

Auteurs and God with Michael Curzi

Reach Truth Podcast

Tasshin:

Hey, Curzi. Thanks for joining me again on the podcast. Sort of weird order that we had a recorded conversation. Now we're doing the more formal thing one on one, but it's good to have you here.

Michael Curzi:

Oh, last time. Oh, you're talking about the -

Tasshin:

The [Lovey Dovey Douchebags](#) one.

Tasshin:

Yes, that's right. This is cool. I haven't done a thing like this in a minute and they're fun, and I like chatting with you, so happy to be here.

Tasshin:

Yeah. Glad you're here, friend. Maybe just as a sort of simple thing to start with, you just dropped another vibe reel and I'm very curious to hear more about the vibe reels but this one was so beautiful, "[COURTESY](#)". Definitely one of the best ones so far and would love to just hear you talk about that vibe reel and kind of what the impetus for it was.

Michael Curzi:

Oh, sweet. Let me think about it for a second. It's called COURTESY. It quotes Kenneth Clark. I've got like my sort of roster of underappreciated writers, intellectuals, et cetera. One of them might talk about, I try to reference whenever I can - like Arnold Toynbee. I think there are people who will never have heard of Arnold Toynbee. I just try to talk about them all the time and another one of these is Kenneth Clark. Kenneth Clark is this art historian, who made this incredible series in the '60s called Civilisation with an S. He's British and it's 12, 14 episodes or something. I think all of it is on [YouTube](#). He goes through human history, starting with, I think the first episode's called *The Skin of our Teeth*.

Michael Curzi:

He's talking about the dark ages and the sort of idea that the light of civilization almost went out perhaps. He goes through at least the American Revolution era. I think later, even like 1800s, no wait, he actually goes all the way to the 20th century. What am I talking about? I love him and I love this thing - I have to hat tip Samo Burja every time I bring it up because he got a bunch of us to fucking watch it. I've now seen it three or four times, but about the vibe reel, I've wanted to use vibe

reels to talk about to summon spirits. The vibe reel is a material artifact meant to carry some sort of spiritual power. Now we have to be wary of idolatry.

Michael Curzi:

There's a broader topic of what idolatry is and whether it means whether objects can have spiritual power. I think that objects can have spiritual power, including, for example, people, but idolatry, I believe is a hyperfixation and sort of taking a part to be the whole. The part in the whole relationship with the vibe reel is I'm trying to summon spirits and sort of put them in material artifacts.

Michael Curzi:

I don't know if there's probably some kind of like DnD archetypes type of like Shaman or some type of conjuring wizard or something that, that does this in, in the that I might pair myself too, but I'm trying to put the things in these objects, but I also want them to have some kind of relationship to each other. That's something I haven't quite done yet, I don't know if anybody out there is like studying me and my stuff, but I have the idea, you never know, for better or worse. I have idea that like, sort of by the time my work is done, a great coherence will be made manifest. It may be more or less clear I guess I'm rambling already, but that's why you have me on.

Tasshin:

The facial expression there is, I realize when you say that, you could describe me as studying your stuff. I really like the things you do and I've told you that before. I watch closely what you do and that's why we're talking, I'm curious to learn more about everything that you do. Am I understanding correctly that you're sort of saying the vibe reels are you could see them as parts of an emerging larger hole that you're sort of putting in pieces to a bigger puzzle sort of thing?

Michael Curzi:

Yes. It's all one thing. I don't want to do anything halfway. When it comes to making, making art, like a blog post is an artifact? A tweet is an artifact of this type. I maybe focus on spiritual power, but there's also intellectual content a sort of idea of an architectonic hole. I'm in this situation that I find troublesome, which is that the hole is not clear yet. I'm building I'm laying down stones and I'm playing this video game, Valheim. You're a viking and like purgatory in you like build these big towers, kind of Minecraft style. I get hyper fixated on these fixated on these, on these towers.

Michael Curzi:

I spend a long time, building it up and, and whatever. Consuming my content is one level of getting the stuff that I'm trying to put out there studying is I guess I have my idea I study Kanye West, right. When I say study, I mean I listen, I consume the stuff. I also think about it and try to figure out what is everything that's going on? At this point, I guess I am a fan. I definitely am a fan and I guess I'm doing the thing that fans do, which is learn everything they can about a subject, but there's parts of it that I don't know that much about. In terms of like history of music, I don't really know where Kanye falls in.

Michael Curzi:

Cause I'm not a scholar of the history of music. There's people out there who know everything about that. They'll be tracing all the samples he uses and the different, 1970s, R&B people and all the different, whenever rap music comes up, people talk about slaves, spirituals, all this different sort of like there's a lineage and blah, blah, blah, blah. I don't know anything about that but I'm focused on the parts I'm interested in.

Michael Curzi:

Anyway, what I'm trying to say is in the long game, I want everything I put out to make sense and to be understandable in context, part of the context of that is that the things you make early are worse than the things you make later, if you're dedicated, you are going to improve. I just try to make stuff that I will approve of looking back when I'm wiser and better at everything I do. To wrap up RE Kenneth Clark and COURTESY - the vibe reel sort of thing is I care about civilization. If there's a single thing I think is worth supporting, it's the collective effort of humanity to do humanity's thing. Maybe another way that I refer to that is as 'civilization'. I'm sort of putting a coin in the piggy bank on that one by making COURTESY.

Tashin:

It's interesting to hear you describe it as a whole and how courtesy fits into that, because we've talked about this before, but that the first one I think was "[MAMMON](#)" and it's just a totally different vibe. Yet, I'm kind of exhilarated by thinking of, oh, what's the whole picture where there's acknowledgement of Mammon and evil forces in the world. We talked about that and also courtesy and caring for civilization and I, of course being a Lovey Dovey, love the line about all people are our brothers and sisters, and I forget exactly how you put it, but something to that effect.

Michael Curzi:

We channeled that in [your dance video](#).

Tashin:

Yes. We've already touched on so much that I want to dive deeper into, but maybe we could just zoom back for a second and sort of introduce you. I would just love to hear from you who you are and what your life story has been. I know you personally as a friend, but would love to hear more. I suspect that will also give some context for anyone and that's watching who you are and how you got to be here, where you are now, wherever this weird places that you are now.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. You told me before we started that you were going to ask me this question. I was just, oh shit, he's actually asking this question.

Tashin:

That's how everybody feels my friend.

Michael Curzi:

Well, who is Michael Curzi? I feel we're in the process of finding out. As far as life story, there's always, I do have one frame that I can lean on, which I've leaned on in the past, which is thinking about a succession of ideologies that I've been into. In the Meta of that, I'm a little suspicious of it, because I used to get so much out of like ideologies and being a believer and a thing. The truth is always weirder than that. One thing I could say I think I have a spin. I can give on it though. I'll tell the succession of ideologies and I'll sort of like give the spin. When I was a kid, I was like 10 years old. I have this memory. I remember thinking to myself, life is awesome.

Michael Curzi:

Doing stuff is awesome. I wish we could just do that forever. I thought, okay, well what are the ways that could happen? I thought religion and it was, no, I don't really think that works, my thought at the time. I haven't seen God do anything. It was my 10 year old thought. I've asked for things, but just, I don't know, it doesn't... I've got a lot of things I'm trying and that one hasn't panned out. Two was, magic, but could magic do this? I thought about this and I thought I've only really seen magic in books. I don't think that's going to work. Can science do it? I thought about it for a second. I was, no, that's impossible.

Michael Curzi:

That was my 10 year old question. Then my conclusion was, I guess it's impossible. What you need to do is live life as, as well as you can. As an adolescent, I ended up getting really into this samurai philosophy, which I think we've talked about before. Well, we've definitely talked about it. I forget which context we've talked about it.

Tasshin:

Privately.

Michael Curzi:

Privately.

