

The Epistemology of the *Salvia Divinorum* Altered State

Rupture, Layered Amnesia, and the Reassembly of the Knower

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Abstract

This manuscript investigates the epistemology of the *Salvia divinorum* altered state: what kind of knowledge, if any, the rupture yields, and whether a deflationary account defeats it. Its central claim is that the state is epistemically significant less for the recognition it produces — *I have been here before* — than for what its brevity and structural compression make observable: the stepwise reassembly of the ordinary autobiographical knower on return, with a witnessing position reported as present before the personal self is fully reconstituted, though that ordering remains vulnerable to retrospective narrative binding. The manuscript first establishes that the rupture has describable structure — a layered amnesia, a gradient of depth, recognition, the encountered presences, and a sequential return — attested at graded evidentiary weights across clinical and first-person sources (the author's own accounts, Arthur's and Heaven's specialist phenomenologies, Siebert's foundational self-report, and a wider third-party corpus including the German-language *Salviabibel*): the coarse rupture-and-amnesia structure recurs under controlled clinical conditions, the recognition and the serial return recur across the wider first-person corpus, and the finer encounter imagery recurs primarily within an interlinked report ecology. Together these recurrences constrain interpretation independently of any single frame. One further datum — a witness present in an objectless void — is treated separately: in this record it rests on a single first-person account, and carries the weight of one report rather than of that wider corpus. The later parts hold several interpretive frameworks in deliberate tension — Tibetan bardo theory, Gnostic anamnesis, Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna*, Jungian depth psychology, Gurdjieff's fragmented-I, and Kastrup's Analytic Idealism, with Metzinger's self-model account as deflationary foil — letting each illuminate a facet of the rupture without granting any of them final authority, and tracking their divergences as rigorously as their convergences. Throughout, claims are confined to four registers — *phenomenologically real*, *structurally real*, *veridical under a named framework*, or *metaphysically established*. The manuscript declines the last. The aim is strong provisional mapping without metaphysical overclaiming.

Keywords

Salvia divinorum; salvinorin A; phenomenology of altered states; epistemology of mystical experience; anamnesis; layered amnesia; dissociation; Analytic Idealism; Tibetan bardo; witness consciousness

Disclosures

Author standpoint and method. The author writes from within Analytic Idealism and discloses this directly; the manuscript's discipline is to hold that commitment in suspension and let competing frameworks pressure-test it. The standpoint disclosure, the three writing registers and four epistemic claim-statuses the manuscript distinguishes, and the evidentiary handling of the first-person accounts are stated in full in the opening Argument Overview.

AI use. Large language models (principally Claude and ChatGPT) were used in an editorial and analytic capacity throughout: reference checking, terminology and consistency auditing, structural review, and the pressure-testing of claims against primary sources, including drafting and revising language at the sentence and section level. No AI output is treated as evidence, source, or authority. The selection of sources, the phenomenological record, the interpretive commitments, the arguments, the conclusions, and final responsibility for the wording are the author's.

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Argument Overview: What This Manuscript Claims

The Thesis

The *Salvia divinorum* rupture is epistemologically significant not because it produces a recognition — *I have been here before* — but because the brevity and structural compression of the state make visible what longer states obscure: the assembly of the knower who will later try to remember what was recognized. The rupture produces a sequence — dissolution, encounter, recognition, stepwise return — in which the ordinary self is observably reconstituted, piece by piece, with a witnessing position reported as intact before the reassembled self fully arrives. Because this ordering is available only through the apparatus whose reassembly it describes, it remains vulnerable to retrospective narrative binding, although the return phase is the record's strongest evidentiary zone. The recognition is one of several features this sequence makes available; the deeper datum is the visibility of the reassembly itself. The structure within which the recognition occurs is phenomenologically and structurally real — phenomenologically because it is reported with the felt quality of observed process, and structurally because its elements recur at different evidentiary weights: the coarse rupture-and-amnesia structure under controlled conditions; the recognition and the serial return across the wider first-person corpus; and the finer encounter imagery primarily within an interlinked report ecology. These recurrences constrain interpretation without defeating shared pharmacology, common neuropsychology, or cultural transmission as candidate explanations. The manuscript examines this structure by holding multiple interpretive frameworks in productive tension: each illuminates a facet of the rupture; none is granted final authority; their divergences are tracked as rigorously as their convergences. The aim is strong provisional mapping without metaphysical overclaiming.

The Phenomenological Foundation

Part 1 secures the foundation. The *Salvia* rupture has describable structure — onset, dissolution, encounter with presences, recognition, witness, and stepwise return — and this structure is reported with sufficient consistency across first-person sources of differing independence (the inquirer's own accounts; Arthur's and Heaven's specialist phenomenologies; Siebert's foundational case; the larger third-party literature, including the kk84 German-language corpus and multiple independent Reddit reports) to constrain interpretation. The unzipping image, the recognition of "having been here before," the encountered presences, and the sequential return are not artifacts of any one framework's vocabulary. The amnesia that has been treated in much of the existing literature as a single feature is in fact layered: anterograde (entry-phase), retrograde (content-phase), and exit (return-phase) components that can dissociate from each other and from the felt-sense of having-been-there — a phenomenological-memory trace that can persist even when propositional content does not. All of this layering is session-level: it belongs to the amnesia the rupture itself produces — an encoding, retrieval, and translation matter, named in this manuscript the *session amnesia*. Parts 4 and 6 introduce a second use of the word under the interpretive frameworks: the proposal that ordinary bounded selfhood is itself maintained by a constitutive concealment which the rupture temporarily thins. The manuscript names this the *constitutive amnesia* and keeps the two uses distinct. The state itself

occupies a position on a broader spectrum of altered-consciousness conditions, ranging from non-reportable limit cases (general anesthesia, deep dreamless sleep) through a productive threshold zone (hypnagogic states, lower-dose Salvia) to states where awareness is reported as present in an objectless void (deep-depth Salvia at the level of breakthrough). The distinction between the aware void (objectless awareness) and the non-reportable interval is structural rather than incidental: the two are indistinguishable from the outside, and what separates them is whether an accessible trace survives — not a difference the outside can read. The Aware-Void Account of the inquirer's record — the session reporting the sequence: void → awareness of the void → thought → "Rich" → tether → return — stands, if its objectless-awareness characterization holds, as primary phenomenological data for the condition the contemplative traditions have named theoretically. Whatever interpretation the later parts develop, it must account for the fact that the experience has structure independent of the frame.

A bracketing test follows from the evidentiary asymmetry just named, and it is stated once here rather than re-caveated throughout. If the Aware-Void Account is set aside entirely, a reduced process-claim remains supported: the wider corpus supports a compressed rupture followed, in several reports, by a gradual or piecemeal return, including one cross-linguistic report of piecewise reconstruction narrated from an observing position that persists while the ordinary "I" is absent. What the wider corpus does not independently supply is the objectless void, the calm affective texture, or this record's articulated witness → thought → "Rich" → tether sequence as a whole; bracketing the account therefore reduces the granularity of the process-claim and the comparative-contemplative reach built on the aware void: the witness-in-void condition, the *rigpa/turiya/sākṣin* comparisons, and the sleep-yoga correspondence become conditional readings rather than claims evidentially anchored from within this record, and the tether retains its cross-corpus attestation while losing its narration from a position prior to the re-enclosure. The Metzinger scope-limit changes register in the same way: the observation that objectless awareness leaves no content for a familiarity-tag to mis-flag survives as a structural conditional — if such a condition occurs, the mechanism does not reach it — rather than as a challenge anchored in this record's own data. Bracketing the Aware-Void Account therefore narrows the manuscript's contemplative reach without dislodging the epistemological argument's center of gravity. The datum is retained because the report is direct; the argument does not stand on it.

The Epistemic Crux

Two data points anchor the crux: the recognition is reported with the felt quality of knowing, and what the rupture opens onto is not ordinarily retained. The manuscript's central claim is that these two data points are not in tension, because they do not attach to the same locus. The recognition "I have been here before" arrives at the entry threshold — where the apparatus is destabilizing but still encoding, which is why the report itself survives across the literature. What is not ordinarily retained is the full content of the deeper strata, as the apparatus destabilizes and, at sufficient depth, goes offline; what survives of it is typically a felt-sense trace — though selective retrieval, delayed resurfacing, and rare propositional crossings occur — since propositional memory can fail while phenomenological memory persists. Whether the entry recognition and the deeper non-propositional knowing are related — whether the threshold report anticipates or partially translates the same territory — is an interpretive question the

manuscript carries as hypothesis, not as established phenomenology. Under the Idealist reading, the recognition may be veridical; but the narrower structural claim does not depend on that reading. The failure to retrieve the deeper content through ordinary propositional channels remains structural whether the recognition is read as veridical, artifactual, or undecidable — a claim that requires no metaphysical commitment while still constraining the interpretive options. Any interpretation that requires the deeper content to be propositionally retainable must explain why it is not retained. Any interpretation that dismisses the recognition as artifact must explain why it is reported with the felt quality of certainty across independent sources, and why a felt-sense trace persists even when content does not. The manuscript holds both edges.

How the Seven Parts Argue Toward the Thesis

Part 1 (Phenomenology) establishes that the Salvia rupture has structure independent of any interpretive frame: a layered amnesia (anterograde, retrograde, exit; with phenomenological and propositional components that can dissociate), a position on the broader consciousness-state spectrum that includes a productive threshold zone, and — in at least some accounts — a witness present in the void itself. The recognition is reported as knowing. Interpretation is suspended.

Part 2 (Thought-Free Awareness and Self-Model Collapse) asks the pre-metaphysical question: what happens to thought, language, and the self-model during the rupture? Arthur's mechanistic observation — that ordinary language depends wholly on memory, and that Salvia disrupts both — supplies the link between memory-collapse, language-collapse, and the failure-to-hold. The amnesia, however, is not a single event but a layered one: anterograde (entry-phase), retrograde (content-phase), and exit (return-phase) components can dissociate from each other and from the felt-sense trace — phenomenological memory that can persist when propositional memory does not. This gradient structure specifies what Arthur's mechanism must account for at each phase, and it complicates Metzinger's deflationary challenge — that "I have been here before" could be a kappa-opioid memory artifact — by requiring any account to specify which memory it is addressing. The convergence: something happens to the mediating apparatus, and the structure of what it does has determinate implications for what can and cannot be carried back. Part 2 establishes that the failure-to-hold is structural before any interpretive framework gets to interpret it.

Part 3 (The Bardo as Experiential Map) offers the Tibetan framework as a map of *transit*. Onset as *chikhai*, encounter as *chönyid*, return as *sidpa* — the structural mapping holds.¹ The relationship may go further than analogy: Tibetan dream and sleep yoga are training regimes directed at the witness-in-void condition, which the Aware-Void Account documents from the Salvia side. Whether the two routes reach the same ground in the full technical sense, or resemble each other structurally, is held open. What the Bardo framework does not explain is

¹ The stage names *chikhai*, *chönyid*, and *sidpa* are used here as conventional Western-reception shorthand for the three-part bardo sequence, in the form carried into the psychedelic literature by Leary, Metzner & Alpert (1964); they are not the romanizations of the translation this manuscript relies on. Direct engagement with the *Bardo Thödol* is through Thurman's translation (Padmasambhava 1994; see note 11), which renders *bardo* as "the between" and does not use these spellings.

why ordinary forgetting reasserts so completely after the rupture. That gap is where Part 4 begins.

Part 4 (The Hinge — Arranged Forgetting and Fragmented Selfhood) is the manuscript's pivot. It takes the phenomenological datum — the felt sense that the forgetting was not accidental — and refuses to collapse it into a single position. The interpretation admits a gradient: strong adversarial Gnostic (Archons as enforcers, the Demiurge as architect of a forgetting-trap); Hoeller's softer Gnostic (the crime is ignorance, not malice); Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna*² (the self-concealment is structurally necessary for particularity itself, with *anugraha* — self-revelation — built into the same structure). The manuscript holds the gradient rather than committing to one position, because the phenomenology is the same across all three readings and what differs is what the arrangement is taken to be. The phenomenological hinge for the gradient is the tether — the structural pull back toward biographical structure — which each framework reads differently: Kastrup as the dissociative boundary reconstituting the personal mind; Shaivism as the rhythm of *tirodhāna* and *anugraha*; Gnostic-strong as adversarial enforcement; Gnostic-soft as structural arrangement felt as imposed; Gurdjieff as the gravity of mechanical habit. Tracking these divergent readings preserves framework-divergence as data rather than error. The distinction between the aware void and the non-reportable interval further sharpens the question: which forgetting is arranged? The anterograde, retrograde, and exit components do not admit the same answer. Gurdjieff's question cuts across the gradient: the recognition that arrives is only as trustworthy as the I making it, and the unity of that I cannot be assumed. PKD's Exegesis serves as the contemporary evidentiary case — confirming the structural reality of the recognition while demonstrating, in the same record, the difficulty of holding it.

