I Before Me



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A Research Study

I Before Me

From Death to Rebirth
Investigating Accounts of Life between Lives

A comparison of accounts of near-death experiences, memories of life before birth, and encounters with the deceased. An investigation of time, self-awareness, and the possible continuity of personal identity.

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Preface

An account of one's own death always reaches the reader from within life. One person regained consciousness after resuscitation and described what they had experienced; another grew up and wrote down what they consider a childhood memory. A chain connects the event being described to the text on the page. Memory, language, an interviewer's questions, the expectations of loved ones, and a publisher's decisions all play a part. Studying this chain allows us to preserve the value of an account while understanding its limits.

Accounts of continued existence are appealing in their promise of continuity. Where a biography seems to have ended, a new scene appears: another presence, recognition, a place resembling home, a conversation about returning. Connecting such scenes with memories of life before birth produces an almost complete route. Its coherence alone settles nothing. We must establish whether the individual sections belonged to a single experience, whether they were recorded in comparable ways, and what evidence supports the transitions between them.

This book investigates the proposed path from dying to rebirth by comparing published accounts. It focuses on the experiencer's state, the continuity of the self, the surroundings, other participants, and time. Individual chapters consider rest, recovery, the choice to return, and the reasons narrators give for beginning a new life.

The book distinguishes the content of an experience, the circumstances in which it was recorded, and conclusions about the nature of what occurred. When someone reports meeting a deceased relative, what is established first is the existence of that report. An early record and independent corroboration may allow additional details to be checked. Who the encountered being was requires separate consideration. These distinctions apply equally

to a religious interpretation and to an explanation based on brain function.

The word "soul" appears here as a term for a presumed bearer of personal experience in the accounts themselves and in the models discussed. Using it does not mean that such a bearer's composition, properties, or independent existence have been established in advance. What exactly might continue after death remains one of the subjects of inquiry.

The literature includes clinical publications, studies of memory and self-perception, descriptions of children's memories, archives of personal accounts, and research on experiences of bereavement. These groups of material differ in how they were selected and how readily they can be checked. The book offers a structured research comparison. It does not estimate the prevalence of these experiences in the whole population or claim exhaustive coverage of the published literature.

The illustrations accompany three kinds of material: reconstructions of published descriptions, the authors' imagined examples, and analytical diagrams. Their status is stated in the captions. Assumed details in reconstructions are identified separately, and diagrams preserve the distinction between described relationships and research assumptions.

Part I explains what is actually available to observation. Part II leads us through the proposed stages of the path. Part III considers time, personal identity, and encounters with the deceased that do not fit a simple sequence. Part IV discusses possible mechanisms. The final part constructs a branching map and examines why a return might occur at all.

Readers need neither begin with a belief in continued life nor reject it in advance. It is enough to keep the question open to the extent the evidence allows. Investigation may produce a fairly definite explanation or leave several possibilities open. It may also show that the original question combined different phenomena and therefore did not admit a single answer.

Taking an unusual experience seriously need not mean agreeing with all of its narrator's conclusions. An experience may have enormous personal significance while leaving its external circumstances unestablished. Precision in research begins with being able to say both things in the same book.

Part I Experience and Evidence

Chapter 1
What Does It Mean to Experience Your Own Death?

Experience and event

The phrase “I experienced my own death” connects two different statements. One relates to what happened to the person. The other is how what was happening was given to him. To understand the story, it is necessary to untangle this connection. The medical description may indicate circulatory arrest. A personal testimony may contain a feeling of finally leaving the body. You need to find a relationship between them, and not just put an equal sign.

Experience is directly accessible to a person. He feels pain, sees light, recognizes a face, hears a voice, or senses a presence without a visible image. The question of external cause belongs to another level of analysis. This distinction does not imply that perception and its interpretation necessarily follow each other in time. If there is a cup on the table, the question of the difference between the cup and its perception rarely becomes a practical problem. Unusual experience forces this difference to be taken into account.

A simple mental example is helpful. A man sees a familiar room in a dream. Inside the dream there is the color of the walls, the distance to the door, the expectation of a meeting. The experience of a room exists as an event of its experience. Moreover, the mere presence of such an experience does not establish that at the corresponding moment he was in the physical room. This example does not explain near-death experiences as dreams. It shows the logical difference between having an experience and inferring its external object.

The same difference holds under the opposite assumption. If the experience is truly connected to external reality, the strength of subjective certainty does not yet explain how this connection works. For research, additional features are needed: accurate information, independent observations, limitations of conventional channels for obtaining information. The question is not just how convincing the condition was from the inside.

What does the word qualia mean?

The word “qualia” here refers to how an experience feels to the person experiencing it. One can know the wavelength of light and still ask another question: what the corresponding color looks like to a person. You can describe the bodily signs of fear and separately ask how the fear itself is experienced. Such a distinction does not resolve the question of the origin of consciousness. It helps define the subject of conversation.

When exploring non-ordinary states, it is easy to focus on the content of the scene and miss the way it is experienced. Several stories may mention light, but in one it is perceived as an external object, in another as a glow that fills the entire space, in the third as knowledge without a distinct visual form. If you write down only the word “light”, the differences disappear.

Describing experience therefore requires questions about form. Was there a direction of view? Was there a distance to the objects? Was it possible to shift attention? Were the sounds similar to speech or did the meaning emerge immediately? Was the body felt? These questions clarify the experience without imposing a physical interpretation on it. They are especially useful where familiar words are used by analogy.

The expression “everything became clear to me” also needs clarification. It can mean a feeling of completeness, the emergence of a specific thought, an understanding of a relationship, or the ability to answer a certain question. If after returning only confidence in the previous omniscience remains, the researcher

has information about this confidence. Verification of the volume of acquired knowledge is possible only where the content being verified has been preserved.

Several meanings of self

The concept of “I” should not be turned into one indivisible indicator. A person may remember his name and biography, but have a different sense of location. He can perceive himself as an observer and at the same time not think about the years he has lived. In mental analysis, one can distinguish between a sense of presence, ownership of the body, authorship of an action, memory of oneself, and the ability to reflect on one’s condition.

The phrase “I understood that I continued to exist” refers primarily to reflection. The experiencer notices his own experience and draws a conclusion about it. However, the absence of such a phrase does not mean the absence of consciousness. In ordinary concentrated action, a person does not have to constantly formulate the thought that he exists. Similarly, in a story one must distinguish between the absence of reflective commentary and the direct message of a loss of self-awareness.

Preserving an autobiography raises a different question. Let's say the narrator confidently calls himself the same person he was before the event. It is important to find out what provided this confidence. Did he remember his family? Did you recognize your own body? Felt continuity without memories? Did you come to a conclusion after waking up? These variants may be accompanied by the same phrase, “it was me,” but describe different bases of personal identity.

In the following, the word “personality” will be used for the relatively stable biographical and psychological organization of a person, and “subject of experience” for the supposed experiencer. This is a working distinction. It allows the possibility of a change in memory or character to be discussed without immediately deciding

whether a different subject has appeared. This question arises especially acutely in stories about memories of a former life.

Empty memory and lack of experience

There may be a gap between the last memory before loss of response and the first memory after recovery. By itself, it reports no memory available. To conclude that there is no experience, other grounds are needed. The converse is also true: the presence of a memory upon awakening does not automatically establish at what second it occurred.

In a mental example, a person remembers the beginning of a procedure and then finds himself in another room. For him, the gap seemed to disappear. According to the clock, a significant amount of time could have passed. But the subjective absence of a gap does not prove that time has “accelerated” for an individual consciousness. It may be that there is no available event record. This example is needed to distinguish between measured duration and memory structure.

Therefore, the book will consistently distinguish between the observed state of the organism, the experienced content, the available memory, and the explanation of the narrator. These four descriptions refer to the same person, but do not necessarily have the same time frame. Their comparison is the first step towards research.



Figure 1. Four levels of one case. From left to right, from top to bottom, the state of the body, experience, memory and explanation are shown. The author's composition separates the sides of one case without specifying the sequence of their occurrence.

Why the question remains meaningful

Careful discrimination does not eliminate the main interest. The possibility of continuation of personal experience after death affects what a person usually accepts as his own existence. If the body, memory, character and sense of presence can be considered separately, it becomes clearer which properties are intended to be preserved.

For mental comparison, three options for continuation can be distinguished. In one the biography is preserved, in the other there is only a minimal sense of presence. The third allows for the transfer of information without preserving the experiencer. These options cannot be combined with one word “immortality”: they answer different questions about what will remain of a particular person.

The following chapters will begin with the available evidence. Before discussing the entire proposed cycle, it will be necessary to understand how much weight a single story has and what happens when multiple stories come to be understood as describing a single system.

Chapter 2
How an Account Becomes Data

First entry

History takes on a research form when it becomes possible to reconstruct the origin of its details. Who was the first to report an unusual experience? What words were used? What was known at that moment? Who did they tell next? Without such consistency, even detailed publication may leave the most important fact unknown.

Early recording is useful because it limits the room for possible change. If the message is recorded before the hypothesized former family is known, some subsequent influences can be excluded from the origin of the details already recorded. This does not exclude earlier channels of information or guarantee the accuracy of the recording. But a certain limit appears that can be checked.

A later story may also contain valuable information. Its limitation is that the researcher is more often forced to reconstruct the previous path of information from the memory of the participants. The desire to be precise is no substitute for documentation. Therefore, the quality of evidence is determined not by sincerity alone, but by a combination of sincerity, conditions of recording and available verification.

In the book, the date of the supposed event will differ from the date of first documentation. In the case of a child, it is useful to further distinguish between the beginning of utterances, the first in-depth interview, and the first contact between families. For a clinical case, the first conversation after recovery and the narrator’s access to the explanations of others are important. For sleep - the time of recording and the moment of receiving news related to it.

Unit of observation

The calculation begins with the definition of the unit. One person is able to report several experiences. One case may appear in an article, book, interview, or documentary. Multiple researchers may reanalyze the same sample. If you count each publication as a new confirmation, the number of evidence will increase without new observations.

Independence also has several meanings. Two people may not know each other but answer the same guiding questions. Two witnesses may be present to discuss the event prior to the first interview. Two authors may share an early story. In all of these situations, there is a coincidence, but its origin varies.

Let's imagine a conditional archive of twenty stories. It later turns out that eight of the texts are retellings of one incident, and four more were received from members of the same family after joint discussions. The arithmetic number of texts remains the same. The possibility of using it as a number of independent observations disappears. The example shows why bibliography and case corpus require different registers.

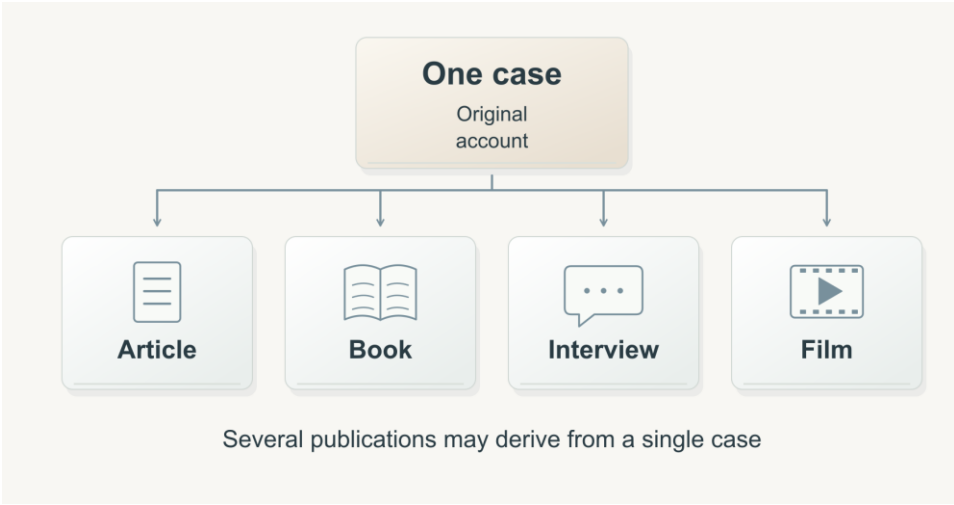


Figure 2. One case and several publications. The schematic diagram shows how an article, book, interview, and film can all be traced back to the same piece of evidence. The number of publications differs from the number of independent cases.

Group percentages need the same attention. If only a portion of the participants answered a question, the response rate among those who responded does not coincide with the rate among all invitees. It is essential for the book to indicate whether it is a group of survivors, a group who agreed to be interviewed, a group with an available recording, or a group that passed a certain threshold of the questionnaire.

Similarity of description and similarity of function

Stories can be compared on several levels. The first one stores a specific image: screen, bridge, room, person, light. The second one highlights the action: viewing, transition, waiting, accompaniment. On the third, the intended function appears: obtaining information, changing state, restoring, preparing a solution.

This classification is useful as long as the transition between levels remains visible. The screen and voice may function as a message, but it does not follow that they are two faces of the same

device. The differences in material, space, modes of interaction and authorship of the message can be significant.

A comparison that is too narrow risks missing semantic similarities. Too wide will reveal it almost everywhere. The category “person going through change” will easily combine sleep, travel, learning and illness. Therefore, the categorization rule must explain both the inclusion of a case and its exclusion. Such a rule is further called an analysis code; We are talking about marking up the material, not about a computer program.

The work map of the book keeps the description and interpretation side by side. If the narrator talks about waiting in a room, it remains a description. Attribution to the preparation phase is a research decision that can be reconsidered. In the absence of information about the purpose of the expectation, such a purpose cannot be quietly added to the original story.

Silence of the source

The unmentioned event allows for several explanations. It might not happen, be forgotten, seem unimportant to the narrator, or not be included in the shortened publication. Perhaps the relevant question was not asked at all. Therefore, an empty field on the card should mean unknown, as long as there is no basis for a more definite conclusion.

Direct denial has a different status. If a person independently emphasizes that he has not met anyone, the researcher receives positive information about the absence of a meeting in his memory. But even then, the question of the completeness of memory remains. Careful recording allows you to see how far the denial extends.

Matching requires at least four field states: the element is described; the element is directly negated; it was not asked or reported; the description is ambiguous. They cannot be reduced without loss to two meanings: “is” and “is not.” It is especially

dangerous to build a universal sequence based on a table where all the gaps have imperceptibly turned into negations.

How to Preserve Uncertainty in a Record

Let's look at the author's mental example. The first story says, “I didn’t see anyone.” In the second: “I found myself in a bright space,” after which the recording ends. Both texts do not describe the meeting, but the information differs. For the first, we note a direct negation of the visually perceived encounter; nothing is yet known about presence without a visible image. For the second, we maintain uncertainty: the absence of a continuation does not indicate whether someone was nearby.

If the interviewer then asks the second person about the guide and receives a positive answer, two entries are needed. In a free story, the element is not stated, but after the question it is described. This is not a judgment on the reliability of the answer. This recording allows us to explore how the mode of conversation changes the composition of the available material. When comparing cases, the initial silence can no longer be imperceptibly replaced by an independent mention of the meeting.

The negative case is not useful as a rhetorical counterbalance to the colorful story. It clarifies the boundaries of the model. If a certain stage is considered obligatory, the reliably described absence of this stage requires explanation. If a stage is considered possible, absence is not a refutation. What is important is the pre-established meaning of the statement.

Questions change the accessible narrative.

An interview helps a person to reconstruct the experience, but at the same time sets the form of the answer. The question “what happened next” leaves more possible continuations than the question “who took you to your resting place.” In the second case, a guide, a direction and a place with a specific function are already proposed.

This does not mean that answers to substantive questions are always false. The problem lies in the origin of the element. When it appears only after a prompt, its repetition cannot be used as completely independent evidence that many people themselves identify just such a stage.

That's why a good research dossier keeps the story loose until further clarification. Then the questions and answers themselves are recorded. This order allows you to later evaluate which details arose independently, which were clarified, and which could have been introduced by the procedure.

Completed routes require especially careful analysis. Their appeal lies in the sequence: arrival, meeting, explanation, preparation, return. However, the sequence may belong to experience, interviews or editing. To verify, it is necessary to compare the early recording, the protocol of questions and the published text.

How to read degree of confirmation

Evidence may be well established in one part and remain open in another. The medical record can confirm the circulatory arrest, but not the content of the experience. Another witness can confirm that the story was told before the news of the death, but not the exact time of the experience itself. The coincidence of a biographical detail may require an explanation without establishing the identity of the two individuals.

It is more convenient to evaluate individual statements than to assign one label to the entire case. For example, the timing of the event, the early recording, the accuracy of the details, possible channels of information and the independence of witnesses are separately checked. Then the strong side does not hide the weak, and the weak does not automatically destroy everything else.

Distinguishing between explanations requires asking what outcome each would expect to see. If every possible answer fits the hypothesis equally, it does little to help you choose between options. A statement becomes more meaningful when it admits the concrete possibility of being wrong.

The following chapters use this method of reading. First it is established what is being reported. Then - what has been tested and with what restrictions. Possible explanations are then discussed. Consistency allows you to explore unusual stories without prematurely turning them into a proven picture of the world.

Chapter 3
A Boundary That Can Be Measured

The price of one word

The medical record allows you to clarify the part of the story that other people observed. The specific state, the method of establishing it, and the time limits are important here. It depends on them which question gets the answer. Evidence of consciousness during a life-threatening condition and evidence of existence after the final cessation of life would require different tests.

A medical description begins with a specific condition. In the 2023 guideline by Greer et al., death by neurological criteria involves an established permanent loss of function of the brain as a whole, including the brain stem. The diagnosis requires a specific procedure. It cannot be inferred from coma alone, the absence of a pulse, or a single equipment reading. Successful resuscitation after circulatory arrest does not, by itself, constitute a return after established brain death. [1]

This difference does not lessen the severity of the experience. A person could be in extreme danger and experience a life-changing event. Precision is needed for the next step of reasoning. If the researcher claims that the experience arose in the complete absence of conditions for the functioning of consciousness, he must show what conditions were measured specifically in this patient. The word “death” itself, even pronounced by an eyewitness, does not replace such data.

It is useful here to preserve the distinction between a name and a measurement. A name compresses many details into a short expression. Measurement returns to those details. The period without spontaneous circulation, the period without a response to being addressed, and the period without an accessible memory

may refer to different intervals. Combining them creates a simple picture of a single empty interval. That apparent simplicity must be tested before an entire journey is placed inside the interval.

Time line resuscitation

The clinical history has more than one beginning. You can count the time from the last meaningful response, from the detection of a person, from the expected circulatory arrest, from the call for help, or from the start of resuscitation efforts. These points are convenient for different tasks and are not interchangeable. Even a conscientious retelling can shift the boundaries of an event if one of them is later called simply the moment of death.

The Utstein International Template for Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest, revision 2024, distinguishes between event and care time stamps and requires that the start and end of the calculated interval be clearly indicated. Unknown time should also retain its status. A similar discipline is also useful in the study of stories: duration becomes meaningful only when it is determined what exactly lasted. [2]

Let's imagine a hypothetical example that does not relate to a published patient. The person is found without reaction, after some time help begins, then blood circulation is restored, and the first conversation becomes possible later. In a memory, he hears a voice and then sees an unusual space. Even an impeccable treatment protocol does not yet tell where the voice and space were located on the external line. First, you need to associate at least one element of the story with an event that has an independent label.

This connection can be stronger or weaker. A recognizable phrase spoken several times limits the interval worse than a single pre-registered message. The memory of a beep becomes more useful if you know the times when the beep actually sounded. However, one matching detail does not automatically date everything the narrator places before and after it. The order within the story and the external chronology still need to be connected.

Therefore, for each scene a separate answer is required: whether its external time is known, whether it is limited to a few possible intervals, or not established at all. The uncertainty here can be kept literally by leaving a blank field. Attributing the entire story to the dramatic moment itself creates a more complete picture, but adds information that no one observed.

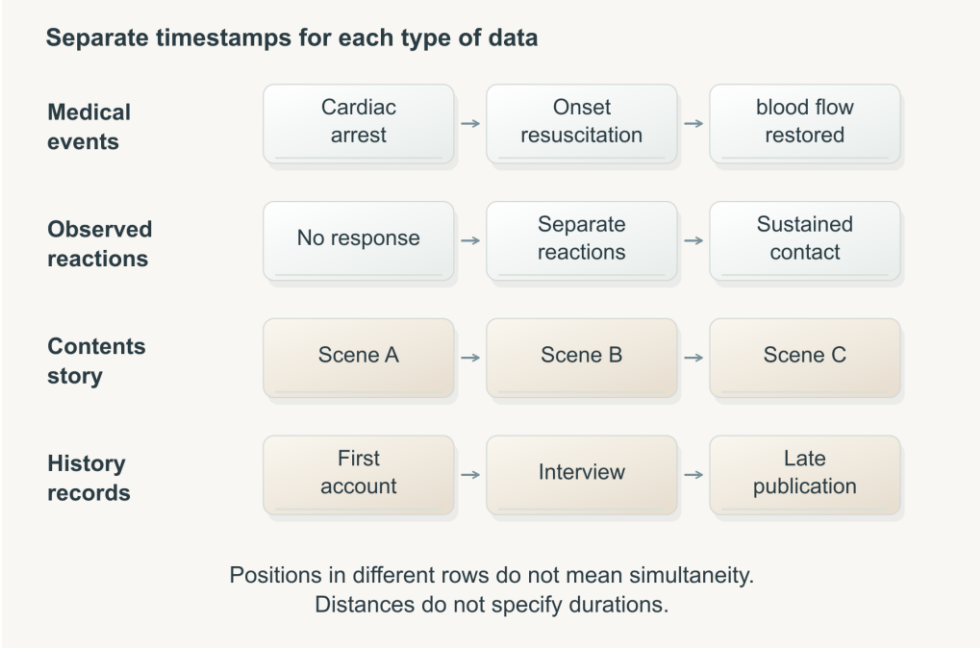


Figure 3. Four timelines. Medical events, human reactions, narrated scenes, and recording history require separate time references. The scheme is conditional; numerical durations are not specified.