Tasshin:

Say some more.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. I have a video on this. It's called [Samurai Parables](#) or something like that. I read this book called the Hagakure it's a 1700s manual. This samurai revivalist guy. 1700's is a weird time for the samurai because this long period of peace, 268 year period of peace begins in 1600. That's the Tokugawa era. This thing is happening like 150 years in. The samurai weird because they're like a military class.

Michael Curzi:

It's sort of these people who were warlords in the preceding era become the aristocrats and then they spend hundreds of years trying to figure out, what does that even mean? How do you be a warrior in a time of piece? This guy who's writing. I thought, oh, I don't know. He's a samurai guy. He's sort of just I'm getting the samurai perspective. When I look back and actually skipped the preface of that book. I've read it like 18, 20 times as like a 13 year old. I skipped the preface of the book. Apparently, this guy was a total weirdo. It's kind of like if you were going to read about the 20th century and it was like the 22nd or 23rd century, let's find like a representative example of a person who lived in America?

Michael Curzi:

Oh, this guy Eliezer Yudkowsky, he seems pretty good. I was sort of like reading, samurai Eliezer Yudkowsky - a guy with very intense views, very boldly argued. You could confuse it for the samurai perspective, but it's really is a peculiar intellectual. This guy Yamamoto Tsunetomo. Anyway, that book is all about meditating on death and Marshall virtue. There's a lot of weird social advice in it. A lot this social advice is way more intense than anything you've ever thought of in your life. Where it's talking about how some samurai's lord lost face. This guy, his samurai, his retainer found a way to take the fall and then committed seppuku. That was good. This is sort of ethos is loyalty.

Michael Curzi:

Sort of take the fall for the guy and die. That's awesome. We want things like that. The samurai are kind of these deeply - Tokugawa-era samurai in my understanding are these deeply, socially sophisticated, super soldiers, who just manifest the loyalty virtues. Anyway, I got really deep in the samurai point here. Skipping forward. I did that for a while. Super duper into martial arts. Then later on I kind of became sort of depressed, I think, early in college and then ended up finding Trans humanism as another ideology that I got into. I went to this conference, run by humanity, plus at Caltech and met all these people started learning about the rationality community adjacent to that. This first thing was transhumanism though.

Michael Curzi:

The Extropians, it's: immortality is good. AI is awesome. We're going to change our bodies, cybernetic, hyper brain stuff. I got really into Ayn Rand, I synthesized these into some kind of, anarchical Trans humanist, glorious great people, legalism thing. I sharpened my dedication to the sort of libertarianism, but becoming an anarchical capitalist. Sort of the ones who think that the libertarians don't go far enough. I was this ancap transhumanist, blah, blah, blah. Then ran into the rationality memes. Then it was, oh shit, AI could destroy the world. Oh shit. I actually there's lots I don't know about like sociology. I was an Objectivist, I thought I had solved philosophy. I was like hell yeah. I was like oh God! So I sort of did my crisis there.

Michael Curzi:

I was a rationalist. Time moved on. I got into the EA stuff. Sort of whatever that sort of the expanded rationality, but we were going to broaden the scope of what it means to improve the world. Subsequently, you know I joined this place, Leverage Research and I won't go too far into that, but spent about seven years studying psychology, studying history, studying the mind and ended

up dropping a lot of my strong associations with rationality and EA. Coming up with my own kind of odd perspective on the world that I guess is too close to me in time for me to call it stupid. The other ones I can be tongue in cheek about, but I'm like - nah, I still a lot of stuff that I believe then. Left there March 2020. What month is it?

Michael Curzi:

Is it September? It's October 2021. Basically, in the last period of time, I've just continued studying history and let me just comment on threads. That's a succession of ideologies, one fine way to tell the story. As far as threads, as I see them. These days, I'm trying to do this manifest spiritual truths in artifacts or in art, like artists, just the high throughput way that I know of, but I would be in any way to do that. One thread is actually spirituality. In reaching for all these ideologies, I think I was looking for coherence, just some kind of story that like made fucking sense of everything I was seeing that also made victory of some type possible. Victory might feel like an overly kind of trumped up term.

Michael Curzi:

I hate feeling bad. It seems an obvious thing to say, but I hate feeling some type of winning isn't possible. Some type of awesomeness isn't possible. This is my way of maintaining the vibrant, joyous spirit of childhood. We're going to just do stuff and it's going to be awesome. I think where I've gone in and out of these troughs certain types of depression and then back to the ecstatic heights of vision or whatever. Ideology definitely helped me through that. The thing with ideology is you just got to keep going. You sort of come up with your frame and, but it's a draft. The cracks start appearing and reality starts speaking through. One of the things you find out, if you really want to have a coherent worldview, is that the truth matters because the truth keeps, keeps coming in and kicking your ass and showing you that you're wrong.

Michael Curzi:

And you're like wait a second. What if I could go to where the puck is going? What if I just knew what was true? Then nothing could fuck with me anymore. It's sort of a control, a sort of control scheme. If I processed all the stuff that could come in and fuck with me, then I will remain whole through the successive realizations of what is really going on, because I will be increasingly knowing what is going on. I will want to know what's going on. The truth stuff definitely the rationality affected me in a big way. There's this sort of spiritual coherence. There's the rationality stuff. One more bit.

Michael Curzi:

You asked me about my life story is I used to want to be a filmmaker as a kid. I decided not to, cause I believe that making film would just be creating something a shallow distraction from life. I wanted to instead of making a beautiful story of what life could be, I wanted life to be good. It's possible that I think that was probably the right move at the time. I was probably 16 or something when I was thinking about this. It's funny that I've come back to it. Sixth grade or seventh grade, I made this video about physics and the whole grade loved it. It was me writing a skateboard, talking about gravity. I was a kid or whatever, and just everyone loved it.

Michael Curzi:

I put in the offspring as the soundtrack. I was kind of a punk junior high and everyone loved it. Third grade, I had this movie idea that just is still stuck in development, helm. There was this video called this movie was going to be called Sea Slugs. The name was my friend's idea, but it was about these alien slugs that landed on earth and were actually superheroes and going to like save everything again. The entire grade was just hyped about this. They come to me with ideas. We should do this. I had this whole vision, all these different villains. Terminator with a fucking tiger arm and blah, blah, blah. It's possible that psychology, I suppose you could say is a very extremely intense hobby of mine.

Michael Curzi:

Maybe if you get bombed with social approval at a young enough age, maybe that just shapes the organism, it shapes the telos or whatever. In any case, I am back on this kind of art and creation stuff for now, I do expect it to continue, but you expect things and then they don't go that way then that's fine. Storytelling, the through lines there, spirituality, some kind of truth seeking storytelling, extroversion sort of pretty much always been extroverted. Social media is part of that sort of a lot of people.

Michael Curzi:

Anyone listening to this will be probably encountering it through social media in some way, unless everyone who watches this goes out and tells their closest friends and family, you have to watch this interview from Tasshin and Michael Curzi. It's the best fucking thing I've ever seen in my life. It changed me and I will change you too. If that happens, then people will be through normal, normal social interaction.

Tasshin:

Just as opposed to abnormal social interaction, which is social media.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah, through technology.

Tasshin:

Can you say more about, I think I missed, or maybe you just sort of aligned, but sort of you said that when you're creating, you're trying to like manifest spiritual truths and what does that mean for you? Where does that come from? What is spirituality for you as you see it these days?

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. I've received a bunch of memes about like art and what it is, actually through my sister. Who studied theater and does a bunch of stuff in that area. What does it say? Which is to say, I haven't drunk from the fountain directly. There's a good history of what is art and how do you do it well, and there's lineages. One of these ideas is you need to tell the truth. If your shits not good, it feels like truth. It feels like speaking truth to when you're getting back on track. They mean that in a

different way than the rationalists mean truth, sort of a speaking your truth is a different thing than describing reality with the joints.