Part 5 (Jung, Archetypes, and the Autonomous Psyche) addresses the encountered presences as autonomous psychic structures. The witness that observes the reassembly — and, in some accounts, the witness that is present in the void itself — may be the *Self* in Jung's sense, the totality of the psyche including its unconscious layers, but this identification is held provisionally, not asserted. Whether the witness-in-void condition and the return-phase witnessing position are the same structure across sessions, or whether the Jungian Self can be plural, remains an open question the manuscript presses without resolving. Active imagination is offered as a method for working with autonomous psychic material after the encounter. The Jungian frame illuminates one aspect of the rupture without claiming to be the whole of it.

Part 6 (Consciousness, Dissociation, and the Structure of Individual Mind) presents Kastrup's Analytic Idealism as one coherent ontological rendering of the rupture-and-return structure mapped by the preceding frameworks. Individual minds as localized dissociations within one universal consciousness; the Salvia rupture as a temporary breach in that dissociative boundary. Dissociation, however, is not a single phenomenon but is itself layered across the spectrum of states: the filter weakens at the threshold zone (Zones 2–3 in Part 1's transit vocabulary: the entry-threshold and dreaming-awake strata), operates differently in altered-but-present states, and reaches a non-reportable limit at Zone 6; Zone 5 is the aware void (objectless awareness), in which awareness without object-content is reported in the Aware-Void Account. The distinction

² Wallis 2013 for *tirodhāna*/*anugraha* and *pratyabhijñā*. First use; inline (Wallis 2013) thereafter.

is not between a proven presence and a proven absence of awareness at maximum depth, but between a reported condition and an interval from which no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I. The frame is large enough to hold the Bardo, the Gnostic, and the Jungian readings without collapsing them. What it does not settle: which I recognizes, why the re-enclosure is so complete, or where on Part 4's gradient the dissociation should be read. Whether dissociation maps as Archonic constraint or as freely-chosen *tirodhāna* depends on what the manuscript holds in Part 4. Kastrup's framework is agnostic between them; the gradient choice propagates.

Part 7 (Integration and the Eternal Now) asks what kind of life is possible after one has repeatedly seen the structure of one's own ordinary continuity and been unable to keep seeing it. Ordinary integration frameworks — therapy, journaling, time — were developed for unintegrated material that needs to be brought back into ordinary continuity. The Salvia rupture is not that. It is the experience of having seen, repeatedly, that the continuity itself is constructed. The integration moves in the wrong direction. Two questions are reframed here. First, the dosing question becomes an epistemological access question rather than a depth question: the productive zone is the threshold, not the deepest reach, because past the threshold reportability collapses — no accessible trace survives the deepest reach for the returning personal-I. Second, integration becomes a question of what is preserved when felt-sense persists without retrievable content — the work is not to recover what was seen but to live in relation to the felt-sense trace of having-seen. What remains is the question of what the contemplative traditions that have lived with this loop for centuries have to say to a position they did not anticipate, and what kind of practice might address what therapy cannot reach.

A Note on Authorial Standpoint

The author writes from within Analytic Idealism. I hold consciousness to be the ontological primitive of reality; individual minds, including my own, to be localized dissociations within a unified field of consciousness; and the physical world to be the extrinsic appearance of that dissociation, not its cause. I arrived at this position before the manuscript began, and the experiences this manuscript documents have not weakened it.

A manuscript investigating the epistemology of a state that points directly at this question faces a choice: perform agnosticism by hiding the standpoint, or disclose it and let the reader read accordingly. This manuscript takes the second path.

The discipline of the work is to hold the author's ontological commitment in suspension and allow competing frameworks — Metzinger's deflationary self-model account³, Tibetan bardo theory, Gnostic anamnesis, Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna*, Gurdjieff's fragmented-I — to illuminate features the author's preferred account would otherwise pass over. Where the discipline fails, it will fail in the direction of Analytic Idealism: summary statements will

³ Metzinger 2003. The kappa-opioid familiarity-tag formulation is the manuscript's construction of a deflationary mechanism informed by Metzinger's self-model framework, not a claim Metzinger makes about Salvia.

occasionally harden what the methodology holds open. The reader is better positioned to register these moments with the standpoint disclosed than without it.

What follows is therefore a deliberately bilateral document. The phenomenological data, the framework analyses, and the evidential arguments are offered as readable across ontological positions. Where the manuscript appears to settle the metaphysical question — where it asserts rather than maps — that is the author's standpoint speaking through the prose.

A Note on Method and Register. This manuscript moves deliberately among three registers, and a reader expecting a single one may mistake the movement for a lack of discipline. It argues as analytic epistemology where the question is what kind of knowledge the rupture yields and whether a deflationary account defeats it; it works as comparative-contemplative phenomenology where the question is what the Bardo, Gnostic, Shaivite, Jungian, and Gurdjieffian traditions have already mapped of this terrain; and it speaks as first-person integration where the question is what living in relation to the felt-sense trace requires of the one who carries it. The movement is structural, not stylistic drift. The object compels it: the epistemology of a state the author both analyzes and inhabits cannot be written wholly from outside the state without discarding the datum that only the first-person position holds, nor wholly from inside it without discarding the argument that only the analytic position can carry. Each register checks the others — the analytic register prevents the first-person material from hardening into testimony that claims more than it can show; the first-person register prevents the analytic material from theorizing about a state it has not contacted; the comparative register keeps both honest against traditions that have lived with this structure longer than any individual account. The form this produces is a long-form essay rather than a journal article, and it is offered as such: a circulated preprint whose argument is followed across all three registers, from which a narrower paper in any single register could later be extracted, but which would lose its object if reduced to one.

What the Manuscript Does Not Claim

It does not claim to settle the metaphysical status of what is recognized. The Idealist reading (recognition as veridical reduction in dissociation), the deflationary reading (recognition as memory artifact), and the agnostic reading (the evidence underdetermines the metaphysics) are held in tension; the manuscript does not adjudicate between them.

It does not claim to commit to a single position on the Gnostic gradient. The phenomenological data are the same across the three readings; the manuscript prefers the gradient to a forced choice because the choice would exceed what the phenomenology can ground.

It does not claim that the deeper content toward which the recognition points can be brought back in full propositional form. The entry-threshold report — "I have been here before" — survives, and rare deeper fragments cross. But if Arthur's mechanism is right, the medium of return cannot carry the deeper strata back unaltered. The manuscript's prose is therefore not a reproduction of what was seen but an attempt to map the place from which it was seen.

It does not claim that the inquirer's own accounts are unmediated phenomenology. The hermeneutic circle — that the interpretation of any experience proceeds from a starting interpretation that is itself shaped by the experience under examination — is acknowledged: Rich Fegley is simultaneously the primary witness and the primary interpreter, and some accounts describe experiences first had over twenty years ago. Where the manuscript shifts from first-person to third-person reference ("observing Rich Fegley reassembling" rather than "observing myself reassembling"), the shift marks moments at which the personal self is being treated as an *observed object* rather than the observing position — a register-distinction that reflects the manuscript's central structural claim about the witness rather than inconsistency of authorial voice. The accounts are treated as evidence with the appropriate epistemic weight, neither inflated nor dismissed. As the mediation caution in 1.2 specifies, where a report was articulated through a framework already operative for the inquirer, its fit with that framework is not independent corroboration of it; mediation limits its evidentiary role without nullifying it as a report.

It does not claim that the cosmic-joke affect is purely descriptive. Section 7.1 audits the labeling itself, noting that "joke" and "irony" may be coping moves rather than neutral observations of phenomenology. The audit is part of the data.

The Standing Posture

Strong provisional mapping without metaphysical overclaiming. Each framework is allowed to illuminate the rupture and to pressure-test the others. Where they converge, the convergence is registered. Where they diverge, the divergence is preserved rather than smoothed. The aim is not synthesis. The aim is to hold the question — what kind of knowledge is this? — with sufficient rigor that the answer, when it comes (or when it fails to come), is earned rather than assumed.

The manuscript is the beginning of a practice, not its conclusion.

Methodological note on the primary accounts

The first-person material drawn upon in this manuscript is not treated as unmediated access to the Salvia state. The deepest phases of the rupture suspend the memory-language apparatus that would allow ordinary phenomenological reporting; there is no notebook taken in the void. The accounts are therefore organized by evidentiary register rather than presented as a single uniform record:

Pre-rupture context. Where, when, life period, dose if known, expectations, ordinary baseline. Ordinary historical data, of the kind any retrospective autobiographical report can supply.

Surviving in-state fragments. Utterances, phrases, recognitions that made it through and have persisted across years or decades. The paradigm case in this record is the in-session utterance "*It's just amnesia, I have to remember!*" — words spoken inside the state in 2004 that survived the forgetting and have remained verbatim through twenty years

of subsequent reflection. Fragments of this kind carry the highest evidentiary weight available from inside the state, precisely because the forgetting did not erase them — with one caveat the closing self-audit (7.4) applies to the whole record and that must be applied here too: a fragment retold across twenty years has been stabilized by its retellings, and reconsolidation can polish what it preserves. What the fragment's survival establishes is that something crossed the gap in propositional form; the verbatim claim is the record's best memory of itself, not an external verification.

Return-phase phenomenology. Observations made while memory and language are reassembling but the reassembly itself remains visible. This is the manuscript's strongest evidentiary zone: the apparatus of ordinary consciousness is reconstituting in slow motion, no longer fully opaque to itself. The stepwise return — *boom boom boom* — and the witness watching reassembly happen are both return-phase data. They are not reports from the deepest rupture; they are reports of the door swinging back.

Immediate residue. Affect, certainty, recognition, fear, the cosmic-joke quality, the felt sense that something has been seen that cannot be brought back as content. What persists in the hours and days after the session.

Structural recognitions, concurrent and retrospective. Moments at which a literary, cultural, or scriptural pattern is recognized as structurally isomorphic to the experience. These divide further by timing. The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 11 recognition — "*it's almost like Krishna had Arjuna smoke Salvia*" — arrived *alongside* the 2004 sessions, not after them; reading and experience illuminated each other in real time. *Severance* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* arrived years later as retrospective triangulations. Both register as data, but the concurrent recognitions are less subject to the confirmation pressure that retrospective ones must answer to.

Framework interpretation. Bardo, Gnostic, Gurdjieff, Jung, Kastrup, Shaivite, Metzinger. Within this register a further distinction is enforced. Some frameworks were operative at the time of an experience and partially shaped what was noticed: the Vedantic and yogic frame — Bhagavad Gita reading, study with Swami Tadatmananda, Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* — was concurrent with the earliest sessions from 2004 onward, and the frame was practical as well as doctrinal: at least one of the earliest sessions was entered with a deliberate concentration practice, attention held on a single physical object in an attempt to remain aware of the act of watching as the state came on; the Wilberian Integral synthesis became operative during the Boulder period from 2005 to 2008. Other frameworks were adopted later and applied to data that preceded them: Kastrup's Analytic Idealism, the Gnostic and Shaivite materials, Gurdjieff's Law of Octaves, and Philip K. Dick's Exegesis belong to the current synthesis. Concurrent frameworks shaped what was noticed at the time; later frameworks map what was already there. The manuscript names which is which.

The aim is not to recover a pure raw phenomenological report from the deepest zone. Such a report is not available — and the unavailability is not an inconvenient limitation of this record but the central epistemic feature of the state under investigation. The failure of ordinary

retention is what the manuscript is about. The aim is therefore to track what kinds of evidence survive from a state whose structure precludes ordinary reporting, and to mark plainly which register is being drawn upon at any given point.

PART 1: THE SALVIA RUPTURE — PHENOMENOLOGY

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

This first section describes rather than interprets. Where contemplative or framework vocabulary appears — and it will appear, because some of the phenomenology has no better label — it is used as a label for a reported feature, not as an interpretive claim about it; the claims those vocabularies carry are suspended until the parts that examine them. The aim is to produce as careful a phenomenological account as the available materials allow — what occurs in the *Salvia divinorum* state, in what sequence, with what reported features, and against what neurobiological backdrop. The interpretive frameworks — Bardo, Gnostic, Gurdjieffian, Jungian, Idealist, deflationary — enter the manuscript later. They are deliberately suspended here.

