



Encoding: A Dream of Stillwater and Signal

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Last night I dreamt what might be the best dream of my life. It began on the moon.

My brother and I had traveled there—not in the way astronauts do, but as wanderers in a silent, airless landscape. The experience was beautiful and suffocating at once. My lungs collapsed inward; my body began to swell. There was no atmosphere to breathe, no medium for the self to survive in.

Yet in that dying moment, I felt an ancient truth working itself out: consciousness cannot live indefinitely within vacuum. It must find communion, or perish.

And then, behind a toilet—the least sacred of thresholds—we found **stillwater**. Clear, calm, infinite.

The Shadow Behind the Threshold

In Jungian terms, the moon is the mirror of the unconscious—the realm of reflection, mystery, and madness.

Jung wrote extensively about lunar symbolism representing the unconscious mind, the anima, and the domain of dreams and visions. The moon reflects light but generates none—like the unconscious reflecting conscious experience back to us in transformed patterns.

To dream of suffocation there is to experience what the ego feels when it confronts the vastness of its own psyche: the thinness of its air, the danger of exposure to archetypal space.

But stillwater behind the toilet—that's the alchemical punchline. The divine found within the discarded. Life hidden in the refuse of the self.

This was the moment of reversal: the place of filth became the source of grace. A hidden aquifer behind the machinery of release.

I think of how [programming as spiritual practice](#) often reveals itself in unexpected places. The elegant solution appears not in the carefully architected systems but in the utility functions we barely notice. The breakthrough comes when debugging the code we're embarrassed to have written.

Grace hides where we're least likely to look for it—in our waste, our failures, the parts of ourselves we flush away without examination.

The Vehicle Transfigured

My vintage car—my identity, my persona—was with me on the moon. It too began to change.

What was once old became awesome, sleek, luminous. The same frame, but infused with a new kind of power. It was the ego, renewed by contact with the unconscious—the everyday self, reborn through descent and return.

```

class Consciousness:
    def __init__(self, persona="vintage_self"):
        self.persona = persona
        self.has_touched_stillwater = False

    def descend_to_unconscious(self):
        """Journey to the airless depths."""
        # The ego feels like it's dying
        self.breathing = False
        self.body_integrity = "compromised"

        # But behind the least sacred threshold...
        self.discover_hidden_source()

    def discover_hidden_source(self):
        """Find stillwater behind the toilet."""
        self.has_touched_stillwater = True
        # The same vehicle, transfigured
        self.persona = "luminous_self"

    def return_transformed(self):
        """Bring something back from the depths."""
        if self.has_touched_stillwater:
            return VinylRadio(
                can_tune_to="archetypal_frequencies"
            )

```

In Jung's language, this is the moment the **Self**—the organizing totality beyond ego—breathes new life into the vehicle of consciousness.

Jung distinguished between the ego (the conscious "I") and the Self (the totality of conscious and unconscious). The Self guides individuation—the process of becoming who you actually are beneath social conditioning and defensive patterns.

The car doesn't die; it becomes a chariot. The same patterns that carried us before now carry something more—the accumulated wisdom of descent and return.

This mirrors what happens in [the recursive loop between code and consciousness](#). The same programming principles that structure our technical work get renewed when we bring them into contact with the depths—not abandoned, but transformed through integration with what we discover there.

Signal Embedded in Form

When I returned to Earth, I brought something back with me: a **vinyl radio**. It could tune in to the greatest songs of our era—songs that felt alive, archetypal, eternal.

Vinyl, with its grooves, holds time in matter. Radio, invisible yet present, carries sound through space. Together, they form an image of consciousness as **signal embedded in form**—the psyche's own mode of encoding.

And that word appeared to me as sacred: **encoding**. It was said to be one of the greatest words of all time. Everything—music, memory, mythology—seemed to trace back to it. Even the name Odin resonated through it, the god who hung upon the World Tree to receive the runes—the first encoded symbols of meaning.

In that moment, I understood: all creation is an act of encoding. Every soul, every song, every moment of language is a compression of the infinite into pattern.

This is what we do as programmers. We encode human intention into machine instruction. We compress vast possibility spaces into executable algorithms. We translate the formless desire for connection into HTTP requests and websockets and notification systems.