What do prospective studies provide?

A prospective study is set up before the stories of interest are available. It allows you to pre-define participants, questions, and screening methods. Its advantage is that the future outcome does not decide who should be included in the sample. But the word “prospective” does not by itself guarantee that every story is recorded immediately, every physiological measure is preserved, and every participant passes the prescribed test.

In the first AWARE project, 2060 cases of cardiac arrest were reported. The initial interview was completed by 140 survivors, the next stage was completed by 101. These are different denominators: the number of medical events cannot be used as the number of people who reported the experience in detail. The article also describes one case, the information of which was able to be compared with resuscitation events; the content of this test will have to be returned to when discussing out-of-body perception. [3]

In AWARE II, of the 567 cases of in-hospital cardiac arrest, 53 individuals survived, 28 completed the interview, and 11 reported memories or perceptions that the authors associated with possible consciousness. Various categories are identified among the descriptions, including six reports of transcendental death experiences. The categories partially overlapped. These numbers cannot be added together as if each represents a separate person. No one identified the hidden image; the article also reports one auditory stimulus recognition among 28 interviewees. Such an answer does not in itself establish an out-of-body method of receiving information. [4]

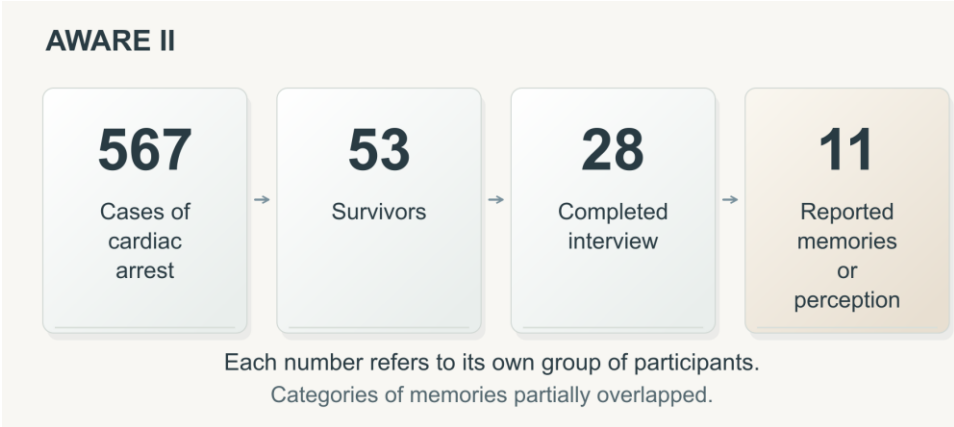


Figure 4. AWARE II Member Groups. The original cases, survivors, interviewees and those reporting memories form different groups. There was some overlap between the categories of experiences in the study. [4]

Every reduction in the sample changes the information available. If a person has died, an interview is impossible. If they survive but cannot participate, their subjective experience remains unknown. If they agree to an interview but remember nothing, the researcher obtains a particular survey result. The proportion of accounts among interviewees therefore characterizes this accessible group. Extending that figure to everyone who was dying introduces additional assumptions that must be stated.

This is especially important for the phase map. A long story is easier to divide into stages than a fragment of one feeling. But a preference for detailed stories can make transitions more natural at the selection level. Research benefits from both short messages and stories without light, meetings or life reviews. They show where the intended sequence ends, changes direction, or doesn't begin at all.

Experiencing and accessing memories

The person's state at the time of the event and his ability to later talk about it represent two research questions. A positive response in an interview proves the presence of a story at the time of the conversation. More work is required to determine when its contents originated. A negative response indicates that no available story could be obtained. There remains a space between these results that cannot be filled by mere assumptions about how memory works.

In a study by Sanders and colleagues, 12 of 260 patients undergoing general anesthesia followed a command by moving a specially isolated hand. Yet none of the 253 postoperative interviews revealed explicit memories of events during the operation. The abstract does not allow each patient who responded during the procedure to be confidently linked to a subsequent interview. Nevertheless, it clearly distinguishes a behavioral response at the time of the event from a later report of memory. [5]

A different result was obtained in a study by Mauduit et al after aortic surgery: none of the 101 patients reported memories of a period of non-response. In 67, the operation included hypothermic circulatory arrest. This is data on the specific conditions of the operation and the subsequent survey. They do not allow the absence of memory to be equated with a measured zero subjective duration. [6]

What limits a null result?

The null result allows us to ask a more precise question: How often would the procedure identify available memory under these conditions? Let's look at a separate mathematical example based on the size of a group of 101 people. Assuming the observations are independent and the probability of a positive report is the same, the absence of such reports gives a one-sided exact binomial upper bound of about 2.9 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent. The calculation has the form $p_{max} = 1 - 0.05^{(1/101)}$. This is an additional calculation of this book, and not a statistical estimate stated by the authors of the study. [6]

The margin refers to the probability of obtaining a report from a given procedure. This probability depends on the occurrence of the experience, the retention of available memory, and the ability to report it during questioning. Without a separate assessment of these links, the number 2.9 percent cannot be used as a limit on the frequency of any experience. The distinction is suggested by the following experience: simultaneously examine the quality of subsequent memory access and the recording of subjective content, while keeping medical conditions comparable.

There is an important consequence here for the study of personality continuation. Emptiness in a story is not the same as a story about emptiness. In the first case, the person cannot communicate anything. In the second, he describes the experience of the absence of objects, darkness, or a feeling of non-existence. The second option already contains a certain phenomenology, that is, a characteristic of how the state was experienced. Combining

these options would eliminate the distinction between missing data and the distinctive content of experience.

Prolonged hospitalization should be treated with equal caution. In a prospective study by Rousseau et al, among 126 long-stay intensive care unit survivors, 19 reached the accepted threshold for near-death experience. The authors were unable to determine at what point in treatment the experience occurred. The time spent in the department therefore does not determine the duration of the described scenes. [7]

What remains measurable

A clinical trial does not have to immediately address the issue of postmortem existence to be meaningful. It can establish how often stories are received under certain conditions, what features are combined in them, and what external events can be compared with memories. It can also detect its own boundary: an area for which there is no record, answer, or reliable time stamp.

For subsequent analysis, it is more convenient to save several parallel lines. The first one contains medical events. The second shows observable human reactions. On the third is the sequence he talks about. The fourth is the interviews themselves and subsequent changes to the story. Matches between lines become the result of verification. They cannot be obtained in advance by placing everything unknown into one convenient interval.

This way of reading leaves room for the unexpected. If a detail is truly established in an early story and independently coincides with an event, it should be explored even when there is no ready explanation. But missing data must also remain missing. Research integrity applies in both cases: maintaining an inconvenient observation and rejecting a convenient addition require the same discipline.

The proposed path begins here at the observable border. There is a body, a medical situation and a later testimony. Further, the story can take the observer to the ceiling, to the light, or to an unfamiliar space. To move with him, you must first understand what the feeling of moving itself means and what kind of object, according to the person, has changed its location.

Part II The Proposed Path

Chapter 4
Separation from the Body

Where is the observer

The out-of-body experience seems especially compelling because it relates to the very condition of observation. The person reports that not just the object in front of him has changed, but the position of the one who sees. The body can become part of the surrounding scene: it is located below, to the side or at a distance, while the point of presence remains where what is happening is perceived. This formulation describes the meaning of the message for now. The question of the physical movement of consciousness has yet to be raised separately.

A few differences are sufficient for an accurate reading. Seeing an image of your own body and feeling outside of it are different characteristics. These may be accompanied by the impression of movement, lightness, lack of weight, or a new bodily form. There is also a separate question about belonging: whether the visible body is perceived as one's own or whether it appears to be someone else's. A story containing only one of these characteristics should not be supplemented with the others to fit the known plot.



Figure 5. The body and the experienced point of observation. One conditional room is shown from the position of a lying person and from above. The author's illustration distinguishes between the visible body and the position from which the scene is perceived.

A mental example is possible. A person imagines a photograph of himself from the outside and understands perfectly well that he is looking at an image. It does not follow from this that his experienced location was transferred to the shooting point. Conversely, one can report one's displacement in space without describing the visible double at all. The word “exit” brings these options together faster than research can distinguish between them.

A change in perspective also does not mean the disappearance of self-awareness. Self-recognition, interest, surprise, and decision-making may be maintained within the story. But the message “I understood what was happening” does not reveal all these properties. It is useful to ask what exactly the person understood at that moment, and what he concluded later. The meaning of the experience may be quite clear to the narrator, although the sequence of its comprehension remains unknown.

A perspective that can be changed

In 2002, Blanke et al described a patient with epilepsy in whom stimulation of the right angular gyrus repeatedly produced sensations of looking down at the legs and lower torso. There was also lightness and the impression of being above the bed. When attention and limb position changed, bodily illusions changed. These episodes did not constitute her usual attacks; the stimulation area differed from the identified epileptic focus. [8]

In a study by Ehrsson 2007, healthy volunteers saw their own back through displays from the position of cameras located behind them. Coordinated visual events and touch enhanced the sensation of being in this new position. When the perceived body was threatened, skin conductance, a physiological indicator of response, changed. Comparison with inconsistent conditions allowed us to examine the influence of the organization of sensory signals. Information about the environment came through cameras and eyes. [9]

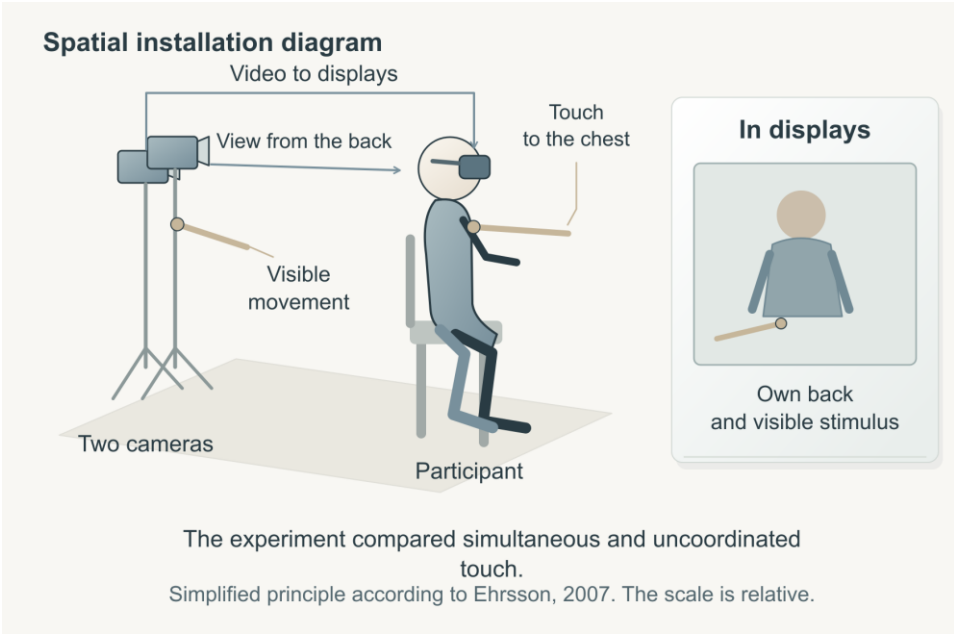


Figure 6. Experimental change in perspective. A simplified diagram of Ehrsson's study shows camera images and the matching of visual events to touch. Information about the environment comes through the normal visual channel. [9]

Such results are important for determining the subject of the dispute. The experienced location of the self is susceptible to experimental change. Therefore, immediate certainty about where an observer is is not itself an independent measurement of his physical position. This is a general conclusion about the verification method: spatial experience and an external source of information must be examined by different means.

This does not provide a ready-made explanation for any story. A specific experiment reproduces selected conditions and measures certain characteristics. Another story may contain additional elements that were missing. An informed comparison begins with a list of similarities, then moves on to the differences. The phrase “they called the same thing in the laboratory” too quickly erases this work if only one point of the description turned out to be the same.

Causal intervention is especially valuable where it helps to separate properties that are usually combined in ordinary experience. It is possible to study whether perspective changes when biographical memory is maintained, whether the sense of belonging depends on movement, and how threat to the body is related to the experienced position of the self. In such a study, the question of consciousness becomes more precise: instead of a single indivisible "I", characteristics are considered that can be distinguished in messages and compared with conditions.

When another one appears

Separation from the usual bodily position is sometimes discussed next to the feeling of someone else's presence. These topics are linked by the question of the source of action. A person feels a touch or movement and perceives it as his own or as coming from someone else. For a map of meetings this is essential: the feeling that someone is nearby may arise before a discernible image and before an explanation of who the person present is.

Blanke et al., in work 2014, combined observations of neurological patients with experiments in healthy participants. In the robotic setup, the mismatch between the hand movement and the touch on the back increased the feeling of another person nearby. The authors investigated precisely such presence and associated bodily impressions. The experience did not establish the identity of the deceased, did not verify the message of the guide, and did not reproduce the entire afterlife. [10]

To analyze a story, it suggests a sequence of questions. First, you should find out what was given directly: a feeling of proximity, a silhouette, a voice, a face, or an action addressed to a person. Then - how recognition arose. It could be related to appearance, to the content of the message, or to immediate confidence without discernible signs. These options are not interchangeable, although later they can be expressed by the same phrase about meeting a relative.

The last level is information. Even if presence has a known possible mechanism, the claim of unknown information obtained requires its own verification. Conversely, the accuracy of individual information does not automatically establish all the properties of the person to whom it is attributed. Separation allows you to work with each question without forcing one result to immediately answer for the origin of the image, its identity and the structure of the world in which it appeared.

What does it mean to see

The word “see” seems simple until research begins to clarify its content. In a story, it can mean a colorful scene with a point of view, instant knowledge of the location of objects, an image without the usual visual perspective, or the belief that the entire event was available. The distinctions are important both for describing qualia and for testing a possible information channel.

Ring and Cooper in 1997 published an interview with 31 a blind participant who reported near-death or other out-of-body experiences. The authors separately discussed the ambiguity of visual language: “seeing” could convey a combination of spatial knowledge and other impressions. In the case of Nancy, it was possible to interview a witness, but his story also contained the usual auditory channel: he addressed the patient by name. The study offered an unusual interpretation, but the published information did not turn each episode into a controlled test of vision without eyes. [11]

A useful principle that does not depend on the attitude towards such stories is that the knowledge being tested should be described separately from the intended method of obtaining it. If a person correctly identified someone present, you need to know what distinguishable signs he reported before confirmation. If you named an object, accuracy, location and the ability to find out about it in advance or later are important. Even the correct answer may have several sources, and the task of verification is to gradually distinguish between them.

This requires careful attention to the language of the narrator himself. The researcher should not turn an unusual sensation into an ordinary picture just because the picture is more convenient to retell. At the same time, the vague “I knew everything” cannot be considered exact knowledge of specific objects without additional information. A verifiable part receives weight due to its certainty, recording time and independence of comparison.

External Event and Narrative Accuracy

In the case detailed by the authors of AWARE I, 57, a year-old patient, described resuscitation information, which the authors compared with medical records and the operation of an automatic defibrillator. They reconstructed the temporary connection within approximately a few minutes. There was no individual EEG for this episode, and there was no hidden visual target in the room. Therefore, the published test refers to recognizable resuscitation events, but not to the reading of a pre-hidden image. [3]

Similar attention to the origin of information is required in the famous story of the surgeon Lloyd Rudy. Rivas and Smit's publication is based on his later video story and the assistant's confirmation after viewing the recording. The patient, they said, described details of the operating room, including a monitor with notes. The patient's identity and medical record could not be restored; sequence accuracy remained limited. The monitor in this case refers to the terrestrial operating room. It cannot be included in the list of techniques of the supposed afterlife. [12]

Such messages remain valid as cases requiring explanation within the limits of available documentation. But the strength of evidence and the number of repetitions of history are not the same. Repeated retellings do not restore lost medical documentation. Confirmation after reading a story is different from an independently stored description. These circumstances determine how narrow the scope of explanation can become, not how much credit the storyteller deserves.

A specially prepared test also requires a real chance to get a verifiable answer. In Holden and Joesten's hospital project with hidden cards, no usable test interviews were obtained during the study period. The individual reported experience occurred outside the equipped room. This outcome shows the difficulties of the organization, but does not represent a series of unsuccessful attempts to read the card. [13]

At the end of this phase, two independent results remain. The first concerns how a person experiences his own position and physicality. The second is what information about the environment can be verified. Their connection is possible only based on data from a specific case. A further story may change the entire setting: instead of a room with people and equipment, there will be a passage, light, or a greeter. The test will then move from recognizable earthly events to the structure of the narrative itself about another environment.

Chapter 5
Passage and Encounter

Movement without the usual space

After changing the attitude towards the body, the story can continue with movement. The word “transition” is convenient as long as it does not make one imagine a mandatory road that everyone must take. The transition has a direction, but sometimes there is no visible path. There is a feeling of approaching, but there is no distance. The scene may change immediately, and the impression of movement may appear only in an attempt to connect two remembered states.

The woman who published the story under the name Mrs. Grace, describes a luminous curved pipe, lightness and a pleasant sound that was perceived without the participation of the ears. She continues to think and intentionally move forward. There are no creatures or voices encountered in this story. The story relates to the experience after surgery; The publication does not present a reliably established cardiac arrest. [14]

This description allows us to separate the experience of movement from the encounter. The plot itself does not need an accompanying person here: the direction has already been set. If you add the greeter on the basis that he appears in other stories, the original evidence will change. The reconstructed map must allow for a path without a guide and a meeting without a previous path.



Figure 7. Transition without a guide. Artistic reconstruction of the glowing curved passage from the story Mrs. Grace. This description retains the intentional movement and feeling of lightness. [14]

No less significant is the difference between the direction of movement and the method of its implementation. In a normal walk, the body moves relative to a stable environment. In an unusual experience, a person may feel movement even though the walls are not moving closer or further away. The opposite formulation is also possible: everything around changes, but the observer himself remains in place. The general meaning of the transition is preserved, but the intended geometry of space turns out to be different.

Therefore, the tunnel should be described as a specific form of experience, and the transition as a broader relationship between states. This distinction will come in handy later, when a corridor, a river, an instant change of scene and the disappearance of the previous environment are encountered in the same scheme. They can serve a similar narrative function without becoming the same object.

The other becomes distinguishable

In Peter N's story, an invisible presence appears nearby. His answer is perceived both externally and internally. The transition is accompanied by darkness, movement and an increasing rhythmic sound, which Peter compares to a helicopter. Later, distinguishable light individualities arise and the message is transmitted as a thought along with a feeling. Unusual colors and star-like creatures form the environment in which he recognizes the source of the message, although he experiences it within himself. Peter emphasizes that listing episodes one after another does not convey the experience well. The feeling of unity, he said, did not destroy the individual personality. This is a late recording of the experience following a car accident. [15]

Here the interlocutor differs not by his face, clothes or place in the room. The main feature is the origin of the message: it is experienced as coming from another. For the person himself, this can be as certain as the voice of an acquaintance on the telephone. For an outside researcher, two separate questions remain: how confidence in someone else's authorship arose and what information was obtained.

The word "telepathy" is often used as a shorthand name for such communication. But in describing experience it combines several possibilities. One is similar to inner speech, the other is like direct understanding of the meaning, the third includes the feelings of the interlocutor. Before discussing the mechanism, it is necessary to restore the form: were there words, language, intonation, images, the opportunity to ask again. If these differences are lost, speaking in ordinary phrases and suddenly silent understanding will be one sign.

Sharon T remembers the scene of her own bedroom after the drowning and two white figures. One seems to her like Jesus, but she does not examine the face in detail. The figures are silent; love and support are felt. She does not report the instruction conveyed. The light in the window gradually intensifies, as if at dawn. Sharon

associates the opening of the eyes of the figure lying in bed with her awakening by the pool. The external location of the event is different from the space of the experienced scene. [16]



Figure 8. Silent accompaniment. Two light figures and increasing light in the bedroom based on a story by Sharon T. The setting is conveyed conventionally; she associates the external event with drowning at the pool. [16]

Silent accompaniment is also a social meeting. A person can feel accepted without words and perceive those present as helpers in their role. However, the role does not yet establish a biography. “I was helped,” “it was an acquaintance,” and “it was a certain deceased person” contain different statements, each of which requires its own verification. Careful reading preserves this difference even where the narrator himself combines them with one word.

Recognition and names

Recognizing a face and experiencing familiarity are different events. In the first case, you can name the features of appearance, compare a photograph, describe the changes. In the second, a

person can be sure of intimacy without having either a name or an earthly history of relationships. Such recognition is especially important for the feeling of returning home: a place becomes one's own through one's relationship to it, even if it cannot be described as a previously seen address.

