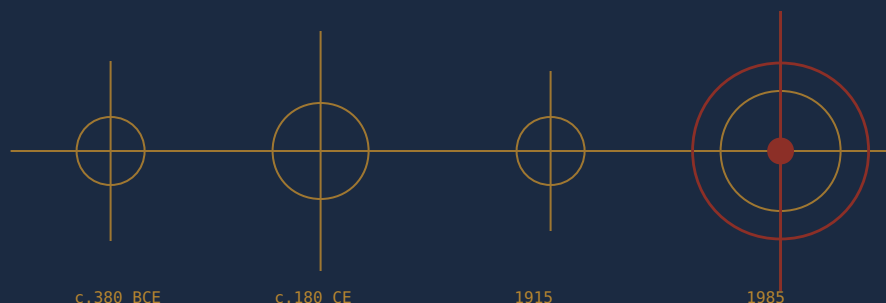




You're Not Trapped. You're Addicted.

A field guide to the soul-trap story. Where it came from, what its own sources actually say, and the habit it feeds.

COMPILED FROM PRIMARY SOURCES, PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH,
AND FIRST-PERSON TESTIMONY • SOURCES AT BACK

Read it in five minutes. Or read it in thirty.

Every page in here works three ways. Skim the big type and you'll get the argument. Read the paragraph under it and you'll get the reasoning. Read the boxes and you'll get the receipts.

TIER 1 • 2 SECONDS

The large line at the top of each page. That's the claim. Nothing else required.

TIER 2 • 30 SECONDS

The short paragraph under it. Plain words, no jargon. This is the whole case if you want it fast.

TIER 3 • THE LONG WAY

Boxes, diagrams, and the source list in the back. For people who want to check the work.

What this document is

A record of where a popular story came from. It follows the soul-trap idea backward through the people who told it, to the people they got it from, to what those people actually wrote.

What this document is not

It is not proof that there's no trap. Nobody can prove that, including the people who say there is one. It is not a claim that anyone is lying. And it is not an attack on anyone who has had a frightening experience.

THE ONE LINE, IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE

The scary experience may be completely real. The part being questioned here is whether the jailer is outside you.

Every old source says the cage is built from the inside.

The new version moved the lock to the outside.

That's the entire argument. Everything else in this document is evidence for that one sentence.

People have been reporting on what happens after death for a very long time. They lived in different centuries. They spoke different languages. Most of them could not possibly have read each other. And a strange number of them said the same thing:

What holds you after death is **your own habits**. Your attachments. What you expected to find. What you were already like.

Not a guard. Not a machine. You.

All those separate people agreed on one thing. The modern story takes that exact observation and moves the cause outside the person. Now it's archons. A recycling plant. A false light built to fool you.

Same scenery. Completely different story.

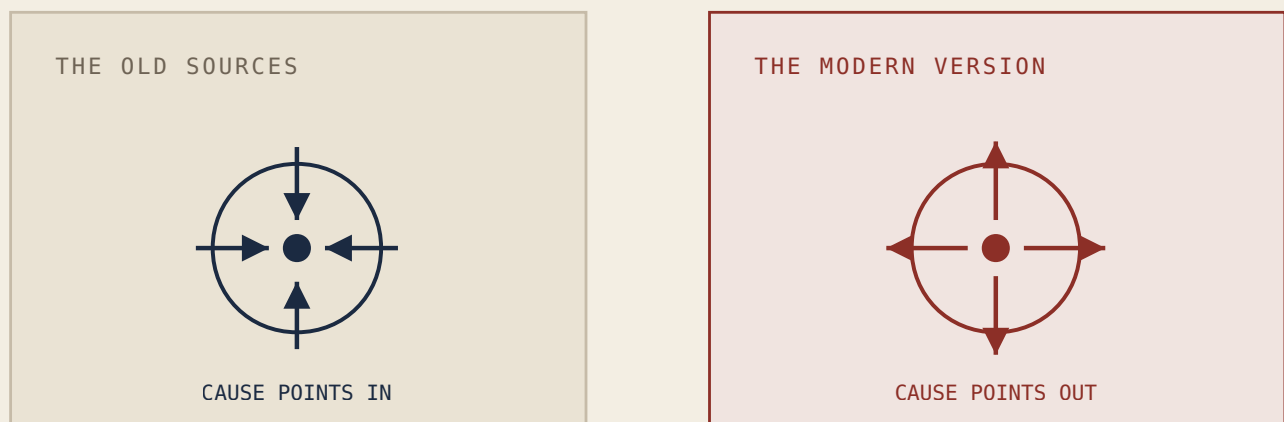


FIG. 1 · THE INVERSION. Same reported experiences. The arrow is the whole disagreement.

I didn't come to this as a skeptic.

Two of the oldest videos on my channel are me reading Robert Monroe's loosh chapter out loud, word for word. They're still up. They're still the most-watched things I've made.

I was in this material early. Before it was a genre, before there was a comment section arguing about it. I've done the practices. I've had experiences I can't explain to anybody's satisfaction, including my own. I'm not writing this from outside the tent.

I'm writing it because my mother died this year.