Michael Curzi:

I think there are different ideas of truth. I think the sort of broad thing can be put together in a good way. Philosophy is some kind of throughline, I guess that's related to the truth thing. When you talk about spiritual truth and you put something in front of somebody, when it resonates, the experience of consuming good art or good media is it's all these things. It can be entrancing, et cetera, but it's sort of a fetish. It's like people have fetishes. If you don't do the fetish quite right, it's no. Power dynamic, sure, but not a doctor. I don't like doctors, someone could say that, fuck not doctors. Some people have Nazi fetishes - it is spoken of that these things exist. I would know nothing of these things, and I don't have a Nazi fetish.

Tasshin:

We're on record everyone.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah yeah....going back.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [\[00:23:04\]](#)

Michael Curzi:

Yeah, yeah. Going back... it's like when you're watching media and something doesn't hit the spot, it's friction, it's just like, "nah, not that." Right? You'll find this, where people will watch me and they'll get different things out of it. They'll be like, "Oh yeah, it was incredible but I don't like that actor." Or they'll be like... People don't always know how to describe what they did and didn't like and people who are incredibly good at that are the best film critics. There's a lot of shitty film critics but there's some good ones and Kenneth Clark is a great art historian and also art critic and he performs a cool role where he's looking at these really old and obscure art forms where you're like, "I don't even know what it means. I'm looking at this medieval thing and all the guys are 2D and their hands are weird and what is this?" And he finds a way to convey to you what is going on there and you're like, "oh". He sort of translates language.

Michael Curzi:

Anyway, but going back, when something lands you've done your job. I opine here as an artist or as a creator, that landing, it's a feeling, right? And you created an experience in people where they're no longer focused on the friction they're just in it and even possibly being changed by it in a way that they holistically feel good about or don't. I mean, another one of these memes I've consumed secondhand is, the quote says, "Art is for comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable".

Michael Curzi:

That's a sort of way of thinking about it. I don't necessarily agree or not. It's just an interesting idea. I think I sort of disagree in some important ways but nevertheless, it's resonant. I saw Medea at a

high school play as a kid and it was crazy. I don't know if you know the story of Medea. Medea takes vengeance against her husband, kills her own children and the lights go red and she's covered in blood and she screams and you're like, "ah!", you're just like, "oh my God". But that's resonance too, right? It's not always a good experience in the normal way but it's resonant.

Michael Curzi:

So basically what I'm saying is, I want to give people chills, that's one thing I've been thinking about lately. I want to be a chills manufacturer. Because when someone gets chills and they say 'chills' on social media or whatever, that's an experience, it's a specific thing. Anyway, I've sort of gone on about this but does that make any sense? I'm trying to give a practical answer to what I'm trying to do by conveying spiritual truths.

Tasshin:

Yeah, I'm hearing that. Well for one thing, just reading between the lines here, it's not like you're attached to a particular religious faith or tradition at this point but instead you're trying to convey the truth in a way that is impactful for people. Maybe it's inspiring or horrifying or edifying in some way but it has a felt resonant impact in some way.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah, there are ways that I could comment on religion and spiritual belief because I have gotten into that in my life, in the last couple of years. Would that be-

Tasshin:

Yeah, go for it.

Michael Curzi:

I believe in God, I didn't use to and in order to get to a point where I do, I had to do a lot of personal philosophy. I needed to think a lot about what I meant by that and I still don't know if I'm sure but there's something I was thinking about just the other day at work. Okay, I'll just say it boldly, I think I, more than perhaps anyone on earth, am equipped to convey a certain concept. It's a broad claim but it's about a narrow thing. A certain concept of naturalistic spirituality that is deeply compatible with what people usually want to get out of theism and what people usually want to get out of atheism.

Michael Curzi:

Now that I've said it boldly, I know that I've overstated it and the way that I've overstated it is, I have failed a million times to explain to people what I mean by that. But for example, when people talk about religion, they're often very focused on belief - like *doxa*. I think that is probably the philosophy term and 'orthodoxy' translates as 'correct belief'. And so ideology as you'd normally think of it is like, we've got these beliefs. This is what God is, this is what Christ is, this is what you should do, and we have the beliefs and whatever. My own approach it's like if I were actually the pope, if I were actually in charge of people's spiritual development... I'm almost completely unconcerned with belief in that sense, I'm so much more concerned with process.

Michael Curzi:

I've been told that there's this concept 'process theology' that I would vibe with. I haven't read anything about it but this term has come up whenever I talk about this with some people and I'm like, is Michael Curzi an atheist or a theist? It doesn't matter. What matters to me is that I keep returning to the question of the big picture and what's going on and what significance that has for my fate, and if I go into and out of theism and atheism, that is only to be expected because who am I to know what my spirit must do in the face of the fucking universe? I don't know. To me though, I am confident that good practices are good, right? So I think I could... I definitely overstated that thing I said before, but there's a type of prototypical theist or atheist who I can sit with, as essentially my students in this particular method.

Michael Curzi:

The Curzi method of figuring out what the hell is going on and I could, in the language of theism, talk to this theist and explain how everything we're doing is about God and we're going to figure out what God wants from us and how we're to reach him, etc. I could equally sit with the atheist and talk about the mental protocol that we're going to run in order to reconcile with the big picture and how we're relating to our own concepts in a way that relates us to the true reality that sits outside of our concepts and intending to be changed by that in order to act more excellently and agentially in the world. So there are two languages but it's one... I mean, they're different activities, they just would be customized to the people and they'd get the same benefits. So that's sort of a ramble about religion and that's part of why... I don't know, is my art religious art? I hope it's so good that no one cares. Yeah.

Tasshin:

Yeah. Right. There's so much here that I want to dive into deeper and I imagine whoever's listening has a similar feeling of wanting to ask hundreds of questions at this point. But just given the sort of circumstance of this conversation that we find ourselves in.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah.

Tasshin:

It seems like I would be remiss if I did not ask about this Ingroup Pope thing and the Roam Research drama that's been happening recently. I told you about this before, I'm personally mostly disinterested in this but it does seem like almost a journalistic responsibility to hear the man himself about the issue. Is there anything you'd like to say about the Ingroup Pope role or Roam Research drama and so on?

Michael Curzi:

Yes, yeah. So as I mentioned earlier, I should probably say something here but I will... here's the context, [Ingroup Pope](#) was a bracket on Twitter.

Tasshin:

Yeah, some people have no idea what ingroup is as well. So let's talk about that. Or even what Roam Research is.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's true.

Tasshin:

Thankfully James has made this [edifying meme](#) that explains the whole thing. But anyway-

Michael Curzi:

All right, for context, anyone listening about to hear this bit about online drama: This is a complete waste of your time, there was no reason at all for you to pay attention to this.

Tasshin:

Skip ahead like 5, 10, 20 minutes, it will be better after that.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah, you do not need this in your life, no one does. But here we are okay, so we have to play the hand we're dealt. All right, let's knock this out. So what is ingroup? And I'm just going to, because I'm the one talking, I'm just going to pretend that I'm authoritatively able to kind of do what all these things are. So to answer what is ingroup you have to answer what are post-rats, to answer what are post-rats, you have to answer what are rationalists. So we're just going to knock these out in quick succession.

Tasshin:

Oh my good, all right.