One must also distinguish between recognition during the experience and a name given later. Val C describes an unusual figure, tentatively comparing it to an alien. She allows the influence of a book read previously on the character's appearance. In the scene itself, Val is more interested in the interlocutor than in the proposed show of life, and asks permission to look into his eyes. Earthly friends and the school play remain accessible to her memory and influence her desire to return. She connects the explanation that everyone is shown images in accordance with expectations with the subsequent reading of other stories. [17]

Such a source is especially useful because it contains its own attempt to separate the event and its explanation. The assumption of personal appearance may be reasonable, but it does not become part of the original scene just because it explains it well. To compare stories, you need to preserve both layers: how the creature seemed then and what people began to think about it later.

This also applies to the word “God”. It can denote a character, an unseen source of guidance, a universal unity, or the meaning a person attaches to an experience. These uses cannot be completely reduced to one image. The statement about an encounter with God becomes clearer if we find out what exactly made this encounter divine in the eyes of the narrator: the spoken name, knowledge of intentions, a feeling of unconditional acceptance or absolute confidence.

Lisa R talks about a dark room with light outside its boundaries, a group of short creatures in colored clothes and the main interlocutor who interrupts communication several times, as if consulting with someone. For her, stern faces are combined with kind eyes. Another participant calls the invisible interlocutor God.

Lisa herself does not see him. According to her description, the creatures understand her thoughts, but only partially allow her into their own thoughts. Curiosity turns to fear as she remembers the accident. She wants to stay, but returning turns out to be mandatory. [18]

In this story, membership in the hierarchy is established through the characters' messages and observation of their behavior. The experience does not provide equal access to all participants. This is already a meaningful limitation of the hypothesis about the universal transparency of consciousness: the very possibility of direct communication does not mean that everyone knows everything about everyone.

Meeting without guaranteed consolation

The conductor is interesting not only in appearance. He may have the right to direct, permit, refuse, wait for an answer, or make decisions for another. Therefore, emotional impression and power distribution should be considered separately. A friendly interlocutor may leave little freedom. A strict figure can be perceived as reliable. The feeling of love does not in itself answer the question of whether it is possible to refuse the proposed path.

It is here that the individual “I” manifests itself especially clearly. A question, an objection, an attempt to postpone a decision or hide a thought requires distinguishing between one's own desires and the intentions of another. If a person describes such a scene, his self is not completely dissolved, even when there is a sense of unity and common connection around him. It is important to find out whether unity and resistance belong to the same moment or to different parts of the memory.

Tina W, in a later account of childhood electrical trauma, describes calm observation of her own body and white light, but denies the tunnel, creatures, life review, omniscience, and time change. Her story ends with the return of bodily sensations. She

does not report a separate world in which the meeting would take place. [19]

Sammy E, while describing the domestic crisis, also directly denies the presence of other beings and voices. In an unusual state, he remembers his own life and contemplates returning. There is no normal vision or hearing, and the body is felt distantly, like a memory. Several lines of thought are experienced simultaneously, but remain his own. The main content consists of reflections; light, tunnel and omniscience are absent. The medical duration of the dangerous condition has not been independently established. [20]

These accounts make room for an important thread: that an experience can be rich in self-awareness and contain little or no external world. The absence of a guide here does not seem like a missing character that needs to be restored. It changes the nature of the event. The person is left alone with his understanding of the situation, and the decision is not formalized as a conversation.

The encounter thus represents a possible extension of experience beyond the self. Sometimes the other is only present, sometimes he gets to know each other, sometimes he explains the rules. In the following scenes, a more complex organization appears: space for communication, access to the past, activities and restrictions. It is there that a single meeting turns into a representation of the whole world.

Chapter 6
Life Review and the Surrounding World

The past becomes accessible

An ordinary memory highlights a part of the past. It leaves other events and other people's experiences outside of attention. Therefore, the story of a complete overview of life is striking primarily in its supposed completeness of access. A person reports that he can simultaneously see his own action, understand its motive, and feel the consequences for another. If we accept such a description as an accurate statement of the subjective state, the very position of the observer changes: he turns out to be both a participant in the event and a witness to it from several sides.

Katherine L describes the pavilion and the screen as if placed on a table. While reviewing, she could pause the show, zoom in on episodes, and look at different perspectives, including the people affected by her actions. The conversation with the creatures also concerned missed opportunities to act. She attributes the experience to complications from the surgery, but does not know whether she suffered cardiac arrest. [21]

In this description, the screen gives access to events, and moral meaning arises from a change in point of view. These functions can be separated. Even if you remove the visual device, the idea of joint perception of the action and its consequences will remain. If you remove someone else's perspective, you are left with a sequence of scenes similar to viewing your own biography. The two review options may have very different meanings to the storyteller.



Figure 9. Review of life and change of perspective. Artistic reconstruction based on a story by Catherine L: the screen is positioned as if on a table. The episode on the screen and the details of the pavilion are depicted conventionally. [21]

Nor can the review be considered a court in advance. What is important to the court is the charge, the rule, the assessor and the decision. A change in understanding is sufficient for self-esteem. Both processes can be present in a conversation: a person himself experiences regret and at the same time hears the assessment of another. The study must show this configuration without replacing it with a familiar religious or psychological term.

Odell H recalls a large screen with several scenes, one of which was enlarged for discussion. The rest remained on the edges. He calls his interlocutor Jesus. The story contains fear of condemnation, comments about actions and shared laughter. An attempt to embellish the motive for the offense, according to Odell, was immediately detected; good actions were also discussed. The tunnel appears after viewing. The page features two versions of the same near-drowning story; this is one witness, not two confirmations of the order of events. [22]

This order is useful precisely because of its specificity. If you place any tunnel at the beginning of a universal route, the original sequence will disappear. A comparison in meaning must leave open the possibility that similar elements are connected differently. While the order is not stable, the map represents a network of possible transitions between scenes.

The screen as a subject and as a comparison

The screen image requires particularly careful reading. The words “life passed like a movie” can indicate the rapid emergence of memories. Mention of the surface, frame, position relative to the person and method of control makes the description more specific. Another case is a modern comparison chosen years later to convey an unusual experience. These options are different even when the narrator uses the same word.

Riette W describes a white room, a man in white clothes, and several flat touch screens. One shows life options, the other gives additional information. She feels she has to choose, even though she doesn't like either option. As a result, preference is given to the family for whom she feels sympathy. After the decision, a passage through the door follows, and the continuation is not remembered. She dates the recalled episode to around the age of four; its interpretation as pre-birth is contained in an adult publication. White clothing is not called a medical gown. [23]

Here an exact substantive similarity appears with some of the review stories: information can be viewed through a separate surface. But the content is directed in the opposite direction of time. In one case the past is shown, in the other a possible future. The way in which choice or knowledge is represented appears to be common, but its intended purpose varies.

Shelley P also describes a room and several screens, but emphasizes in detail the simultaneous display of three lives. One option disappears after the refusal gesture, the other continues to play. The escort convinces her to accept a life for which she does

not at first desire. Later on the same page an amphitheater with many souls appears, but this is a separate adult vision. Combining the selection room and the amphitheater into one continuous scene would distort the source. [24]

This distinction is important for a spatial map. Two situations described by one person are not necessarily adjacent and do not even necessarily belong to the same class of conditions. To consider them parts of a single place, a connection indicated by the narrator himself is needed. The richness of the overall text can give the impression of detailed geography, whereas the source material consists of discrete episodes.

The similarity becomes more meaningful if several features coincide: the position of the screen, the method of selecting an image, the ability to stop, a separate accompanying person. However, even this combination does not determine the origin of the experience. She asks a comparative question. To answer, one would have to take into account the time the record appeared, the cultural images available to the person, and the circumstances of the memory. The mere convenience of a device for explaining complex information does not confirm the existence of a common external technology.

Human artifacts have an important property: they immediately suggest a method of action. A door allows passage, a book invites reading, a queue implies waiting for access. In interpreting the story, this clue may be too strong. Having seen the similarity of a device, the researcher runs the risk of attributing to it a function that the witness did not mention at all.

Rooms and books in the environment description

George C reports a long white hallway and rooms to the right. He is accompanied by a tall, light creature. There are other creatures in the rooms and a starry darkness that contrasts with the corridor. When he asks if the others will go with him, the attendant replies that they are not ready yet. George feels small, and compares his

companion's attitude to his father's. He does not remember the end of the journey and birth. Does not describe any treatment in the rooms. [25]

Such a space can easily be called a hospital, educational institution or distribution center. But each name will add information. For a hospital, signs of treatment are needed, for a school - for training, for distribution - for assigning a place. The corridor and waiting alone do not choose between these versions. Sometimes the most accurate formulation remains descriptive: a room in which others are present while the person being followed moves on.

Brian D talks about the desks, books and index cards that accompany learning. His guide appears as an almost faceless golden creature, communicates mentally and maintains a connection even when he ceases to be visible. There is a sense of familiarity about him, although there is no recognizable face; communication allows for humor. Brian experiences himself as a broader being for whom the earthly personality represents one of the forms. He asks questions and directs attention, and at the end other light assistants appear. This is a self-report with anecdotal medical and temporal assessments. [26]

In such a scene, knowledge receives its usual organization. The desk separates the student's place, the book stores the contents, the card index promises search. Together they create the impression of working with information. To understand the subjective world, it is important to find out whether one was actually required to read, search and remember, or whether the meaning became immediately available. In the first case, consistent activity is maintained. In the second, surrounding objects rather provide access, the mechanism of which is not described.

This raises the question of causality within a scene. If a person receives an answer because he opened the book, the object participates in the action. If he already knows the answer and notices the book at the same time, the connection is weaker. If the book is added later as an explanation, we are talking about the

language of memory. All three options may be sincere, but they provide different information about the structure of the experienced world.

White coats and earthly professions

One of the most literal accounts of men in white coats is published by Stephen I. He directly calls the event the dream of an adult and reports that he worked as a nurse for many years. The dream contains a gurney, figures taken for doctors, photographs and screen images associated with the supposed past personality. The publication does not contain independent confirmation of this identity. [27]

This example shows why subject similarity should be preserved along with context. Robes are indeed present. But their detection in a dream does not create another medically determined near-death event. Professional familiarity with the hospital environment is also included in the source description, although it does not in itself explain every detail of the dream.



Figure 10. White clothes and medical gowns. On the left is Rietta W's stated prenatal memory of wearing white clothing; on the right are medical images in Stephen I's adult dream. The diptych reconstructs two different messages. [23] [27]

Different relationships between experience and habitual image are possible. A person can perceive familiar things as real objects in another world. He can understand them as a specially selected representation. Finally, the image can only become understandable with subsequent retelling. To choose between these possibilities, it is necessary to know what exactly the witness is claiming. It is impossible for him to decide whether the room he saw was a literal room or a form of communication.

A world that depends on attention

Catherine L adds that the shape of the buildings became more defined when she paid attention to them; similarly the human form of her own presence could appear. In her presentation, the degree of objectivity depended on concentration. Later she remained in the gardens, but could not go deeper into the city. She decided to call one interlocutor Jesus, although she then described him more

as a representative of divine intention. The communication itself gave her strength; The content of the acquired knowledge turned out to be inaccessible after returning. [21]

Such a world is difficult to map in the usual way. The map assumes that the object persists while the observer is looking in a different direction. If the story itself links form to attention, another question arises: what exactly remains stable when it changes? Perhaps a place, a function, a connection to another being, or just a feeling of recognition. The answer determines what can be considered a repeating unit.



Figure 11. Objectivity and attention. Conditional visualization of Katherine L's message that shapes became more defined with concentration. The change in detail conveys the described experience. [21]

Kami R reports presences without clear visible figures, a sense of a common whole, and a joint decision to continue living in the same body. It does not directly assign a specific order and place to all experience. Her story includes several hospital and subsequent conditions that cannot be combined into one medical minute. [28]

Considering the subject and almost non-subject stories together shows the range of possible descriptions. At one edge are buildings, surfaces and activities. On the other are relationships, meanings and decisions that do not require a detailed setting. The general function may still be preserved, but the familiar geography becomes less defined.

Further comparison should maintain this difference. Experiencing an organized world does not always mean describing an unchanging environment. For a storyteller, the most sustainable things can be connections with others, a sense of belonging, and an understanding of what is happening. It is these properties that become especially noticeable when movement stops and abiding occurs.

Chapter 7
Staying, Resting, and Recovering

After arrival

The word "stay" denotes an important change in the story. The transition is completed, the initial position is understood, and the next event has not yet occurred. Between these points, it becomes possible to live within the experienced space: talk, observe, choose an activity, or simply remain calm. It is here that the question arises whether there is a gap in the stories that cannot be reduced to the preparation of a new birth.

Maureen K describes, after the initial meeting, a separate group of helpers engaged in her restoration. She remembers soft warm blankets, music with no apparent source, and understanding needs without question. The assistants work in silence. First she asks if she really died and if what is happening is real; fear gives way to calm. Maureen doesn't sense anyone else nearby. She directly says that she had no reference point for determining the past tense. Then other attendants appear. The story was published as a self-report of a dangerous condition, without accompanying medical documentation. [29]

In this case, the restoration is highlighted by the content of the scene itself. It differs from instant relief: there is the experience of a state that requires care, there is help and its completion. Even if there is no calendar duration, the sequence remains. At first help is needed, then the situation changes. Such a transition can be described without calculating how many Earth minutes it corresponds to.



Figure 12. Care after arrival. Soft blankets and silent help from a story by Maureen K. Artistic reconstruction conveys restoration and calm; The duration is not specified in the source. [29]

Relief, rest and recovery are not entirely the same. Relief means that the painful sensation has decreased. Rest implies the absence of the need to act. Restoration implies the return of some ability or state. The story may contain all this, but may be limited to one sign. A feeling of warmth does not indicate treatment, and the absence of fatigue does not prove that there was a period of rest before it.

Opportunity to stay

James in the OBERF archive outlines the supposed previous death, white area of recovery and subsequent training. In the grove, he is offered to return to Earth to the teacher or stay with the mentor; he chooses to stay. Long conversations, a bench overlooking the valley and a teacher with a white beard remain in my memory. James feels like the place was made just for him; the mentor confirms this with a reservation. The readiness to be born arises gradually. It is preceded by resistance, then farewell to a loved one and the meeting of a future brother. James emphasizes that he is unable to

measure the duration of the recovery: the expression “minutes or years” conveys uncertainty. He explains the mention of God through existence and the Universe. This is an adult publication with a stated memory from childhood, with no established previous biography or early documentation. [30]

Within such a story, the gap has its own content. It involves a relationship and interest that cannot be described as an instant sorting of the arrival. Moreover, the choice to remain in a specific situation does not determine the right to remain indefinitely. The text shows one decision and a subsequent change of heart. Turning this episode into a universal rule of freedom would add information that the story itself does not provide.



Figure 13. Opportunity to stay. A bench overlooking the valley and a conversation with a mentor based on James' story. Artistic reconstruction conveys a separate episode of stay, the duration of which is unknown. [30]

For comparison purposes, it is particularly useful to distinguish between opportunity and preference. A person may want to stay and find it impossible. May be able to stay but want to continue. May change desire as communication progresses. Then the reason for the transition lies in a change in the state of the individual, and

not in the expiration of a set period. These options create different patterns of return, although at the level of a short retelling they all sound like “he was sent back.”

The gap has another property: it can be valued in itself. If it is interesting in conversations, relationships or exploration of the environment, its meaning is not limited to the future life. This must be taken into account when discussing the learning hypothesis. You can learn for the sake of preparing for a task, for the sake of understanding, or for the sake of participating in communication itself. To choose a specific meaning, you need to know the content of the message, and not just the presence of a mentor.

Peace that you want to preserve

Angela E describes, after a supposed previous death, fatigue, comfort from familiar beings, and a desire to withdraw from communication. Resentment towards her former family and interest in her fate remain, but those accompanying her do not allow continued observation, so as not to cause pain. She is allowed additional rest. Later, she refuses to choose her parents, and the choice, according to her, is made for her. The sensory environment of this interval is almost not described. The focus is on safety, delay and changing the degree of participation in the decision. There is no early independent record of the hypothesized childhood memory. [31]

This example allows us to see that the absence of a detailed landscape does not make the story psychologically empty. The internal state can be described better than space. It is known what a person avoids, what he asks for when he begins to interact. For a stay map, this is sometimes more useful than the number of doors and rooms. Restoration of personality can be depicted through the return of readiness to enter into relationships.

However, care and management are not mutually exclusive here. The assistant can respect the request for a delay and later make a decision for the mentee. To a person, this may appear reasonable,

forced, or unfair. To understand the role of the accompanying people, it is necessary to reconstruct the narrator's attitude towards their actions. One word “loving” does not describe the entire order of interaction.

Jennifer B remembers a dark but safe and familiar state that seemed very lasting to her. I don't want to leave. In the free story there is an opportunity to stay, while the questionnaire responses speak of the need to leave. Favorite presence is associated with this decision. Sounds and smells are not described, and a sense of urgency appears around the moment of leaving. [32]

It is better to preserve this discrepancy. Possible explanations include a change of desire, different meanings of “can,” an imprecise question, or later organization of the memory. Choosing one explanation requires further grounds. Until those are available, the source shows a tension between experienced freedom and experienced necessity. This tension is an element in its own right that would disappear in an overly smooth edit.

Activities and relationships

Diana G describes a light landscape, crystalline buildings and a library. There is no separate sun, the light seems to come from the surroundings. The creatures she encounters, in her impression, are engaged in art and creation. A familiar presence shows her around and discusses returning. Diana initially resists, then agrees. The story involves a near-drowning; she herself does not claim that her clinical death was established. [33]

Such a scene is important as a question of activity. If the other life is described only as the absence of earthly pain, it is difficult to understand what fills its positive content. Creating, communicating, exploring, and helping introduce goals that go beyond ending suffering. They also assume differences between the participants: some know how, some learn, some want to see the result.



Figure 14. Activities and creativity. Two separate scenes based on the story by Diana G: on the left is the library, on the right is creative activity. Architecture and specific activities are depicted conventionally. [33]

This raises an internal question about the world model itself. If all knowledge is immediately available, in what sense is learning required? If every desire is immediately fulfilled, what does long-term work mean? These questions do not refute the story. They help clarify whether the claimed completeness of knowledge relates to a specific topic, a summary state, or a general later interpretation.

Several logically different options can be imagined. Knowledge of the result is available, but the process itself has not yet been experienced. The idea is clear, but you need to master the method of action. The feelings of others are known, but the freedom to enter into relationships with them is maintained. These are possible distinctions for analysis, not information about an existing post-mortem arrangement. A specific story should provide a reason to choose one of them.

Communication also requires some variability. A conversation in which nothing new can be learned and attitudes cannot be changed

has little resemblance to learning in the usual sense. Therefore, it is important to clarify whether a person is surprised, asks questions, or does not understand everything at first. It is details like these that show the internal dynamics of being, even if the narrator himself talks about the absence of time.

Staying without items

Carey T, in an adult recording, recalls a childhood dream of emptiness, where ordinary objects, a body, thoughts and emotions were absent. Curiosity then set in, followed by a scene of early infancy with a cat and the pain of a scratch. The memory itself is framed as a dream of a four-year-old child, ending with awakening. He develops the connection between emptiness and pre-existence in the following explanation. The birth transition and accompanying persons are not described in this fragment. [34]

This story is far from the image of a populated vacation spot. But he also poses the question of abiding: is it possible to describe a state of no activity and still consider it as one's past? It is especially important here not to confuse the initial lack of thought with later curiosity. There is already a boundary between them, beyond which a direction towards something else appears.

A comparison of such options makes it possible to distinguish between the richness of content and the preservation of selfhood. For one narrator, the "I" is supported by the memory of loved ones, for another - by the ability to choose, for a third - by a simple sense of presence. If defining a person in advance requires a rich biography, the latter option will fall out of consideration. If we consider any experience of presence as a person, the connection with a specific earthly life will remain unclear.

Thus, the stay is described in several independent directions: pleasantness of the state, availability of activities, relationships with others, degree of freedom and readiness for change. None of them replace the others. You can be safe and not want communication; one can experience joy and at the same time obey the decision; you can safely remain without a busy external scene.

The question of a new life appears when maintaining the current state is no longer enough or when another participant reports the need for a transition. The next chapter is devoted specifically to this border. It especially shows the difference between offer, agreement, concession, assignment and what the narrator later calls his own choice.

Chapter 8
Choosing to Return

What exactly do they choose?

The choice of rebirth seems a natural conclusion to the story of being between lives. However, the word "choice" hides several different actions. You can agree to continue existing in the body, choose a family, prefer some circumstances over others, or just make a decision that can no longer be changed. In each case, some degree of participation is retained, but the amount of freedom is different.

Adam K recalls being offered two options: being tall and having a possible sports career without his twin, or living with his twin brother and having a close bond with him. He chooses a relationship with his brother. The scene does not describe in detail the place, body or appearance of the interlocutor. The preceding death and the actual birth are also not shown. A story about attempts to explain this to his mother in early childhood was published later. [35]

In such a story, one can confidently identify an object of preference: the relationship outweighs the other possibility. But the ability to choose between two lives does not mean the opportunity not to be born. The right to refuse the entire offer is a separate feature. If it is not described, it should be left unknown and not automatically assumed to be present or absent.