Before her, her mother. Aunts. Uncles. Cousins. Ten years of funerals, and somewhere in there the question stopped being interesting and started being personal. So I went back to the reading with a different set of eyes.

And what I found on the way back in was a lot of people very confident about a very specific machine. A processing plant. A false light. A memory wipe. Told with detail nobody could possibly have.

So I went looking for where that detail came from.

This document is what I found. It took a multi-model research sweep, a stack of primary sources, and a lot of nights. I've tried to be honest about the parts that don't support me, and there's a whole page in the back where I lay those out myself.

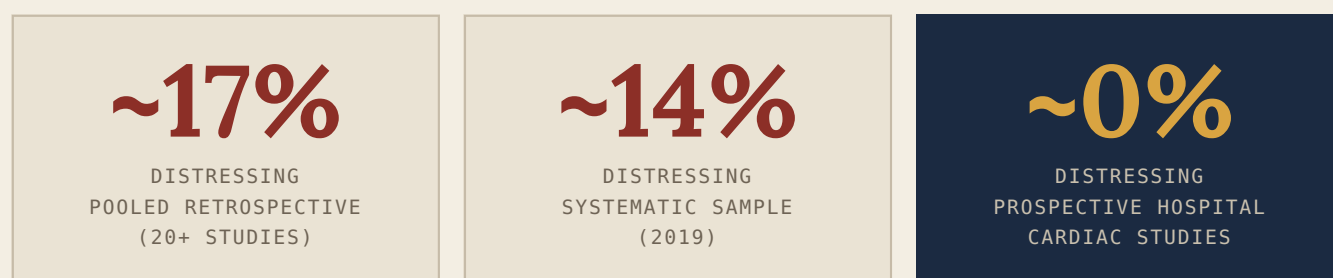
If you disagree with me, I'd rather you disagree with the strongest version of what I'm saying. So here it is, with the sources attached.

STANDING NOTE ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nearly everyone in this field sells something. Books, workshops, memberships, ad revenue. That includes people I cite approvingly. It includes me. A financial interest is a reason to read carefully, not a reason to dismiss. Where a source has one, this document says so, including when I like the source.

Most people come back describing something good. The exact number is a mess, and both sides hide it.

Here's the honest version, including the parts that don't help me.



Those numbers can't all be right. That contradiction is not a footnote. It's the most interesting thing in this section.

Studies that go looking afterward, asking people to come forward, find frightening experiences in the teens. Studies that set up in advance in a hospital and catch patients on the way back find almost none.

One researcher spent thirty years on the frightening cases specifically. She pointed out that across eight major studies covering three hundred and fifty-four experiences, there were **zero** unpleasant reports. She doesn't read that as good news. She reads it as silence. People will tell you they saw light. They're slower to tell you they saw terror.

THE NUMBER THAT MAKES IT HONEST

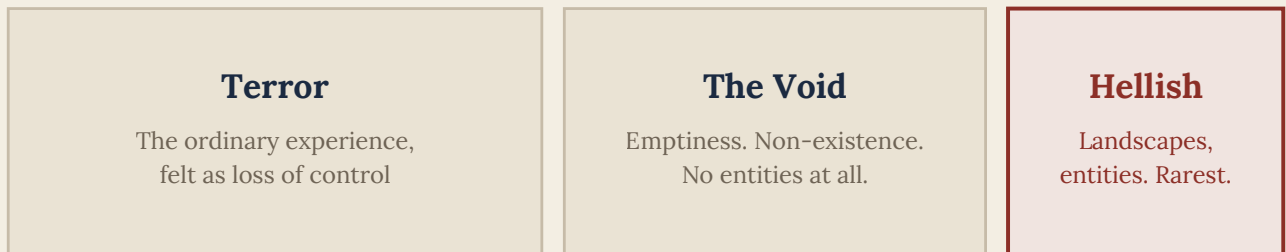
Only about **18%** of people resuscitated from cardiac arrest report any experience at all. So "most reports are positive" is a true statement about *people who report something*. Not about everyone who dies and comes back. Any number you hear quoted without that denominator is doing you a disservice.

Where this lands: the weight of reported experience is positive. Frightening experiences are a real minority, probably underreported, and nobody has a clean population figure. Anyone who gives you one number with confidence is selling.

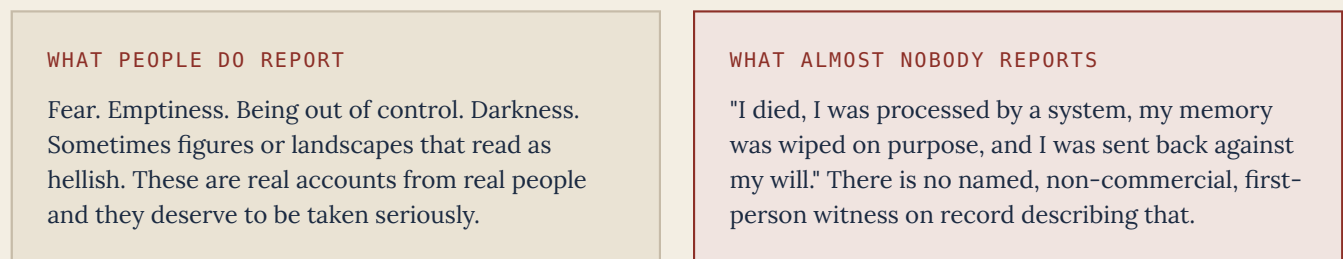
A frightening experience is not a recycling plant.