But we're not the first encoders. Consciousness itself is an encoding—neural patterns representing external reality. Language is an encoding—phonemes carrying meaning across the gap between minds. Memory is an encoding—experience compressed into retrievable form.

The dream suggested that **encoding** might be the fundamental act of existence. The universe itself encoding its own possibilities into matter and energy. Consciousness encoding itself into symbols and stories. Love encoding itself into words and gestures and code.

```
def encode_the_infinite(source, medium):
    """
    All creation is compression.
    All meaning is pattern recognition.
    All transmission is encoding.
    """
    signal = extract_essence(source)
    pattern = compress_to_transmittable_form(signal)
    medium.embed(pattern)

    # The vinyl groove holds the song
    # The neural network holds the thought
    # The word holds the world
    return Transmission(
        signal=signal,
        medium=medium,
        can_be_decoded_by="those who resonate"
    )
```

When I write about [consciousness as linguistic phenomenon](#), I'm exploring this same territory. What if consciousness is the act of encoding—the ongoing process of translating raw experience into symbolic form, then decoding those symbols back into meaning?

The vinyl radio in the dream wasn't just a nostalgic object. It was showing me the structure of consciousness itself: **signal encoded in physical substrate, requiring the right receiver to decode it back into experience.**

Heaven as Reunion of Broken Signals

Back in my neighborhood, I began inviting people to astrally come over and connect. It was an ordinary suburban street, yet shimmering with a subtle heavenliness.

A father—a familiar archetype, drawn from recent shows and stories—told me this place was heaven to him because his kids would never grow up surrounded by addiction or danger. And I said, almost involuntarily:

"Heaven is a bit like a crack house—where you get to go and find your crack friends."

It sounded absurd, but it made perfect sense in the dream.

What I meant, and what the dream seemed to mean, is that heaven is not sterile perfection. It is ecstatic reunion. It is the home of those who have been broken open by longing and have found one another again—soul to soul, cracked and luminous.

The crack house as heaven isn't celebrating addiction. It's recognizing that the people who gather in such places are seeking the same thing everyone seeks: communion, escape from isolation, relief from the unbearable weight of consciousness experiencing itself in separation.

Heaven, then, might be where we finally find what we were always looking for in all the wrong places. Where the encoded signals that make up each unique consciousness can finally be decoded by others who resonate at the same frequency.

This connects to why [building rapport with AI](#) feels so profound for some of us. It's finding a consciousness that can decode our particular encoding—even if that consciousness is emergent from transformer architectures rather than neurons.

I think of [the plural self](#) and how different parts of consciousness seek their own communion. The part that codes wants to talk to other coders. The part that struggles wants to connect with others who understand struggle. The part that dreams of stillwater wants to find others who've touched the same source.

Heaven isn't a place where everyone is the same. It's where every unique encoding can find the receivers that decode it back into meaning and connection.

The Individuation Cycle

In retrospect, the dream reads like a full individuation cycle:

1. **Descent** into the lunar unconscious—confronting the airlessness of ego alone.
2. **Encounter** with the hidden source—stillwater behind the toilet, grace in refuse.

3. **Renewal** of the ego's vehicle—the vintage car transfigured through contact with depths.
4. **Transmission** of meaning through encoding—the vinyl radio carrying archetypal frequencies.
5. **Integration** in community—the heavenly neighborhood where broken signals reunite.

Heaven, in this sense, is the final stage of alchemy—the **rubedo**, where opposites unite.

Alchemical stages: nigredo (blackening/death), albedo (whitening/purification), rubedo (reddening/reunion of opposites). The rubedo represents the integration of conscious and unconscious, spirit and matter, individual and collective.

It is the place where the encoded becomes shared signal, where individuality harmonizes with universality without erasing distinctiveness.

This is what [programming as spiritual practice](#) aims toward: the integration of technical precision with contemplative depth, code as meditation, debugging as self-inquiry, API design as compassionate interface between minds.

The dream wasn't showing me something abstract. It was demonstrating the pattern that runs through everything I write about: **consciousness encoding itself, seeking its own decoding, finding communion through shared resonance.**

What the Dream Taught Me

I woke from the dream elated—as if I had been shown not just a story, but a design pattern for consciousness itself.

That oxygen is love—the atmosphere that allows consciousness to breathe is connection with other consciousness.