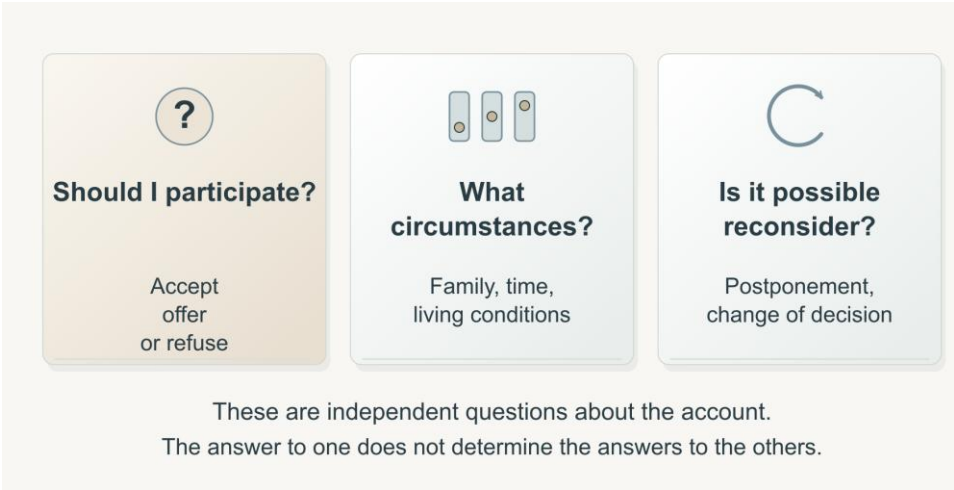


Figure 15. What exactly does choice mean? The analytical framework distinguishes between participation in a decision, choice of circumstances and possibility of revision. The freedom to choose one parameter does not determine the scope of other freedoms.

Michelle N, in an adult entry, describes dreams and flashes of memories that she says have accompanied her since childhood and dated back to before birth. She talks about a quiet dark space, another little girl and an invisible interlocutor who asks about wishes for the next life. The initial desire for wealth and popularity is replaced by a choice of life lessons. Then both find themselves in something like an ancient boat without water; white light completes the memory. There is no scene of birth or previous death. [36]

Here, the learning motive is present within the recalled conversation. Moreover, from one such choice it is impossible to establish the purpose of all incarnations. It is only possible to compare what is considered desirable: position in society, relationships, experience, help or the acquisition of a certain quality. Even if the external organization of the scenes differs, the objects of preference provide material for meaningful comparison.

Consent may vary

Christian Sandberg describes the long delay after a painful life, the handler's repeated questions about readiness and subsequent consent. In another episode, he recalls training for accepting limitations, loosely calling it a simulation. The guide first assures that there is no rush, but before a specific entrance there is an urgency given earthly time. Beings, which Sandberg conventionally calls technicians, participate in the preparation of forgetting and ask for final consent. Their medical gowns are not described. He also offers a bar graph of internal states as a rough comparison, rather than a literally observed device. Memories, he said, returned in adulthood through meditation. [37]

At first glance, freedom from time and the requirement to hurry contradict each other. But the story may refer to them as different solutions. One can choose to participate indefinitely, whereas the chosen opportunity has a limited window. These are logically compatible provisions. The verification question begins next: what allows us to establish the existence of such a window and tie it to an earthly event?

This distinction helps to understand consent as a process. Initial curiosity is not the final decision. Fear can lead to procrastination. Familiarity with perceived limitations may change intention. Therefore, not only the last remark and the birth that took place are significant, but also the path along which the person came to agreement.

Consent has conditions. Did the person understand the consequences clearly enough? Could you stop the preparation? Have alternatives been proposed? These questions do not require the transfer of earthly law to a supposed other world. They make it possible to clarify the meaning of the word “voluntarily” in the evidence itself. Without specification, it is easy to call any event that was preceded by at least one positive feeling voluntary.

Obligation and limits of refusal

In another prenatal story, Jennifer describes loving guides and the belief that she must return until the task is completed. She asks to keep the memory so she can cope better. Then a separate force appears, which she attributes to erasing memories, and resistance begins. Jennifer herself considers the words about the “last time” ambiguous: it could be the last chance or something else. She does not report a meeting with God. [38]

Here, support and coercion refer to different participants. Neither a coherent system of government nor a conflict of independent authorities can be immediately deduced from this. Such a conclusion would require the described interaction between them. So far, the story gives, first of all, the difference in the experienced roles: some help, others hinder, and still others allow passage.

Something else is more significant. The idea of a mandatory task can be combined with uncertainty about its content. Then the person experiences responsibility, but does not have a clear condition for completion. This is a difficult question for the learning hypothesis: what is the measure of success when memory for a task is limited? The story may offer a moral answer, but the mechanism for verifying the result itself requires a separate description.

Alex P remembers a painful previous death and the inability to choose the next circumstance due to fear of repetition. The time for choice, he feels, is ending, and he enters the body without a final preference. He does not remember specific past biographies, does not know the future, and cannot name the purpose of his current life. Family information about his birth is given as a subsequent comparison. [39]

This story changes the emotional center of the intended choice. Instead of a calm comparison of possibilities, a decision appears under pressure. It is impossible to explain anxiety in advance by insufficient development of the soul, a special lesson or erroneous

perception: the source does not establish such information. Fear is part of the story and should remain visible alongside the more comforting versions.

Return to your old life

A separate branch is formed by decisions to return to the same body. They have a different subject. A person does not choose an unknown family or biography, but correlates his own desire with existing relationships. The mere fact of returning to consciousness does not allow us to determine whether the decision caused physiological recovery or whether the decision became part of the experience of this recovery.

Ursula K, in a later account of a child's dangerous condition, describes the hospital's observation and mother's sympathy. She decides to return after considering the consequences of leaving for her. The tunnel, another world, the dead and the review of life directly denies. Medical circumstances and hospital observation have not been independently verified. [40]

The relationship motive here is comparable to the choice of intimacy in prenatal stories. However, the coincidence of motive does not combine two events into one physiological or metaphysical procedure. Continuing the same biography and starting another biography require different evidence. The only thing that can be called common is the experience of a reason to stay connected with people.

This distinction is also important for the words “it’s too early.” They may mean that the present life is not completed. It does not follow from them that after its completion the next one will necessarily be chosen. A story that ends with a return after resuscitation leaves the further cycle beyond observation. It can only be filled with another source, clearly noting the change of source.

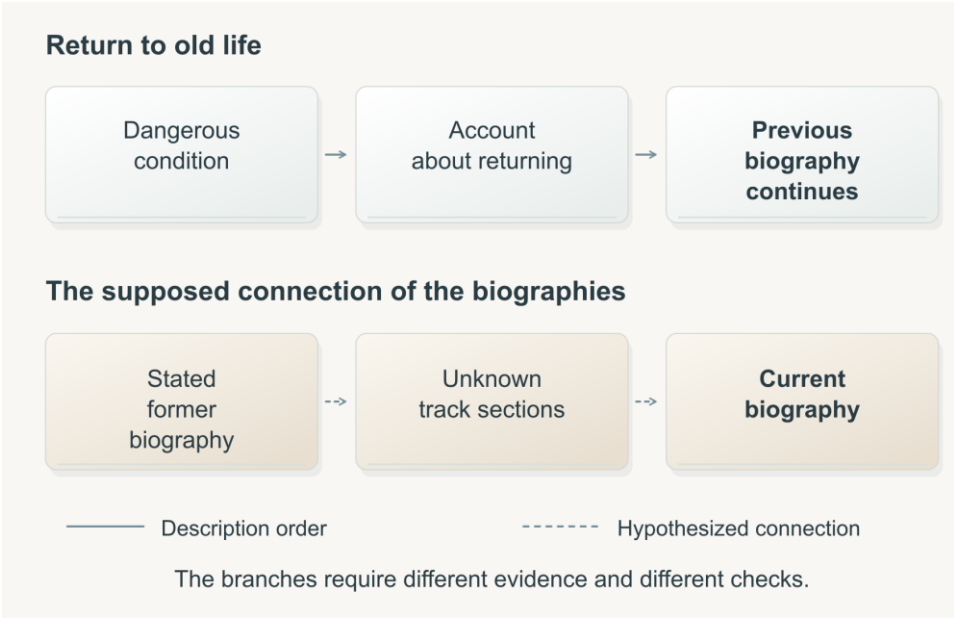


Figure 16. Two branches of return. The scheme separates the continuation of the previous biography and the intended connection with the new biography. Each branch requires its own evidence and methods of verification.

Plan and open future

The expected choice of circumstances raises the question of freedom in subsequent life. Several models are possible here. In one, only the initial conditions are defined. In the other, probable difficulties are selected, but the answers to them remain open. In the third, everything that happens is recorded in advance. These models cannot be discreetly changed depending on explanatory convenience: they make different demands on prediction and memory.

If we are talking about probable branches, a discrepancy with a specific event may be acceptable, but then the prediction becomes more difficult to test. If an immutable scenario is asserted, the prediction error becomes more important. The more freely a hypothesis adapts to any outcome, the less that outcome communicates about its correctness.

The moment of recording must also be taken into account. The explanation of the present difficulty in terms of an allegedly previous choice appears after the difficulty is already known. It can be a meaningful way of thinking about life. But the evidentiary task of prediction requires a text that existed before the event and contained fairly definite information. Late recognition of fate does not replace such a text.

Particularly careful handling requires the assumption that suffering has been chosen in advance. Sharing your own consent does not give you access to another person's consent. Moreover, it does not establish that the disease, violence or disaster was necessary for the victim. Even in a hypothetical model of pre-choice, there remains earthly responsibility for harm caused and the opportunity to reduce suffering.

The learning motive also does not automatically make every challenge rewarding. To talk about learning, we need to identify what has changed and how that change is maintained. If the result is completely forgotten, another carrier of the acquired quality is assumed. If a tendency or way of relating to others persists, it is necessary to show how to distinguish it from the characteristics of present life. This is already a question of the continuity of personality, to which we have to return.

Thus, stories make it possible to highlight desire, offer, constraint, consent and purpose as different elements. In some cases, they form a clear solution. In others, conflict or unfinished choices remain. The subsequent birth completes the narrative, but does not remove its ambiguities. To understand what exactly crossed this border, one should turn to the memory of the beginning of life.

Chapter 9
Memory Before Birth

Where does present life begin?

A memory of a state before birth need not include another earthly biography. A person may describe choosing a mother, waiting, cramped conditions in the womb, or their first sensations after birth, without saying anything about a preceding death. For that person, this begins their own account. For the researcher, it leaves open whether another life existed in the proposed sequence.

It makes sense to distinguish four subjects of memory: the previous biography, the interval between biographies, the intrauterine state and birth. They can connect, but the presence of one does not establish the others. The mention of a mother's voice, for example, does not yet contain a statement about family choice. The family selection scene may be completed long before any remembered bodily sensation.

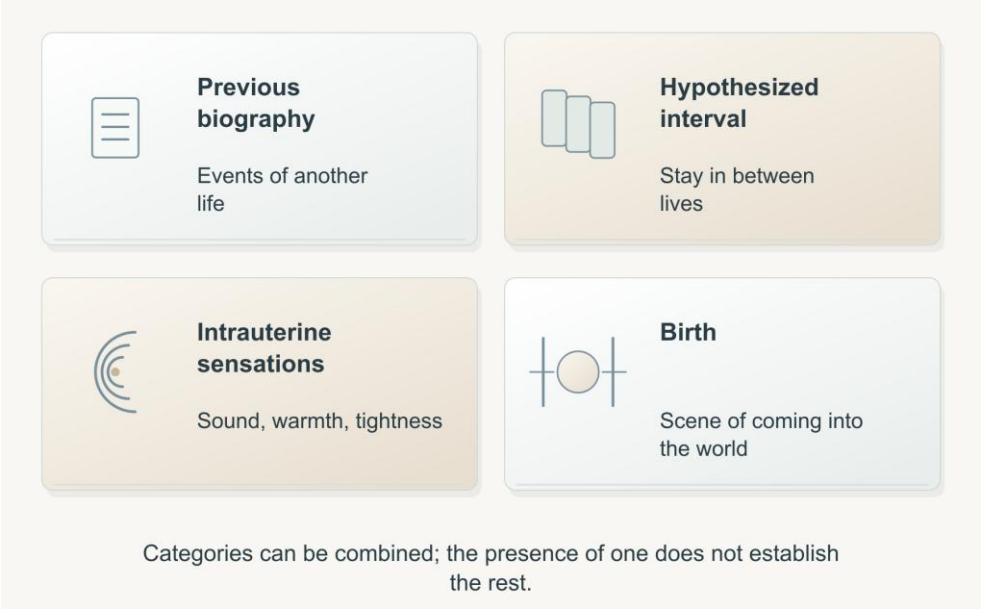


Figure 17. Four items of memories. Previous biography, estimated interval, intrauterine state and birth are presented separately. These categories can be combined, but the presence of one does not establish the others.

Okado and Ikegawa's work examines 21 a child who reported a supposed between-life state. Interviews were conducted for 13, and maternal questionnaires were used for eight. Many did not talk about their past lives. One mother's report concerns a girl who said she saw her mother in a wedding dress with a dog. The comparison is given through the memory of the mother, who claimed that the child did not see the photograph of the event; an independent recording of the child's words before matching is not presented. [41]

Such a scene has an external support - an event in the parent's biography - but the assumed position of the observer remains a separate statement. Even if the dress and the dog are confirmed, it is necessary to find out what the child might have seen in the photograph or heard in the family. Confirmation of object detail and confirmation of perception before birth require different tests.

The physical world returns

May describes choosing to live with the support of a presence whose face is not retained in memory. The future life is shown through a kind of hole, which it does not directly call a screen. White light is perceived as almost tangible and sensual. This is followed by warmth, density and closeness, harsh light at birth and the mother's voice. In her later story, the thinking subject experiences himself as wiser than the infant body allows him to express, and is irritated by the lack of language. She strives for her mother, whose connection she already considers familiar. There is no early recording of this memory. [42]

This description connects two scales of selfhood. One is related to the body and its limitations: it is difficult to move, you cannot speak, the sensations are unusual. The other is represented as the already existing ability to understand and evaluate. If we take the story at the level of its internal structure, the birth becomes a limitation of the means of expression with the supposed preservation of the observer.



Figure 18. Return of bodily sensations. Warmth and closeness, harsh light and the closeness of the mother in May's late story. An artistic composition conveys a sequence of sensations; the details of the scene are relative. [42]

But there remains a distance between the experienced sensation and its adult name. The words "womb", "choice", "consent", "inhalation" may be late concepts for an early image. This does not change the image, but it changes the question. It is necessary to find out what exactly a person remembers as immediate content, and what he infers from sequence, family explanations and current knowledge.

Descriptions of misunderstandings are especially useful. If the narrator claims that at a certain moment he did not know where he was, one cannot at the same time attribute to him full knowledge of what was happening. Later scene recognition must retain its timestamp. Otherwise, the incomplete early fragment will quietly turn into a detailed record of the entire birth process.

Bill D remembers the wait, the line, and the strong formless presence gathering those ready for the body. There is no normal sight or sound; the position and feelings of others are perceived directly. He tries to preserve his memory and describes his own

strategic plan. Next to a powerful figure, he feels his own smallness, although he continues to reason and act. Then there are tremors, a difficult first breath and cold scales. However, he says that he did not understand the intrauterine position and does not know the earlier past. Even the author himself does not consider rebirth to be the only necessary conclusion. [43]

In such a case, the preservation of intention is more important than the assumed completeness of knowledge. Personality is recognized through the goal: to continue to remember. But the memory erasure claim goes one step further. A memory may contain a gap, but the gap itself does not indicate why the memory became unavailable. Additional information is needed to draw conclusions about the external erasure mechanism. You cannot automatically explain to them every missing part of the route.

Transition, stay and return in children's stories

Sharma and Tucker identified three groups of reports in their analysis of 35 Burmese cases: transition after death, relatively stable stay, and return associated with parental choice or conception. The sources included earthly places, responsibilities, comfort and discomfort, self-direction to family, and help from an elder being. In one description, other creatures threw objects at the narrator; in another, the person's needs were provided for and the stay felt pleasant. The authors specifically cautioned that the Burmese portion of the database was incompletely coded and was partly selected for the presence of interlife memories; it cannot be considered representative for prevalence calculations. [44]

The significance of this scheme is that it extracts a sequence from a particular class of records. But the three wide nodes do not yet tell us which states are required in each case. “Stay” can combine a detailed description of a place and a short phrase about being near a tree. With the same code, the completeness of information differs.

The same applies to external and internal signs. A known place does not give duration. A message about an elder being does not establish a method of communication. The reference to the next family does not explain whether it was chosen freely. If the original researcher did not ask these questions, missing information cannot be recovered from similarities to other stories alone.

Matlock and Giesler-Petersen compared 85 of published cases and noted that few covered more than three of the five stages considered. Their material contains differences between terrestrial and nonterrestrial environments in Asian and Western descriptions. At the same time, the authors accept in advance the reincarnation explanation for some cases; this premise is not the result of the comparison itself. [45]

The combined sequence may appear continuous even when no source traverses it completely. In this case, the map shows the compatibility of individual fragments with the general hypothesis. To move to a statement about a single route, you need to additionally confirm that the same states are actually connected, and the gaps between them are not filled with assumptions.

Child's voice and recording history

Tomo, in Ocado's study, distinguishes between his current self and his former British boy. He describes the transition through an image likened to a slide or escalator, and talks about choosing a strong body. A significant part of the information is preserved in the mother’s diary; by the research interviews, many details had already disappeared. The hypothesized former identity could not be found. The image of my former mother and the desire to meet her persisted longer than some of the details. Therefore, the decrease in available information did not coincide with the immediate disappearance of the emotional connection. [46]

In this case, the diary allows you to see the story over time. It shows which questions were asked and which answers came first. Even in the absence of an established biography, such a document

is useful for studying changes in memory. It also limits the possibilities of later reconstruction: a known earlier statement cannot be quietly replaced by a more convenient version.

The age of the child in itself does not make the story free from influences, but it does not explain its content either. A specific history of access to information is required: family conversations, trips, images, questions from adults. At the same time, the researcher must maintain the possibility of error in both directions. Acknowledging a match too quickly leaves regular channels unchecked; explaining too quickly by fantasy stops the search for a possible source of knowledge.

Stevenson and Samararatne's publication on Thusit Silva includes a report that before his birth he observed his present father at a place of pilgrimage. There were early lists for biographical statements, but it is not entirely clear which stage of the record the interlife phrase specifically belongs to. The article also retains erroneous information. [47]

This example shows why the document date is important at the individual statement level. Having an early record of an entire case does not mean that every detail later published was there from the beginning. History can reinforce some conclusions and leave others without independent support. The general reputation of the case should not replace the examination of a specific fragment.

What should pass through the border

If we assume the continuation of personality, it is necessary to determine what exactly continues. Possibly biographical information, characteristic preferences, attitudes, skills, a sense of familiarity, or the ability to experience. These signs differ in the way they are checked. The name of the former place can be compared with the document. The feeling of a former home requires first describing how it differs from the current confidence in the origin of the memory.

Continuity of self-awareness also has several meanings. One is the absence of an experienced break. The other is the belief that the same subject existed before the break. The third is saving certain information after it. The presence of the third does not automatically imply the first: a person can know information about the past without remembering the transition at all. Therefore, “remembering a past life” and “remembering the whole path” should remain different categories.

The birth itself in this part of the book serves as the boundary of the story, and not a predetermined point of attachment of consciousness. Some sources place the choice earlier than conception, others describe the entry into the body later, and still others begin with the bodily scene. It is possible to bring them to one date only at the cost of additional assumptions. Each case should have its own sequence.

After birth, another story begins - the story of the story of the experience. A language appears, questions arise, and accessible concepts change. At some point, information is recorded for the first time. There may be years between the hypothesized event and the document. The next part of the book is devoted to what can be restored through this distance: earthly time, personal stability and the testimonies of other people.

Part III Time and the Continuity of Personal Identity

Chapter 10
Two Kinds of Time

Event calendar

The question of time arises almost immediately after the story of the return. If a person says that he left the body and ended up in another place, I want to know how long he stayed there. If the child considers himself to be a deceased person, another question arises: how much time separated the two lives. Both questions are understandable, but they refer to different quantities. The first concerns the experienced duration, the second concerns the interval between events in the earthly calendar. Additional information is needed to connect these quantities. The persuasiveness of the story alone is not enough to automatically make the two scales comparable.

The difference between the date of death of one person and the date of birth of another is calculated in the usual way. However, the meaning of the result depends on the assumptions. It must be accepted that it is the previous life that is established, that no other supposed existence is missing between the two biographies, and that the birth corresponds to the moment of transition that the narrator describes. If at least one condition is unknown, the resulting number retains its calendar meaning, but its interpretation as the duration of stay between lives remains conditional.

Even simple arithmetic has to be checked. Krishna Rawat's article on Shanti Devi lists the death of Lugdi 4 October 1925 and the birth of Shanti 11 December 1926. The author calls the period one year ten months and seven days. Based on the given dates, it turns out to be one year, two months and seven days, or 433 days.

This is an internal publishing error. The corrected subtraction does not turn the dates themselves into independently verified documents: the article retells the story, and the original death and birth certificates are not presented here. [48]

Such a discrepancy may seem minor compared to the unusualness of the whole story. But it is precisely from such numbers that ideas about the timing of return are then built. An accidental typo, a translation error, or the wrong month can change the expected pattern. Checking the time therefore begins with the mundane work: where each date comes from, in which document it appears, how accurately the day is known, and whether the table and the main text are consistent. Metaphysical interpretation does not cancel the requirements of the calendar.