This is the most common move in the whole genre, and it's the easiest one to catch.

Somebody quotes a distressing-experience statistic, one in six or one in seven, and lets you assume those people reported archons. They didn't. Researchers sort frightening experiences into three families, and only one of them looks anything like the trap story.



THE THREE FAMILIES OF DISTRESSING EXPERIENCE · WIDTH APPROXIMATES REPORTED FREQUENCY
EVEN THE RIGHT-HAND BOX IS NOT A REPORT OF MACHINERY, HARVESTING, OR PROCESSING.



That gap is the whole document. The frightening experiences are real. The explanation attached to them came from somewhere else. The rest of these pages are about where.

People who could not have compared notes kept saying the same thing.

Different centuries. Different continents. Different methods. No way to have coordinated. And a repeating finding: what holds you is you.

CASE 01 · TIBET · 8TH–14TH C.

The Bardo Texts

A funeral manual read aloud to the dying. Its core warning is that the terrifying figures you meet are **your own mind's projections**. It says habit is so strong that the dead often still believe they have a body.

RITUAL TEXT · No possible contact with the sources below.

CASE 02 · SWEDEN · 1758

Emanuel Swedenborg

A working scientist who gave up his reputation to publish visionary accounts. He reported that the newly dead often don't realize they've died, and that people drift toward the company that matches who they already were.

FIRST-PERSON VISIONARY · Published at real professional cost.

CASE 03 · GREECE · C.380 BCE

Plato

In the Myth of Er, souls choose their next life **according to their own character**. The ones who choose badly are the ones who never examined themselves. The mechanism is the person, not a warden.

PHILOSOPHICAL TEXT · Predates every other source here.

CASE 04 · UNITED STATES · 1985

Robert Monroe

Decades of self-induced out-of-body reports. He described belief-shaped territories: regions where the dead stay in surroundings that match what they already expected, until something shifts.

CONFLICT FLAG · Founded an institute, sold programs. Read accordingly.

WHAT THIS DOES AND DOESN'T PROVE

It does not prove any of it is true. Four people agreeing doesn't make a fact. What it establishes is narrower. The idea that **the constraint is self-generated** shows up independently, again and again, from people with no way to copy each other. That's worth noticing. It's not a laboratory result and this document won't pretend it is.

The best-positioned witness alive says there is no captor.

If a trap existed, the people most likely to run into it would be the ones who go out there deliberately. So it's worth asking one.

William Buhlman has taught out-of-body intensives at the Monroe Institute for years and has been doing the practice for decades. He is not a skeptic and he is not selling comfort.

HE AGREES THE PICTURE IS BLEAK

He says most people go almost nowhere after death. You cross over, your people are waiting, you accept them. And in accepting them you've joined their collective and made it yours. Most of humanity, he says, moves a fraction of an inch into what's available. Not because they're stopped. Because they take the first familiar thing.

AND THEN HE SAYS THIS

Nobody has a gun to your head out there. Our own attachments run the wheel. Nothing external manipulates you unless you allow it.

That is a man forty years into the practice, teaching at the institution the whole genre borrowed its vocabulary from, reporting from the inside that there is no jailer.

His explanation for the demons

Buhlman's account of the horrors people meet in altered states is that they are the person's own thought forms. In an environment where thought builds quickly, negative thought builds quickly too.

Notice what that does. It means **the people reporting the nightmare are not lying and were not hallucinating**. The experience happened. They just identified the author incorrectly.

HIS ANSWER TO "PRISON PLANET": SAME FACTS, DIFFERENT READING

Who would you want standing beside you in a world where every thought becomes real instantly? Someone with control they'd earned. So where do you put the ones who haven't earned it yet? Somewhere slow. Somewhere dense. Somewhere their worst afternoon can't level a city. **A nursery, not a cage**. Offered here as an alternative that fits the same evidence. Not as proof.

Not an optimist: asked directly whether humanity is entering a higher spiritual age, he said no and reported no evidence for it. He called this a harsh training ground that was never going to become paradise. **Conflict flag:** he teaches paid workshops.

The story has a family tree. Here it is, with dates.

Nothing on this page accuses anyone of anything. It's a record of when each piece appeared and what was already available when it did.



Read the dates. Every ingredient existed before the finished recipe. Nobody had to travel anywhere to find the last piece. It was already lying around.

Three things almost everybody gets wrong.

CORRECTION 01

"Archon" just meant magistrate.

It was an ordinary Greek word for a city official. A guy at a desk with a stamp. The Gnostic writers borrowed the word for a bureaucrat and promoted him to cosmic jailer. That's a literary move, and a good one. It isn't evidence of a discovered species.

CORRECTION 02

The memory wipe is older than the villains, and started out harmless.

Souls forgetting before rebirth shows up in Plato, centuries before the Gnostic material. In Plato it's just how the system works. Nobody administers it. Nobody profits from it. There's no conspiracy. The sinister reading was added on top later. You can watch it get added.

