a means to an end.

We share the end; the means is their decision, not mine.

Those who read my work have found their keys. This is all we were meant to do — **guide, not force**. This also echoes in the hymn of Divinity, all through time. The scriptures agree here with a unanimity that should embarrass no one: there is no compulsion in religion; to you your way, and to me mine; shake the dust from the feet and move on; test the teaching for oneself, as the Kalamas were told; reflect on this fully, then do as you wish.²¹

I find this incoherence to be most prevalent today in the conversation around gender.

First, I want the reader to consider deeply what I have said: anything we discuss is within the construct of life as it currently stands. It is part of the “design.”

Second, I would like the reader to hold: gender ideology and gender dysphoria are two very different things.²² There exist many straight Christian “God-

fearing” individuals who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and I have personally met many transgender individuals happier in their new image and understanding of the Divine than most modern Theists.

One must consider: the “darkness” wears a different persona than the one we are expected to see. I always ask myself — what is the intent of the persona telling me something is evil? Whose empire does the division serve? For me, often times, this leads to the success of an Ego incoherent with the Self, in demise. Scattered tongues are useful to somebody; they always have been. Division is cheap fuel for a dynasty whose *asabiyya* is spent. The scriptures ask the same question from the other side: judge not; find the beam in one’s own eye before naming the mote in a neighbor’s; remember that mortals look on the outward appearance while the Divine looks on the heart.²³ Harm aimed at a neighbor who is healthy, happy, and harming no one is almost never born of knowledge. It is born of misunderstanding — the persona mistaking its own discomfort for the voice of the Divine.

I would then want the reader to understand what I said above. Under the concept of “one consciousness interconnected,” one is looking at a differently fragmented version of the Creator — that is, a mirror — or one is truly looking at oneself. For “they made us in their perfect image”²⁴; who am I to question the designer of their design?

The old instruction to **turn the other cheek** runs through nearly every tradition.²⁵ Confucius alone pushed back — repay injury not with kindness, he said, but with uprightness²⁶ — and I hold that, read rightly, even this is no contradiction. Uprightness and justness are an understanding of a neighbor’s incoherence, and the desire to guide them must never be delivered in words of evil or hate — only in the guiding words of the Self, the One, the Divine. To me, sometimes I think turning the other cheek just means allowing other individuals to live uninhibited within the design. Who am I to say a person is “sinful” when they have “found God” in their own right? I am a simple man, a

father, a husband, and a philosopher. I have no business in the field judging the person next to me.

Especially if the construct of their beliefs misaligns with mine.

I find that **coherence is gained through understanding**. I would not stand on my own mountain of growth had it not been for the hundreds of people who have explained their own “meaning of life” to me.

The meaning of life? Ask me directly now, after all this writing, and the answer is this.

The meaning of life, within the framework, is to be happy. To show others how to be happy.

With the fruits of the design, and not reach for anything more. This could be shelter; this could be food; this could be medicine; this could be knowledge.

This could be as simple as looking at a neighbor, and asking why they have been disregarded so.

We are truly all one, and Karma is perceivable when one stands in the right spot and looks the right direction.

I am not asking anyone to stand there. I am not asking anyone to see. **One need only listen**. Not to me — to a neighbor.

Forgive them for being different, and listen to what they are saying. They speak only of the things they need to be happy.

I can almost certainly guarantee that to be true.

Be kind, and the design will be kind in return.

NOTES

1. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a. The rule of reciprocity recurs across the traditions in nearly identical form: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31; an-Nawawi, *Forty Hadith*, no. 13; Mahabharata 5:1517 (Anusasana Parva 113.8); Udanavarga 5:18; Analects 15:24 (*shu*, reciprocity); T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien; Dadistan-i Denig 94:5; and Baha'u'llah's counsel to choose for one's neighbor what one chooses for oneself.
2. John 17:21; Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7 (*tat tvam asi*, "that thou art," repeated as a great saying of Atman–Brahman unity); Quran 4:1 and 21:92; the *Ik Onkar* opening the Guru Granth Sahib; Rig Veda 1.164.46 (*ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*).
3. Genesis 11:1–9. "Babel" plays on the Hebrew *balal*, "to confuse."
4. Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, trans. W. M. Brinner, vol. II, *Prophets and Patriarchs* (SUNY Press, 1987): at Babil the one speech, formerly Syriac, became seventy-two tongues in a single day. Quran 16:26 — the building struck at its foundations — is traditionally associated with Nimrod's tower, though classical commentary reads it as a general parable of arrogant designs collapsing from beneath. The association is symbolic, and is offered here as such.
5. Recorded by the Dominican friar Diego Durán in the sixteenth century: the giant Xelhua, survivor of a flood, builds the great mound toward heaven, and the offended gods scatter the builders. Scholars debate how much of the account as we have it was shaped by post-contact missionary influence — a dispute worth sitting with, since a Babel story whose own transmission may have been confused in translation is not a weaker example of the confusion of tongues, but a living one.
6. Shatapatha Brahmana, book III (trans. Julius Eggeling, *Sacred Books of the East*, 1900): the asuras, building toward heaven, are deprived of intelligible speech.
7. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, the "Incantation of Nudimmud" (Oxford ETCSL; see H. L. J. Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings*, 2003). The passage has two scholarly readings that run in opposite directions: on one (Kramer), Enki *confounded* a once-unified human speech; on the other (Alster, Vanstiphout), the incantation looks forward to the day all speech is made *one*. I make no attempt to collapse the question. Both meanings stand in the text at once — the memory of unity and the promise of it — and the reader may collapse the reality they need. That the oldest Babel story we possess cannot itself decide whether language was scattered or is waiting to be gathered seems, to me, exactly the point.