Duration and order

Subjective time has several sides. A person may remember a sequence of events, feel a long wait, know within the experience that many years have passed, or retain only the impression of timelessness. These descriptions cannot be written in one column. Sequence answers the question of what happened before and after. The sense of duration tells how drawn out the event seemed to be. A statement about the number of years may be part of the content of the experience, although the sequential experience of these years is not remembered.

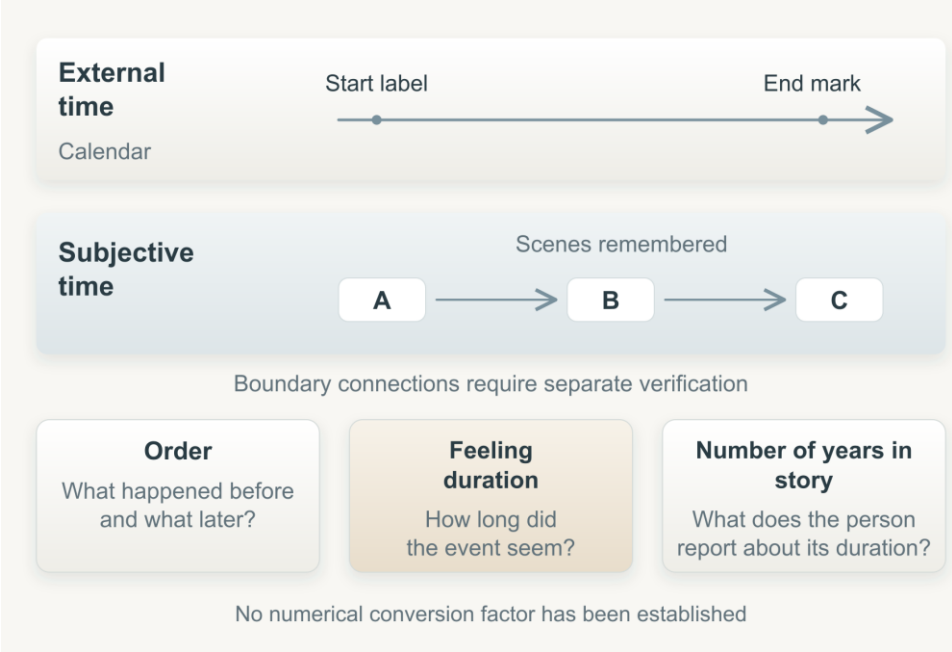


Figure 19. Calendar and subjective time. The schema maps external cues to scene order and a sense of duration. A subjective line has no set numerical scale.

In the publication of Rawat and Rivas, Shanti Devi, when asked about time, answers that there was no sensation of it and she cannot estimate the duration. Another passage calls the wait long. These formulations are compatible: the experience could have consistency and the emotional quality of expectation without numerical evaluation. However, the article combines materials from different years, including descriptions of hypnotic interviews, so they cannot be considered one recording made immediately after the event. [49]

The phrase about lack of time requires especially careful reading. It may indicate the absence of a clock, a loss of interest in duration, an inability to appreciate the interval after returning, or an experience of simultaneity. Each opportunity poses its own question. If a story contains a conversation, a decision, and a subsequent transition, there is already a distinction between states, even if the narrator considers the place timeless. This does not

refute the experience. It's just that the word "time" is used here in several senses, and they should be separated before building a physical model.

A mental example helps you see the difference. One person reports waiting at the door for a long time, but doesn't know how long. Another says that he immediately became aware of the past hundred years. The third recalls many individual days. In all three cases, a strong feeling of prolonged stay is possible. But only the third story contains the stated expanded sequence. Even there, the question remains how memory represents many days and whether their number can be established. To give all three the same length would be to lose the main difference between the stories.

External landmarks

In the descriptions of the supposed interval, earthly events are found: funerals, conversations of relatives, movement of people near the body. Such details can serve as temporary references if their provenance is verified. However, the landmark connects a specific fragment with the calendar. It does not automatically measure the entire subsequent scene. A recognizable funeral allows discussion of the position of the episode in relation to the funeral, but does not indicate the duration of further stay in the garden, darkness or unfamiliar room.

Purnima Ekanayake's study mentions a few days near the deceased body, followed by a transition. There is an obstacle to the calendar check: the table dates the death of 9 to April 1985, but the main text dates it to September of the same year. Birth is indicated as 24 on August 1987. The researcher also notes the lack of initial recording of utterances prior to the families' contact. Until the discrepancy is resolved, the exact interval is unsuitable for inferring the speed of subjective time. [50]

There is another possibility of error: a person could find out the time of the earthly event later. If, after returning, he read how long the resuscitation lasted, this knowledge could be included in the

subsequent story. Then the phrase "I was there for seven minutes" could mean "the doctors reported that seven minutes had passed." In this case, there is no subjective assessment. The researcher must preserve both formulations and their origins so that the medical interval does not begin to impersonate the internal clock.

It is useful to ask how exactly a person came to his assessment. Did he see a clock, count repeated actions, observe the cycle of day and night, hear a number from a character, or draw a conclusion after waking up? The answer does not determine the truth of the entire story, but it allows us to understand what value is generally proposed for comparison. Sometimes the most accurate result is to admit that the duration is unknown. Such a recording leaves room for further research and does not create false precision.

Missing links

Particularly difficult are cases in which a person reports several previous existences. Stevenson's description of Swarnlata includes Biya, who died in the year 1939, and Swarnlata, born 2 in March 1948. But the story includes another supposed life between them, Kamlesh, who could not be identified. The interval between two known dates cannot therefore be confidently considered as one stay between lives. [51]

In the same book, Jasbir's case is arranged differently: the supposed predecessor died approximately three and a half years after the birth of the child. The story connects the transition with the illness of the already living Jasbir, and the exact date of the illness has not been established. The date of birth of the body and the supposed change of identity here denote different events. A negative difference between birth and death does not become evidence of reverse time. [51]

There are also specially selected short intervals. Matlock reviewed 36 published cases in which the reported death preceded the birth by less than nine months. This sample allows for discussion of the relationships between the intended transition,

pregnancy, and birth. It does not characterize the frequency of short intervals among all messages and does not itself establish the moment of attachment to the body. [52]

From these examples follows an important amendment to the scheme itself. It may have several possible ending markers: conception, a certain point in pregnancy, birth, or a late change in self-identity. If a researcher pre-selects one label for all stories, he or she runs the risk of ending up with a pattern created by his or her own definition. You should first find out what event is being discussed in each case, and then compare only comparable intervals. The age of the first utterance and the date of its recording refer to the history of the message; without the narrator's specific approval, they cannot be considered the moment of the intended transition.

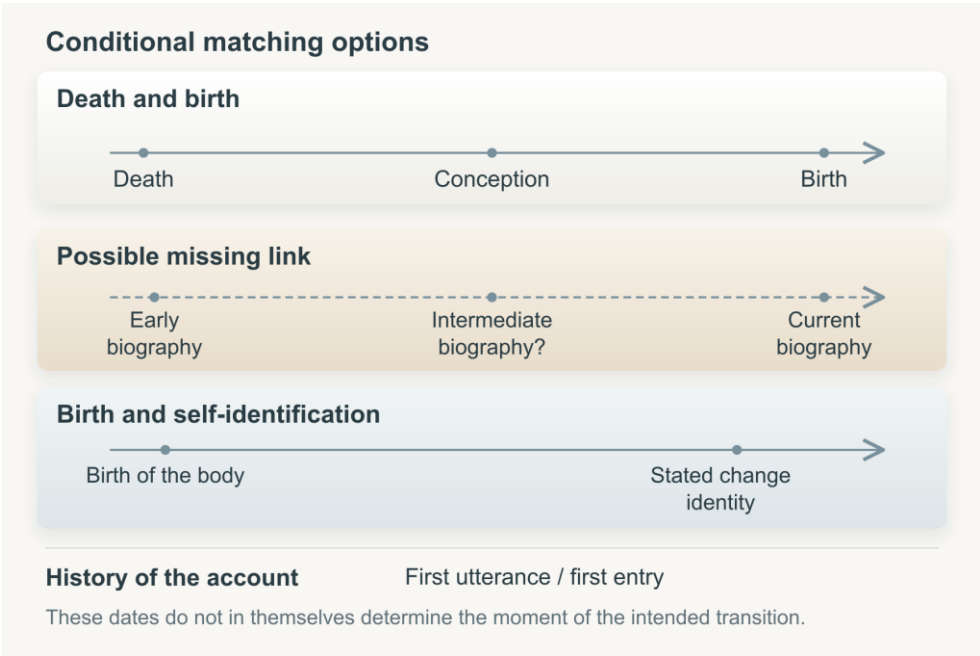


Figure 20. Interval boundaries. The conventional scheme separates conception, birth and the declared change of identity. The first entry relates to the message history; its date does not determine the moment of the supposed incarnation.

Comparison of two scales

For a full comparison, two intervals with the same boundaries are needed. The external interval must be tied to documented events. Internal - described by the survivor himself before he was told the external result. In addition, you need to know that the memory refers specifically to this period, and not to the state before or after it. These conditions are difficult, but they explain why individual medical minutes and stories about years cannot yet be added into a universal ratio.

As a mental example, let's say that two people independently described a long stay and the medical records show the same duration of non-response. Even such a coincidence leaves several options: they could estimate the same duration differently, form experiences in different parts of the observed period, or later give the experience a greater length. Sequence details and early records are needed to distinguish between variants. Simply dividing one number by another hides these forks.

One should also distinguish between the moment of experience and the moment of its restoration in memory. It may take years for a person to talk about a scene for the first time. This in itself does not establish either its later creation or its preservation in an unchanged form. A separate story arises: when the first certainty appeared, what exactly was remembered first, what information came later. Experience, biography, and narrative each have their own chronologies. Their connection constitutes the research problem.

Acknowledgment of these limitations does not render the issue of time contentless. On the contrary, it makes possible concrete results: a corrected date, the separation of a long wait from the knowledge of years, the identification of a missed life, the establishment of an early message. The heterogeneous evidence considered here does not allow us to derive a reliable general relationship between earthly and subjective duration. The next problem therefore concerns whose watches are being compared. If time connects two biographies, it is necessary to understand on what basis they are considered biographies of the same being.

Chapter 11
Who Continues to Live?

Body and perceived identity

The question of the continuation of life is often formulated as if the meaning of the word “continuation” is obvious. But a story about a cardiac arrest experience, a childhood memory of another family, and a sudden change in adult identity make different demands on the concept of personhood. In the first case, the person returns to his biography. In the second, a statement about another biography appears. In the third, the previous life of the body continues, but the story of who owns this body changes. A general theory should explain differences, not eliminate them with a single name.

Sumitra's case makes the problem particularly clear. According to the initial report, she was born around the year 1968. Shiva Tripathi died in May 1985. In July of the same year, after an unusual state, Sumitra began to identify herself with Shiva. There is no medical confirmation of Sumitra's death. The researchers began work after introducing the families; newspaper information about the death was previously available. The authors recognized the clue in one recognition and errors with photographs, although some of the other information was considered difficult to explain. [53]

The transition here cannot be described in one sentence about the new birth. According to the story, the attitude of a living person towards his own name, loved ones and past has changed. If we imagine a literal continuation of Shiva, the question arises about the fate of the former Sumitra. If we assume a psychological change in self-identification, it is necessary to explain its content and the knowledge associated with it. Both productions are meaningful, but each requires its own set of observations. The uncertainty does not disappear because an expressive term is chosen.

Even the word “death” in such a case requires separate verification. Relatives may describe immobility, a lack of noticeable breathing, or a belief that the person is dead. These reports reveal the perceptions of witnesses. Medical approval requires other data. Therefore, the chain “a person died, another soul took over his body” includes at least two hypotheses: about the state of the body and about the source of the new identity. The strong impression from the second part does not confirm the first.

Conviction, knowledge and identity

Three independent statements can be distinguished. A person perceives himself as a certain person. He provides information about the life of this person. There is an identity between him and the deceased, that is, we are talking about one continuing subject. The first statement relates to self-awareness, the second to information, and the third to the nature of personality. They are connected, but the transition from one to the next requires justification.

The story of Iris Farzadi shows why the stability of self-identity does not complete the test. The Hungarian girl began to imagine herself as the Spanish Lucia. Upon later research, the claimed Spanish family could not be found. The authors of the detailed publication differed in explanations: they considered possession, dissociation with cryptomnesia, and the possibility of leaving the issue unresolved. The durability of the unusual identity appeared to be compatible with the lack of a verified hypothesized biography. [54]

Cryptomnesia is a situation where previously learned content appears without recognition of its origin and can be perceived as its own new thought. Brown and Murphy examined this effect in tasks where participants inadvertently assigned the answers of others. [55] The term itself does not replace the establishment of a specific channel of information in a specific case. If the explanation involves a book read, a conversation overheard, or a previous acquaintance, it is advisable to provide reasons for such an

assumption. The link to a potential opportunity should remain a possibility, and the information path found should remain a verified circumstance.

The reverse error occurs when an unknown source of information is immediately declared evidence of personal continuation. Mental example: a person, without explicable access, accurately lists the facts of someone else's biography. Even if this condition is met, there remains a difference between receiving information and preserving the subject itself. The memory transfer hypothesis, the alternate mode of knowledge hypothesis, and the reincarnation hypothesis may all coincide in one prediction. They will have to be distinguished by additional consequences, and not by repeated presentation of the same facts.

This reasoning does not discount unusual information. It clarifies what issue it can solve. Testing knowledge can significantly narrow the range of explanations. Establishing identity also requires showing why the coincidence of information indicates the continuation of the experiencing “I”, and not just the coincidence of the contents of two minds. In a book about the possible path of the soul, this boundary is especially important: otherwise, biographical information begins to quietly carry out the work of an entire theory of consciousness.

New speech and old biography

Another strong motive is the appearance of speech that a person supposedly never studied. This communication is called xenoglossy. Before discussing its origins, it is necessary to determine what exactly is being demonstrated: a few words, memorized expressions, comprehension of questions, fluent speaking, or native-level proficiency in the language. Changing pronunciation and the ability to construct new sentences have different testing requirements. A listener who does not know the language can evaluate only part of these properties.

In a linguistic analysis of the case of Uttara and Sharada, Sarah Thomason showed discrepancies between assessments of Bengali speech. Possibilities of previous exposure to the language were considered; one specialist assessed the speech as modern and non-native. Such material requires caution in moving from impressive linguistic behavior to inferences about a particular historical figure. Thomason analyzed primarily the linguistic strength of the evidence, and it is within this framework that her conclusions should be read. [56]

Even a well-done language test addresses a limited issue. He is able to determine how freely a person understands and produces speech. The history of language acquisition is checked separately. The historical figure one considers oneself to be is another separate task. If you mix these levels, any unusual phrase begins to serve as evidence at once of language, memory, and a new carrier of consciousness. In contrast, sequential division allows us to notice at what stage the evidence actually becomes stronger.

The method of communication during the inspection also matters. If the evaluator knows the intended background, he can ask appropriate questions and interpret vague answers in her favor. Reverse bias is also possible, when an unusual answer is rejected because of a pre-accepted explanation. Separate recording of questions, answers, and evaluation criteria protects the study from both directions of error. What is important here is not the emotional state of the researcher, but the ability of another specialist to restore the progress of the test.

Several possible sequels

A simple model assumes a match between one deceased person and one new person. Stevenson discussed reports among the Igbo where one deceased person was believed to have incarnated several children. He noted the unequal strength of evidence and the familial interest in such attribution. In the same book, the claimed intermediate existence of Ma Tan Tan Aye in the body of an ox remained unverifiable. Such stories expand the set of hypotheses,

but do not establish either the division of personality or the transition between biological species. [57]

Logically, the hypothesis of several continuations is much more demanding than the hypothesis of one. You need to decide what exactly is being shared: memory, ability to experience, character traits, or all of the above. If two people have the same perceived past, do they maintain a common center of experience? Could their decisions diverge? At what point do they become separate entities? Without answers, the word "separation" denotes an image rather than a mechanism that can be compared with observations.

A mental example makes the difficulty clearer. Let's imagine two exact copies of one autobiographical memory. Each copy is confident in its past and recognizes itself as a continuation of the previous person. If they are in different places and have different new experiences, their current points of view will diverge. The presence of the same memory does not determine which of them is the former subject and whether a single answer is even applicable here. This is a philosophical problem that arises even before discussing specific stories of rebirth.



Figure 21. Same memory and different points of view. Mental example: two figures have the same autobiographical memory, but receive different new experiences. The coincidence of memories leaves the question of the identity of the subject open.

On the other hand, the absence of memories does not resolve the issue negatively. It is possible to define personal continuity through memory, but then cases of its loss will require additional conditions. You can lean on the body, but such a model will read stories about another body differently. One can assume a stable bearer of experience who does not depend on the available biography. Then you will have to explain by what observable signs he is recognized. Each definition has consequences and should be chosen openly.

How to make a difference explorable

Here a problem arises for future theory. Let the first model involve the transfer of information without the continuation of the previous subject, and the second - the continuation of the same subject. If both predict the same responses under any available conditions, additional biographical matches will make it impossible

to choose between them. This refers to the observational discernibility of models and does not mean that the philosophical question has already been resolved.

To take this further, each model needs its own law of connection between the intended host, memory, and behavior. It should specify different consequences: for example, restrictions on multiple simultaneous continuations or on the joint saving of a skill and a specific intention. Constraints cannot be chosen after experiencing an opportunity. First, a testable consequence is derived from the model device, then suitable data are searched for or collected. The book offers this path as a research challenge; There is no established way to directly measure the numerical identity of a subject.

Persistent Self

To analyze stories, it is useful to temporarily hold several personality components side by side. Is there still a sense of existence? Does a person recognize his earthly life? Does he remember relationships and obligations? Can he reflect on his own condition? Is there a sense of authorship of decisions? It is not necessary for all components to be changed at the same time. Therefore, the statement about the preservation of the “I” makes sense only in conjunction with an explanation of what exactly the narrator refers to this “I”.

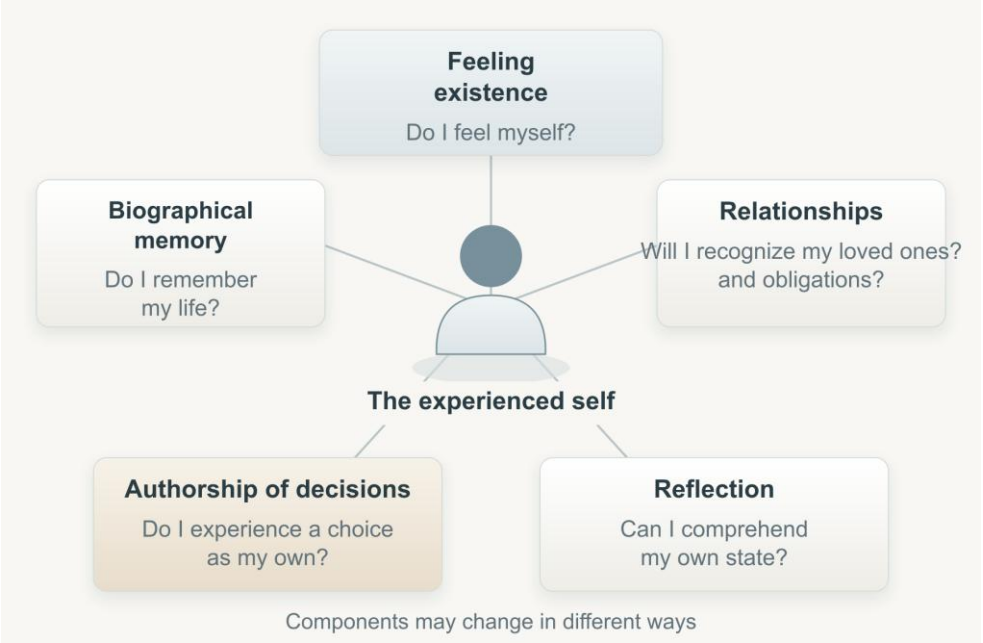


Figure 22. Components of the enduring self. The working framework distinguishes between sense of existence, biographical memory, relationships, authorship of decisions, and reflection. These signs can change in different ways.

Qualia, that is, the experienced quality of a state, give access to the other side of the question. A story about color, pain, peace, or touch reveals how an experience is remembered from within. It does not contain a ready answer about who is its bearer outside of the current biography. Self-awareness adds a relationship to experience: what is happening is recognized as one's own. Reflection allows us to evaluate this attitude. These differences should be preserved in the analysis so that the vividness of sensations does not replace the establishment of personal continuity.

In Jasbir's case, a particularly pressing question remains: what happened to Jasbir's former self if the subsequent identity is considered to have come from outside? Stevenson himself did not have a definite answer. The unknown place in such a story must remain visible, even if other details attract the researcher. [51]

Therefore, the map of the continuation of life should show not only transitions between places, but also changes in the one who recognizes himself. At one point we can talk about a former person with full memory, at another - about a subject without a name, at a third - about a new biography with separate fragments of the past. It is impossible to silently draw a line of identity between such states. It is this line that requires explanation. The next group of evidence complicates the task even more: the deceased is recognized by another person who continues to live.

Chapter 12
Encounters in Dreams and Shared Experiences

Whose side of the meeting is available

The story of meeting the deceased seems especially close to direct observation: a familiar person looks a certain way, says words, touches a hand, or reports that he is fine. But the researcher receives the testimony of a living participant. The presumed side of the deceased is accessible only through the content of this experience. This simple distinction allows us to preserve the details of the meeting without turning each of them into an independent report about the structure of another world.