Michael Curzi:

We're going to do this on timer, I'm going to crank through it, okay. Rationality, well, to really talk about it you have to go back to Descartes,,, But really to talk about Descartes, you really should be talking about Plato and let's go over that-

Tasshin:

Heraclituss and [crosstalk 00:33:27] why not, you know. [laughing]

Michael Curzi:

Right, right. Rationalists are a group of nerdy people who are also fucking brilliant. I have to stan the rationalist, a bunch of them called crypto early and sort of became wealthy but on the whole, there's a lot of software engineers and etc. There's a guy you should Google Eliezer Yudkowsky. There still is a blog, new version of a blog called Less Wrong and it became a community largely centered in the

bay area, also in New York, also some in Oxford and around the world. That's who the rationalists are. Post-rat are rationalists, who don't like calling themselves, that or people who had some kind of break with the ideas of rationality, maybe they felt harmed in some way by the ideas of rationality, maybe they just thought that something else was more wholesome and whatever, and there's a sort of collective cultural sense that there's this group of people called post-rats who have a different sense of what truth is or how to be in the world, who like vibing more than they like being, to use the internet slang, being autistic about everything. That's who the post-rats are.

Michael Curzi:

Doing good so far? Okay. Ingroup. So ingroup is a joke or was a joke about how it's something that the post-rats had been into, which is like social psychology. In social psychology, there's the idea of the ingroup and the out-group. You like the ingroup and you're not a fan of the out-group and you coordinate with the ingroup and you'd try to defeat the out-group, etc. So ingroup was always a sort of, as far as I understand it, a tongue in cheek joke about how like, "oh, you know, well I'm ingroup, so we're good" right? It's sort of like a nerdy way of vibing over like we're friends but we kind of know the surrounding context of humanity is this horrifying lovecraftian beast coming out of the ancient evolutionary history, of blood and murder, but we're cool. You know?

Michael Curzi:

So that's how I understand where that came from or where it really comes from intellectual. Okay, good. Ingroup Pope - we're cranking through this. There was a Twitter bracket, a bracket, meaning people voting with Twitter polls for who would be the Ingroup Pope. It was not defined what this means. It was not explained what those responsibilities it would hold. It was simply said, we are going to vote for the Ingroup Pope. Here are the 12 options. Over four days, there was a contest, in which I participated. There was vote buying, there was backend dealing, there were people saying, "I'll support you if you reject this person in this round because I think that they're going to beat me in the whatever." Did I mention the vote buying already? People were literally buying votes, like spending real American dollars or whatever on bots to vote in the thing.

Michael Curzi:

There was propaganda and I was one of the chief exporters of that propaganda and as a result of a sort of variety of factors, the confluence of a variety of factors and the will of God, I was crowned Ingroup Pope. Okay, so that's what that is, that's what it is. Right. So, how serious is it? How much does it matter? Some might say that it is mere memery, just a stupid joke. I'll comment to the side, I hope that I have not offended too many Catholics. At least I hope I haven't offended the cool ones, but if I've offended the cool ones, I hope that that can be rectified because I actually think Catholicism is cool. I just don't want to give anybody the middle finger and I'm just a dude who's confused about religion and trying to figure shit out. But also I think things are funny and I like when things are funny and I'm like making jokes and I don't want to back down on that front either, right?

Michael Curzi:

I take very deeply and seriously questions of spirituality, I take much less deeply human social structures and human beings preferences. I shouldn't talk about humans as 'human beings', you definitely sound like a sociopath when you do that, but let's move on.

Tasshin:

I'm not a sociopath. I'm on record, I'm not a sociopath.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. Not a sociopath, don't have a Nazi fetish. Just getting these sort of fundamentals nailed down. All right, that's what ingroup Pope is. There been jokes, there been memes, there's been fun. All right, the next bit to finally get to the stupidest part of this entire thing. I work at Roam Research, I have for not long, a couple of months, I just got this job. All right? I didn't really want to talk about this that much online, but cat's out of the bag so that's the thing that's happening. In this context, I want to try desperately to disclaim any possible sense that I'm speaking for the company, because I am not doing that here, I'm not trying to do that here. Take that power away from me, wrest it from my hands, it is not my desire.

Michael Curzi:

That said, Roam has a subreddit. The subreddit sometimes has spicy takes and haters and people posting like, "I use Roam, I'm switching to this other product because, you know, the company is like messed up, blah, blah, blah." It has like sort of interesting PR profile and in part it's because Conor White-Sullivan, the founder, has an interesting PR profile and twitter and I think he's brilliant and he's fucking awesome. He can be spicy on Twitter and it is what it is. Right. Basically what happened is I stepped into the subreddit, introduced myself, where my intended message was: if you get banned from the subreddit and want to appeal that you can ask me. And I in fact unbanned some people. But I will admit that I did introduce myself as the Ingroup Pope, and this may not have been the most advisable thing to do.

Michael Curzi:

I've received a lot of messages, sort of like ideas from different people that this was a deeply stupid thing to do, including a few of the vocal members of the subreddit. I then made the error of, someone commented and leaving what I still think was a not great comment that broke all of the rules that we had just introduced to the subreddit, I immediately banned them before realizing that like, they're maybe an important part of the extended Roam community, I don't know. I had just woken up. I was like, what the hell? I dropped the ball there and basically then shit exploded. People were tweeting about it, some guy made a video talking about how deeply concerning it is that this guy has introduced himself as Ingroup Pope and 'the cult language and religiosity has really gone too far' and is this the fall of Roam Research? So that's what happened. That's my comment on that.

Tasshin:

Okay. Okay. Yeah. I think this is probably pedantic, but I would take issue with the identification between post-rats and the rat lineage and ingroup. Maybe I'm post-rat in that I've never wanted to be a post-rat or something but I don't consider myself a rationalist or post-rat. The way I would frame

ingroup is just like a community of people on Twitter that are very online, very aware of each other's presence, are on Twitter a bunch and are more there to hang out and be friends rather than like promote something or do something. It's like, "hey, these are cool people that are like fun to hang out with," I guess.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. No conversation about post-rats would be complete without objections to everyone else's statements of the subject. I do actually agree with what you said, I probably spoke to it too much in terms of where I came from. But oh yeah, a lot of people have assembled in the space for sure. Yeah.

Tasshin:

Yeah. Yeah. I think that's basically all that needs to be said about that. I'm just, as I said, eminently bored by the topic of this Roam drama so there's all the other things we've been talking about are much more interesting to me. So is there anything else that you want to say about that before we move along or any addenda or speeches to the people.

Michael Curzi:

Just briefly: I hope to perform my obligations successfully. I have learned some things, I apologize for nothing. I am speaking with the conviction that this will all be fucking hilarious when I'm talking about it on Jimmy Kimmel in 2035. I try to live my life in a way that is funny. But people get offended, I don't always know why and it's my job to learn so there's authenticity there and important stuff. Again, only speaking as myself here - I don't have all the PR skills, I just don't have it. I tweet under my name, I have boldness, I have creativity, I have adaptability. I don't have all of the things related to whatever PR is about and professional standards of a certain variety. To me, professionalism is about responsibility and conducting yourself in a way that is possible to coordinate with, and it's not about like stodginess or being actually boring, but you know what I mean... I have a lot to learn and I want to learn it. That's all I really have to wrap up with, but thanks for asking about it. I feel good, having said something.

Tasshin:

Sure, sure.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah.

Tasshin:

The service to the people that actually care about this, which I think is, at least not me, but you know-

Michael Curzi:

I care about it because I'm involved in it. I appreciated the jokes. Basically if anyone engaged with the spirit of humor, like you're on my fucking side, whether you want to be or not. Cause I think apprenticeship works.

Tashin:

James made the most epic meme of all time about it. So, well done.

Michael Curzi:

We stan Uberstuber. Follow him on YouTube. Follow him on Twitter.

Tashin:

Yeah. Okay. Well, let's circle back then and we talked about the Courtesy vibe reel in particular and a little bit about Mammon and as you know, I'm also a huge fan of ["SPEED"](#). I think that's actually my favorite as much as Courtesy is up my alley, I think SPEED is just a masterpiece, but tell me, what is a vibe reel and how did you get that idea? And tell me a bit more about them, kind of big picture.