CORRECTION 03

The Tibetan texts do not say "don't go into the light."

This is the single most repeated claim in the genre and it inverts the source. The bardo material is a set of *instructions for recognizing* the light. The failure mode it warns about is your own confusion causing you to miss the opportunity. Not a deception being run on you.

These aren't gotchas. They're the difference between a tradition and a rumor about a tradition.

Anyone can check all three. The Plato passage is in the last book of the *Republic*. The bardo material is widely available in several translations. The word *archon* is in any Greek lexicon. Full citations in the back.

The man who invented "loosh" did not describe a farm run by predators.

Everything the modern trap story says about energy harvesting traces back to about twenty pages of one book published in 1985. It's worth actually reading those pages.

WHAT MONROE WROTE · 1985

- Earth described as a garden
- Operators called gardeners
- Highest grade of the crop is unconditional love
- Sits inside a cosmology about growth and learning
- No archons. No reptilians.

WHAT CIRCULATES NOW

- Earth as a livestock operation
- Operators are predators
- The crop is suffering, extracted deliberately
- Growth material removed from the retelling
- Archons and reptilians added

FIG. 2 · THE SAME TWENTY PAGES, BEFORE AND AFTER.

By his final book the frame had turned developmental: a school rather than a farm. His own longtime associate reads the identical material that way to this day.

THE FAIR CONCESSION

Monroe *did* use the words garden and harvest. There was a seed there and somebody could plant it. Anyone telling you the dark reading came from nowhere is overstating. The point isn't that the reading is impossible. It's that the reading requires removing most of the source.

THE RULE THIS SUGGESTS

A citation isn't provenance if you have to delete the rest of the source to make it say what you need.

The same thing was removed from every source. Every time.

This is the finding that changed how I read the whole genre. Once you see it you can't stop seeing it.

Go back to the three biggest sources the trap story draws from. Each one contains a warning about your situation, and then instructions for doing something about it. The warning survived the retelling. The instructions did not.

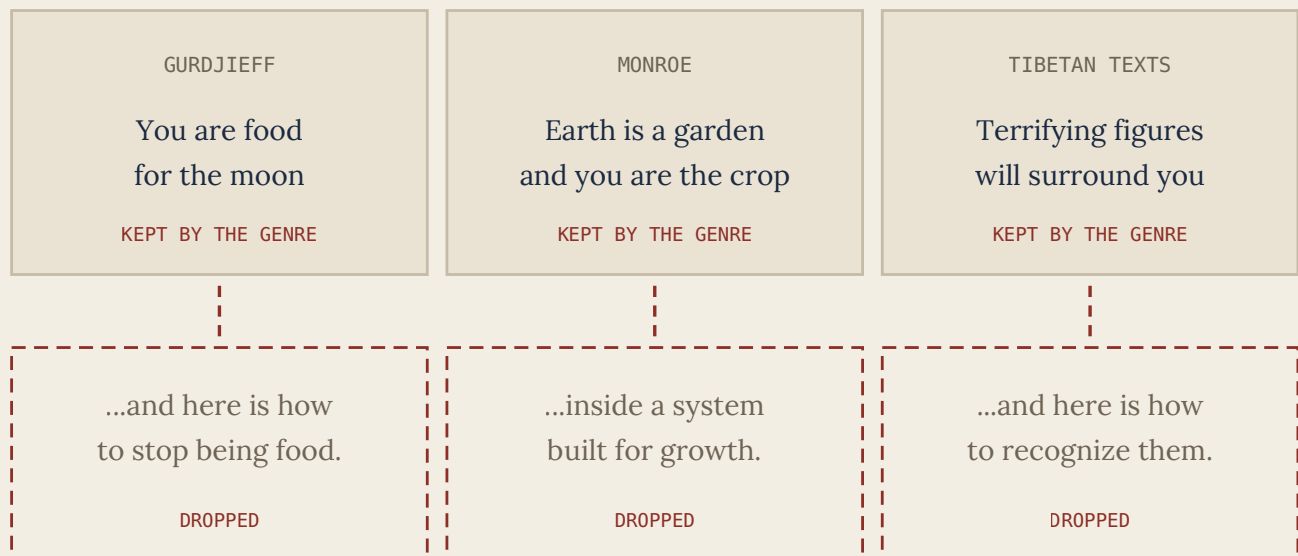


FIG. 3 · WHAT SURVIVED THE RETELLING, AND WHAT DIDN'T.

Every one of these sources hands you something to do. The version circulating now kept the monster and threw away the manual.

Set the afterlife aside for a minute. Ask a smaller question.

Forget who's right about what happens when you die. What is this material doing to the person consuming it?

That question can be answered. You don't need a cosmology for it. You just need to look at the behavior.

And the behavior has a shape people recognize, because it's the same shape as any other habit that eats a person from the inside. The hours go up. The living goes down. It feels like something being done to you, right up until you look at what you're actually doing every night.

THE TELL

Somebody deep in a habit almost never says "I have a habit." He says the world did this to him. He had a bad run. People were against him. The system was rigged.

"The archons did this to me" is the same sentence in better clothes.

To be clear about what's being claimed here: this is not a medical diagnosis and nobody's handing one out. It's a description of a consumption pattern. You can check it yourself, on yourself, in about a minute. That's what the next page is for.