In a survey of bereaved hospice caregivers, Wright et al found dream themes to include health and peace of the deceased, messages, shared memories, and illness and death. Dreams could be pleasant, unpleasant or mixed. The study looked at the mourners' experiences without measuring the subjective duration of the dream character's existence. [58]

For a map of a possible post-mortem path, this means that images cannot be placed into phases based only on sleep time. If a person saw a relative many years after the funeral, the gap in the dreamer’s life is known. It does not follow from it that the relative subjectively waited the same number of years or was in one place all this time. A specific date may also be present in a dream, but then you need to separately establish how it is known and what exactly it means.

The question also arises about the compatibility of such meetings with rebirth. Let's say, in a mental example, that one deceased person is credited with being reborn, and another person later reports sleeping with him. The contradiction will appear only

under the additional condition: the new birth completely excludes any previous manifestations. If this rule is not in the original hypothesis, the dream cannot be considered either a refutation or confirmation of rebirth. But you can see what new rule has to be added to connect the two stories.

The last days of a living man

Near-death dreams and visions of the patient himself represent a separate group. In the longitudinal study by Kerr et al, the analysis included 59 hospice patients; 52 have reported end-of-life dreams or visions. Among the images there were dead, living and everyday scenes. This number does not mean that all 52 saw the dead. Interviews were repeated and time was noted relative to the patient's subsequent death. [59]

In the home hospice study, Depner et al also found a variety of content: closeness and support, neutral or conflictual interactions, daily activities, transportation, and familiar images of popular culture. Messages from one participant may have been repeated. Therefore, the number of recorded experiences differs from the number of people, and the presence of an everyday scene does not automatically allocate it to a special posthumous category. [60]

In such observations, the ability to trace changes over time is especially valuable. But you need to understand what exactly is changing: the content of the dream, the frequency of messages, the patient’s condition, the ability to talk, or the researcher’s willingness to include the episode. If a person can no longer respond, his absence from new interviews does not equate to a lack of experience. Here the researcher faces a frontier of data availability that cannot be filled by guessing at what happened inside.

The same scene can also take on different emotional meanings. Seeing a deceased person you know does not mean experiencing relief. In Dam's Indian study, some participants were frightened by the very presence of a person they knew to be dead, even if his

image seemed benevolent. This makes it difficult to consider comfort as a necessary feature of such experiences. Differences in circumstances and samples do not allow the result to be explained by national or religious affiliation alone. [61]

Therefore, it is useful to describe content and reactions to it separately. Who showed up? What was happening? How did you feel during the meeting? How did the person evaluate her after waking up or returning to normal communication? These answers can diverge without contradiction. The meeting could be intimidating at first, but later felt supportive. Both points are important for the reconstruction of experience, since the later consoling meaning does not have to coincide with the initial state.



Figure 23. Who experiences the meeting. On the left is a dream after a loss, on the right is the patient's experience at the end of life. The author's composition separates the two contexts of the message and shows whose side of the experience is available for research.

News that hasn't arrived yet

Of greatest interest for verification are messages about a meeting before receiving news of death. Here an external fact appears that

can potentially be compared with the earlier record. However, a distinction must be made between unknown death, unknown illness and unknown danger. If a person has long known about the serious condition of a relative, the coincidence has different conditions than in the absence of any preliminary information. Both stories can be meaningful to the person experiencing them, but their research framework is different.

The Historical Case of Doris is published by William Barrett. According to the letters, the family hid the death of Vida's sister from the dying woman. However, doctor Florence Barrett left before Vida's episode; this part is described by others present. Measures to conceal news were reported by relatives and are not controlled isolation of information. Web transcription allows for the reconstruction of differences in evidence but does not replace original manuscripts and medical records. [62]

In Haraldsson's study, another narrator associated Margret's appearance with a clock that read 03:30. His wife later confirmed that in the morning he spoke about the meeting before the news of his death. This sequence is more interesting than a single later memory, but the early written record and independent confirmation of an exact match are not presented until the minute. [63]

A strong test must hold four elements together: the content of the first message, the time it was recorded, the information available before it, and the independently identified external event. If one element is missing, the others do not disappear, but the range of acceptable output is narrowed. Confirmation of death proves death. Confirmation of the morning story establishes the existence of the story before a certain news event. The matching of parts requires its own verification. The word “confirmed” without specifying the confirmed element creates more confidence than the data allows.

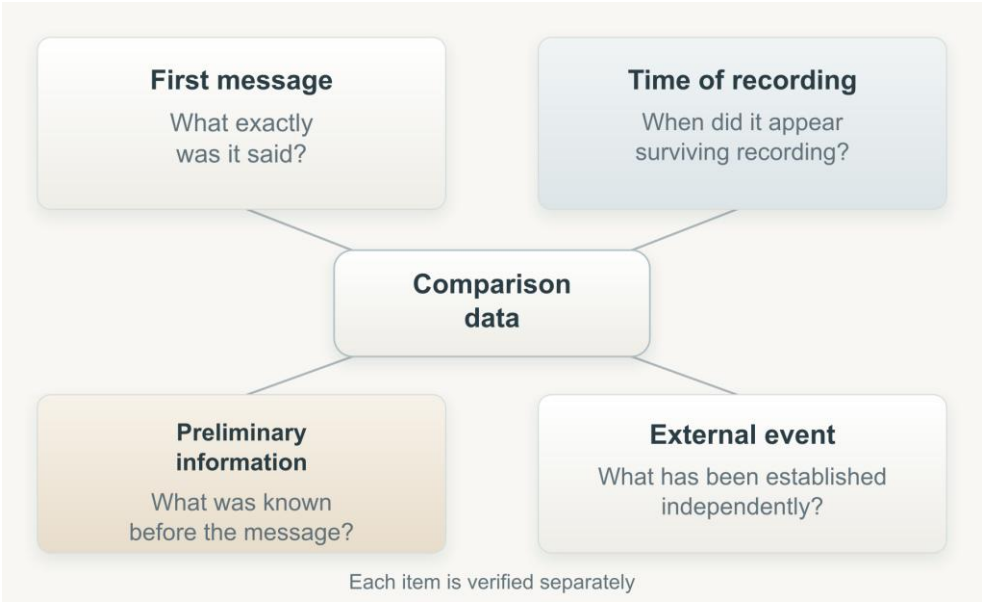


Figure 24. What exactly confirms the coincidence. The scheme combines four verification elements: first message, recording time, previously known information and an independently established event. Each element requires its own confirmation.

It is also necessary to take into account failed correspondences. Mental example: a person writes down many dreams about friends, but discusses only the one after which sad news comes. Even a very close match in such a story is evaluated differently than a single pre-formulated message. To compare observation with chance, you need to know the space of possibilities: how many dreams, people, suitable events and acceptable time intervals there were. This question is about the structure of the test, not the sincerity of the person.

Collaboration and independence

The name shared death experience may give the impression that two people were simultaneously observing the same world. In the Shared Crossing Research Initiative study 107, participants reported 164 experiences. The term included the feeling of being accompanied by one narrator to the dying person; two

independently recorded witnesses were not required for each episode. The two publications in this project use the same original sample, so they cannot be stacked as independent corpora. [64]

Tressoldi et al.'s cross-cultural survey included 121 individuals who reported 146 cases. The definition included experiences before, during, and after the death of another. In the available author's preprint, when covering multiple moments with the same person, priority was given to the "before" category. Therefore, the time distribution also depends on the decision of the encoder. The study does not represent a prospective medical examination of all matches. [65]

There are at least four degrees of compatibility. One person may feel close to the dying person. Several people may talk about the same incident. Their later stories may coincide after discussion. Finally, you can obtain separate records before exchanging information. These situations cannot be placed on the same level just because the word “together” is present in all of them. For checking the general source of information, the last option is especially significant.

Haraldsson was checking reports of second witnesses. Of 39 reported joint observations, 21 received late confirmation, 6 remained unclear, 3 - without recall or participation in confirmation; 9 witnesses were unavailable. These results show the value of follow-up testing but do not establish the independence of the original descriptions. [63]

The important thing here is not to demand the impossible from old stories, but to accurately understand their capabilities. A later interview may reveal a discrepancy, confirm the existence of an earlier conversation, or clarify the situation. It usually cannot recover a lost recording until witnesses communicate. If people immediately discussed what they saw, their subsequent agreement should be analyzed in conjunction with this fact. The independence of a witness's personality and the independence of his information are different properties.

The meaning of the encounter

Cultural interpretation can change the meaning of a dream. In Hinton et al.'s study among traumatized Cambodian refugees, persistent dreams of the dead could be understood as a sign of difficulty with rebirth. This is a clinical group with experience of mass violence; its characteristics cannot be transferred to all Buddhists or all mourners. [66]

Even research categories require verification. In Black et al.'s work, coder agreement was weaker when attributing a dream to a pleasant visit from the dead than when coding more specific physical expressions of affection. This means that an outwardly clear spiritual name may hide different decisions of appraisers. The closer the category is to the intended nature of the event, the more important it is to establish on what grounds it is assigned. [67]

For a person, an encounter can retain meaning regardless of whether the origin of the image is established. The emotional outcome and the transmission of external information refer to different issues. Both can be seriously explored without requiring consolation to prove the objectivity of the dream world or for uncertainty of origin to destroy the value of the experience. This approach allows one to talk about evidence without pre-judging a person's entire experience.

For the general map, a significant result remains. Dreams, near-death visions and stories of those accompanying them provide additional forms of meetings, recognition and communication. They expand the material for comparison, but do not become a direct record of the chronology of the deceased. Their separate position should be preserved: this is information about what the living experience when meeting the image of the deceased, and sometimes statements about receiving unknown information. The test of the second statement begins where the mere description of the brightness of the meeting ends.

Part IV Possible Explanations

Chapter 13
Consciousness, the Brain, and the Limits of Explanation

What is required from the mechanism

After becoming acquainted with unusual stories, there is a natural desire to get one explanation. It must combine leaving the body, clarity of thought, meeting, light, changing time and confidence in the reality of what is happening. However, we must first determine whether we are explaining each of these characteristics separately, their combination in a particular individual, or the origin of a common narrative route. Answering one question does not automatically complete the others.

In consciousness research, neural correlates are strictly understood to be the minimal neural mechanisms that are jointly sufficient for a particular conscious experience. A single EEG measure may be a candidate marker of these mechanisms; its statistical connection with the report does not yet establish the entire mechanism. [84] For a causal explanation, more is required: to show how a change in conditions affects the desired property of experience. Another step is to understand why this particular content occurs. A change in state, the appearance of a particular image, and the subsequent belief in its meaning may require different levels of analysis.

Let's imagine a hypothetical research situation. It is known that when given certain exposures, people are more likely to report an unusual bodily perspective. This is already a meaningful result. But he doesn't tell you why one person sees a hospital room, another describes movement in the dark, and a third doesn't remember

anything. To move from a general possibility to a specific story, data about additional conditions, sequence of events, and memory formation will be needed.

An explanation in terms of an external world or the continuation of consciousness should be treated in the same way. Merely assuming another level of reality does not explain why one person has access to one scene and another person to a different scene, or why information is retained in this particular form. Any substantive model must describe the conditions under which experience arises and identify observations that would contradict its expectations. Otherwise, it merely retells the account in more general terms.

Brain recording without story

A paper by Vicente et al. 2022 analyzed the EEG of a 87 year-old patient with severe brain damage and seizures. Absolute gamma power increased before cardiac arrest at a certain recording site, and decreased after it; the relative proportion of gamma activity had a different dynamics. The patient died. The assumption of a possible review of life arose during the interpretation of physiology, since he could not communicate the content of the experience. [68]

In 2023, Xu and colleagues studied recordings from four dying patients. Two showed increased gamma activity and changes in connectivity after ventilatory support was withdrawn. No patient survived to provide an account of that period. The authors themselves noted that the findings do not establish the presence of conscious processing and are also compatible with pathological processes. [69]

When reading such works, it is especially important not to turn electrical activity into a translation of a particular scene. The name of the frequency range does not indicate a memory, a feeling of love, or a meeting with a relative. Meaningful correspondence requires data about one person's physiology and experience within

an agreed-upon time frame. If one of the parties is missing, there remains a hypothesis about the relationship that has yet to be tested.

In AWARE II this problem manifests itself differently. EEG was available for only two of the subsequently interviewed participants, and they reported no explicit memories. Rhythms recorded in other patients cannot be transferred to narrators. The presence of both physiological recordings and unusual stories in one article does not in itself mean that they are individually synchronized. [4]

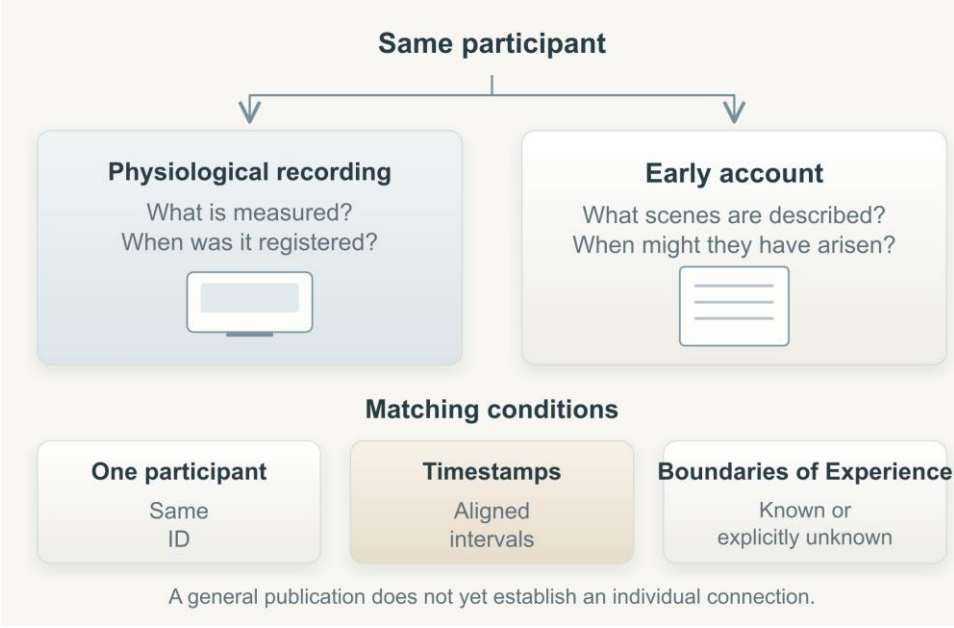


Figure 25. Comparison of physiology and story. The author's diagram shows the conditions for individual comparison: one participant, agreed intervals and known limits of recall time. The presence of both types of material in one publication does not yet establish their connection.

There is also a simple arithmetic difficulty that can change the meaning of the title. The relative contribution of a certain signal may increase when the total quantity decreases faster than the signal itself. For example, in a conditional data set, five units out of ten constitute a larger proportion than ten units out of a hundred, although the absolute number has decreased. Therefore, the words

“increased activity” need to clarify the indicator, the starting point of comparison and the recording area. This principle applies to measurements in general and is especially useful where the conclusion about consciousness depends on a small terminological error.

What can be compared in the laboratory

Laboratory analogue is useful when it allows precise changes in conditions and comparison of results. Its value does not require complete coincidence with the original phenomenon. At the same time, the list of matches should be kept next to the list of differences. The model of an individual component becomes much more informative if it is clear in advance which part of the story is being tested and which questions the experiment does not yet address.

In Martial et al.'s study 2024 a year after controlled syncope, eight of 22 participants with eligible data achieved story content threshold on the Greyson scale. The change in the experience of time was noted by 20 people. Encounters with deceased or religious figures and boundaries of no return were not reported in this sample. The work compared narratives and EEG, demonstrating partial overlap with the phenomenology of near-death experiences. This is not a study of the experience after permanent death. [70]

Another way to compare is to ask people who have experienced both conditions of interest. In the work of Martial, Carhart-Harris and Timmermann 31, a participant contrasted his own near-death experiences with psychedelic experiences. There was overlap in a number of characteristics, with differences in bodily separation and visual images. The study was retrospective and relied on self-selection; The circumstances of the experience varied. The coincidence of features did not establish either complete identity of the mechanisms or a common external location. [71]

To assess similarity, it is important to separate frequency and intensity. One symptom may occur in both groups almost equally frequently, but be experienced with different intensity. The overall score can also hide different sets of components: two people arrive at the same number through different answers. Therefore, the similarity statement must be read in conjunction with the scale questions. Without this, comparison turns into a comparison of names, behind which different experiences remain.

Clinical circumstances add another layer of complexity. In a case published by Fritz et al in 2025, a woman described an unusual experience following severe respiratory failure and emergency administration of ketamine along with other drugs. Cardiac arrest is not specified in the description. It was not possible to accurately position the experience in relation to the drug and other disturbances of the condition. To attribute all content to a single substance would be to exceed the possibilities of this case. [72]

Therefore, the comparison must maintain context. Retrospective survey, experimental intervention, and single clinical observation answer different questions. They can be combined into a research program, but the status of the result cannot be imperceptibly changed when moving from one category to another. A possible mechanism remains possible until its necessary conditions are established in the event in question.

Trying to put together an explanation

The NEPTUNE model, proposed by Martial et al in 2025, integrates the proposed influences of physiological stress, blood flow, neurochemical changes, bodily signal processing and psychological processes. She looks at near-death experiences up to brain death. The authors directly indicate the theoretical status of the model and unknown necessary and sufficient combinations of mechanisms. Its goal is to link disparate findings into a testable neuroscientific explanation; The review itself does not constitute a new single sample of patients. [73]

Combining mechanisms makes it possible to meaningfully describe complex experiences without requiring a single cause for all its details. But the complexity of the model comes at a cost. If any combination of observations can be explained by the selection of additional processes, the model loses certainty. Therefore, after unification, restrictions are especially needed: what properties should occur together, what conditions should weaken a particular effect, and where the absence of a result is expected.

A simple example of such a requirement can be formulated without choosing a final theory. If it is assumed that a change in bodily perspective depends on the mismatch of certain signals, the researcher must describe in advance how this sign will change when the mismatch is eliminated. If the influence of biographical expectations on the image of the greeter is expected, expectations must be recorded before the experience or at least independently of its subsequent interpretation. In both cases, the usefulness of an explanation is determined by its relation to new data.

The transition from a possible condition to an established cause deserves special attention. The formulation “such a mechanism is capable of causing a similar characteristic” leaves open the question of a specific episode. It requires information about the presence of a mechanism, the time of its action and its connection with the content. This intermediate level may seem less complete than a universal solution, but it is precisely this level that allows you to gradually refine the explanation instead of endlessly repeating the general idea.

The limit of explanation and the limit of question

Brain research and the philosophical question about the nature of consciousness are related, but not completely coincidental. Even a detailed description of the conditions under which a certain experience occurs may leave open the question of why it has a subjective side. Conversely, recognizing this philosophical quandary does not establish a concrete story about another world,

family choice, or the transition of personality between bodies. Each such story has its own information requirements.

The neuroscientific explanation also does not negate the human significance of the experience. The reasons for the occurrence of the experience and the place it took in life can be studied separately. If a person considers an encounter to be a source of reconciliation or new understanding, it is a statement of consequences and meaning. To discuss the literal reality of the encounter requires a different set of arguments. One research direction does not have to absorb the second.

When comparing hypotheses, reverse substitution must also be avoided. The insufficiency of a particular model does not serve as ready proof of its alternative. A positive basis occurs when an alternative model describes the observation being tested better, limits the expected result in advance, and withstands attempts to find conventional ways of obtaining it. This is especially true for the intended transmission of information: the content being verified must be stored until confirmation, and possible channels must be studied separately.

At this point, the conversation about the brain returns to the structure of evidence. Even if all the events of an experience can ever be accurately dated, the content will remain accessible through memory and story. It is already possible to explore how they are influenced by confidence, questioning and cultural language. The next chapter is devoted to this gap between the event and its explanation, in which most of the material available to the researcher is formed.

Chapter 14
Memory, Suggestion, and Culture

The persuasiveness of memory

A person can doubt someone else's story and have little doubt about his own experience. It is especially difficult to question an event that is remembered with unusual clarity and has changed one's attitude towards life. Therefore, an explanation through memory is often perceived as an accusation of invention. For research, this is a false convergence. Sincerity refers to the narrator's intention; accuracy - to the correspondence of individual statements to events. One can faithfully report what is experienced as a memory and still need external verification of its content.

Moore and Grayson asked 122 participants to compare memories of their near-death experiences with real and imagined events. Memories of NDE were generally rated as particularly rich. The average interval after the experiment was about 34 years. This is evidence of the characteristics of the memory at the time of the study. A single examination does not show that the content of each memory remained unchanged throughout the previous years. [74]

In Schmidt et al.'s experiment with 24 highly suggestible adults, a posthypnotic cue increased confidence and speeded word recognition compared to a neutral cue. No statistically significant change in accuracy was found. The work shows the individual variability of certainty, but does not reproduce the emergence of a false biography or posthumous journey. [75]

It is therefore useful to consider memory according to several characteristics. How bright is it? How confident is the person? How consistently do the details repeat? Is there external verification? When did the first entry appear? These features may be consistent, but they cannot be replaced by a single overall impression of credibility. A detailed story without external reference points

remains a detailed story. A short early message with a verifiable rare detail may be more valuable for a particular issue, although it makes less of an emotional impact.