Michael Curzi:

So I did write, I have been writing about this on and off on my substack and how should I put it? There's something very, vibe reels are a practical idea. I'm not always that great at being practical. I'm very comfortable in philosophical ideas spaces, I'm very comfortable like just contemplating. I'm trying to become more and more comfortable just doing shit. Since I left my last job, I have been trying to find ways to get my thoughts in the world in part because it's a very concrete activity that you can grind on and iterate on, high feedback, good learning environment. So I've done tweets, blog posts, long Tweet storm things, short videos, videos of many different types. I did my Twitch show Philosophers on Twitch playing Flight Simulator, we did 30 episodes of that, been on other people's podcasts to some degree and the vibe reels felt like the next step and the next step of just sort of enshrining value in art, in artifacts in some way. I want to learn how to make cooler and cooler stuff and there's this convenient fact...

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [\[00:46:04\]](#)

Michael Curzi:

... which is that there are stock footage websites and there are copyright free music things and they're ... Some of these are free and some of these are paid and you can also sometimes pay a couple dollars to somebody on Bandcamp to get the rights to one of their sick cyberpunk mixes or whatever. Also, I did start messing around with voiceovers, so SPEED, you mentioned, brings in this quote from the Italian futurist manifesto, these young Italian artists who were trying to talk about this very intense and vigorous spirit of creation that they wanted to be into.

Michael Curzi:

I got this Italian dude on Fiverr and I paid him to do the voiceover, and I learned a lot while doing it. In a sense, in a sort of practical lens, vibe reels, are my drafts. I mean, they're just a way to keep

drafting, to keep tacking toward making cooler and cooler stuff, so I can make extremely cool stuff. Kanye West has these lines about, what is it, five beats a day for four summers or something like that and how he would, every summer, make four or five beats a day. After four years of four or five beats a day, you've made a whole lot of ... I don't know the math there. What is it, three months, call it 3 and a half months. Call it a hundred days, times four beats is 400 times four summers like 1600 beats, 1600 and 2000. When I'm 60 - what is the Visa's thing - do something a hundred times? Do it 2000 times you can also get somewhere too. So, that's the kind of spirit of that from a practical creation perspective.

Tashin:

Got you. Got you. I'm curious what, one of the questions I definitely wanted to ask you, and we've talked a fair bit about this, but would be curious to hear more, especially with time and perspective, what your experience was of working on the music video that we did together? And what that was like for you. Anything you want to say about that?

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. Do you have a question about any particular part of it? I can also just say stuff.

Tashin:

Yeah. Start with just saying stuff.

Michael Curzi:

One thing I'm in the process of is figuring out the infrastructure behind how I want to keep making things. It's getting to the point where they probably hire people to make stuff. I work at Roam, I have a salary. I don't need to do anything with it. I would honestly like to spend as much of it as I can on whatever will push the cutting edge on me making cool stuff. And so, I have ... I did post about this, I did... Have been paying somebody, a Twitter person a lot of people here know actually, but I shouldn't have said that doesn't matter, to listen to me rant. And because this is part of how I figure out what's next and what the vision is, but I should probably be getting someone to browse all the stock footage sites and come up with, here are 40 ideas of what could be your next vibe reel.

Michael Curzi:

And they all kind of, I can pick and choose or an editor or I have lots of camera equipment, like camera person, just not in a place where I can pay full salaries for all these people, but this infrastructure stuff is like the next step that I really need to grasp, what that should look like and make some bets on that and see what it turns into. And, you did me a great service, coming to me with this project of you making this music video. In part, because literally, it's not to gross to say, but you were willing to pay for it. And I was like, sick, you know what I mean? It's partially like a confidence thing, like being paid to do something that you actually want to do that you are now a bit more confident, but at the time you're not sure you're like, is the earth, is the soil receptive to this seed that I want to plant in it?

Michael Curzi:

And it's an empowering thing. So, that was one part and then the other part was like collaboration. I don't want to just be me and a laptop for the next 30 years making vibe reels. I want to build things with people. And I have tweeted before about one of the people I might kind of idols is Hideo Kojima, who is a Japanese video game guy who made the Metal Gear Solid series. He made this game Death Stranding, he's a little bit controversial. And I said, it like that. Cause he made this game, Death Stranding, that people criticized as a 'walking simulator' because you just kind of walk for like a lot of the game, but he's got music from CHVRCHES in there. He's got music what is it? The song is called Low Roar. There's a bunch of them, I forget this other artistic group. (*Low Roar was the group's name.*)

Michael Curzi:

In the game for energy you drink Monster. Your dude goes to his weird little futuristic cave thing to prepare for the next journey, you'd have six cans of Monster on the desk. Norman Reedus is in the game. He's in this zombie shirt, Walking Dead, and at one point you can get a motorcycle that he uses in this other show he's in. And a lot of this stuff could be... Mads Mikkelsen is in the game, fucking love Mads Mikkelsen. And also in a lot of games you get these little trinkets that you find around in secret locations and all of the trinkets in Death Stranding have these little short couple paragraphs of Hideo Kojima talking about his love of stuff. He's like, here's this old horror movie about a car that becomes sentient.

Michael Curzi:

It's like you haven't heard about it, right? You get this kind of behind the scenes of you, kind of like Tarantino where it's like you watch a Tarantino movie, you're watching 500 movies because all the references and different things in there. And if you're a nerd about it, you can just crawl into this space and this curation that this cutting edge auteur, I think is the word, has pre produced for you. And Kojima...it just radiates through, he's having fun. He loves stuff. He loves, like the union jack, he just loves the flag. He loves the Rolling Stones. He likes one of those mech things that people like, Gundams and stuff. So anyway, he's kind of like an example.

Michael Curzi:

Kanye also does sick collaboration. A perfect example of Kanye is like Flashing Lights - it's like 10 all star performances, it is a great song. And so anyway, working on that was like an instance. Again, put a few coins in the piggy bank on the thing you care about and sort of like pay your respects at the shrine, make an offering to the gods. I do indeed value this, and even though I'm not there yet in every way that I want to be, I'm starting now, you know? Yeah.

Tasshin:

That was really clear to me from the beginning, just like the three of us, you, me and Danny Jay, who made the music could do something that was just far bigger than anything, any one of us could do alone. And that, that was what made the thing. So, I've said this before, but when Danny Jay made the music, he was like, "oh, can you record a video of you dancing to it?" And I was like, "oh, well, we're going to have to have Curzi edit it." If you imagine there's an alternate universe where I made

the video and it's me, just literally Danny Jay's music over it... I don't know, with my editing skills, just putting it on top is like... That would be... but the video's epic.

Michael Curzi:

It's not as hot.

Tasshin:

Yeah, no, we did good on that one.

Michael Curzi:

I'm excited about your next thing. I don't know how much you've talked about... What the status of all that is.

Tasshin:

It's coming... Soon.

Michael Curzi:

It's coming. I'm ready.

Tasshin:

Yeah. Yeah. And could you tell me a little bit more about... I feel like this is actually pretty critical to understanding where you're coming from, this auteur concept and also maybe Kanye in particular? I've listened to some of Kanye's music. I liked the collaboration that you did with Daft Punk a long time ago. Cause I've been a huge fan of Daft Punk for a long time, but I'm very much an outsider to Kanye and would be curious to hear more from you about what you admire about him and what you think is going on there. Let's, as you said, sort of from the lineage perspective and more just like what's your experience, listening to him and being a fan and admiring him for you?

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. Let me think for a second about that.