This is not because interpretation is unimportant. It is because interpretation that is not anchored in close phenomenological description tends to flatten the experience into whatever framework reaches it first. Bardo language colonizes Salvia easily. So does Gnostic language. So does neuroscience. Each framework can recognize itself in the rupture before the rupture has finished being described. The section's task is to slow that recognition down — to put pressure on the data before any interpretation gets to claim it.

The data comes from three sources, in descending order of immediacy: my own first-person accounts; the two existing book-length phenomenologies of the Salvia state — J. D. Arthur's *Salvia Divinorum: Doorway to Thought-Free Awareness* (2010) and Ross Heaven's *Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia* (2013) — both of which compile additional third-party first-person reports; and the published clinical and pharmacological work, anchored by Daniel Siebert's 1993 isolation of salvinorin A and his foundational self-report. Arthur and Heaven are the closest thing this field has to specialist phenomenologists. Where my own observations confirm theirs, I cite the convergence. Where they sharpen mine, I borrow. Where I depart, I mark the departure.

1.1 The Empirical Anchor

Salvinorin A is a κ -opioid receptor agonist. This is unusual. It is not chemically related to the classical psychedelics — psilocybin, LSD, DMT, mescaline — which are 5-HT_{2A} serotonin receptor agonists. Nor to the dissociative anesthetics — ketamine, PCP — which are NMDA antagonists. It produces a phenomenologically distinctive state through a distinct receptor pathway.

Daniel Siebert isolated and self-tested salvinorin A in 1993.⁴ His account — the foundational first-person record at the molecular level — appears as a recurring data point throughout this section. Siebert's published catalog of characteristic effects, summarized later by Heaven, identifies five recurring features: the resurfacing of past memories (often childhood scenes); sensations of motion or being pulled or twisted by unseen forces; visions of membranes, films,

⁴ Siebert isolated and characterized salvinorin A; the pharmacology is reported in Siebert 1994. (Isolation 1993; publication 1994.)

and two-dimensional surfaces; merging with or becoming objects; and overlapping realities such as being in several locations at once. Each of these surfaces in the structure of the rupture below.

Onset is rapid, typically within one minute when inhaled. Peak effects last roughly five to ten minutes. Total duration before return to baseline is approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. This compressed timeline matters for the phenomenology in a way that is rarely emphasized: the brevity of the rupture makes its structure observable in a way that longer experiences do not allow. The brevity of the ten-minute Salvia state makes its threshold-and-return sequence examinable in a way a multi-hour session does not — not because the deepest phase is recalled in full, but because entry, threshold, and reassembly fall within a single retainable arc. The deepest stratum remains subject to the layered amnesia described below; what brevity makes examinable is the structure around the gap, not its core. Whatever else Salvia is, it is among the most *examinable* of the deep dissociative states — rivaled in brevity only by nitrous oxide, whose one-to-two-minute arc grounds the closest historical precedent for this argument: William James's anesthetic self-experiments, with their insight that arrives carrying total authority and does not survive the return.

The most thorough neuroimaging study to date — Doss et al. (2020), from the Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research — used fMRI to examine functional connectivity changes during the acute Salvinorin A state. The principal findings: salvinorin A attenuated within-network connectivity in the default mode network (DMN), increased between-network connectivity, and reduced brainwide dynamic functional connectivity.⁵ The DMN attenuation was strongest during peak effects and recovered as the experience subsided. This pattern — DMN disruption — is consistent with what has been observed for psilocybin, LSD, DMT, and ketamine.

The Hopkins authors are appropriately cautious about reading "ego dissolution" off this finding. They note that DMN disruption has also been observed under THC, alcohol, and amphetamine, where dissolution is not typically reported. The neurobiological signature is informative but not decisive. The Salvia state is *something the brain is doing in this configuration*; from the imaging alone, it is not yet anything more than that.

A second instrument is relevant here: the SALVIA Experiential Rating Scale⁶, designed specifically to capture dimensions of the Salvinorin A experience that other psychedelic instruments miss. It tracks features such as identity loss, contact with non-human entities, perceptual unzipping or sheet-like distortions of the visual field, and the felt sense of having entered a different reality rather than having altered the present one. The existence of the scale is itself relevant data: the standard psychedelic measurement instruments were judged inadequate to capture what Salvia produces.

⁵ Doss et al. 2020. The Johns Hopkins fMRI study of salvinorin A: attenuated within-network DMN connectivity, increased between-network connectivity, and reduced brainwide dynamic functional connectivity during acute effects, recovering as effects subside. First substantive use; inline (Doss et al. 2020) thereafter.

⁶ The SALVIA Experiential Rating Scale (Siebert n.d.); dose-level structure used descriptively as a depth/orientation schema, not as a clinical-validation claim.

1.2 The Structure of the Rupture

What follows is a phenomenological synthesis drawn from my own accounts, Arthur's and Heaven's published phenomenologies (including Siebert's foundational case as quoted by Heaven), and the larger third-party first-person literature. It is offered as descriptive — not yet interpreted.

Before that inventory, one structural observation must come first, because it shapes how everything else should be read: **the Salvia state is not a single destination.** It is a terrain with gradient depth, and users may move through multiple registers within a single session. Daniel Siebert's SALVIA Experiential Rating Scale — designed specifically because existing psychedelic measurement instruments failed to capture the Salvia state — maps six distinct levels, from subtle alteration through amnesia. These levels are not sequential stages that every user passes through; they are a gradient of possible depth. What a user reports depends partly on dose, partly on set and setting, partly on the emotional and attentional state they bring to the experience. A user at Level 3 (light visionary — closed-eye fractals and geometric imagery, full cognitive coherence, no confusion of imagery with reality) is in a different state from a user at Level 5 (immaterial existence — loss of individuality, complete break with consensual reality, some lucid thought remaining) who is in a different state from a user at Level 6 (amnesic effects — consciousness lost or unrecallable). The phenomenological inventory that follows identifies where each feature tends to appear in this gradient. No single session need contain all of them.

1.2.1 The Entry: Salvia Space Recognized

The first reported event — appearing at any level of depth — is not the disruption of ordinary consciousness but the *recognition of a different domain beginning to appear*. My early accounts describe this as entering "Salvia Space": a felt sense that the veil is dissolving, as if someone is slowly turning up the lights in a room that was always there. This is not the experience of one's ordinary consciousness being distorted. It is the experience of a different field becoming visible as a field — and recognizing it as such. At any level of the SALVIA scale, from subtle alteration through breakthrough, users report this entering-recognition: something else is here now, becoming more present.

The manuscript uses *Salvia Space* throughout as a shorthand for this domain — the field that becomes perceptible at the entry threshold and is recognized as already-there. The term is descriptive rather than ontologically loaded; what *kind* of domain it is remains the question the manuscript holds open.

Critically, the recognition "I have been here before" arrives *at this threshold*, not after deep immersion. In my own accounts, the recognition comes immediately — right at the moment Salvia Space first becomes perceptible — before any encounter with presences, before amnesia, before depth. It is not recognition of something encountered during the trip. It is recognition of the *space itself*, the domain, as familiar. The ordinary world is not gone yet; Salvia Space is just becoming visible through it. The recognition belongs to the entry, not to the depth.

This sequential observation matters: the "I have been here before" is not a recognition that surfaces after forgetting and returning. It surfaces as the door opens.

One consequence of this placement must be marked now, because later parts will otherwise appear to contradict it. A recognition that arrives at the entry threshold arrives while the memory-and-language apparatus is destabilizing but still running — which is why the report itself is propositionally retained: "I have been here before" is among the few salviaic contents that survives verbatim across the literature. What fails to hold is not this report but the bulk of the deeper strata's content, as the apparatus destabilizes and, at sufficient depth, goes offline. Recognition-class events are also reported from those deeper strata — the Zone 4 recognition "it is me doing this to myself," and the 2004 in-state utterance "It's just amnesia, I have to remember!", this record's paradigm case of a propositional crossing — so the recognition should not be treated as a single event at a single locus. Whether the entry recognition is related to anything in the deeper strata — whether it anticipates, points toward, or partially translates the same territory — is an interpretive question, and the manuscript treats it as one: the surviving evidence establishes the timing of the report and the loss of the depth, not the relation between them.

1.2.2 Directional Structure

Once ordinary grip loosens, the rupture does not move in a single direction. Two drifts are available, and which one dominates depends on dose, set, setting, and which layer of the experiencer is most available at the moment of loosening:

Outward drift — away from the personal, toward Salvia Space, toward what some accounts describe as One Mind or the transpersonal field. This is the dominant direction in the third-party literature and in the majority of my own accounts. As depth increases, personal memory fades, personality structure loosens, and the individual experiencer dissolves into something that feels larger, impersonal, already-there. This direction is where the most dramatic encounters and the deepest amnesia occur.

Inward drift — not outward but deeper into the personal: childhood formation material, early relational ground, biographical layers below the surface of ordinary memory. The Childhood-Ground Account of my record — an inward-drift session — documents this: not a pull toward One Mind but a somatic regression to maternal care and early safety — the same modality (felt, somatic) as the outward presences, but oriented toward biographical rather than transpersonal depth. The kk84 German-language corpus shows analogous examples.

Both drifts are real. The Salvia rupture is not a one-destination mechanism. The manuscript's subsequent interpretive frameworks apply differently to each direction: the Bardo and Gnostic frameworks map more naturally to the outward drift; Jungian depth psychology maps more naturally to the inward. This distinction should be maintained throughout.

1.2.3 The State-Space Spectrum

The SALVIA gradient maps depth within the Salvia state itself, but the Salvia state also occupies a position on a broader spectrum of altered-consciousness conditions. Tracking this larger

spectrum clarifies what is happening at each level of the SALVIA scale and reveals something the within-Salvia gradient alone does not show: the most epistemologically productive zone of the Salvia state is not the deepest.

The broader spectrum can be organized by the presence and quality of personal-I dissociation:

The non-reportable limit. General anesthesia (propofol, sodium pentothal) and deep dreamless sleep (*sushupti* in the Advaita vocabulary) constitute the limit cases: no accessible trace of the personal-I survives for the returning subject. On return these states present as retrospective gaps; from the outside, they are unconsciousness. The comparison among them is at the level of the returning subject's access — not a claim that their underlying conditions are identical or that awareness ceased.

Threshold zone. Light or emerging anesthesia, hypnagogic states (sleep onset), hypnopompic states (waking), and lower-dose Salvia inhabit a different region. The personal-I is weakened — its filtering and organizing function is partially offline — but the dissolution is observable from the inside. The witnessing structure is still operating; what it witnesses is its own loosening, the disassembly of the apparatus that ordinarily delivers the world. This is the hypnagogic-equivalent condition that contemplatives, dreamers, and patients emerging from anesthesia across traditions have identified as the field in which the structure of mind shows itself.

Altered-but-present. Lucid dreams and moderate-depth Salvia experiences with retrievable content occupy a third position: the personal-I is intact and operating, but it is operating in a different state-space. The recognition event occurs; partial content returns.

The non-reportable limit, again. At the high-dose Salvia limit — Level 6 on the SALVIA scale — the returning personal-I finds no accessible trace from the interval and no bridge back to ordinary categories. This recurrence is the crucial structural finding. More Salvia past a certain threshold does not mean more access. Past the threshold, no accessible trace survives to bring back.

The epistemologically productive zone of the Salvia state is therefore the threshold — where the personal-I is dissolved enough to stop filtering but not so dissolved that no bridge back remains. This reframes the dosing question, in a way the manuscript will return to in Part 7: the relevant question is not how deep the user can go but whether the threshold zone can be inhabited long enough for the recognition to occur and the return to function.

1.2.4 The Zones of the Transit

The SALVIA gradient maps depth, and the state-space spectrum positions the Salvia state among altered-consciousness conditions more broadly. Neither of these maps the sequential phenomenology of what one passes through during a session — what is encountered, in what order, as the rupture proceeds. That sequence is identifiable across reports and is the structural register in which several of the rupture's most important features locate. The first five zones name reported locations within the transit, in the order they are encountered, regardless of which depth a given session ultimately reaches. Zone 6 is different in kind: it marks the

non-reportable limit — the point at which no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I — and so is not a positively described location. A light session may pass through the first two zones and return; a deeper session may pass through Zones 1–5 before reaching that limit.

The zones are not the same as Siebert's SALVIA levels. The SALVIA scale measures intensity of effect; the zones measure phenomenological location within the transit. A session reaching Level 4 on the SALVIA scale may pass through Zones 1, 2, and 3 and return. A session reaching Level 6 may pass through Zones 1–5 and then reach the non-reportable limit. The two scales are complementary and both are used throughout the manuscript — the SALVIA scale for depth, the zones for transit-position.