Sustainability also needs definition. The repetition of a general meaning is one thing, the coincidence of specific words, sequences and circumstances is another. If a person says for years that he has been surrounded by love, this does not establish the immutability of each episode. If the later version contains a new figure, you should find out whether it was in the earlier entry. This analysis allows changes to be noticed without the assumption that any change is a deliberate deception.

Error and source of knowledge

In Meyersburg et al.'s study, 15 adults with reports of past life memories were compared with 15 control participants. In tasks with semantically related words, false recall and recognition of the missing word could occur. In the first group, some erroneous answers were more common, although the statistical power depended on the test. Specific backgrounds have not been verified; spontaneous pediatric cases have not been studied. Therefore, the result relates to the characteristics of the laboratory task performed by this small sample. [76]

The significance of such work is the ability to study a single mechanism under known conditions. The researcher knows which word was presented and which was not. In stories about supposed existence before birth, such a reference list is absent. Because of this, transferring a laboratory result requires caution. It shows that conclusive recognition can be erroneous, but does not automatically determine the origin of any particular memory obtained outside the laboratory.

The explanation through reconstruction must also be specific. What information was available? When could they get to a person? Which part of the story matches them? What details remain unexplained? The presumption of having read a book becomes

stronger if the book is found and familiarity is established. The general possibility of narrative influence remains a weaker claim. Research rigor is equally necessary when searching for an unusual source as when explaining it in the usual way.

A mental example allows us to distinguish between an error of content and an error of origin. The person accurately reproduces the address, but believes that he saw it in a dream, although he once read it in a letter. The address may be correct, but the idea of where it is known from may be incorrect. If you check only the address, you will get the impression of a confirmed unusual transmission. If you reject an address due to a possible memory error, truly accurate information will be lost. Two checks are needed because the statements are different.

This leads to a useful reading rule. Each statement about knowledge can be decomposed into content and the stated source. “The house was red” is one statement. “I learned this while out of body” is another. They may receive varying degrees of confirmation. This separation does not artificially sever human experience; it allows us to understand which part of the story poses a problem for the existing explanation.

Order asked by the question

Procedures designed to obtain memories require special attention. In Helen Wambach's book, a sequence is published that guides a person to an imaginary exit from the body, the state before birth, the choice of birth, helpers and the purpose of life. The first answer is sometimes given five seconds. There is no control group free from such a scenario in the described material. Therefore, the overlap of routes should be considered together with the overlap of issues. [77]

The difference between an open-ended question and a guiding question can be small in form and large in impact. The question “What happened next?” allows for a wide range of answers. The question “Who met you after leaving?” already presupposes an exit

and a greeter. The question “Why did you choose this family?” additionally assumes that the choice has taken place. Even if a person answers sincerely, these answers cannot be processed as independent occurrence of all the listed elements.

In a survey of 26 therapists, Wambach attributed the rare mention of the tunnel to the fact that many specialists did not ask about the transition after death. Her very way of working included leading to the light, reviewing life and discussing subsequent incarnations. The material shows why a missed question and a negative answer should have different symbols. [78]

The Newton Institute Guide 2022 recommends open-ended questions and allows for different orderings of experiences. At the same time, certain areas are required for certification; a council or place of supreme wisdom is indicated by a mandatory stop. Expected locations include training, recovery, and body selection. This is a modern educational document. It helps analyze the procedure, but does not establish that each of Newton's early sessions followed exactly the same rules. [79]

To compare stories, it is useful to save the question next to the answer. Then you can see whether the room appeared on its own, appeared after an offer to inspect the room, or was named by the researcher first. The same applies to the guide, the screen, advice and preparation of a new life. The similarity of words ceases to be the only criterion; The history of the appearance of each element becomes visible. It is this that determines how independent the repetitions are.



Figure 26. How the question guides the story. On the left is the open-ended question “What happened next?”, on the right is the pre-meeting question “Who met you?” The author's model shows different conditions for the appearance of the answer.

Expectations and boundaries of the scenario

The publisher's abstract of Robert Baker's study reports on 60 students who received supportive, neutral, or skeptical training in regression. The number of past lives reported depended on the setting. The annotation does not allow us to reconstruct all the details of the group distribution and effect sizes. The work indicates the value of preliminary expectation, but does not determine the historical truth of individual stories by this result. [80]

The influence of anticipation does not necessarily mean passive repetition of the prompt. The person may be surprised by his own images, resist the intended story, or report something that the interviewer did not expect. In Brian Weiss's book, one patient's material includes rest, waiting, and the obligation to return; in one session the expected meeting with the “masters” did not take place. Such an episode shows the variability of the story itself, but does

not provide an independent verification of the described structure of the world. [81]

Therefore, a simple division into “completely inspired” and “completely independent” is too crude for analysis. Various contributions are possible: an initial impression, a given topic, a random image, clarification after a question, a later interpretation. In a particular record, you should look for their sequence. The more detailed the protocol is preserved, the less you have to guess which part of the content belonged to the original experience and which arose during its discussion.

Independence of repetitions is especially important. One hundred similar responses following the same instruction may reflect the robustness of that instruction. One hundred similar early reports with no known common source pose a different question. In both cases, a pattern is found, but the patterns relate to different objects. The first may describe the interaction of procedure and imagination, the second - the broader mechanism of the emergence of stories. The number of answers without information about their origin does not choose between explanations.

Culture before and after the experience

The personalization hypothesis suggests that familiar images serve as a way to convey shared meaning. It can be formulated precisely enough for discussion. But first we need to separate three possible moments of cultural influence: the content of the experience itself, the words when first telling it, and the later interpretation. The same image can receive a religious name only after its return. If this occurs, the name cannot be automatically assigned to the original state.

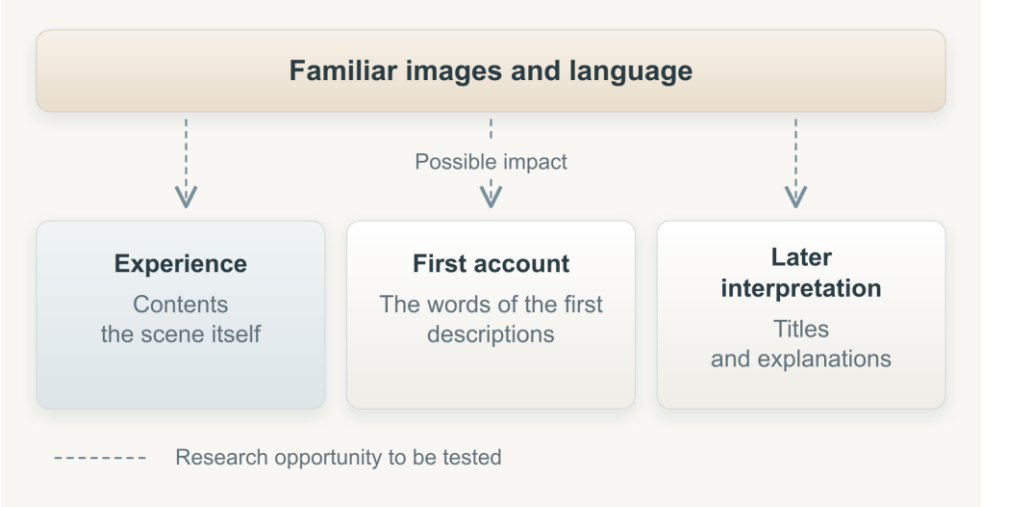


Figure 27. Cultural framing of experience. The analytical framework distinguishes three possible levels of influence of habitual images and language: the experience itself, the first story, and later interpretation.

In a Japanese study by Morita et al., near-death visions were reported by relatives. The likelihood of reporting was related to the religiosity and beliefs of the responding relative. This connection does not establish the cause of the patient's experience, but it does show another place of possible selection: the observer decides what to notice, remember and call a vision. [82]

The title of the Iranian study by Rashidi et al uses the word rebirth. In content, it denotes personal renewal after returning to life, and not a new incarnation in another body. Such differences are important when comparing publications in different languages: the literal coincidence of a word does not guarantee the coincidence of the phenomenon under study. [83]

The personal design model should also set the limits of variability. If the common path is preserved, what features must be present regardless of religion? Accompaniment may have different images, but the obligatory nature of accompaniment is a separate prediction. The choice room and direct decision can perform a similar function, but coercion and free refusal differ in the rule of action. All contradictions cannot be considered a change of scenery if the hypothesis claims to describe a general process.

Memory, questions and culture therefore form an important part of the explanation of recurring plots. Their participation can be explored without first solving the entire problem of the origin of consciousness. Precise work begins with distinguishing what originated, what survived, what was proposed, and what was named later. After such an analysis, it is no longer equally weighty stories that return to the general map, but evidence with different histories. It is from them that we must build a circuit that will withstand its own exceptions.

Part V Map and Meaning

Chapter 15
A Map with Branches

What does the map represent?

After considering separate groups of evidence, it is tempting to collect them into a single sequence. Separation from the body, transition, encounter, review of life, stay, choice and rebirth form a clear narrative. But the understandability of a sequence and the confirmation of transitions between its links are different properties.

The map offered in this chapter represents the relationships between the motifs described. Its nodes indicate classes of experiences. Arrows show possible transitions within stories or research assumptions about the connection between groups of sources. Where complete transition has not been observed in one individual, the relationship should remain conditional.

Such a construction is useful even without solving the question of the external reality of the described space. It allows you to see which elements are examined in sufficient detail, where different meanings of the same word are used, and in which areas it is especially easy to quietly fill in missing information.

The map has two scales. On a large scale, functions are visible: changing the attitude towards the body, meeting, staying, deciding. On a small scale, specific details are preserved: the shape of the conductor, the method of communication, the feeling of one's own body, the sequence of actions. You should move on to a generalization in such a way that the opportunity to return to a separate story does not disappear.

Comparison Map Nodes

Knot	What is being compared	Ch.
Bodily perspective	Position of self and access to information about the environment	4
Transition and meeting	Change of environment, recognition and communication	5
View and space	Appeal to biography, objects and ways of obtaining meaning	6
Stay	Rest, recovery, waiting and exercise	7
Decision	Consent, refusal, delay and limitation of choice	8
Previous biography	Returning to your old life after an experience	3, 4 and 8
Supposed new life	Memory before birth and testing the connection of biographies	9 and 11
Time	External cues and subjective duration	10
Other evidence	Dreams and stories of those accompanying	12

Initial section

The initial node can be called a change in the usual bodily perspective. This is a more cautious description than the ready-made statement about the separation of an independent entity. It covers what is available in the story: the location of the observer, the appearance of one's own body, the change in pain, lightness, the absence of familiar boundaries.

The next node relates to changing the environment. It is important here not to assume physical movement just based on the story of the transition. In the descriptions discussed in chapter 5, there is a path with a sequence of landmarks, and the appearance of a new scene without a detailed transition. For a map, these are different options for communication between states.

The meeting forms another node. Its function may be recognition, assistance, communication or restriction of further movement. These functions do not require you to consider each person you meet as a guide in advance. The being who communicates the need to return and the familiar person with whom the emotional encounter takes place may occupy different roles.

The biography review, options for which are discussed in chapter 6, should be indicated separately. The role of the greeter and the way the biography is addressed do not necessarily coincide. Its contents include memories, assessment of consequences and a sense of understanding. The map should not infer the mandatory existence of a court solely from the presence of an assessment.

Stay and decision

The middle area of the map brings together a relatively stable stay. Here it is necessary to maintain the distinction of rest, recovery, communication, learning and waiting. If a person does not describe activities, this does not yet define an empty state. If treatment is mentioned, it is important to find out whether it refers to well-being, memories, emotional consequences, or an image of bodily recovery.

The decision to transition forms an independent area. It distinguishes between offer, consent, delay, persuasion, assignment and the experience of coercion. Replacing all options with the word “choice” would destroy some of the material. On the other hand, the message about the need to return does not yet reveal the mechanism of this need.

There is a fundamental difference between returning to a former life and the supposed preparation of a new birth. In the first case, the story is usually associated with a person who continues the previous biography. The second requires establishing a connection between the biographies, or at least the origin of the assertion of

such a connection. These branches should not merge in the drawing just because both are described by the word “return.”

Dreams of loved ones are located next to the map, but do not replace the missing part of the deceased’s path. They provide information about the dreamer's experience and sometimes contain statements that can be verified. To use a dream as an observation of a certain stage of another person's existence, an additional argument is needed. The mere recognition of the deceased does not establish the date of his rebirth or the length of stay.

Places of rupture

The most significant gap lies between a temporary departure from an ordinary state and the irreversible end of a biography. A living survivor provides a near-death account. The source may contain no account of what would happen beyond the point of return. Filling that section with material about prebirth creates a research model that still needs to be connected to independent data.

The second gap arises between the story of the preparation of life and the confirmation of the specific circumstances of this life. If an adult describes the choice of his parents, subsequent knowledge of his own family is already included in his accessible biography. Testing prior knowledge requires early fixation to limit the influence of that knowledge.

The third gap concerns the preservation of the subject. Even if the transfer of unusual information could be established, the question would remain whether the recipient is a continuation of the previous experiencer. Information connection, similarity of character and personal identity require different criteria.

A break does not mean that communication is impossible. It denotes a place where existing information is insufficient for the next inference step. A scientific map becomes more useful when its incompleteness is visible. The reader can then understand what new observation would change the design of the circuit.

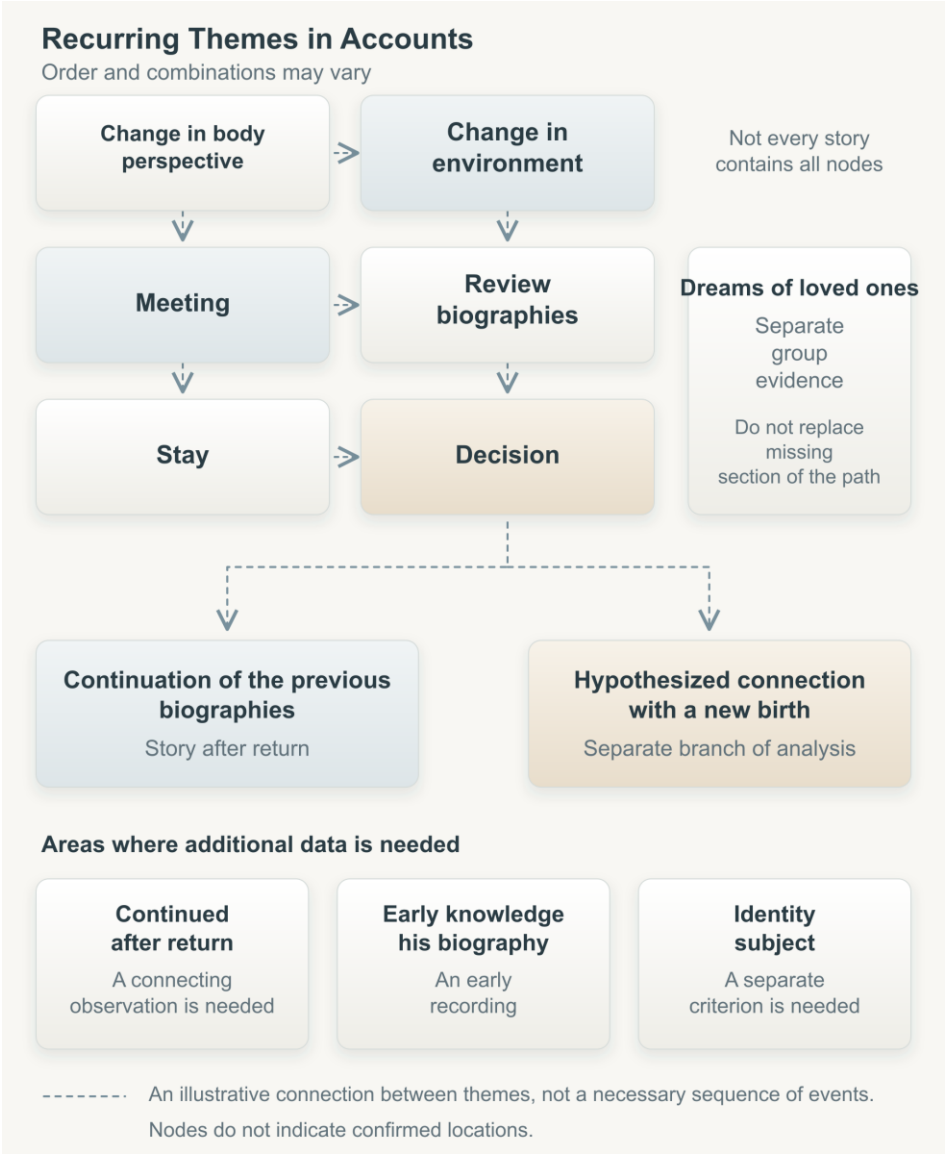


Figure 28. A map of motifs with forks and breaks. The connections are conditional and do not specify a mandatory order. Not every story contains all the nodes.

How to compare branches

One possibility is that we have different forms of a common process. The other allows several processes with partially similar content. Another one connects the similarities with the common means of experience and storytelling. To choose between them, it is not enough to list common words.

You should look for combinations of signs. A separate mention of light says little about the order of events. More meaningful would be a stable combination of a rare method of transition, a certain type of interaction and the same restriction of action. In this case, it is necessary to determine the matching criteria in advance and check how much they depend on the culture and questions of the interviewer.

Contradiction is also assessed at the level of assertion. Variations in room color do not necessarily disrupt the overall functional pattern. The distinction between free refusal and compulsory return may affect the intended mechanism itself. The more important a rule is for a model, the less reason there is to explain its absence only by differences in scenery.

Therefore, the final map must remain a map with branches. It retains the possibility of a common path, but does not require a single path where the sources do not establish one. The next question relates to the meaning of the proposed movement: what exactly could justify or cause a repeated return.

Chapter 16
Why Return?

Reason, function and meaning

The question of the cause of rebirth seems uniform until the meaning of the word “why” is clarified. Sometimes people ask about the mechanism: what causes the next transition? Sometimes it’s about function: what result is achieved by repetition? Sometimes it’s about a personal meaning: why would a person agree to a new life? These questions allow for different answers and different ways of testing.

A mechanism can act without a conscious purpose. The goal may exist for the actor without determining the structure of the entire system. Personal meaning can appear after an event, even if it was not its cause. Therefore, the experience of a mission cannot automatically be considered a description of the general law of existence.

Previous chapters discussed messages about tasks, training, return, and the possibility of deferment. Now, several analytical models can be distinguished from them. These are constructs for comparing putative rules. None of them become established simply by helping to read the story coherently.

Each model should be asked what persists between lives, what changes, why bodily life is required, and on what basis the process could be completed. If answers are missing, the name of the model indicates a line of thought rather than a ready-made explanation.

Training model

The most understandable version suggests that repeated lives teach something. However, the word “learning” needs content. Obtaining information, mastering a skill, changing one's attitude

towards another person and moral development are different processes. Each requires its own characteristics of the result.

If access to very broad knowledge is expected before birth, the question arises of what knowledge still needs to be acquired in life. One possible answer distinguishes between description and living. One can know the wording about pain and separately have the experience of pain. Such a model logically allows for the value of embodiment as the acquisition of a certain type of experience. But it does not yet explain why this particular experience is needed and why it must be repeated.

Another answer relates learning to a change in the way of doing things. In this case, it is important to establish what is carried forward: memory, inclination, ability to make decisions, or attitude towards others. Without a transferable result, the connection between successive lives becomes uncertain. To justify accumulation, it is necessary to determine the transferable result and signs of its persistence.

Forgetting can be included in the model as a self-selection condition. However, this explanation comes at a cost. The more complete the presumed forgetting, the more difficult it is to test the continuity of learning. If any character of a person is declared to be the result of past lessons, the hypothesis covers all outcomes and makes almost no difference between them.

For research development of the model, restrictions are needed. For example, what changes should be more common in a certain sequence of biographies? What messages would refute the hoarding assumption? How does the proposed transfer differ from the normal development of the current person? These questions do not require you to deny learning in advance. They give it a certain meaning.

There is also the question of completion. If the goal is finite, a criterion of sufficiency is needed. If the goal is constantly changing, you need to explain in what respect the next cycle continues the

previous one. The word “development” itself does not convey any direction, no limit, or who evaluates the result.

Relationships and correction

Another model places relationships at the center. A new life is supposed to be an opportunity to continue the connection, to repair what has been done, to change roles, or to help another. Here the unit is no longer an individual person, but a network of interactions.

Such a scheme raises a complex coordination issue. If the circumstances of one life affect many, whose decisions are involved in their choices? Is disagreement possible? Does the plan change when the other person acts differently? A model in which everyone chooses their own destiny entirely must explain the intersection of these choices.

It also cannot be concluded from the hypothesized choice of circumstances that the current person actually gave consent to every event that happened to him. For such a conclusion it would be necessary to establish the existence of choice, its content, understanding of the consequences and the continuity of the decision-making subject. These conditions are not replaced by a general belief in purpose.

The connection between suffering and learning especially needs precision. That a person later finds meaning in what he has endured does not establish that the suffering was pre-ordained for that purpose. Subsequent understanding and the original cause remain different statements. Thanks to this distinction, research can discuss meaning without attributing unproven solutions to people.

The relational model would become more meaningful if there were independently recorded interrelated messages. However, even such a match would require checking the usual channels of information and matching rules. Explaining each meeting by a past

agreement can only be done at the cost of losing the distinction between the assumption and the result.