Michael Curzi:

Kanye is spiritually interesting to me. And also his career is interesting to me. The career thing is a little bit more straightforward and it does relate to the auteur idea. I mentioned Hideo Kojima talking about Kanye and another one is Walt Disney and there's a... Kojima a little bit less so. He sort of found his niche in video games and has been cranking out video games. I also don't know as much about what other projects he's involved in, but Kanye and Walt Disney both have a feature that they make something sick, they cross that infrastructure boundary to qualitatively change how it is that they make sick shit, and then they make the next sick thing. Disney likes drawing, he's a kid who likes drawing cartoons. I've known many such kids in my life, you know? And then he sold these shorts to distributors in theaters who put them before movies.

Michael Curzi:

And then they came up with the idea of the silly symphonies. Silly symphonies were novel because they had animation, they threw music behind it and they would literally make sheet music and record people at their studio honking like geese and laughing like a Raven or whatever, like a pig and do whatever. They make these crazy sounds behind these silly symphonies. They came up with Mickey Mouse, right? And Mickey Mouse blew up. People wanted more Mickey Mouse stuff. They've made the Mickey Mouse Club which was, actually at the time, like an afternoon school program where they said things like "don't swear" and "don't chew tobacco," and "do your homework" or whatever. I don't even know if they had homework back then probably just have good lives instead or not. I don't know. Maybe they got beaten by their parents. I don't know.

Michael Curzi:

You know, it's lindy, it's trad, it's good. And then Mickey merchandise popped off. Disney thought he wanted to make a feature film. They made Snow White in the 50s. I think like Clark Gable and his girlfriend or...

Tasshin:

It was the 30s actually.

Michael Curzi:

Was it 30s?

Tasshin:

Yeah

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. Oh, no, of course, because it's before the war. Thank you. There's all this criticism like, "Oh no, what adult is going to want to watch a cartoon?" And all these celebrities come and their crying. Like when Snow White eats the apple and the dwarves are sobbing, and the people are crying. It's like this breakthrough event. They build all this infrastructure to make feature films, the war happens, he makes propaganda for the government, training films for like Navy stuff, about how to make sure you don't break the ship or whatever they need to train people in.

Michael Curzi:

And then after the war, he sort of loses the spirit for making feature films. The company still makes them, but he's sort of not as interested and he starts playing with trains instead, playing with model trains. Builds a model train set in his backyard and rides around in circles and hangs out with his kids. And there's a little bit of like, has he lost his touch? ... Is he just going to ride trains? And then he comes up with Disneyland. And the connection, it was obvious, in retrospect. He's thinking about turning this Disney ethos into reality. Sort of drawing it out of fiction, right into some kind of strange real-world thing. And then famously, by the end of his life, he's working hard on EPCOT, the experimental prototype city of tomorrow, which was going to be this futuristic city.

Michael Curzi:

And they were going to have electric rail lines, bringing people to work. And it was completely centrally planned, cybernetically planned which weirds modern people out. We don't like seeing a perfectly structured, circles around concentric circles of like living hives or whatever. But he was going to make the city, he bought land in Florida and it was all set up to build some kind of weird Disney kingdom, you know what I mean? And then he died and the project got turned in to some sort of resort and it's like a history center, but it's nothing like what it was going to be.

Michael Curzi:

And so anyway, Kanye moves from music and he's trying to move into fashion and has moved into fashion. And he had these deals with Nike and Adidas and different stuff like that. And if you scroll back on Kanye's Twitter and watch some of his interviews, he's designing like Buckminster Fuller type structures for people to live in. These like weird, it's kind of like an indoor beach kind of thing with like a hole in the ceiling where like natural light can come through. And he's talking about growing certain types of fabric on his land and Wyoming to make this. He's trying to sort of like going into this odd kind of futurism space while also he's becoming more religious and that really religiosity is becoming more important to him and who knows where that's going to go? But he talked on Joe Rogan about like a million person chorus, having a million people sing the praise of God and at the same time, the earth would shake or something. I don't even know what would happen.

Michael Curzi:

What I'm trying to say with these stories is that it's like a template. To me, it's like a career template. And the auteur part is that there's this kernel of artistry, artistic creativity, but it's not just that. It's also business decision making, infrastructure building and like organization design and Steve Jobs is another example. The iPhone and all the Apple stuff and Pixar. And it's like, it has this trajectory. So, things change, I could be wrong about all kinds of things, but I'm currently plotting things out that way. And so that's a major reason that I'm interested in Kanye and these other sort of types of people.

Tasshin:

How would you sort of summarize that career template as it were? What's common between say Walt Disney and Kanye, because I get a sense of it, but I'd be curious to hear how you describe it.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. There's like an uncompromising artistic integrity that leads the endeavor, but it's not the career of an artist only. And they find a way to expand the process. Like there really is this effort to build an institution and build a huge project in a way that... and the art keeps overcoming itself. And then you see how art is spiritual vision...

Michael Curzi:

There's a blog post I wrote called [Michelangelo's Shelter](#). This one is on my personal website, it's michaelcurzi.com and it's over there. And I wrote that before I'd made any vibe reels, before I'd done any Twitch shows, before I'd really made that many blog posts, before I felt like I was good at Twitter. And I'm just getting started. It's like in 20 years, I will be able to say it's before I ever made 'zhhhht' or whatever I make then. And it's like, I talk about how Michelangelo built the David. Carved the David in this wooden shack sitting in the middle of Florence. And the piece of marble was allegedly, as the story goes, a crappy piece of marble. It fell on its side on this thousand mile journey and cracked somewhere. The David kind of stands at this angle in part, because like there was a crack in the thing and he puts it in the shelter and it's like, when you're sitting there with your shitty piece of marble, do you see a piece of marble or do you see the David?

Michael Curzi:

And there's this aspect of, he built it in the shelter... Oh yeah, also by the way that the stone just sat there in Florence getting rained on for like 20 years.

Michael Curzi:

And then this kid shows up who it happens, had just carved the Pieta. So he was definitely like a wunderkind. He's like 23, 27, 26 or something when he's working on the David. They don't make them like that anymore. Or maybe they do, but he was a special one. He surrounds it with this shelter. I guess part of what I was experiencing when I wrote that is like the eyes of the multitude burn. Because if you have the kind of extroverted narcissistic artistic instinct like I do, you want to be seen. You want your shit to be seen, but also if you care enough about what you're doing, you fucking hate what you're making, because it's not awesome yet. I can't speak for artists but I think a lot of people will resonate that in any field you get into it be cause of the coolest shit that exists.

Michael Curzi:

And then you have to retreat from the fucking heights of divinity and be like, all right, yeah. I have to be upset that this guy is overcharging me for the voice note purely because I didn't order the right type of copyright. And he doesn't know that I have a destiny, god damn it. 'We labor in ugliness' - that's a phrase that I use because shit doesn't start feeling beautiful until a long way in. But part of the joy, I think of being a kid usually is to make stuff. You're not worried about whether it's good. But I think that there's a thesis antithesis synthesis to sort of like youth and maturity, some of these topics and people say like, "dance like nobody's watching."

Michael Curzi:

I don't believe in that. I'm not good at dancing, I don't dance. So I'm actually, I shouldn't use this example, but I mean by that, it's like, you want to know it's true. And so you can pretend like no one can see you and that can get you somewhere. And probably some people should do that, but people can see, right? The truth of it is people can see your flaws. This is a little bit of my intensity, but it's like, when I make stuff, it pains me. Even my good things pain me because I see the flaws and I can imagine somebody thinking, "he should have clipped that like a couple of frames later." And I'm like "Fuck, I know."

Michael Curzi:

Kanye does this too in some of his interviews. Often he talks about how he made the greatest whatever of some time, but then sometimes caveat stuff. He has repudiated Golddigger a little bit. He's like "you make some just cause that's sort of how you make an album that works." You can tell it's not his favorite. And so this whole anguished artistry thing, I think I've learned to work it and I think it's a system that you can learn how to do. But I barely feel comfortable calling myself an artist, but I decided to just keep doing it, to see what happens.