Zone 1: Ordinary consciousness. The personal-I is intact; the dissociative boundary is closed; the filtering and organizing apparatus is fully operational. Nothing about Salvia is yet evident. This is the baseline against which the transit will be registered.

Zone 2: Entry threshold. The personal-I begins to destabilize. The "veil dissolving" sensation described in the entry passage above is registered here. This is also where Salvia Space first becomes perceptible and where, in many reports, the recognition "I have been here before" arrives. Unprepared users frequently lose orientation entirely at this point — the felt structure of the world begins to give way before any clear new structure has replaced it.

Zone 3: Dreaming awake. The majority of Salvia reports — including the most dramatic content — live in this zone. The personal-I is partially dissolved: enough to lose its anchoring grip, not enough to stop generating interpretation. What arises has the phenomenological character of dream material: swirling, layered, image-rich, narratively chaotic but content-dense. The descriptor "dreaming awake" is precise. The user is encountering the contents of mind in their native pre-propositional language, the way one encounters dream contents from inside a dream, without the waking apparatus translating them into ordinary cognitive register. The chaos is the form; the content is meaningful in the same way dream content is meaningful, and admits the same methodology — Jungian amplification, attention to recurring figures and structural patterns — for interpretation. The Bardo parallel here is exact: the *chönyid bardo* of the Tibetan tradition is precisely the realm of vivid, beautiful, and frightening apparitions that the unprepared consciousness mistakes for external reality and gets lost in. Tibetan dream yoga is the practice of becoming lucid within this layer — bringing the witness into Zone 3 without collapsing the content.

The zone admits two structurally distinct sub-currents that should be tracked separately:

Zone 3a: the felt sense of arrangement. The phenomenological texture of "*someone did this to me*" or "*I was not supposed to discover this*" — the felt sense that the forgetting was not accidental. This is real as phenomenological data and is reported with striking consistency. Its interpretation, however, is open: the felt-sense is of a concealment being met from the inside — as though something long hidden is being approached by the very process that kept it hidden. What this texture amounts to is taken up in Part 4; Part 1 records only the texture. The

adversarial register belongs to the felt-sense; whether it belongs to the ontology is the question Part 4 takes up under the heading of the Gnostic/Shivaite gradient.

Zone 3b: archetypal content. The encounters with presences, the recurring figures (the Salvia goddess across the kk84 German-language corpus and the Shepherdess across English-language Reddit reports), and those object-becoming experiences that carry symbolic charge. These are accessed *through* the dissolving personal-I and are therefore rendered in personal and cultural idiom — but the structural consistency across users who share no interpretive doctrine — though not no ecology; the provenance limit fixed in 1.3 applies here with full force — suggests the encountered material is not simply personal projection. The rendering is personal; what is encountered may be archetypal. Not all object-becoming belongs in this bin, however, and the sorting deserves to be explicit. A subset of the object-becoming reports — becoming a brick, a wall, a zipper-tooth, a sheet of paper, in some reports for a felt lifetime — is affectively flat and arbitrary in its object: no presence attends the assumed identity, no instruction or symbolic charge accompanies it, and the episode resolves through ordinary return rather than through any encounter. Phenomenologically, what these reports describe is the point of experiential focus coming loose and settling briefly on an impersonal coordinate — "localization" is deliberately avoided here, since that term is reserved for its technical sense in Part 6, where it names the dissociative formation of an alter. The same loosening that permits inward drift toward biographical depth and outward drift toward the transpersonal field appears in these reports as neither drift: focus lands somewhere, and the somewhere is empty. The sorting mark is therefore the character of the destination, not the mode of arrival. Where a presence, a teaching, or symbolic charge attends the assumed identity, the report remains in this zone's archetypal material; where none does, the report patterns with the mechanism-adjacent phenomena examined in Part 2, and it is not counted toward the archetypal convergence that later parts interpret. Whether the charged remainder comprises Jungian autonomous psychic structures, contents of mind-at-large briefly accessible across the weakening dissociative boundary, or some other reading belongs to Parts 5 and 6.

The dominant content of Zone 3 is therefore both real — in the sense that it has structural content — and underdetermined, in the sense that what it is content *of* remains an open question. The methodological consequence is that the entities, presences, and figures encountered in this zone must not be dismissed as projection (the convergence across independent users argues against that) and must not be naively asserted as literal independent beings (the data does not warrant that either). They are recurring structural features of the dreaming-awake layer, and the appropriate interpretive posture is the same as the one applied to recurring figures in dreams: take them seriously as representatives of something real at that layer of mind, while holding open what that layer is.

Zone 4: The clearing. If the dissolution proceeds far enough — and if the experiencer has sufficient non-attachment, training, or simple luck — the chaos of Zone 3 clears. The personal-I has released its interpretive grip; what remains is a quieter witnessing position from which the rupture is visible whole. This is where the recognition "*it is me doing this to myself*" arrives, where the affective response sometimes described as the cosmic joke is reported, where the relief from terror occurs. The clearing is not departure from Zone 3 but Zone 3 becoming lucid —

the dream-contents are still present but no longer mistaken for external events imposed on a continuing personal self. The Kashmir Shaivism term *pratyabhijñā* — recognition — names the structural event with precision: the apparent self recognizing its own concealment from the side of self-recognition rather than self-protection. Whether this recognition is veridical or artifactual belongs to later parts. The phenomenological point is that the zone exists, that its affective signature is distinct, and that the recognition occurs from a position that is no longer the personal-I.

Zone 5: The aware void (reported objectless awareness). The named personal-I has not yet reassembled. Awareness is reported as present, with no differentiated object-content reported — no thought, autobiographical memory, emotion, or imagery available as an object of attention. The Aware-Void Account provides the manuscript's primary first-person report of this condition, within the sequence void → awareness of the void → thought → “Rich” → tether → return. The evidentiary status of this zone differs from that of Zones 2 and 3 and should be carried visibly: the cross-validated salvific corpus secures the entry threshold and the dreaming-awake stratum across many independent reporters, while the aware void rests, in this record, on a single first-person account read against the contemplative traditions' theoretical descriptions. The zone is retained in the map because the report is direct and the traditions' convergence on the condition is independent; its weight is that of one report, not of a corpus. The aware void is a limiting case within Arthur's broader category of thought-free awareness, which may still include nonverbal experiential content. The contemplative traditions offer comparison vocabularies — *rigpa* in the Tibetan framework, *turiya* or *sākṣin* in the Advaita framework — but the phenomenological label does not settle whether these are technically identical or what the awareness ultimately is. The Tibetan *rigpa* in the context of sleep, the Advaita and Kashmir Shaivism *turiya* — the contemplative naming-conventions converge here. Zone 5 is reached, when it is reached, by way of Zone 4 — though not all sessions reach Zone 4 in sufficient form to make Zone 5 accessible, and not all sessions that reach Zone 5 do so by way of a recognized Zone 4. Tibetan sleep yoga is the practice directed at stable presence in this zone specifically.

Zone 6: The non-reportable interval (the reportability horizon). At the limit where no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I, the interval appears retrospectively as a gap. It cannot be positively characterized from first-person evidence. Awareness may have lapsed; awareness may have continued without leaving an accessible trace; or a trace may exist but remain inaccessible to the returning personal-I. The blank does not decide among these possibilities. From the standpoint of retrospective access, the interval is comparable to gaps associated with general anesthesia or deep dreamless sleep, but that comparison does not establish that the underlying conditions are identical or that awareness ceased. This is why increasing depth beyond the point of reportability does not necessarily produce greater epistemic access: once no bridge survives, the returning personal-I has no usable first-person evidence to bring back. The dosing question follows from this and is taken up in Part 7.

The zones provide the transit-vocabulary the rest of the manuscript will use to locate features and frameworks. Body-world distortion, the Others, and the recurring archetypal figures all locate in Zone 3. The clearing and the cosmic-joke affect locate in Zone 4. The aware void

(objectless awareness) is Zone 5. The amnesia distribution maps across the sequence: anterograde forgetting refers to Zone 2 and the entry to Zone 3; retrograde forgetting refers to what was present in Zones 3, 4, or 5 but cannot be propositionally retrieved; exit amnesia refers to gaps in the return through Zones 3, 2, and 1. The interpretive frameworks the manuscript develops attach differently to different zones: the *chönyid bardo* and the Jungian autonomous psyche speak primarily to Zone 3; *pratyabhijñā* and the cosmic joke speak to Zone 4; *turiya*, *rigpa*, and *sushupti* speak to Zones 5 and 6; the Archonic and Shaivite readings of arrangement attach specifically to Zone 3a. The zones do not settle the interpretive questions, but they specify *where* each interpretive question applies.

Zone	Transit position	Typical SALVIA level	Spectrum band	Characteristic features	Amnesia component	Framework attachments
1	Ordinary consciousness	baseline	ordinary	Personal-I intact; boundary closed	—	Baseline reference
2	Entry threshold	2–3	threshold zone	Veil dissolving; Salvia Space perceptible; "been here before" arrives	Anterograde (dose-modulated)	Clear-light glimpse at entry; hypnagogic analogue
3	Dreaming awake (3a texture; 3b content)	3–5	altered-but-present	Dream-register content; presences; body/world distortion	Retrograde (gradient, selective)	Chönyid bardo; Jungian autonomous psyche; Archon/Shaivite (3a)
4	The clearing	4–5	altered-but-present	Lucidity; "me doing this to myself"; cosmic-joke affect	Retrograde	Pratyabhijñā
5	The aware void	deep 5	threshold of non-reportable	Awareness, no object (single-account basis: the Aware-Void Account)	Retrograde at limit	Rigpa, turiya, sāksin
6	Non-reportable interval	6	non-reportable limit	Retrospective gap; cause indeterminate	Total (access-level)	Sushupti / anesthesia (access only)

1.2.5 Level-Dependent Features

The phenomenological features that characterize the Salvia state are not uniformly present across all sessions or depths. What follows maps each feature to where it tends to appear in the SALVIA gradient. Each feature is also located in the zone-vocabulary introduced above, so that depth and transit-position can both be tracked:

Body-world distortion (Levels 3 and above). Reports converge on a small set of recurring images: reality unzipping, walls or floors revealing themselves as sheets being pulled away, the visual field reorganizing into pages or panels. Heaven's catalog includes Martin: "*like a zipper being undone, and I'm riding along it, being unzipped as well*"; Trendal: "*everything I was seeing was losing its depth and becoming flat, like a piece of paper*"; Alexia: "*The Salvia landscape looks very two-dimensional to me.*" The third-party report from "Duskin" describes the zipper with notable precision: a zipper opening reality from the upper right of the visual field down to the lower left, with familiar objects still visible but no longer connected to their ordinary function.

A first-person report from this record instantiates the same allocentric placement from the reporter's own early experimentation. In one of the first sessions, the observer — bringing a rudimentary yogic concentration stance to the state — fixed attention on a single physical object, an incense burner resting on the rug directly ahead, in a deliberate attempt to find something to hold as the state came on. What was retained is structurally specific: the object remained at the center of the visual field while, past a certain radius, the entire surround resolved into undifferentiated visual static — the analog of television snow — with the observer at the center as if seated on a small island of intact world in a sea of noise. The static was not experienced as an artifact of the eyes but as a feature of the room, placed in the environment exactly as the zipper is placed in the upper right — an allocentric reorganization of the perceived world rather than a retinal or intracranial one. The report adds two things to the third-party convergence. It independently reproduces the allocentric character of the salviaic visual reorganization from a naive early session, and it locates a center-periphery structure — intact focus, dissolving surround — that a κ -opioid account of progressive perceptual disintegration would predict and that a purely projective account covers less naturally. As with all first-person material here, it is offered at its register: a single early recollection, reconstructed, corroborating a structural feature the corpus already carries rather than establishing a new one.

The geometric and structural content — wheels, rotating frames, conveying machinery — appears to operate as two-dimensional temporal structure rather than three-dimensional solid form. It flickers, rotates, and processes. It is not a vision of objects; it is the perception of structure itself: spacetime appearing as readable mechanism. This 2D temporal quality is consistent across independent reports and distinguishes Salvia's geometric content from the 3D architectural hyperspaces reported on high-dose DMT or ketamine.

The Others (Levels 4 and above). Many reports include presences — entities, beings, intelligences encountered within or at the border of the state. Arthur settled on the word *presences* because "spirit," "angel," and "entity" all import categories the experience does not warrant. The presences are sometimes humanoid, sometimes geometric, sometimes recognized as having always been there and only now noticed.