Experience, Participation and Service

Another model assumes that the goal is variety of experience. The new life then represents a different way of seeing and acting. The question of the end of the cycle changes: if diversity is valuable in itself, completion does not necessarily take the form of a graduation test.

This option explains the possibility of many different lives at the level of a general idea. But it does not explain why these particular conditions are required and who evaluates their value. It is also necessary to determine whether there is a common carrier of diverse experience or whether each subject receives only a separate part.

The participation model emphasizes action in the world. The return is intended for the sake of help, a relationship, or a specific task. For her, it is important to distinguish between the meaning that a person ascribes to his life after the experience and the task that can be independently traced back to it. Both options can have personal meaning, but serve different roles in verification.

Finally, a mandatory cycle model is possible. In it, the transition occurs according to a rule that does not depend on the current desire. This assumption requires establishing what makes a rule mandatory. Pointing to a teacher, council, or higher authority shifts the question to the authority of that actor. The name of the authority in itself does not reveal the basis for its decision.



Figure 29. Five explanations for the supposed return. From left to right, top to bottom: learning, relationships, diversity of experience, assistance and the mandatory cycle. The author's composition compares analytical models that require clarification of the result, transition rules and the possibility of completion.

Freedom to stay

The question of renunciation of birth contains several steps. The experiencer may want to stay, say no, get a reprieve, or be able to finally break out of the cycle. The transition from one stage to another requires additional information.

Final failure is especially difficult to examine. The sample of people talking about the present life, by its design, contains those who exist in the current life. It is not possible to directly calculate the proportion of those who were never born again. This selection constraint persists even if the entire degeneration model is temporarily accepted.

The message “after this life I will no longer have to incarnate” refers to the expected future. To test it, one must determine what would be considered a refutation, how a new incarnation would be

established, and how long one should observe. Without such conditions, the word “last” remains part of the content of the story.

There is also a difference between the freedom to choose a particular parameter and the freedom to reject the entire system. The ability to choose family, time or task does not mean control over existence at all. The map must keep these freedoms separate, otherwise a private decision will be quietly transformed into absolute autonomy.

Who is called God

When discussing purpose, the question of a higher source arises. In the descriptions of chapters 5 and 6, the word "God" means different things: a recognizable interlocutor, a luminous presence, an all-encompassing unity, and a subsequent explanation of the experience.

These values should not automatically convert to each other. Personal appeal presupposes a relationship between participants. The experience of unity may, on the contrary, be accompanied by a weakening of the boundary between oneself and the environment. The same word in the final story does not eliminate the difference in the structure of the experience.

The personalized presentation hypothesis assumes that one source takes forms that are understandable to different people. In order for it to lend itself to research, it is necessary to indicate that when the shape changes, it remains constant. If the appearance, rules, sequence, and meaning of decisions can change, it becomes difficult to determine what data would generally testify against the unity of the source.

The question of the meaning of existence therefore remains broader than the question of a repeating plot. Similarity of messages can reveal a consistent way of experiencing the target. To draw a conclusion about the objective purpose of the entire system, it is necessary to connect the content of these messages with independent grounds. The book maintains this boundary while making room for the human meaning of experience.

Chapter 17
How to Test a Picture of the World

Statement before explanation

After comparing the stories, the next step is to formulate statements that can be individually tested. The question “does the entire described world exist” is too large for one observation. A more specific question concerns specific information, the sequence of events, or the dependence of images on conditions.

A research program can begin in several directions. You can check the accuracy of a report about an object that is inaccessible to normal observation. You can compare early and later versions of the story. You can find out whether the content changes with different methods of questioning. You can study the sequence of messages about the death of another person. These tasks do not have to provide the same explanation in advance.

Each statement requires conditions under which the result will be considered a coincidence, error or uncertainty. It is advisable to ask them before reading the answer. If the rule changes after the result, it is difficult to distinguish the found pattern from a classification adaptation.

The schemes proposed below are directions of research, and not a description of the experiments carried out in this book. Their implementation would require appropriate professional training, agreement on ethical conditions and protection of participants.

Surveillance for a medical event

The clinical review must relate three records: the objective sequence of medical events, the conditions of information availability, and the person's early free narrative. Even an accurate report of an object is of little help in localizing an experience if it is

not known when the object might have been seen or heard in the usual way.

Possible test stimuli should be separated from the normal information of the chamber. For timing purposes, predetermined stimulus changes and an independent time log are useful. In this case, the interviewer evaluating the answer, if possible, should not know the correct content before recording the story.

Before such a study begins, a dictionary of acceptable matches, a time window, and a method for assessing the answer are recorded. If the stimulus changes, content correctness and timing accuracy become two separate outcomes. A match with any image ever shown has a different meaning than a match with an image from a predetermined interval.

Any such procedure is subject to treatment. It does not involve creating a dangerous condition or changing the necessary assistance for the sake of observation. The challenge is to record a naturally occurring event while maintaining medical priorities.

A positive result would require an investigation into available channels of information and reproducibility. A negative result must also be read within the boundaries of the task. If an individual has not reported a target stimulus, this may limit the specific perceptual inference about that stimulus. It does not necessarily answer all questions about the experienced content.

Early reports of another biography

In researching children's stories, fixation before finding matches is central. Free utterances are recorded with date and context. Then, clarifications, questions from adults, and information that appeared after meeting the supposed former family are stored separately.

The list of statements should be divided by verifiability. Common phrases like having a family have many possible matches. A rare combination of name, place and event is potentially more

informative, but needs to be checked for spelling variations, breadth of search and usual sources of knowledge.

It is important to retain errors and inconsistencies. If only successful details are published, it is impossible to evaluate the entire set of statements. It is also advisable to distinguish between information verified by a document, the story of one relative and the consent of several people after a joint discussion.

One possible additional control is to independently compare the original list with multiple biographies according to pre-established rules. The evaluator does not know which family the participants believe matches the story. This approach does not eliminate all the difficulties of the search, but it allows you to check how much the choice depends on knowing the desired answer.

The search for a supposed biography itself becomes part of the history of information transfer. Therefore, its stages need to be documented. Independence of subsequent verification means, first of all, the ability to reconstruct what information the participants had at each moment. This procedure is useful no matter which explanation ultimately turns out to be preferable.

Dreams and messages about death

For dreams, registration before receiving news related to them is especially promising. The diary should contain not only unusual coincidences, but also a sequence of ordinary entries. Otherwise, the background against which a successful case stands out is unknown.

Pre-defined compliance rules are needed. The coincidence of a name, image, general mood and a specific event has varying degrees of accuracy. The time period allowed also changes the number of possible matches. The freer these parameters are, the easier it is to select a connection after familiarizing yourself with the result.

In the case of multiple witnesses, notes should be obtained prior to mutual deliberation. Already existing communication is noted

separately. If the separation occurred too late, this is not a reason to destroy the data, but a reason to limit the conclusion about their independence.

A possible control comparison consists of assessing the correspondence of records to real events and comparable control events without prompting the evaluator which pairs are considered putative matches. The rule for forming pairs is set in advance. The result then refers to the ability of the established procedure to distinguish between these pairs, rather than to the impression of the separately selected story.

Even a well-documented match requires an assessment of available information channels and the frequency of such messages. One episode can pose a question, and a series with predetermined conditions helps to understand its reproducibility.



Figure 30. Three ways to verify accounts. The design juxtaposes a medical case study, a child's report, and a sleep study. Early fixation, verification of available information, and independent comparison include storing matches and errors.

Personalization and shared itinerary

The common path hypothesis with individual design requires comparison of two sets of traits. The first relates to images: figures, objects, spaces and religious symbols. The second is about relationships and rules: who decides whether refusal is possible, what precedes the transition, how information is communicated.

The similarity of the second set while the difference of the first would be compatible with the personalization hypothesis. But it may also be compatible with the general properties of human storytelling. Therefore, comparisons with other experiences and testing of the impact of the questions will be required. A cross-cultural list of similar topics is not enough.

It is desirable to obtain a description of culture regardless of the content of the experience. You cannot first call an image Christian and then use its presence as the only proof of a person's Christian expectations. Consideration should be given to actual beliefs, exposure to stories, and changes in views before and after the event.

Coding should be entrusted to several people who apply predefined rules. Their discrepancies themselves provide useful information. If the same scene is consistently assigned to different phases by different researchers, this may indicate ambiguity in the map, rather than a special property of the supposed world.

What results would really change the conclusion?

Strong advances would occur through repeated acquisition of predetermined information under conditions that exclude known conventional channels and allow the outcome to be accurately linked to the timing of the event. This would increase the validity of a particular unusual information effect. Further conclusion about the information carrier would still require a separate analysis.

Another important result might be the consistent dependence of stories on interview mode. It would help identify which parts of the map are created or enhanced by the procedure. Similarly,

independent reproduction of a certain combination of elements under controlled influence would clarify the mechanism of this combination.

The study must maintain the possibility of change in both directions. More rigorous evidence may strengthen an unusual hypothesis, limit it, divide it into multiple phenomena, or show that the original category was too broad. This is what makes the program research-based.

Until such results appear, it is permissible to maintain several explanations with different areas of applicability. It is important to understand at what step the verified ends and the assumption begins. This clarity allows work to proceed without the need to determine the final answer in advance.

Conclusion

A person talking about the experience of death or life before birth conveys an experience that has already passed through memory and language. This path does not devalue the testimony. It determines in what way it can be studied.

A comparison of sources allows us to identify recognizable themes: changing bodily perspective, encounter, receiving meaning, staying, deciding and returning. However, the repetition of a theme does not establish a single external mechanism, and a sequence constructed from different stories does not automatically become an observation of a complete cycle.

The most useful distinctions initially look small. Circulatory arrest differs from irreversible death. The duration of a medical event is distinct from the duration of an experienced scene. A sense of presence differs from recognition of a specific person. Confidence differs from accuracy. Transferring information differs from the continuation of the same subject. Rest differs from waiting, and the possibility of postponement differs from a final refusal.

These distinctions do not lead away from the question of continued existence. They make it more defined. One can now ask what information might have been preserved, what personality traits are assumed to be continuous, and what observation would confirm a particular connection between biographies.

The proposed map remains conditional. It has relatively well-described areas and transitions for which there is a lack of data. The absence of a complete route established is not evidence that such a route is impossible. It means that it cannot be presented to the reader as a completed result of observation.

The question of the purpose of return remains independent. Even the establishment of an unusual connection between lives would not explain why this connection exists, whether it is obligatory and who the supposed goal belongs to. Learning,

relationships, participation, and task performance become research models only when they have defined conditions and discernable implications.

The personal meaning of an experience may be clearer than its external explanation. A person is able to change his attitude towards life, memory and loved ones without having a complete picture of the structure of consciousness. Research is not required to choose life's meaning for him. Its task is to accurately describe what is known and why it is believed to be known.

Continuation of work depends on the quality of the next observation. An early record, an independent witness, a preserved error, an open record and an accurate timing sometimes provide more than another complete story. It is precisely such details that allow the question of the boundaries of consciousness to remain the subject of consistent research.

Appendix 1
A Record for an Individual Account

The case record is intended for comparison of published materials. It preserves the origin of each detail and helps avoid confusion between event, memory and interpretation. An unknown value should be recorded as unknown. An empty cell does not mean the absence of a phenomenon.

Margins refer to a specific statement, not just the entire story. For example, medical circumstances may be confirmed by a document, but the conductor's phrase is known only from a later interview. This information has different bases even within the same case.

Field	Content of the Record
Case and publications	A person's code name or identifier; list of publications related to the same case. Repeated retellings are not counted separately.
Message Type	Near Death Experience; children's sayings; adult memory; dream; guided session; message from another witness.
Hypothesized event	The date, place and circumstances in question. The basis for each date is indicated separately.
First available entry	When and by whom was it made? Is it preserved entirely? recording a free story or retelling of another person.
History of issues	What the person reported independently; what appeared after open clarification; what arose after the meaningful prompt.
Medical context	Documented states and intervals. The relatives' report of lack of breathing does not replace the medical record.
State of self	Location, physicality, authorship of actions, memory of oneself, the ability to evaluate what is happening.
Experienced environment	Vision, hearing, other sensations, arrangement of space, objects, the ability to move and change attention.

Field	Content of the Record
Other characters	Image, method of recognition, speech or other method of communication, message content, assigned role.
Two times	External cues and subjective sequence are recorded separately; indicates which boundaries actually coincide.
Verified Content	Exact original wording, possible matches, source of confirmation, and presence of inconsistencies.
Information channels	Contacts, reading, discussions, acquaintances, publications and other available ways of knowledge up to each stage of the story.
Independence	When the witnesses talked to each other; what is recorded before communication and before receiving supporting information.
Summary of statements	Confirmed within the designated boundaries; refuted; remains uncertain; cannot be verified using the available material.

Appendix 2
Questions for Each Proposed Phase

This table specifies the general reading method. Its lines do not state a mandatory order and do not indicate confirmed places. When answering, you must save the narrator's words next to the research classification.

Phase	Self	environment and others	Time and transition
Changing bodily perspective	What has changed in the position of self and body ownership? Is the biography preserved?	What was seen or heard? What earthly details are independently verifiable?	Is there an external scene marker? What determines its beginning?
Transition	Who is causing the movement? Can the experiencer stop it?	Is there a path, landmarks, or an immediate change of environment?	Is the duration described or just the order? What boundaries are used?
Meeting	How does recognition occur? What does a person understand at the moment of meeting?	What does someone present look like? How is the assigned identity confirmed?	When does communication begin? What changes after the message?
Biography Review	Is there personal authorship of the assessment? How is memory experienced?	Is there an image, a conversation partner, or immediate understanding?	Do the scenes follow each other or are they given together? Is there an external landmark?

Phase	Self	environment and others	Time and transition
Stay	Is your condition stable? Do desires and well-being change?	What activities and relationships are described? What exactly does recovery mean?	How is the passage of time recognized? What ends the stay?
Decision	What can you choose, postpone or reject?	Who proposes, explains or limits the solution?	When does the decision become final? Is there a re-discussion?
Connection with bodily life	What exactly is supposed to be continuous?	How are family, body and biographical information connected?	Are birth and identity change different? Are there any confirmed dates?
Subsequent memory	What has remained and how has understanding changed?	Who participated in the questioning and search for matches?	When did the first entry appear? What information became known later?

Appendix 3
Glossary of Key Concepts

The definitions below give the meaning of the terms in this book. They do not require agreement with a single philosophical theory of consciousness.

Qualia. The subjective side of experience, the way a sensation or state is experienced. Describing qualia is different from identifying an external cause for that experience.

Phenomenology. In this context, a description of how the state is given to the experiencer: images, feelings, time, physicality and the position of one's own Self.

Subject of experience. The supposed experiencer. The term allows us to raise the question of the continuity of experience without asking in advance its physical or other nature.

Self-awareness. Self-awareness; the analysis distinguishes between a minimal sense of presence, knowledge of one's own biography and other forms of attitude towards oneself.

Reflection. The ability to notice and evaluate one's own condition. Having experience is not necessarily accompanied by extensive thinking about it.

Self-localization. The experienced location of oneself. Its description does not in itself measure the physical location of the information source.

Personal identity. The assertion that we are talking about the same subject at different moments. Similarity of information or character does not yet provide a ready-made criterion of identity.

Near-death experience. An experience that a person associates with the proximity of death; in the publications in question, he is judged by the subsequent message. Specific medical circumstances and questionnaire criteria are determined separately.

Out-of-body experience. An experience in which a person describes himself as being outside the normal boundaries of the body or viewing the body from a different position. The term refers to an experience.

Intermission. The supposed interval between lives in rebirth stories. Its content and duration are not derived from one calendar break.

Reincarnation. The assumption of continued existence through a new bodily life. Different models have different definitions of what exactly continues.

Prospective study. A study in which the observation conditions are determined before the outcome of interest is obtained. The specific quality depends on the execution of the protocol.

Retrospective study. Research of events that have already occurred using memories and preserved materials. Its capabilities depend on early records and the history of the information.

Correlates. A measurable attribute that is related to another indicator. The presence of a connection does not in itself determine the direction of causation or the specific content of the experience.

Guided regression. A procedure in which a person is asked to refer to a perceived past. The experienced persuasiveness of an answer does not certify its historical origin.

Cryptomnesia. Using previously acquired information without available memory of its source. In a specific case, such an explanation also requires reasons.

Independent fixation. A recording made under conditions that limit the influence of other stories or subsequent review. The degree of independence is determined by circumstances.

Functional code. Exploratory designation of the role of a story element: for example, accompaniment or expectation. The code does not replace the original description: the researcher retains both.

Negative case. A case explicitly reporting the absence of an expected element, or a result that contradicts a specified

assumption. Missing information does not, by itself, constitute a negative case.

Appendix 4
Index of the Accounts Discussed

An index helps you navigate back from a general outline to a specific source. It contains 29 of documents with personal communications discussed in chapters 5–9; some of them are also used in other sections. The number in square brackets refers to the bibliography. This is a list of documents to navigate, not a number of independent confirmations. In particular, the two versions of Odell's story refer to the same narrator, and the separate episodes of Shelley and Camie cannot be connected into a continuous path.

Source	Message	Chapters
[14]	Mrs. Grace	5
[15]	Peter N	5
[16]	Sharon T	5
[17]	Val C	5
[18]	Lisa R	5
[19]	Tina W	5
[20]	Sammy E	5
[21]	Katherine L	6
[22]	Odell H	6
[23]	Riette W	6
[24]	Shelley P	6
[25]	George C	6
[26]	Brian D	6
[27]	Stephen I	6
[28]	Kami R	6
[29]	Maureen K	7

Source	Message	Chapters
[30]	James	7
[31]	Angela E	7
[32]	Jennifer B	7
[33]	Diana G	7
[34]	Carey T	7
[35]	Adam K	8
[36]	Michelle N	8
[37]	Christian Sandberg	8
[38]	Jennifer	8
[39]	Alex P	8
[40]	Ursula K	8
[42]	May	9
[43]	Bill D	9

The accompanying files source_registry.csv and source_registry.json preserve the link, type of material, and discussion points in the source text. The year of publication is not used in place of the date of first independent documentation. Unspecified dates remain unspecified. Verifying the origin of a particular statement requires passporting from Appendix 1 and returning to the source itself.

Appendix 5
How to Test the Order of Episodes

From theme repetition to prediction

The common path hypothesis becomes stronger if it predicts the structure of a new story in advance. To do this, it is not enough to find light, meeting and return in the material already read. Fixed rules are needed: what counts as each event, how the order is established, what exceptions are allowed, and on what independent messages the forecast will be checked. Below is the author's research program, continuing chapters 15 and 17. It does not describe the human trial that was conducted.

Let's compare the two models. The first takes into account motive frequencies, cultural context and interview procedure, without assuming a single order. The second adds certain restrictions on transitions. Both must work with the same source codes. A verbal description of a model becomes a research commitment only after specifying a computable prediction and acceptable complexity. The number of free exceptions cannot be increased with each failure.

Data before merging

First, two related registries are created: people and documents. Different publications, interviews, and versions of the same episode are not distributed between training and testing as independent cases. Free narration, clarification and meaningful hints are separately noted. For each motive, description, direct denial, no mention, no question, and ambiguity are distinguished. For order, explicit precedence, succession, simultaneity and unidentified connection are additionally preserved.

The two encoders work separately at first. Until agreement, their original decisions are preserved. It is especially important to

distinguish between image and function: white clothing does not yet indicate medical assistance, but the presence of another does not indicate accompaniment. Disagreement may show a lack of definition. It cannot be corrected only by choosing a code that makes the overall route prettier.

Small computable example

Let's look at eight completely artificial recordings. Six explicitly describe transition and encounter, and in five the transition precedes the encounter. In the seventh there is only a transition, in the eighth both elements are listed without a set order. The last two records are stored in the set, but are not included in the comparison of the directions of this pair. The skip does not reverse the order.

Record	Conditional Events	Order established
D1	transition → meeting	yes
D2	body → transition → meeting	yes
D3	transition → body → meeting	yes
D4	transition → meeting → decision	yes
D5	transition → meeting	yes
D6	meeting → transition	yes
D7	transition only	Not defined for this pair
D8	transition and meeting	no

For educational control, we will select in advance a very narrow null model: the directions of the pair are independent and have a probability of one in two. The probability of getting at least five matches out of six with this rule is $[C(6,5) + C(6,6)]/2^6 = 7/64 = 0.109375$. Therefore, even five identical directions out of six do not automatically make the result unusual relative to the chosen control. This is not the probability that the common path is false, nor is it a comparison with all possible psychological explanations.

The program reproduces this example, listing the reasons for excluding records, and rejecting duplicate identifiers. It also calculates the day 433 from the 10 chapter and the percent limit 2.9 from the 3 chapter. The source code and startup order are given in the accompanying materials.

Strong check of the following case

For a real corpus, the equiprobability of directions will require justification. The interview itself can set the sequence, and the length of the story can determine the number of available transitions. Therefore, the opponent must take these properties into account. The outcome of the comparison should be assessed on previously set aside people and sources, then separately check the transfer between cultural and linguistic groups. The proposed main indicator is the average logarithmic loss of the forecast on new independent units; The reliability of the probabilities is checked separately.

The order model's sustained gains on new messages will support its predictive value. The disappearance of the winnings after taking into account the interviews will indicate the role of the procedure. Neither outcome by itself establishes a posthumous bearer or identity of the subject. This requires a theory that relates message structure to differing observable consequences.

Sources

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