Tasshin:

Yeah. Yeah. I really resonate with a lot of that. I mean, as you say, things change and it's hard to know the future, but do you have a sense of what you'd like to do as you sort of scale up your infrastructure and focus on things? Like, do you have a sense of what's coming down the pipeline or are you going to revive the Twitch show? What's going to happen?

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. As far as Twitch goes, I really did enjoy doing a lot of Twitch streaming and I have to think about it. I want to do it the right way. It's possible that I should just have sort of like a semi-open slot where like most weeks I host someone and just hang out and talk about stuff, but I'm not sure. I like that I can say that I liked The philosophers on Twitch Plane Flight Simulator property. I liked the memes, I liked the jokes. I like Flight Sim. I like hosting my friends and just seeing what wacky shit happens because it's live. And I love a lot of it. And I am feeling that and I just want to figure out the right way to do it. And as far as what's coming next in the bigger picture, I don't know. One always thinks of like, movies? But also I think movies are the most visible, coolest artifacts around. And I want to spend some time thinking about...

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [\[01:09:04\]](#)

Michael Curzi:

...kwhat should new media be? What could be different? Movies are not interactable, they're unidirectional, video games are bi-directional, right? You can affect it and it affects you back. Both feel like consumption to me. And I don't think that has to be a bad time, there's a time to consume. But I wonder what could be more active, you know what I mean? Just in terms of... I don't know, if I don't have to put somebody in a chair for two hours and I can have them doing something that's cool, but I want to spend a bunch of time thinking about this theory of... There's a technological angle. What's the next big thing? The next Pixar isn't going to be Pixar, where I'm referencing Pixar here as an innovator in the technology of filmmaking. And that's just a way of saying, I don't know yet.

Tasshin:

Yeah, fair. Fair.

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. But I'm going to keep making... I don't know, follow me on Twitter, I'm just going to keep making cool stuff. And I'm going to share it with the world. So I believe in the process.

Tasshin:

Definitely. Definitely. Is there anything adjacent to the things that we've talked about that you want to dive into more or talk more about?

Michael Curzi:

I could talk about anything, but nothing's immediately coming to mind. If you have a different... If you have some kind of prompt, I can go with that.

Tasshin:

One I had on my mind is, in the series of propaganda pieces you put out for the Pope election, you had a piece that cited John O'Donohue and I don't actually know who that is. So I'm sure you can say something about that, but I'll just read it now and then ask you about it. But he said "many people are deeply disappointed in the version of God they've been offered, a domesticated, disapproving God. And I think one of the tasks of our time for those that are interested in God is to make God dangerous again." Yeah, what appeals to you about that quote and why did you use it, and what's going on there?

Michael Curzi:

Yeah, I was actually trying to find the full quote because I did clip something out of that and... Make God dangerous again, the full quote actually is better. I don't know whether I can find this on such short notice. Try one more time, but let's see if my Google Fu will serve me in this time of need. This looks right. Got it. Yeah. So I'll just throw in some of the context. So he says, "I think that there is a wonderful danger in God that we have totally forgotten because one of the things humanoids like to do is they like to bring in the tamers to tame their deities down. They don't like the idea of a wild God, because it could get very awkward and deeply embarrassing. One of the reasons that young people are leaving religion is because God has died for them are becoming incredibly boring and uninteresting. And I think one of the tasks of our time for those that are interested in God is to make God dangerous again."

Michael Curzi:

Yeah. I don't really know who John O'Donohue is. Someone mentioned that someone saw an early draft of the Pope thing and they're like, "Oh yeah, this reminded me." And I was like, "That totally... yes." Someone I've had a bunch of conversations with who gets my spiritual outlook. And I was like, "Yeah, that works." I tried a few other quotes. That was the one I liked. Religion is such a weird topic. It's such a hard topic because there's so many... It's like a landmine type of topic. There's so many different rabbit holes to go down and important distractions, I would say. There's a lot of important distractions where questions of doctrine and things like, well, what religion is true? It's a very important type of question, in some way, even if you dissolve the question, it was an important question to dissolve or whatever, but it's so hard to comment on religion because people often feel like that needs to come first.

Michael Curzi:

They're like, "Okay, but are you telling me this? Or this? Are you giving me what? And which answer are you giving me?" They want to know where the feed is coming from. They want to know who's... What you're selling. Right. Who's shit you're selling. In part, because especially in America we are fuckin salesmen. Everyone's selling something. But religion's been selling stuff since people... I don't know. Since Mesopotamia, since before then probably. Thinking about the Sumerians, basically the educated Sumerian priest class knew when the tide would come in, they knew when the river would change, and when it would flood. And when that would fuck up your crops and other people didn't know, and they would use that knowledge to... That's how they would gate their power.

Michael Curzi:

That was part of the justification of their power. And they might let your crops get flooded or not let people know, because if you weren't paying your taxes, whatever, my understanding of it. This is derivative. I haven't said it enough. It's referenced in Carroll Quigley's, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, incredible book, but point is, as far as commenting on religion, there are still things I like trying to say that I want to try to say. And that quote in part to me is... And again, if you're talking to believers and non-believers, you want to say things different ways. And so that's also part of what makes it challenging. But for me, the language of God has been personally useful. I'll say that. That way of talking about life and outlook and where we're all going and what matters.

Michael Curzi:

And in part, I've only been able to find it useful when I was able to contextualize it in my life, in the right way. And if your idea of religion is as it is for some people a bunch of stupid old superstitions, we're not talking about... We're not having the same conversation, because I also think that there's a bunch of stupid old superstitions. And I hope I don't offend anybody, but I have heard that there are facts in the Quran about whales and what they are and how they work that are just not true. And you can go down the rabbit hole of maybe there were different whales then, but like also I think I'm okay with that. I think I'm okay with the prophet being wrong about whales, and that makes me not Orthodox in a certain way.

Michael Curzi:

And that is a decision, right? But also people underestimate religion, the religions. People underestimate every ideology that they haven't learned a lot about because brilliant people come up with shit. And a lot of ideologies, even totally failed ones, have deep and ancient roots and powerful, important concepts behind them. I would say almost every, or maybe every idea, I don't know whether I would categorize some ideology is outside that group, including the evil ones. And that's a spicy thing to say, but I think they can be evil and based on cool ideas. Lucifer as a fallen angel, he has one sin. It's pride. That's what makes you the devil. But when it comes to religion, a thing I like to note, and again, it's because I branched off from Richard Dawkins style atheism, which I was into in my high school or whatever I branched off from that.

Michael Curzi:

So this is what feels relevant to me. I believe it's, and if I'm not misremembering, I believe at Westminster Abbey, the major church in London, Copernicus and Darwin are both buried. Okay. And Isaac Newton, sorry, Isaac Newton and Darwin are both buried and Isaac Newton is sitting there in marble with his book and his engineer's triangle, those things they have, and there's a globe and there's little cupids around him, and he's out there doing science. And there's a version of science versus religion that anyone, in my opinion, who knows about enough about science or religion knows it doesn't work like that. And I know there are some cool, important, hardcore atheist, modern scientist type people, but back in the day it wasn't understood these are different things.

Michael Curzi:

Truth is truth. And so it's making God dangerous again. I mean, making it relevant again. I go in and out of the sense that I can just ask out a question about, sometimes I do feel like I can, I can at least ask, I may not know how to interpret what happens after I ask, but I can ask. And that feels relevant and also dangerous. It's also irreverent. Connie mentions the Ricky Bobby type prayers. This is the Will Ferrell movie where this guy Ricky Bobby's praying to a little baby Jesus. And I mentioned Will Ferrell praying. And you get into these spaces, you're like, do I pray about like small things, trivial things? It's like, maybe. But I pray that Valheim update comes out soon where you have a reaction to the idea and it's something you can listen to. So I don't know, maybe it's me. The danger might be the feeling of relevance, spiritual relevance.