A specific spatial quality distinguishes these encounters: the Others are characteristically *close but inaccessible in ordinary spatial terms*. They feel as if they are in an adjacent room — perceptible but not seeable. Or they are sensed as just behind, but when attention turns toward them directly, no one is there. This is not absence. The sense of their presence does not dissolve on the turn. They are simply not graspable through ordinary spatial orientation. Heaven's three-Peru session and kk84's recurring Salvia goddess accounts both suggest stability and autonomy in these presences across sessions. The interpretive question of what they are belongs to Part 5; the phenomenological point here is that they are reported with a consistency — and a specific elusiveness — that prevents them from being treated as incidental.

Amnesia (Level 6, deep Level 5; dose-dependent and structurally layered). The most widely cited feature of the Salvia state is also its most variable, and its variability has internal structure. Amnesia here is not a single phenomenon but a constellation of distinct forgetting-components that can dissociate from each other:

Anterograde component (entry-phase). Forgetting how the user arrived in the state. This component is itself dose-modulated. At lower depths, the dissolution of the ordinary self is witnessed in real-time: the personal-I observes its own disassembly while the disassembly proceeds, the "I" remaining partially intact long enough to register its loss. At higher depths, the dissolution is not witnessed — the user is already gone before any observation of going can occur. The phenomenological texture of these two cases is different even though both are reported retrospectively as "I don't remember entering."

Retrograde component (content-phase). Forgetting what occurred during the state. This is gradient and selective rather than total. Some content is fully inaccessible by any means of retrieval. Some returns under deliberate effort. Some surfaces spontaneously hours or days later. And in many cases a felt-sense of having-been-there persists without retrievable propositional content — the somatic or pre-cognitive trace of "something happened" without any narrative attached to it.

Exit amnesia (return-phase). Gaps in the reassembly sequence itself, particularly through the hypnagogic threshold of the return. Users sometimes report knowing they reassembled but not remembering the early steps of the reassembly.

These components are independently graded. A session can produce strong entry-amnesia and weak content-amnesia, or the reverse. A session can leave the user without retrievable content but with a vivid felt-sense of having-been-there; another can produce vivid content with no felt resonance at all. This distinction — between phenomenological memory (the felt-sense trace of having-been-there) and propositional memory (the retrievable narrative of what was encountered) — is structural rather than incidental. The two can dissociate, and the project of integration depends on which of them is present.

The variability of these components has a familiar analogue in dream recall. One can wake from a dream with nothing, with a fragment, with a vivid narrative, or with more surfacing over the following hour; the amount recalled does not straightforwardly measure the depth or significance of the dream itself. Salvia content-phase amnesia may behave similarly: the same person, at comparable doses, can return with a detailed report, a single image, or nothing but the felt-sense of having-been-somewhere. The analogy carries a methodological rule for the corpus work in this manuscript. A well-remembered session is better documented and can support more specific claims about content; it is not thereby evidence of a deeper event. A near-total blank is a fact about the returning subject's access, not a report that nothing occurred — though what did occur, in such cases, is exactly what cannot be claimed.

The deepest depths reach the limit case Siebert's foundational formulation describes: "I had no actual memory of ever having lived in any other state of consciousness but the disembodied condition I was now in." This is the complete substitution of one totality for another at the moment of breakthrough — but it describes Level 6 specifically, not the texture of the amnesia at every level.

At less extreme depths, the more common report is a modest disorientation with distinctive affective texture: a sense of having broken something, of being in trouble, of owing an

explanation to someone whose identity is not yet remembered. It is not cognitive absence but a gap in the personal context that ordinarily situates experience.

Amnesia, when it occurs in its deeper forms, is associated predominantly with the outward drift: the dissolution of personal context into something larger. Becoming "lost in the awe of One Mind" is how one of my accounts frames the mechanism. The personal context — who I am, what I did to arrive here, what day it is — is suspended when the personal self dissolves into the larger field. The forgetting, on this account, reflects less a failure of encoding than the suspension of the ordinary autobiographical apparatus as the personal self dissolves into the larger field. Whether encoding ceased, occurred in another register, or left a trace inaccessible to the returning personal-I cannot be determined from the surviving record.

The return from amnesia is itself phenomenologically structured: not a sudden snap-back but a fragmented recovery. Memory returns in pieces, one element at a time, with recognizable gaps between them. The movement is not from blank to full but from not knowing to a series of discrete ah-ha moments — each piece arriving with its own small shock of recognition. "I remember!" is an event that happens multiple times in sequence, not once. This fragmented return structure is as consistent across reports as the amnesia itself, and it will carry interpretive weight in later sections of the manuscript.

The Aware Void and the Non-Reportable Interval (deep Level 5 and the Level 6 limit; structural rather than dose-dependent). The amnesia discussion above raises a structural question that the zone-vocabulary makes precise: what is present in Zone 5, when the personal-I with its memory and language is offline? Two distinct possibilities exist, and from the outside they look identical.

The non-reportable interval. This is Zone 6 as already defined: the limit at which no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I, so that the interval appears on return only as a gap. Unlike the aware void, it cannot be positively characterized from first-person evidence. What matters for the present contrast is that the interval is known only through the absence of reportable access, not through any positive description of what occurred there.

The aware void (objectless awareness). Awareness is reported as present, with no differentiated object-content to take. The simplicity is extraordinary: just awareness and the absence of anything to be aware of. This is not unconsciousness. It is consciousness without an object, named in multiple independent contemplative vocabularies: what the Tibetan tradition calls *rigpa* in the context of sleep, what the Advaita and Kashmir Shaivism traditions call *turiya* — the fourth state, the witnessing principle that underlies waking, dream, and deep sleep. The interpretive weight of this nomenclature belongs to later parts. One caution attaches to the convergence of the vocabularies themselves: these are not fully independent witnesses. Advaita Vedanta, Kashmir Shaivism, and the Indian Buddhist tantra that Tibet inherited are historically entangled traditions, in centuries of contact, polemic, and mutual borrowing (Sanderson 2009), and their shared vocabulary for objectless awareness is therefore partly shared inheritance rather than independent discovery. The convergence that carries evidential weight in this manuscript is of a different kind — between sources with no lineage relation at all — and the operative cases are named where they occur: Arthur's solo mechanism converging with the

Tibetan competence diagnosis (Part 3), and the nitrous-oxide epistemic signature James documented a century earlier under a different pharmacology (Part 7.4).

This distinction is epistemologically central and easy to miss. The third-party indicators — apparent unconsciousness, motor stillness, total amnesia of the period — are the same in both cases. The difference is whether an accessible trace survives: the aware void is reported (the Aware-Void Account is such a report), while the non-reportable interval leaves no accessible trace for the returning personal-I. If Salvia produces aware-void experiences, those experiences are primary phenomenological data for what those traditions describe theoretically. This relationship will be developed in Part 3.

My own record contains a direct phenomenological account of this state. Documented as the Aware-Void Account, the report describes the void as aware nothingness — calm rather than threatening, because there was nothing there to threaten. The observed sequence, from the inside, was: *void* → *awareness of the void* → *the arising of a thought* → *the arising of "Rich"* → *the tether* → *the return*. The void was inhabitable but not indefinitely; the felt observation was that one could remain there forever, but that the personal-I has no function in the void, no content to organize, no time to inhabit. The return was experienced as a tether — a structural pull back toward the body and biographical structure — not as a chosen movement, though the absence of any reason to remain produced something that could also be described as choice. The tether is taken up as the phenomenological hinge of Part 4's gradient (4.2) and is distinguished into personal and world components in Part 7.1.

The account is offered as data, not as interpretive claim. Whether the witnessing principle in the void is the same witness across sessions, whether it is identical to the witness watching the reassembly during the return, whether it is the structural condition that underlies all states of consciousness or a particular configuration produced under particular pharmacological conditions — these questions belong to later sections. The phenomenological observation here is that the aware void is reported, in at least some Salvia accounts, with an accessible trace of awareness present; that this is epistemically distinct from the non-reportable interval, from which no accessible trace survives; and that the distinction shapes what the manuscript can claim about the relationship between Salvia and the contemplative traditions that describe similar states.

Two further cautions attach to the Aware-Void Account specifically, and the single-account status compounds rather than excuses them. The first is framework-mediated articulation. The reported sequence — void, awareness, thought, "Rich," tether, return — is near-isomorphic to the Vedantic account of *turiya* and the reassertion of the personal sheaths, and the methodological note in the front matter records that the Vedantic and yogic frame — Bhagavad Gita reading, study with Swami Tadatmananda, Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* — was concurrent with the earliest sessions, shaping what was noticed, retained, and later articulated, and no session in this record predates it. The provenance of the sequence must be marked with the discipline the record applies everywhere else. The Aware-Void Account was first articulated in writing in May 2026, in dialogue within the present project, and its phrasing is habitual rather than episodic — "I always go back" — a

characterization of recurring deep sessions rather than a report of one dated session. No contemporaneous written articulation of the sequence survives; the sequence as stated is the record's best memory of itself, reconstructed within the vocabulary of the present project.

The mediation cuts both ways, and both edges belong in the record. Against the datum: an observer trained by doctrine to expect a Seer is primed to find a witness — and supplies the narrative binding of 2.2's ordering problem with a ready template. This is the contamination worry in its strongest concrete form, and it is stated here rather than softened. For the datum, one bounded consideration. The corpus's most robust finding about intention is that intention fails: Arthur's decade of solo work is organized around the inability to hold an observational stance through the rupture, so a doctrinally trained expectation of a witness does not reliably manufacture witness reports under full rupture. And a further edge against the datum, drawn honestly rather than conveniently: the doctrine supplies more than vocabulary. Kośa-viveka pedagogy and the *Māṇḍūkya* schema provide a ready structure for disidentification from content toward witnessing awareness and for awareness as prior to the ordinary content-states, and Patañjali's contrast between *vyutthāna-saṃskāra* and *nirodha-saṃskāra* supplies a ready vocabulary for the tension between outward-going mentation and restraint. The reported sequence therefore cannot serve as independent evidence for those doctrines; its ordering may have been noticed, retained, or narratively stabilized through them. Mediated articulation is not manufacture, and nothing here asserts that the study produced the experience. What the concession fixes is the account's evidentiary role: the stepwise character of the return is independently attested across the corpus, while the Aware-Void Account's specific void-to-“Rich” sequence remains a framework-mediated first-person rendering rather than independent corroboration of the framework. The bracketing test in the Argument Overview already limits what falls if the datum falls; this caution concerns the datum's shape, not only its weight. The second caution is that the evidentiary standing of reports of this kind has its own contemporary literature, and the manuscript's handling should be read against it: whether reports of awareness in dreamless sleep are credible, and how retrospective reports from objectless states should be weighted, is an active question in analytic phenomenology (Windt, Nielsen, and Thompson 2016; Thompson 2015), and the cautions that literature has developed — retrospective reconstruction, and the difficulty of distinguishing a memory of objectless awareness from an inference that awareness must have been present — are the same cautions this record applies to itself.

Time distortion (all levels; intensifies with depth). Time in Salvia Space does not operate normally, and this is not incidental. A five-minute peak may be experienced as one minute, or as hours, days, weeks, or something outside of temporal measure altogether. The distortion is not merely subjective stretching or compression; it is a perceptual discontinuity from the temporal framework that ordinary reality sustains. Time, as it operates in ordinary consciousness, is reported in my accounts as belonging to the ego-structure that maintains personal continuity — what later parts will examine under Kastrup's vocabulary of the alter's boundary. At sufficient depth, time in the ordinary sense is reported as simply not operating. This is not reported as disorienting. It is reported as structural: as how things are *there*. The time distortion is not reported as something that happens to the user inside a normal temporal frame; it is reported as the absence of that frame.

1.2.6 The Return and the Overlap

The most precisely articulated structural feature in my own accounts is the return — and specifically its two phases:

The first phase is an *overlap*: Salvia Space and ordinary reality are simultaneously perceptible. Both are present, neither fully dominant. My own formulation: *"I was in between — I could see reality and I felt like I was outside it at the same time, dreamlike, layered."* This is not the disorientation of transition; it is a specific perceptual simultaneity in which the user can see through one domain into the other. The boundary between Salvia Space and ordinary reality is, from this position, not a wall but a membrane thin enough to perceive through from either side. This threshold position is not always reached — it depends on depth of the session — but it appears consistently enough in independent reports to be structural rather than idiosyncratic.