8. The loci for the reader's own study: the persona in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (CW 7); ego and Self in *Aion* (CW 9ii) and *Psychological Types* (CW 6); the Self as *imago Dei* in *Aion* and *Psychology and Religion* (CW 11). The use made of Jung here is my own symbolic interpretation, not a claim about clinical doctrine.
9. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (1938), on play as a primary meaning-making activity of culture.
10. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Mythopoeia* (1931): the human maker as "sub-creator," making by the law in which we ourselves were made — because we are made in the image of a Maker.
11. The psychology of memory calls this the fading affect bias: the emotional intensity of negative autobiographical memories fades faster than that of positive ones (Walker, Vogl & Thompson, 1997; Walker & Skowronski, *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 23, 2009). The bias concerns the fading of feeling, not of recall — which suits the argument: the lesson remains after the sting has gone.
12. Physical relativity (time dilation across reference frames) and psychological time (emotional states stretching or compressing perceived duration) are distinct phenomena; the parallel drawn here is symbolic — two rulers, different shapes, measuring the same absence of any absolute clock.
13. Luke 17:21. The Greek *entos hymon* is genuinely disputed: "within you" (KJV; defended by D. B. Hart) or "in your midst" (most modern versions). Parallels: Gospel of Thomas 3 ("the kingdom is inside you and outside you") and 113; Chandogya Upanishad 8.1.1 (the small space within the lotus of the heart); Dhammapada 1–2 (mind precedes all states); Quran 50:16 (nearer than the jugular vein); Deuteronomy 30:14 (the word very near, in the mouth and in the heart).
14. A beloved Sufi saying transmitted in al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din* — that neither heaven nor earth contains the Divine, but the heart of the faithful servant does — carries no authenticated chain, and hadith scholars class it as inauthentic. Yet it persists, I would suggest, because its meaning coheres with what is authenticated: the first hadith of both Bukhari and an-Nawawi's collection, "actions are but by intentions" (*innama al-a'malu bi-n-niyyat*). Transmission can break where intent still carries — the letter scattered at Babel, the meaning arriving anyway. The two interpretations exist because the design measures the heart, not the paperwork.
15. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* I.254–255: the mind as its own place, able to make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

16. Jung's account of psychic inflation and "godlikeness" (*Two Essays*, CW 7): the ego identifying with the Self it was only meant to serve. Again, the application is my own.
17. Excavations of the workers' settlement at Giza (Lehner, Hawass) indicate organized, provisioned, rotating labor crews — bakeries, breweries, medical care, honored burials near the monument — rather than the enslaved masses of legend.
18. Hubble's primary mirror was figured to the wrong shape by roughly two micrometers — about one-fiftieth the width of a human hair — producing spherical aberration that blurred every observation until corrective optics were installed during the 1993 servicing mission.
19. Rome's decline is read by modern historians as multi-causal — fiscal strain, plague, climate, external pressure — and Egypt's Third Intermediate Period as political fragmentation. The moral reading offered here stands in the older interpretive tradition of Gibbon and Ibn Khaldun, and is offered as philosophy, not as history.
20. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* (1377; trans. F. Rosenthal, 1958): dynasties rise on *asabiyya* — group-feeling forged in hardship — and rarely outlast three generations of the luxury that dissolves it.
21. Quran 2:256 ("no compulsion in religion"), 109:6, 18:29; Matthew 10:14; 1 Peter 3:15; the Kalama Sutta (Anguttara Nikaya 3.65); Ashoka's Rock Edict XII, honoring the sects of others; Bhagavad Gita 18:63; the Jain doctrine of *anekantavada*, the many-sidedness of truth; Tao Te Ching 2 and 43, the teaching without words.
22. "Gender dysphoria" is the clinical term (DSM-5-TR, American Psychiatric Association, 2022): clinically significant distress arising from incongruence between experienced and assigned gender. It is a condition a person carries, not an ideology a person argues.
23. Matthew 7:1–5 (judge not; the beam and the mote); 1 Samuel 16:7 (mortals look on the outward appearance; the Divine looks on the heart). Jung named the mechanism *projection*: the shadow one refuses to see in oneself becomes the "evil" one discovers in a neighbor (*Aion*, CW 9ii). And one measurable fact, offered to both sides of the line: transgender people met with acceptance and support show markedly lower rates of depression and suicidality than those met with rejection (family-acceptance research, e.g., Ryan et al., 2010; the Trevor Project's national surveys). Kindness is not a position in the debate; it is the variable that moves the outcome.
24. Genesis 1:26–27.

25. Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29; anticipated in Lamentations 3:30 and Isaiah 50:6; paralleled in Tao Te Ching 63 (repay injury with virtue), Dhammapada 3–5 (hatred never ceases by hatred), the parable of the saw (Majjhima Nikaya 21), and Quran 41:34 (repel evil with what is better, and the enemy becomes a devoted friend).
26. Analects 14:34: asked whether to repay injury with kindness, Confucius answers — then with what would one repay kindness? Repay injury with uprightness (*zhi*), and kindness with kindness.

LEGIBLE TRACES

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