Tasshin:

Yeah. I was thinking about it. I think when I first saw that quote, the thing that really made it intriguing for me was the adjective dangerous, but stewing on it... You first made that video, I don't know, a month ago or five weeks ago or something, and then thinking about it since then, I think the actually really interesting part of that quote is it's quieter, subtler, but it's the verb make. Make God. Because you could just as easily put in sexy or I like relevant. I think that's good. But make God, what kind of theology is under making there? I could gloss it a certain way, but I don't know if that's how he meant it and I don't know how you meant it.

Michael Curzi:

Well, there's another quote at the very end of that vibe reel where that's actually... It's actually [Leonard Cohen](#) in this very awesome Jewish version of a fire and brimstone speech. Fire and Brimstone... you don't call it a speech. It's a sermon. And in that someone asks Leonard Cohen, "Are you saying that the Jews have a responsibility to save the world?" And he says, "The Jews have responsibility to save God in the world." And it has a similar, I guess, similar idea: make God this, make God that. I think whenever you're talking about God, there's also the idea of people's ideas about God. And maybe the thing, if you're doing social religious activity, like preaching or proselytizing or trying to save people or condemn people or whatever you're up to, you're interacting with people's ideas about the thing.

Michael Curzi:

That's what makes it social is that is the collective shared notion that we're ping-pong off of. And if you're a believer, you hope that your ideas about God don't remain stuck in as ideas about a thing. To show another one of my videos, I have one called [Improving your God-Concept](#). It's literally about this. And this is one of the dimensions I think atheists could vibe with me. Which is when you're contemplating in any way, you are interacting with your concepts, these things in your mind. You see a dog and you apply the concept dog. That's a dog, okay. And if you see God, or you may or may not apply the concept, God. And this is part of the thing that comes up in the religious traditions is that we misunderstand the message. We misunderstand the signs.

Michael Curzi:

And you have to sit and listen and find out. But I will be the first person to say that if someone is praying to God, it really matters what they mean by God, and the religious people say that too. Because there are these pernicious errors like idolatry. There are these pernicious errors, trying to shrink the infinite to something that you can grasp. And it's good to grasp. It's good to want to grasp it. It's also good to understand the scope of the problem of grasping something huge and something that keeps unfolding itself to you. And even if you've never thought about God once, try to grasp the idea of the universe. Try to grasp the idea of a million. That's so much, so much smaller than the universe. A million? That's the tiniest thing ever. You barely fucking hold that one.

Michael Curzi:

You barely fucking lug that one around with two arms and a fucking drag it with a truck. Or maybe you can, you can try. And a person who put many, many hours into contemplating 'a million' would have a much better sense of it than someone who hasn't. And so I forgot how I started rambling about this, but... Oh yeah. Improving your gods concept, talking about improving the mental stuff that you're using to orient towards something that is outside the mental stuff. So that's a frame for how I do think about prayer and religiosity and such.

Tasshin:

Definitely. Yeah. That jives with what I was thinking about that quote of well, there's God, and then there's our relationship, and social conventions, and ideas about God. Yeah. It also reminds me, I mean, I think part of the reason it's interesting to me is... And we've talked about this to some extent, but with loving kindness, I've, over time come to think, I'm doing two things there with that. One is I'm teaching it. And I think it's actually taught pretty poorly and that I can do a better job, but that's, to use a software analogy, it's like a point update. It's not like I'm intrinsically making it better or something, or it's a version 2.0. I think I'm just doing it, the details better in some ways. Almost just pedagogically, not spiritually.

Tasshin:

In fact, I'm very clear about the limitations of my own spiritual practice, but in terms of someone that wants to pick up the technique, I think I can help them with that in a way that might be more accessible than even someone who's deeper at the technique or something. But then there's also... And this is even more important than where there's a lot more room for innovation, I think, is inspiring people to do it. I think the cutting edge before our video really was Sharon Salzberg book

about Loving Kindness, which I read, I don't know, eight years ago. And it was great. It's a good book, but it's not something that's going to reach people today in the same way that a three minute music video could. And so I want to do the point updates on the teaching and then really ideally revolutionize what it means to inspire someone to do a meditation technique and a music video, I think there's a perfect avenue for that. I have some other ideas too that are even even bolder, but like you say, it takes time to build infrastructure and stuff like that.

Michael Curzi:

Well, I mean, the thing that makes me think about is there's this part of why I like to talk about prayer. I'm 200 and some 30 something days into my 30 minute a day prayer streak, I'm pretty proud of that. And on the margins I've had to do an extra 10 minutes the next day because I missed 10 minutes... It's been pretty good. Again, it's not like a... Pretty good, but it has been consistent. The time, definitely on average it's there without any major variations. Anyway, I don't think anyone cares [laughs]. But part of the reason I talk about it is I hope to be successful and... I may not be, and I may be. And if you're unsuccessful, you hope to be successful anyway, which is to be discovered after your death - someone like Nietzsche or the guy cut his ear off.

Michael Curzi:

I'm pretty sure he was discovered-

Tasshin:

Van Gogh?

Michael Curzi:

Van Gogh. There's also the Picasso's of the world who were discovered during their life. And they go womanize and get rich and do cool stuff, or whatever. But I want to have been, in a way, marching to the same tune the entire time, which is... I'm trying to think about whether I can say this. So many, many years ago, let's say a close friend of mine... Okay, fuck it. I mean, it was one of my exes a million years ago. I will not give out any identifying details. She'd been watching me get into all this intellectual stuff, it was different ideologies. And she was like, 'yeah, I don't know. It seemed fine. Whatever.' And at a certain point I met a very famous bad-ass person and I told her about it and she suddenly was like, "Oh, that's amazing! Yeah. I feel like you're like really getting somewhere."

Michael Curzi:

And I was just like, "You know what? Fuck that." [laughs] I didn't really make a fight out of it, but it was like, you know what? This is the challenge of legibility. I want to be able to say the truth, which is that the shit that matters was there at the beginning. And I hope that if I am successful, my success speaks to the fundamentals on which it actually rested. And fucking Mozart wrote Soli Deo Gloria on his sheet music - all for the glory of God. And whatever about that language. The God stuff doesn't vibe with everybody. But it's also just - having a practice. That's a practical thing.

Michael Curzi:

It's load bearing for me and it's load bearing for you, in your life. I am definitely getting to the point where I very much do not know who I would be without the practice. And there are people who wants to be able to bear the sorts of load that I can in that area. There are obviously people who can carry much more than I can in different ways, et cetera. And people, it's also, obviously people can do whatever they want. People get into different stuff for different terms of value. But if there's someone who can get value from spiritual practice, I want myself to be... I Want to be a good advocate for it by being successful, and happy, and awesome, and good, and also to connect the dots to the things I think are really responsible for it. And for me, at least part and I think also for you, it's the practice. Some kind of practice, we have different practices. It's because part of, for me, it's the customizing is part of the practice. You design your thing.

Tasshin:

I completely agree. Completely, I agree with that. Yeah. Yeah. Well, this has been terrific Curzi. It's been great to get a lot more of the big picture view of what you're up to and where it comes from. And I'm hoping that we'll have another conversation like this in the future. Yeah.

Michael Curzi:

Awesome. Yeah. Thanks for having me on. I had a lot of fun. I hope I didn't talk too much.

Tasshin:

No, it's great. That's perfect.

Michael Curzi:

Did we get all the format. All right, perfect.

Tasshin:

Oh, we're perfect. Yeah.

Michael Curzi:

Buy Vibe Reels. That's all I have to say.

Tasshin:

Buy Vibe Reels.

Michael Curzi:

Buy Vibe Reels.

Tasshin:

I would if I could man.

Michael Curzi:

I guess I should start selling them. Alright, see you later.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [[01:30:43](#)]