The second phase is *sequential reassembly*: memory returns step by step, piece by piece, and something — the witness — is present and observing before the reconstituted self fully arrives:

"The returning of my memory was just like that — one step at a time — and you could easily see it happening because it's only a 10-minute experience. It happened so fast where you lose everything, and then it happens so fast as it comes back — step-wise, boom boom boom."

Each piece of identity, memory, and world-orientation arrives discretely. The watcher is present and intact before the reconstituted self fully reassembles — not anxious, not confused, observing Rich Fegley coming back online and recognizing the whole construction as a construction. Arthur's complementary observation: the return is structurally automatic — "returning to form," the weight of habit pulling the ordinary self back into its accustomed shape. The return is not effortful. It is what the system does when the rupture ends.

1.2.7 Variation and Unpredictability as Structural Features

The Salvia state is not a fixed delivery mechanism. Two sessions with the same user, the same material, and similar dose may produce different depths, different directions, different content. This variability is not a defect in the data — it is part of the phenomenology. Variation has identifiable sources: dose is the primary determinant of depth; set and setting shape the content and character of what surfaces; the user's emotional and attentional state at the moment of smoking is a significant factor, particularly for valence — entering the experience in a state of anxiety or unresolved negative feeling is a known amplifier of difficult content. This means that the phenomenological features cataloged above should not be read as guaranteed features of any given session but as the stable features of the terrain — present in the space, accessible at appropriate depth, variable in any individual crossing.

1.3 Cross-Validation: The Convergence of Independent Reports

The phenomenological pattern outlined above is not built from a single source. Arthur's *Doorway to Thought-Free Awareness* (a decade of solo experimentation) and Heaven's *Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia* (built around 80+ first-person accounts collected from independent sources) are the existing specialist phenomenologies, and they converge — without

claiming to converge — on the same structural features I have described. The unzipping image, the bidirectional amnesia, the recognition of having been here before, the encountered presences, and the stepwise return all recur in third-party reports, but not with equal independence or evidentiary weight. For the stepwise return, several reports — including the cross-linguistic kk84 record — describe gradual or piecewise recovery, with no single order recurring across them. Full independence cannot be demonstrated for the Anglophone corpus — the online trip-report ecology is interlinked, and its images circulate — and the limit extends further than a language boundary can repair. The kk84 German-language corpus is a useful out-of-network check, but it is a single author writing inside an internet drug-report culture that was never isolated from the Anglophone one, and it cannot function as a strong cross-contamination control. The record's strongest anchor is of a different kind, and it is an instrument check rather than a population check: the controlled clinical corpus — Addy et al.'s thirty participants under laboratory conditions, Doss et al.'s imaging cohort, Baggott et al.'s five hundred survey respondents — in which the coarse structural features (the amnesia, the depersonalization and derealization, the drastic perceptual reorganization, the rapid arc) recur without depending on the trip-report ecology's imagery. What the clinical corpus secures is the coarse structure. Its participants and respondents are themselves drawn from user populations exposed to the ecology — Baggott et al.'s survey was internet-recruited from within it — so what the clinical corpus contributes is not framework-naïve reporters but controlled conditions and standardized instruments under which the coarse features recur regardless of the imagery. The finer image-cluster — the unzipping, the pages, the recurring presences — remains attested primarily within the interlinked ecology, and claims resting on it should be read with that provenance in view.

Heaven's three-person Peru session is an instructive case. He, his partner Tracie, and the shaman Jungle each had a distinct identity-loss experience, with three different return strategies. Tracie's: refusal to leave the dream — *"Even dream characters have a life and don't want to die."* Jungle's: re-anchoring through role rather than self — *"I am a shaman, and I help others through places like this."* Heaven's: encountering himself from the perspective of the objects in his memory of a familiar street — *"every object in my life was also me; like our realities were interchangeable."* Three minds in the same room, taking the same substance, producing three structurally distinct returns that nevertheless share the bidirectional amnesia and the eventual reassembly. This is data that resists any single interpretive framework's claim to be sufficient.

One reporter (Vulpine) describes the Salvia mechanism as a kind of stage magic in which the alterations to reality are made where one is not looking, and reassembled into one's experience as though they had always been that way — false memories planted such that nothing seems to have changed until the return. This is a precise phenomenological description of what later sections of this manuscript will analyze as *arranged forgetting*. Vulpine arrives at the description as an account of how the substance works, not as a metaphysical claim. That makes the description stronger as evidence, not weaker.

A further cross-linguistic corroboration appears in kk84's German-language *Salviabibel*, a single-author corpus of reports spanning roughly a decade (2007–2017)⁷. Although it cannot count as independent population-level evidence, it is valuable because it converges outside the Anglophone Arthur/Heaven/trip-report vocabulary: familiar return, stacked worlds as book-pages or membranes, ego-peeling, presences, laughter, and the difficulty of carrying the state back into ordinary language recur throughout. The convergence across language, generation, and cultural frame strengthens the claim that the phenomenology described in Part 1 tracks structural features of the state independent of any single interpreter's framework.

The convergence matters because it constrains interpretation — but the baseline against which convergence is measured must be fixed here, once, because later parts will spend this convergence and must not spend it twice. A shared pharmacological mechanism acting on shared neural architecture predicts convergent content, with no contact with shared territory required; the geometric form-constants of the classical psychedelics are the textbook precedent, and Part 2 supplies the citations. Mechanism-shaped convergence, not noise, is therefore the deflationary expectation, and convergence counts against a deflationary reading only to the degree that it exceeds what a mechanism-shaped account covers. With that baseline fixed: whatever frame is brought to the experience must account for the fact that the experience has structure independent of the frame. The unzipping is not a Bardo image. The stepwise return is not a Gnostic image. The recognition of "I have been here before" is not a Vedantic image — although each of these frameworks will be shown, in later sections, to articulate something the phenomenology already contains.

The texture of arrangement reaches its sharpest formulation in a passage from the same corpus. During a peeling sequence, kk84 asks the Salvia goddess, "Wer bin ich eigentlich, wenn du mich ganz geschält hast?" — "Who am I, actually, when you have peeled me completely?" Her answer is: "Ja, ähm...niemand!" — "Yeah, um... nobody!" The laughter that follows the exchange is part of the report. What the exchange exhibits, at the descriptive level, is the peeling reaching the questioner himself: the I asking who remains is encountered as one of the layers being removed. What that structure amounts to — and whether it is what Part 4 will call arranged forgetting at its phenomenological limit — is interpretation, and is deferred to Part 4. Part 1 records the exchange as the corpus's sharpest instance of the texture.

One limit on this convergence must be carried forward: the corpus that yields it privileges reporters who could organize the rupture into coherent language. The difficult-integration

⁷ kk84 2017. Single-author longitudinal corpus, 2007–2017; retrospective consolidation and anthropomorphic framing noted as caveats. Full provenance in the Source Table. The observer-during-reconstruction report cited in 2.3 is "Die Normale Welt Hat Keine Bedeutung Mehr! — Sublinguale Reise mit 0.3g Blätter," dated May 2015 (*Salviabibel* pp. 297–300): the reporter describes an observing position persisting while the "I" is absent, then piecewise rebuilding of the left body-half with the I-feeling returning concurrently, and cautions in the same passage that describing it from a neutral observer's perspective "is not quite right either, because I no longer existed" (translated from the German). A separate report, "Von Wo Werde Ich Runter Gezogen Und Von Wem?," dated March 2017 (pp. 377–379), records a deliberately adopted neutral-observer commentary position at threshold dose. The German passages and report locators were verified against the full source; translations were prepared for this project and are the author's responsibility.

record — examined in 7.1.1 — is part of the data, and the features cataloged here should be read as the structure of the terrain, not as a promise about its valence.

1.4 What This Section Has Not Done

It has not asked whether the recognition is veridical. It has not interpreted the witness as the Ātman, the Buddha-nature, the Self in Jung's sense, the pneuma in the Gnostic sense, or simply a temporarily decoupled cognitive subroutine. It has not asked whether the encountered presences are autonomous psychic structures, the consciousness of the plant, the universal mind, or hallucinated representations of any of these. It has not weighed the deflationary account — that the self-model collapsed and a different self-model was running during the witnessing phase, that the "recognition" is a kappa-opioid memory artifact — against the metaphysical accounts that will follow.

These are the questions of the sections that follow.

The single point this section has tried to establish is the phenomenology itself: that the rupture occurs; that it is structured (onset → dissolution → encounter → recognition → return); that the dissolution and the encounter include a productive threshold zone distinct from non-reportable limit cases; that the recognition is reported with the felt quality of knowing; that the amnesia which has been treated as a single feature is in fact layered, with anterograde, retrograde, and exit components that can dissociate from each other and from the felt-sense of having-been-there; that the return is sequential and observable; that something is watching the return — and, in at least some accounts, present in the void itself — and that the witness and the recognition are reported together but are not obviously the same thing.

These are the data. The remainder of the manuscript is the attempt to read them.

PART 2: THOUGHT-FREE AWARENESS AND SELF-MODEL COLLAPSE

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

Part 1 described the rupture without interpreting it. This section examines what happens to thought, language, and the self-model during the rupture — *before* any religious, mythological, or metaphysical framework is allowed to speak. The point is to apply pressure to Part 1's central data through the two thinkers who ground their accounts in mechanism rather than in cosmology: J. D. Arthur and Thomas Metzinger.

The pressure comes from two directions. Arthur, working from approximately a decade of solo Salvia experimentation, identifies a specific structural feature of the state — the cessation of thought, and with it the cessation of ordinary language — and proposes a mechanism that links this cessation directly to the phenomenology of failure-to-hold described in Part 1.⁸ Metzinger, working from philosophy of mind and neuroscience, supplies the deflationary challenge: that the phenomenal self-model is constructed; that its collapse implies nothing about the metaphysical status of what remains; and that the felt quality of recognition could in principle be a memory-system artifact rather than veridical re-cognition.

Neither position is dismissed here, and neither is granted final authority. Both pressure-test the data. The section's task is to register what each genuinely establishes, what each cannot establish, and where they converge — because their convergence, more than their divergence, constrains what the rest of the manuscript can claim. Specifically: the section will argue that Arthur and Metzinger agree on a structural fact about the rupture (the mediating apparatus is altered) and disagree only about what follows from that fact. This convergence is what makes the failure-to-hold *structural* rather than contingent — independent of any metaphysical commitment Parts 3–6 might develop. The witness-position is real; the recognition is reported with the felt quality of certainty; but neither datum can be cashed out propositionally without reckoning with what Arthur and Metzinger have already established about the medium of return — and, as the section will develop, the word *recognition* itself names more than one phenomenon in the Salvia case: an entry-threshold report that the apparatus retains because it was made while the apparatus was still encoding, and deeper-strata material — including what the manuscript will provisionally treat as a non-propositional knowing — some of which the return-phase apparatus can render only partially, after the fact.

2.1 Arthur's Thesis: The State Before Interpretation

J. D. Arthur's *Salvia Divinorum: Doorway to Thought-Free Awareness* (2010) is a record of approximately a decade of solo experimentation, during which the same structural feature emerged with cumulative consistency: that the salviaic state, at its deepest, is characterized not by altered thought but by the *cessation* of thought. Arthur is careful to distinguish this from the brief suspensions of thought familiar from meditation. What is described is, in his phrasing, "a

⁸ Arthur 2010, the thought-free-awareness thesis. First substantive use; inline (Arthur 2010) thereafter.

steady state — a dramatic, alien, effortless release from mentation." It is not a quieter version of ordinary thinking. It is the ordinary thinking-process going offline.

The precision of this distinction matters. If the Salvia state is a vision-state, an altered ego-state, or a journey through symbolic content, the interpretive frameworks of the later sections — Bardo, Gnostic, Jungian — can reach the experience directly. Their imagery becomes available for description. But if Arthur is correct that the deepest stratum of the state is *prior to thought*, then those frameworks are reaching the rupture *retrospectively*, applying linguistic and conceptual structure to something that, in its actual occurrence, contained neither.

This in itself is not yet an argument. What turns Arthur's observation from phenomenological description into mechanism is his specific claim about language. Ordinary language, he observes, "depends wholly on memory for every aspect of its functioning." This is not a poetic flourish. It is a structural claim: that the words we think with, the syntactic templates we deploy, the semantic associations through which any sentence acquires meaning — all of this is memory in operation. Strip the memory, and the language strips with it. There is no language without remembered words, no syntax without remembered patterns, no meaning without remembered referents. As Arthur puts the implication: "If the memory itself ceases to function, as was becoming apparent in the salviaic state, language, as we know it, must also cease."