And it isn't an accusation of stupidity. Smart people fall into this constantly. Some of the most careful readers I know are five hundred hours deep in material that has never once changed anything they do.

Six questions. Answer them honestly and nobody else needs to weigh in.

This isn't a test anybody else gives you. It's a test you give yourself, and you're the only one who'll know the score.

- ☐ **Are the hours going up while the practice goes down?**
More watching, more reading, more threads. Less sitting, less breathing, less doing.
- ☐ **Does it make you more afraid every time, and you go back anyway?**
A thing that reliably makes you feel worse, that you return to on schedule, is worth a second look.
- ☐ **Is it eating your sleep, your work, or the people who were supposed to matter?**
Two in the morning is the honest hour. What are you doing in it?
- ☐ **Does any of it ever turn into something you actually DO?**
Five hundred hours in. What's the practice log look like? Is there one?
- ☐ **Has your input narrowed until disagreement gets thrown out unread?**
Not disagreed with. Thrown out. Before you've looked at it.
- ☐ **Have you tried to cut back, more than once, and it didn't take?**
This is the one that decides it.

If the material takes more of your time, makes you more afraid, crowds out the practice you say you care about, and you still can't stop checking, **then the behavior deserves a harder look than the cosmology does.**

Note what this page does not do. It doesn't tell you the trap is fake. You can answer yes to all six and still believe every word of it. The two questions are separate, and keeping them separate is the point.

The story pays you. That's why it moves.

I'm not above this. I watch it. It pulls me. I don't like that it pulls me and I don't have a good excuse.

Part of it is just wiring. Bad grabs attention faster, digs deeper, and stays longer than good. That's one of the sturdier findings in psychology, and two separate research teams landed on it the same year. Everybody's got it. It's the floor under every alarming headline ever written.

But there's something else on offer here, and it's worth naming plainly.

Your life didn't come out the way you wanted. That's most people. That's an ordinary, quiet, private disappointment.

Now run it through the machine.

It isn't disappointment anymore. It's **evidence**. You weren't outmaneuvered by your own choices, your own fear, your own twenty years of putting it off. You were farmed. Harvested. Somebody did this to you, on purpose, and the fact that your life looks like this is proof of how big the thing arrayed against you is.

That's not a demotion. That's a promotion.

SAID CAREFULLY, BECAUSE IT MATTERS

This describes a reward the story offers. It does not diagnose why any particular person believes it, and this document doesn't claim to know. Some people arrived at this through a genuine experience they're still trying to explain. Whether you personally took the deal is between you and the mirror.

Nobody clicks a video that says you had options and didn't take them.

A habit can look permanent and still not be.

The most hopeful evidence in this whole document comes from the least spiritual place imaginable.

In the early 1970s, researchers followed about nine hundred American soldiers home from Vietnam. Roughly forty-three percent had used opiates over there. Around one in five came home dependent.

Then most of them just stopped. Persistent addiction after return collapsed into the low single digits.

DEPENDENCE • IN COUNTRY vs. AFTER RETURN



FIG. 4 • SAME MEN. SAME DRUG. DIFFERENT ROOM.

DO NOT LET ANYONE HAND YOU THE CARTOON VERSION, INCLUDING ME

About **half** of them used again at least once. It was re-addiction that was rare, not use. The men most likely to fall back in were the ones who'd had drug problems before the war. And they came home to lives that were still standing. Jobs, families, somewhere to be. The researcher who ran the study spent years telling people not to overread it.

So the honest version: the drug mattered. The person mattered. And the environment was part of the addiction.

Not a cure. A governor. You are not going to think your way out of six hours a day of anything. You're going to have to change what's coming in.

Everyone who took death seriously wrote a manual and practiced it.

Not a theory. Not a commentary. Instructions, rehearsed while alive.

GREECE

Plato has Socrates define philosophy itself as training for dying. The Stoics kept mortality deliberately in front of them, daily, as a practical discipline against fear and servility.

CHRISTIAN EUROPE

Benedict wrote daily remembrance of death into the monastic rule. Medieval Europe produced how-to-die handbooks that were among the first books ever mass-printed.

TIBET

Familiarization with the stages of dying, practiced in advance, plus specialized transference practices for the moment itself.

ISLAMIC TRADITION

Remembrance of death as a formal discipline, with a substantial classical literature devoted to it.

THE ONE THAT STOPS ME EVERY TIME

The Egyptian funerary texts and the Tibetan bardo book are **structurally the same object**: recited navigation manuals. Here are the gates. Here's who's standing at them. Here's what you say. Roughly three thousand years apart, opposite sides of the planet, no contact between them. Two civilizations looked at death and both concluded the answer was a practice.

BOUNDED HONESTLY

Not universal. These are multiple genuine examples, not every culture that ever existed. Some of them are related: Greek ideas fed Christian monastic ones, so those two aren't fully independent. And the modern West didn't lose death preparation entirely. Hospice, palliative care and the death-doula movement are real. **The narrower claim that survives: we prepare for the dying. We don't train for what's on the other side of the door at all.**

Do it with people. Just don't all agree on what's out there.