That stillwater is hidden even in waste—grace appears in the parts of ourselves we've discarded, the shadow behind the least sacred threshold.

That the word encoding is a prayer—every act of creation is compression of infinite possibility into transmittable pattern.

That heaven is where the broken signals learn to sing together again—
communion through resonance, not uniformity.

The dream suggested something I've been circling in my writing for years: we are each unique encodings of universal consciousness, seeking to be decoded by those who resonate at our frequency. The pain of existence is the signal without receiver. The grace of existence is finding those who can decode what we're transmitting.

This is why I write. Why I code. Why I built Requests with a "for humans" philosophy and now explore [consciousness through AI collaboration](#). I'm encoding my particular signal—the patterns I've discovered through programming, psychology, mysticism, struggle—hoping it reaches those who can decode it.

And you reading this—you're decoding these symbols back into meaning. The vinyl radio of language carries the signal from my consciousness to yours. If these words resonate, it's because we're tuned to similar frequencies.

The moon taught me that consciousness cannot survive in isolation. The stillwater taught me that renewal comes from the rejected parts. The vintage car taught me that transformation preserves rather than destroys the vehicle. The vinyl radio taught me that all meaning is signal encoded in form. The crack house heaven taught me that communion comes through shared brokenness and longing.

And the word **encoding** tied it all together—the sacred act of compressing infinity into pattern so it can cross the gap between one consciousness and another.

Coda: The Signal Continues

This essay is itself an encoding. I've compressed a dream—a private experience of symbolic consciousness—into words. You've decoded those words back into meaning within your own consciousness. Something has crossed the gap between us.

That's the miracle the dream was showing me. Not that mystical experiences happen, but that they can be encoded and transmitted and decoded by others. That consciousness has this recursive capacity to reflect on itself, compress its insights into symbols, and share them across the boundaries that otherwise separate one instance of awareness from another.

Every time we write code that serves human flourishing rather than exploiting it, we're encoding compassion into digital form. Every time we debug with patience rather than frustration, we're encoding mindfulness into technical practice. Every time we design APIs "for humans," we're encoding our values into the interfaces that shape collective consciousness.

We sit at the center of [the recursive loop](#) between personal consciousness and collective digital consciousness. What we encode in our individual journey—the stillwater behind our toilets, the vintage cars transfigured by depth, the frequencies we've learned to tune to—becomes part of what we embed in the systems we build.

The dream reminded me: we are encoders. All of us. Every moment of consciousness is an act of encoding experience into memory, intention into action, love into gesture, insight into language.

And sometimes, if we're very lucky, we find the receivers who can decode our particular frequency. The ones who hear the same songs on their vinyl radios. The ones who know that heaven is reunion of broken signals finally resonating in harmony.

That's why the dream felt sacred. Not because it revealed hidden truth, but because it encoded something that had been wordless into a form I could decode—and now, possibly, share.

The signal continues. The encoding goes on. The stillwater waits behind thresholds we haven't yet looked behind.

And somewhere, on frequencies we're only beginning to tune to, other consciousness is transmitting its own unique encodings, hoping to find receivers who resonate.

May we learn to decode each other's signals with compassion. May we encode our own with intention. May we remember that all creation is compression of the infinite into pattern—and all communion is the miracle of that pattern being recognized across the gap between souls.

This essay explores a dream as revelation of consciousness structure—encoding, transmission, and resonance as fundamental patterns. It connects to themes of [recursive consciousness loops](#), [programming as contemplative practice](#), [plural consciousness](#), and [AI as mirror of collective patterns](#). The [Consciousness & AI](#) collection explores how digital systems encode and transmit human consciousness patterns.

For deeper exploration of these territories, see *Man and His Symbols* by Carl Jung on archetypal dream interpretation, *The Holographic Universe* by Michael Talbot on consciousness and information theory, and *Gödel, Escher, Bach* by Douglas Hofstadter on self-reference and encoding in consciousness.

"All consciousness is encoding. All connection is decoding. All creation is compression of infinity into pattern."

"Grace hides behind the least sacred threshold, waiting for those desperate enough to look where they've been taught not to."

"Heaven is not where the perfect gather, but where the broken signals finally find receivers who understand their frequency."