Arthur reports observing this directly. At a certain depth in the state, the internal narrator — the voice that ordinarily describes one's experience to oneself in language — does not merely quiet. It shifts mode. The familiar language becomes inaccessible, and what replaces it (when anything does) is what Arthur describes as alien yet somehow familiar — a mode of significance that does not depend on the same memory-language apparatus. He compares it tentatively to the language of dreams. Whether or not that comparison holds, the claim that ordinary linguistic representation has gone offline is precise and falsifiable: under sufficient salvinorin A dose, the internal narrator stops, and ordinary descriptive language is no longer available.

Arthur's account, written before the layered amnesia distinction had been articulated, treats the failure of memory as a single event: memory goes offline, language goes with it, the medium of retention is unavailable while the rupture occurs. The phenomenological refinements established in Part 1 specify the mechanism with greater precision. The amnesia is not monolithic. Anterograde forgetting — the loss of how one arrived in the state — is dose-modulated and can dissociate from retrograde forgetting (the loss of what occurred while there), which itself can dissociate from exit amnesia (the gaps in the reassembly sequence). More structurally, phenomenological memory — the felt-sense trace of having-been-there — can persist when propositional memory cannot. The distinction is critical for what Arthur's mechanism actually explains.

What Arthur's mechanism explains, refined through the layered distinction, is the failure of propositional retrieval. The medium that carries propositional content — language operating on memory in their integrated function — was not running during the period when the deepest content of the rupture was available. What was available in that period cannot be brought back through the propositional channel because the propositional channel was offline at the time.

This is what "I cannot say what I saw" reports, and Arthur's mechanism gives it a structural reason rather than treating it as inarticulacy on the experiencer's part.

What Arthur's mechanism does not explicitly develop, and what the layered distinction makes visible, is the persistence of the felt-sense trace. Phenomenological memory operates through a different channel than propositional memory and is not equivalently dependent on the ordinary integration of language and recollection. Salvia reports consistently include this trace: something happened, something is known, the felt quality of having been touched persists without retrievable narrative. The persistence is itself data — it indicates that something of the rupture is carried in a medium Arthur's account leaves open rather than closes. The mechanism is correct as far as it reaches: ordinary propositional retrieval cannot deliver what was there. But the felt-sense trace points at a different mode of carrying, one for which contemplative traditions have developed a more articulated vocabulary than Arthur or Metzinger draws on, and which Parts 3 and 5–6 will engage on its own terms.

The implication for Part 1's central data now needs to be stated with precision. Arthur's mechanism does not apply uniformly to every recognition-class event. The entry-threshold report — "I have been here before" — arrives while the memory-and-language apparatus is destabilizing but still operating, which is why the report itself survives propositionally. What Arthur's mechanism explains most directly is why the deeper-strata material the report may point toward cannot ordinarily be carried back in full once the propositional channel has gone offline. Rare fragments cross; the 2004 utterance is the paradigm case. But the exception does not erase the structural constraint. What returns is limited by what the reassembling apparatus can encode, retrieve, and translate.

This explains, mechanistically, the failure-to-hold without collapsing distinct loci into one event. The deeper material is not ordinarily unavailable because of a defect in the rememberer. It is ordinarily unavailable because the medium of propositional retention — language operating on memory — was not functioning in the same way while the deeper strata were available. What returns is therefore a partial rendering: felt-sense trace, selective retrieval, delayed resurfacing, and, rarely, a propositional crossing. This is also where Arthur's mechanism does its second job — it is an account of *reassembly*, the automatic returning-to-form named just above, and the manuscript's primary datum is that this reassembly is observable while it happens. The failure-to-hold and the visibility of the reassembly are the same fact seen from two sides. One scope-limit should be marked. Everything this mechanism explains is session-level — the encoding, retrieval, and translation failure the rupture itself produces. It is an account of why what the rupture opens cannot ordinarily be retained in full; it is not an account of what the rupture opens, and it is silent on the prior question the interpretive frameworks of Parts 4 and 6 will raise: whether ordinary consciousness itself operates under a concealment of which this session-level forgetting is only the recording-side shadow. Part 2 establishes the mechanism; it does not adjudicate that question.

Arthur's complementary observation, already quoted in Part 1, sharpens this further. The return is not just amnesic; it is *automatic*. The customary mode of awareness, he observes, "seems a tenuous construction that attains solidity gradually through a process, it seems, of a type of

automatic 'returning to form' and the weight of its own habit." The ordinary self does not effortfully reconstruct itself. It reassembles because that is what the system does when the rupture ends — language reattaches to memory, memory reattaches to identity, identity reattaches to world. The reassembly is the *default* state of the apparatus. The rupture is the interruption.

What this gives the manuscript is a candidate mechanism, not a metaphysics. Arthur is not claiming that what is recognized during the rupture is veridical knowledge of some underlying reality. He is claiming, more cautiously, that the structure of the rupture — what becomes available, what becomes inaccessible, what fails to carry back — can be explained without invoking any layer beyond the relationship between memory, language, and the apparatus that runs ordinary consciousness. This is a substantial claim that does not require any further metaphysical commitment. Whether what is recognized is *also* veridical in a stronger sense is a separate question, and Arthur leaves it open. The point of his thesis is that the failure-to-hold is *structural*, regardless of how that further question is answered.

This already constrains the interpretive options for the rest of the manuscript. Any interpretation that claims the deeper-strata material can be brought back and articulated as propositional knowledge must explain how this is possible if the linguistic medium was offline while that material was available. Any interpretation that treats the deeper strata as a content-rich revelation must reckon with the possibility that the felt richness is a property of the state inhabited, not of any retrievable proposition. The manuscript's task in later sections is not to disprove Arthur's mechanism but to ask: given that it is plausible, what space remains for stronger interpretive claims, and on what evidence?

2.2 Metzinger's Challenge: No Self, Only Models

Where Arthur supplies a mechanism that links memory, language, and the failure-to-hold, Thomas Metzinger supplies the deflationary pressure-test. *Being No One* (2003) develops the thesis that what we ordinarily call "the self" is the content of a *phenomenal self-model* (PSM): a representation, generated by the brain, of the system to itself. The PSM is not a self in any robust metaphysical sense. It is a model of certain system-related properties — bodily sensations, emotional state, ongoing cognition, the position of the body in space — integrated into a single coherent representation that the system can use as a frame of reference for action and self-directed attention.

What makes the PSM feel like a self, rather than feeling like a model, is what Metzinger calls *transparency*. The contents of self-consciousness are not experienced as the contents of a representational process. We do not experience ourselves as a model the brain is running. We experience ourselves as ourselves, simply and directly. This phenomenal transparency is what the model achieves, and it is achieved precisely by *hiding* its own nature as a model. From the inside, the representation is invisible as representation; only its content is given. The "self," in Metzinger's reductive account, is the transparent content of this self-modeling process.

If this account is broadly correct — and a great deal of contemporary cognitive science is sympathetic to it, even where particular claims are contested — then nothing metaphysically

significant follows from the collapse of the PSM. When the salviaic rupture takes the autobiographical self offline, what has gone offline is a representational process. The collapse of representation is not the revelation of anything underlying; it is simply the cessation of the representation. There may be other representational processes that continue (perceptual, attentional, interoceptive), and these may produce phenomenal content of various kinds. But none of this requires positing a deeper or truer self that is now revealed because the model has fallen away.

Two specific challenges follow from this account, and both apply directly to Part 1's central data.

2.2.1 The Witness Problem

Part 1 records that something was present during the stepwise return — calm, neutral, watching the reassembly. This witness was reported as preceding the reconstituted self, observing the reconstruction as construction. Part 1 deliberately did not ask what the witness is. Metzinger's challenge is that there is no need to posit anything substantial. The witness could be a temporarily decoupled self-modeling subroutine — a higher-order observation process that runs while the autobiographical PSM is offline, producing the experience of "watching" without the autobiographical apparatus that ordinarily mediates that experience. The phenomenal feel of being a calm observer is generated; whether anything more than the observation-process exists is a further question that the phenomenology alone cannot answer. Naming this process "the witness" — implying continuity with traditions in which the witness is ātman, Buddha-nature, or the Self — gives it a metaphysical weight that the bare phenomenology does not warrant. The neutrality of the witness, the equanimity, the recognition of the construction *as* construction: all of these can be explained as features of a higher-order self-modeling process running in isolation from the autobiographical PSM. No deeper layer is required to do the work.

This challenge cannot be answered by appeal to the felt quality of the witness alone. Phenomenally rich content is produced by self-modeling all the time; the felt richness of an experience is not by itself evidence that what produces the experience exceeds the apparatus that produces it. The deflationary account does not deny that the witness-position is real as a phenomenological feature. It denies that the phenomenological feature settles anything about what the witness is.

2.2.2 The Recognition Problem

Part 1 records that the most epistemically loaded feature of the Salvia experience is the recognition: *I have been here before*, reported with the texture of remembering rather than discovering, with the force of perception rather than belief, more certain than ordinary perception rather than less. This is the most epistemically contested datum, and the one the deflationary challenge targets most directly. It is not, however, the manuscript's primary datum: as the Argument Overview sets out, the thesis-bearing observation is the stepwise reassembly within which the recognition occurs — observable, witnessed, and recurring — and the recognition is the most charged of the features that reassembly makes available, not the foundation the argument rests on.

The deflationary challenge here is more specific and more pointed than the witness problem.

Salvinorin A is, uniquely, a selective κ -opioid receptor agonist. The kappa-opioid system is implicated in the modulation of memory-recognition circuits, including the systems responsible for assigning the felt quality of *familiarity* to perceptual inputs. The everyday phenomenon of déjà vu is a well-documented case of mis-flagged familiarity: a present perception that has not actually been encountered before is tagged by the recognition system as familiar, and the experience that results is a vivid, certain feeling that the present moment has been lived before. The certainty is real; the recognition is felt with full conviction; the underlying claim — that this moment is a repetition — is, in déjà vu, demonstrably false.

The deflationary hypothesis is that "I have been here before" in the salviaic state could be a globalized, intensified version of the same artifact. Kappa-opioid activation modulates the recognition system. If the modulation is sufficiently strong, the *texture of remembering* could be applied not to a specific perception but to the entire phenomenal field. Everything would feel as if it has always been there, not because it actually has been, but because the recognition-tag has saturated the field. Under this hypothesis, the "recognition" reports a state of the recognition system, not a fact about what is recognized. The certainty would be real and the content would be artifactual.

This is the strongest single deflationary move available against Part 1's central data, and it deserves to be stated at full strength rather than gestured past. The deflationary account does not require the recognition to be hallucinated, fabricated, or false in any pejorative sense. It requires only that the felt quality of certainty alone is insufficient grounds for veridicality, and that there is a specific, plausible neurobiological mechanism that would produce the felt quality without any underlying veridical fact.

What the deflationary account does *not* explain, however, must also be registered. The convergence of structural recognition across independent first-person reports — the same image-cluster (unzipping, sheet-pulling, two-dimensional reorganization), the same temporal character ("this always was, and I was there"), the same quality of return-toward-something rather than discovery-of-something-new — is more difficult to attribute to a globalized déjà-vu artifact. Déjà vu is generic; it does not produce structurally consistent content. The salviaic recognition is reported with structurally consistent content across speakers who have not coordinated, who write in different decades, who use different vocabularies — within the provenance limit 1.3 fixed for the interlinked ecology, which applies to this image-cluster in particular. The mis-flagged-familiarity hypothesis explains the *texture* of recognition (the felt certainty) but does not, by itself, explain the structural convergence in *what* is recognized.

A second scope-limit on the deflationary mechanism must be marked, and it follows from Part 1's aware-void datum. The kappa-opioid mis-flagging hypothesis is a specific proposal: that the recognition system's familiarity-tag, ordinarily applied to perceptual content, is under salvinorin A globally and intensively misapplied to the phenomenal field at large, producing the certainty-quality of "this has always been here." The proposal is precise and pointed. It requires *content* for the familiarity-tag to be applied to. In the witness-in-void condition that the Aware-Void Account documents and Part 1 registers, there is no content for the mechanism to operate on. Awareness is reported as present; no object is reported as present; no comparison is

being made between current and prior states. Whatever is reported about that condition cannot be the mis-flagging of familiarity because there is no perceptual content for familiarity to be falsely attributed to.

The deflationary mechanism, in other words, is a tool that fits the comparative-propositional component of the salviaic recognition well — "I have been here before" as a globalized déjà-vu-like report applied to the entire phenomenal field — and does not fit the aware-void datum at all. Both data points are in the corpus. The tool that handles one does not handle the other.