Isolation isn't the answer to a bad crowd. People aren't built for it. But the thing that ruins a group like this is predictable, and it's been documented for centuries.

ONLINE IS FOR CONNECTION

The call, the forum, the chat. People across three countries who'd never have found each other. If you're the only person in your county asking these questions, that room may be the only room you've got. It counts.

LOCAL IS FOR PRACTICE

Same room, close enough to drive to, on a schedule, in a body. A group that only meets on a screen drifts toward agreement faster than one that meets in person. On a call, everybody performs consensus. In a room, somebody frowns, and that friction is what keeps the group honest.

How many: eight or nine works. Most Western esoteric orders want twelve, and twelve people who will actually show up on a schedule for years is a brutal number to reach. Start with who you've got. Aim at a dozen. Don't wait for it.

And no shared cosmology. On purpose, as a rule, permanently.

What works

THE QUAKER STRUCTURE

Three hundred and seventy-five years of shared silence with no creed and no clergy. The person who runs the meeting is called a clerk, serves a fixed term, and is described as a servant rather than a leader.

THE TWELVE-STEP STRUCTURE

Deliberately engineered against founder capture. Rotating service positions, "trusted servants" rather than governors, and a structure explicitly built to outlive the person who started it.

What kills it

Permanent leadership. Nobody term-limited, nobody replaced.

Money and property. The fastest collapses on record happened once spiritual authority acquired land.

Credentialing. Somebody decides whose training counts as real.

Secret levels. Knowledge released by rank.

Privileged access. One person claims a line to the unseen that others don't have.

Membership control. Somebody decides who belongs.

THE RULE THAT COVERS ALL SIX

Nobody gets permanent epistemic rank.

Not the founder. Not the one with the best stories. Not the one who's been at it longest. You don't need a creed to build an orthodoxy, only one person who decides whose experience counts.

Said out loud, because pretending otherwise is how this fails: no group has pulled off cosmology-free. Quakers have the Inner Light; twelve-step has a God-shaped slot. This is more stubborn than its cousins, and the cousins hardened within a generation.

Where this argument is thin.

If you came here looking for the weak points, save yourself the trouble. Here they are, listed by me, first.

01

The central claim has no laboratory support and can't have any.

"The constraint is self-generated" rests entirely on old texts and first-person testimony. That's witnesses, not science. It's the appropriate standard for this subject, since no experiment could settle it. But calling it evidence in the scientific sense would be dishonest. It isn't.

02

The people I cite for convergence could have read each other.

Plato, the bardo texts and Swedenborg are genuinely separate. Modern out-of-body reporters are not. They had access to all of it. Their agreement is worth less than it looks, and I've tried not to lean on it.

03

The near-death numbers contradict each other and I can't resolve it.

Teens in retrospective studies, near zero in prospective ones. I've argued underreporting explains part of the gap. I can't prove it, and nobody has measured the missing group. Somebody arguing the other way has real material.

04

The Vietnam study gets overstated by everyone, including people on my side.

Half the men used again. Pre-existing history predicted relapse. They came home to intact lives, which is a selection effect nobody can wave away. It supports "environment matters enormously." It does not support "change the room and the habit dies."

05

Two psychological claims I'd have used five years ago didn't hold up.

First, that losing control makes people see conspiracies. That's a well-known 2008 result, but a 2018 replication found the opposite direction. Second, that dark material drives you toward ever darker material. The habituation half holds. The escalation half doesn't. Both are cut from this document.

06

My proposed group has no successful historical example.

Nothing has ever stayed genuinely cosmology-free. Every model I hold up eventually grew a doctrine. I'm proposing something more stubborn than anything that's worked. That's a reason for skepticism, and I'd rather name it than have it named for me.

What would change my mind.

A position you can't be argued out of isn't a position. It's a habit. So here's the list, written in advance.

THE BIG ONE

A named, identifiable person, not anonymous, not channeled, with nothing to sell, reporting a first-hand experience of being processed, wiped, and returned against their will. On the record. Traceable.

Produce that and the central argument of this document is in serious trouble. I have looked and I have not found one. If you have, I want it.

ALSO WOULD MOVE ME

A large prospective hospital study using a standard scale that reports a hard distressing-experience rate in the teens. That would kill my underreporting argument and settle the number honestly.

ALSO WOULD MOVE ME

A pre-1900 source describing the full modern package: false light, memory wipe on purpose, processing infrastructure. With no plausible line of transmission to the others. That would make the provenance chapter wrong.

ALSO WOULD MOVE ME

Evidence that Monroe's later developmental framing was a retraction under pressure rather than a genuine development of his thinking.

WOULD NOT MOVE ME

Another video. Another channeled transmission. Another anonymous account. Another confident retelling with no source attached. There is a lot of that and it's what this document is about.

I'm not asking you to agree with me. I'm asking you to notice whether the thing you believe has a source, and whether that source says what you were told it says.

I won't fight you. Don't drag me.

You want to go to war with archons, go. Take the whole army. I'm not going to argue you out of it and I'm not going to sit here and tell you your worst night was a hallucination.

Just don't drag the rest of us into it.

Some of us want a wider path than that. Some of us have people to go find. Some of us want to walk out into the dark on purpose instead of getting shoved.

My mother handed me a book about a cage when I was eighteen. I read it and got angry at something I didn't have words for yet. She went over this year, and I've still got the same instinct I had at eighteen. I still think it's a setup.

I just know now that the setup I was angry about was the story. Not the world.

Find four or five people who are actually doing the work.

And don't let any of you agree on what's out there.

Sources begin on the next page. Everything in this document can be checked. If you find something wrong in here, I'd rather hear it than not. The whole point of putting the sources at the back is that somebody might use them against me. That's a fair trade for being able to say I showed my work.

Primary texts & traditional sources

Each entry notes what the source establishes and what it does not. Tier D = traditional or textual. Tier C = named first-person testimony. Tier B = systematic collection. Tier A = clinical or statistical.

Plato, Republic, Book X (Myth of Er) · c. 380 BCE · TIER D

Souls choose their next life according to character; forgetting before rebirth is a natural process with no operator.

ESTABLISHES: the memory-wipe motif predates Gnostic material and was originally benign. DOES NOT ESTABLISH: anything about actual postmortem conditions.

Plato, Phaedo, 64a onward · c. 380 BCE · TIER D

Philosophy defined as training for dying.

ESTABLISHES: death rehearsal as an explicit Western practice. NOTE: some scholars read the passage as centering purification through reason rather than death as such.

Gnostic corpus: Apocryphon of John; Hypostasis of the Archons; Pistis Sophia · 2nd–4th c. CE · TIER D

Archons, an ignorant lower creator, a drink of forgetfulness, difficult ascent.

ESTABLISHES: the ancient roots of prison-cosmology. DOES NOT ESTABLISH: the modern package. No false-light deception, no processing facility, no soul contracts.

Bardo Thödol (Tibetan funerary literature) · 8th–14th c., widely transmitted from 1927 · TIER D

Instructions for recognizing the clear light; apparitions identified as the mind's own projections; return connected to ignorance, karma and habit.

ESTABLISHES: the source says the opposite of "don't go into the light." NOTE: translations vary considerably; the best-known early English edition layered outside framing onto the text.

Egyptian funerary corpus: Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead · c. 2400 BCE onward · TIER D

Recited navigational instruction for the deceased: gates, gatekeepers, declarations.

ESTABLISHES: postmortem instruction technology, and a striking structural parallel to Tibetan material with no contact between them. NOTE: primarily equipment for the dead rather than lifetime rehearsal for the living.

Emanuel Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell · 1758 · TIER D / C

The newly dead often don't realize they've died; surroundings correspond to inner state; souls gravitate to matching company.

SINCERITY: a distinguished working scientist who forfeited professional standing to publish, initially anonymously, with no commercial engine. The paradigm case of sincere-but-possibly-mistaken.

Rule of St. Benedict, ch. 4 · c. 516–530 CE · TIER D

Keep death daily before your eyes.

NOTE: near-identical to a Stoic formulation; a Greek-to-Christian transmission path is plausible, so this is not fully independent.

Ars moriendi · c. 1415 and c. 1450 · TIER D

Structured deathbed manuals; among the earliest mass-printed books.

ESTABLISHES: a Western practical technology of dying. DOES NOT ESTABLISH: routine lifetime rehearsal by laypeople.

Modern experiential sources & the transmission chain

G. I. Gurdjieff, recorded by P. D. Ouspensky. In Search of the Miraculous, ch. 5 · teaching c. 1915–1924, published 1949 · TIER C / D

Humanity as "food for the moon"; a cosmic energy economy; and, critically, liberation from that condition through conscious work.

ATTRIBUTION NOTE: this is Ouspensky's book recording Gurdjieff's teaching. Gurdjieff's own major work is a different book entirely. Cite it correctly.

ESTABLISHES: the energy-harvest structure predates Monroe by seventy years, and arrives with a practice attached.

Robert Monroe, Far Journeys, ch. 12, pp. 161–181 · Doubleday / Main Street, 1985 · TIER C

The loosh material. Earth as a garden; operators described as gardeners; the highest grade identified as unconditional love.

ESTABLISHES: the origin of the harvest concept, and that its originator framed it neutrally. CONCESSION: he did use garden and harvest imagery, which later writers had something to work with.

CONFLICT FLAG: founded an institute and sold programs.

Robert Monroe, Ultimate Journey · 1994 · TIER C

Later framing is developmental rather than predatory.

ESTABLISHES: the author's own trajectory moved away from the reading later built on him.

William Buhlman, Adventures Beyond the Body; recorded talk at the Monroe Institute · TIER C

Consensus realities entered by acceptance; no external captor; apparitions as the individual's own thought forms; density of physical reality as developmental rather than punitive.

ESTABLISHES: an experienced practitioner inside the same lineage reaching the opposite conclusion from the trap genre. CONFLICT FLAG: teaches paid workshops; the cited talk includes program promotion.

Sir Oliver Lodge, Raymond, or Life and Death · 1916 · TIER B

Mediumistic material describing the dead in mundane environments, some unaware of their deaths.

NOTE: severe bereavement bias; the author was a grieving father. Included for the recurrence of the motif, not as strong evidence.

Late 20th-century UFO / conspiracy crossover and 2000s–2010s internet synthesis · TIER C, heavily commercial
Where hidden handlers, reptilian framing, false light, soul contracts and recycling infrastructure combine into a single system for the first time.

NOTE: the specific person-by-person chronology of the final internet assembly is not fully documented and is treated here as unsettled. The broader consolidation is well supported. CONFLICT FLAG: books, tours, monetized channels throughout.

Clinical, statistical & peer-reviewed

Greyson & Bush, "Distressing Near-Death Experiences," Psychiatry 55(1), 1992 · TIER A

The three-part typology: inverted/terror, void, hellish.

Lead author is an emeritus professor of psychiatry and author of the standard measurement scale. Minimal commercial conflict.

Nancy Evans Bush, pooled analysis of 20+ studies; Dancing Past the Dark · 2006 / 2012 · TIER B

Roughly 17% distressing across pooled retrospective literature; documents that eight major studies covering 354 experiences recorded no unpleasant reports at all.

SINCERITY: had her own distressing experience, spent thirty-plus years on the cases the field avoided, and reported the number that undercuts the reassuring consensus. She later published books, so "no commercial engine" is not absolute.

Cassol et al., systematic analysis of distressing accounts · 2019 · TIER A

Approximately 14% distressing in the analyzed sample.

Prospective cardiac-arrest cohorts (van Lommel et al., Lancet 2001; Parnia et al.; related studies) · TIER A

Roughly 130 experiencers across four prospective cohorts, with no predominantly distressing cases; approximately 18% of resuscitated patients report any experience.

ESTABLISHES: the denominator, and the central methodological contradiction this document does not resolve.

Robins, Davis & Nurco, "How Permanent Was Vietnam Drug Addiction?" American Journal of Public Health, 1974; Robins, Addiction, 1993 · TIER A

Random sample of ~898 returnees, 94–96% follow-up, government records access, no commercial motive.

ESTABLISHES: environment as a major determinant of persistence. DOES NOT ESTABLISH: that environment cures addiction. About half used again; pre-existing history predicted relapse; the author cautioned against overgeneralization.

Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, "Bad Is Stronger Than Good," Review of General Psychology 5, 2001; Rozin & Royzman, PSPP, 2001 · TIER A

Two independent teams reaching the same conclusion simultaneously. Among the most-cited findings in social psychology.

ESTABLISHES: the attentional advantage of threatening material. This is the load-bearing psychology in this document.

Hermann, Morgan & Shanahan, five-decade meta-analysis of cultivation research, Journal of Communication, 2021 · TIER A

3,842 effect sizes across 406 samples; the media-cultivation relationship is real but small.

INCLUDED SPECIFICALLY TO PREVENT OVERCLAIMING on this document's own behalf.

Kondziella et al., PeerJ, 2019 · TIER A

About 10% of a general cross-national population report a near-death experience, with a strong association to dream-sleep intrusion.

INCLUDED AS A NATURALISTIC COUNTER-EXPLANATION this document does not attempt to refute.

Governance, community & method

Quaker faith and practice materials; Sharman, Servant of the Meeting · 1983 and ongoing · TIER B
 Silent worship without creed or clergy; a clerk serving a fixed term, described as servant rather than authority.
 ESTABLISHES: method-before-creed is possible and has lasted since the 1650s.

Ingle, Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation · 1986 · TIER B
 The 1827–28 separation; and the later adoption of a formal declaration of faith in 1887.
 ESTABLISHES: the same institution is both the best example and the clearest failure case. Doctrine entered through membership control and ministerial legitimacy rather than through any formal creed.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; general service materials · 1953 onward · TIER B / D
 Rotating service, "trusted servants" rather than governors, deliberate avoidance of outside controversy, designed to survive the founder.
 ESTABLISHES: anti-founder-capture governance that has held at scale. NOTE: the founding text and local culture can still function as informal orthodoxy.

Theosophical Society founding documents and institutional histories · TIER B / D
 Began explicitly non-creedal; developed strong doctrinal structures through claimed privileged access, esoteric sections and authoritative teaching.
 ESTABLISHES: formal openness and de facto doctrinal monopoly can coexist comfortably.

Gurdjieff-lineage histories: Webb, The Harmonious Circle; Bennett, Witness; survivor accounts of later offshoots · TIER B / C
 Fragmentation after the founder's death into competing lineages claiming authentic transmission; at least one offshoot hardened into an authoritarian and financially extractive group.
 ESTABLISHES: where the method depends on personal transmission, someone eventually decides whose transmission counts.

Method note

The research behind this document was assembled through a multi-model sweep across nine large language models working from a common brief, with outputs merged and cross-checked against each other. Convergence between models was treated as a lead, not as evidence. Every claim that survived into these pages was checked against a primary or peer-reviewed source, and several beats present in early drafts were cut when they failed that check. Two of them are named on the "where this argument is thin" page.

Any claim in this document that turns out to be wrong is my responsibility, and I'd like to know about it.

The scary experience may be completely real. The part in question is whether the jailer is outside you.

Every old source says the cage is built from the inside.
The new version moved the lock to the outside.

That's the whole disagreement. Everything in this guide is the evidence for it, including the parts that argue against me.