This does not refute Metzinger's framework. It locates a question the framework must address if it is to be sufficient. The witness-in-void condition, if the report is reliable, describes awareness without object: not a self-model with reduced content, not a content-rich state misdescribed in language, but the structural condition of consciousness functioning as consciousness with nothing to be conscious of. Metzinger's apparatus is built to explain self-modeling and its phenomenal contents. The witness-in-void condition is, on its face, a state in which self-modeling and phenomenal content have both gone offline while awareness has not. Whether the apparatus can extend to this case, or whether the case lies outside what the apparatus is constructed to address, is a question Part 2 raises and Parts 3 and 6 take up through frameworks that have developed vocabularies for this specific condition.

This does not refute the deflationary account. It locates the constraint the account must meet if it is to be sufficient: the convergent structural content of the reports. Part 1.3 fixed the baseline against which that convergence is measured — mechanism-shaped convergence, not noise, is the deflationary expectation — and an explanation of this general type is not exotic. The geometric form-constants reported under the classical psychedelics are the textbook case of convergent content produced by a shared mechanism acting on shared neural architecture, with no contact with shared territory required.⁹ What remains genuinely open is whether a κ -opioid analogue of the form-constant account can be specified for the salviaic image-cluster — the unzipping, the two-dimensional reorganization, the stepwise return — and, if it can, whether it also reaches the convergence of relational structure (the already-there presences, the recognition-of-place) that a perceptual account covers least naturally. One portion of the corpus is conceded to the mechanistic column in advance: the affectively flat object-becoming reports sorted out of the archetypal material in Part 1.2 — assumed identity with an arbitrary object, no presence, no charge — are what a loosened point of experiential focus settling on an impersonal coordinate would produce, and nothing archetypal is entailed in producing them. Until that work is done, the convergence constrains the deflationary account without defeating it, and the manuscript should not lean on the convergence as though it did. (Part 5.3 makes the equivalent concession about the presences — convergence of function across cultures is what shared neuropsychology would produce — and the concession applies symmetrically here.)

The kappa-opioid neuroscience is a pressure-test, not a verdict. Lean too heavily on it and the section becomes a neuroscience chapter, which it is not. The point is that any interpretive frame

⁹ Klüver 1966; Ermentrout & Cowan 1979; Bressloff et al. 2001. The standard form-constant lineage. This is the load-bearing precedent for "mechanism-shaped convergence," cross-referenced again at 6.2.

later in the manuscript must reckon with the fact that there is a specific, mechanistically grounded, available explanation for the felt quality of the central datum — and that the felt quality alone, however vivid, cannot bear the full weight of veridicality without further argument.

2.2.3 The Ordering Problem

A third challenge must be stated here at the same full strength as the first two, because it targets neither the witness's nature nor the recognition's content but the datum the manuscript's thesis actually rests on. The thesis-bearing observation is a claim about temporal order within the return: a witnessing position intact before the personal self is fully reconstituted. That ordering is reported after the fact, by the reassembled apparatus — the same apparatus whose reconstruction the claim describes. The deflationary move available here is not mis-flagged familiarity but retrospective narrative binding: the returning self-model, finding a gap and fragments, imposes sequence on them in the act of reporting, and "witness first, self after" would then be a product of how the reassembled self stories the gap rather than an observation preserved from it. The manuscript deploys precisely this move against the felt knowing in 7.2 — the possibility of a confabulated noetic tag — and consistency requires deploying it against the ordering too. Exit amnesia sharpens the objection: the record itself documents gaps in the early steps of the reassembly, which is exactly where the ordering claim needs retention to be reliable.

Three considerations bound the objection without dissolving it. First, the return phase is the record's strongest evidentiary zone for a structural reason already established: encoding has partially resumed while the reassembly is still in progress, so the ordering report is not a report from the non-reportable interval — it is a report from the one stretch of the transit where the apparatus is running and its running is still visible. Second, the ordering claim is weaker than the content claims the manuscript declines to make: it concerns a reported relative sequence — an observing position present as pieces of autobiographical identity arrive — not the content of what was watched, and seriality itself (the stepwise, piece-by-piece character) appears in several accounts in the assembled corpus — including, in the cross-linguistic kk84 record, one explicit piecewise reconstruction — while other reports describe abrupt return, and others a gradual fading without piecewise structure. The corpus therefore supports piecemeal return as a recurrent mode rather than as a universal or prevalence-ranked feature; the reported orders differ, so it does not establish a canonical sequence. One limit on this consideration must be marked. The corpus attests the piecewise character of the return and, in some reports, an observing position during that return. It does not establish the more specific ordering in which witnessing precedes the reappearance of autobiographical identity. Corroboration of seriality and of observation-during-return is therefore not independent corroboration of the Aware-Void Account's particular witness-to-"Rich" sequence, which remains, on that ordering, a claim of this record. Third, the claim is falsifiable in principle in a way the deeper-strata claims are not: return-phase phenomenology is the one stratum where prospective, near-immediate reporting protocols are possible, and a record in which the ordering appeared only in delayed retellings but never in immediate ones would count against it. What the manuscript cannot do — and does not claim to do — is cleanly separate preserved sequence from narrative binding from inside its own record. The ordering problem is therefore carried forward as a standing constraint on the thesis, registered with the same status as the mis-flagging hypothesis: a specific, mechanistically

available deflationary reading that the phenomenology alone cannot exclude. One further distinction should govern how the ordering claim is heard at every register of this manuscript. Three claims of priority must be kept apart: phenomenological priority — witnessing is reported before "Rich," biography, and world-orientation arrive; functional priority — a minimal observing or encoding process operates before the autobiographical self-model resumes; and ontological priority — awareness independent of the cognitive machinery altogether. The record contains and provisionally weights reports of the first, while acknowledging that preserved sequence cannot be cleanly separated from retrospective narrative binding. The deflationary reading renders the reported phenomenological priority as functional priority, and is entitled to. The contemplative and Idealist frameworks of Parts 3 and 6 examine whether it may be rendered as ontological priority, and are examined on that reading's terms. The manuscript treats only phenomenological priority as part of its own evidentiary claim — and even there as reported rather than independently established; the choice among functional and ontological renderings remains underdetermined.

2.3 The Residue Problem

Arthur and Metzinger arrive at the rupture from opposite directions. Arthur works phenomenologically, describing what is present from the inside; Metzinger works analytically, describing what the apparatus is doing from the outside. They use different vocabularies. They are addressed to different audiences. They are not in conversation with each other. And yet, on a specific structural claim, they converge.

The structural claim is this: during the salvific rupture, the mediating apparatus that ordinarily produces the experience of being a continuous, language-using, memory-having self is disrupted. Arthur describes this as the cessation of thought and the failure of ordinary language. Metzinger would describe it as the temporary disintegration of the phenomenal self-model. The vocabularies differ; the structural fact described is the same. Something specific has happened to the apparatus, and what happens during the gap cannot be straightforwardly understood as the apparatus operating with different content. The apparatus itself is altered.

This convergence is what makes the failure-to-hold *structural*. Whatever the rupture is — whether it is a breach in dissociative boundaries, a compressed bardo transit, a glimpse of pleromatic light, an irruption of archetypal content, or simply the temporary cessation of a brain function — what comes back is constrained by what the medium of return can carry. The medium of return is the same apparatus whose ordinary operation was disrupted. Memory, language, and the self-model resume operation; whatever occurred while that operation was suspended cannot be brought back through them unaltered. Arthur explains this as a mechanism; Metzinger explains it as a consequence of representational architecture. Both arrive at the same constraint.

Where they diverge is on what follows from this convergence. For Arthur, the gap is real and what is encountered there is real; the failure-to-hold is structural in the sense that the medium cannot carry it, but this does not make the encounter illusory. He preserves the possibility — without committing to it — that what is recognized in the gap exceeds what any later

metaphysical or neurobiological account can fully reduce. For Metzinger, the gap is real but what is "encountered" is whatever phenomenal content the still-functioning representational subsystems happen to produce; the failure-to-hold is structural in the sense that there is nothing of the right kind to bring back, and the felt quality of recognition is itself a representational artifact. He preserves the possibility — without committing to it — that nothing whatsoever underlies the experience beyond the brain's ongoing self-organizing activity.

These are not equivalent positions. They have substantially different implications for the rest of the manuscript. But the manuscript's stance is to hold the divergence rather than to resolve it. Both readings are coherent; both survive the phenomenological data; both pressure-test what the later frameworks can claim.

Part 1 added a datum to what Part 2's residue must include: the witness-in-void condition documented in the Aware-Void Account, in which awareness is reported as present in the salvific void without content for the awareness to take as object. This datum sits outside what Arthur and Metzinger were directly addressing, and the residue Part 2 leaves to Parts 3–6 must register it without claiming to have explained it.

Arthur's framework leaves room for it. His thought-free awareness thesis is precisely about awareness present without thought; the cessation of mentation does not, in his account, entail the cessation of awareness itself. What Arthur does not develop, and what the Aware-Void Account explicitly reports, is the further structural feature: that the awareness can be present even when no content is present — that thought-free awareness can be present in the void itself, not only at the threshold where thought is fading. The thesis is consistent with this extension; Arthur does not pursue it because his interest is in what occurs at the boundary where the apparatus first goes offline.

Metzinger's framework can be extended to the case only with substantial modification. A higher-order self-modeling subroutine running while the autobiographical PSM is offline is a familiar move within his system, and it accounts adequately for the witness watching the reassembly during the return. But the witness-in-void condition reports something more than a subroutine modeling lower-order content: it reports awareness with no lower-order content to model. The deflationary parsing must either deny the report (claiming retrospective reconstruction is doing all the work) or extend the framework to accommodate a kind of awareness that has no content to take as object. Either move is available, and this record cannot make them equally costly. Retrospective reconstruction is a straightforward response to this instance, given its single-account, late-articulation, framework-mediated status; the bracketing test has already priced what falls with it. The question stays open at the level of the class, where objectless-awareness and dreamless-sleep reports call for an independently motivated account rather than case-by-case dismissal. Extension would modify the framework; reconstruction would preserve it. The aware-void datum forces that choice to be stated, not resolved.

The convergence Arthur and Metzinger arrive at — that the mediating apparatus is altered during the rupture — therefore points at three structural facts about the rupture rather than two. The apparatus is altered (their convergence); what occurs while the apparatus is altered cannot be carried back through the apparatus when it resumes (the failure-to-hold, structural under

both readings); and something is present during the alteration that neither thinker fully anticipated — awareness reported as present without the autobiographical and self-modeling structures that ordinarily accompany it, and in at least some accounts present even when no content of any kind is reported. The third fact is the one the frameworks of Parts 3–6 are best equipped to develop on their own terms.

What can be established before Parts 3–6 begin their interpretive work:

First, the witness-position is real as a phenomenological feature, but its two reported locations are not equally attested. In the wider corpus, some reports contain an observing position during gradual return; the strongest cross-linguistic third-party analogue currently located is kk84's report of an observing position while the ordinary "I" is absent, followed by piecewise bodily reconstruction with the feeling of self returning progressively, although the reporter explicitly cautions that the observer-language is a retrospective description (kk84 2017, pp. 297–300). In this record, the position is further described as calm and as preceding the specific restoration of thought, autobiographical identity, and ordinary world-orientation. The mediation caution of 1.2 applies directly here: because this witness-description was articulated by the inquirer, who was concurrently trained in contemplative doctrines of witnessing awareness, its fit with those doctrines cannot serve as independent corroboration of them. The description remains part of the report; the caution limits its evidentiary role. The second location — awareness present in the void itself, without object-content — rests in this record on the Aware-Void Account. Whether the return-phase witnessing position and the witness-in-void condition are the same structural position is a question the phenomenology raises but does not settle; the question is taken up through the contemplative traditions in Parts 3 and 6. The two locations are not equally attested, and the asymmetry is what the reportability structure already established would predict. The return-phase witnessing position is reported across independent sources because it operates while the apparatus is reassembling — encoding has at least partially resumed, and a reportable trace can survive. The witness-in-void condition sits at the reportable edge of the non-reportable horizon, Zone 5 abutting Zone 6, where trace-survival is marginal by the same structural logic; independent objectless reports should therefore be rare, and in the assembled corpus they are.¹⁰ This bounds the datum rather than corroborating it. The witness-in-void remains a single-account basis; its scarcity is not evidence in its favor; but because the scarcity is exactly what the reportability structure predicts, the scarcity is also not a special objection against it. One further precision is owed here, by the same exposure standard §6.4 applies elsewhere. The reportability horizon is an empirical access model rather than merely an interpretive rendering, and it therefore owes conditions under which it would lose credibility. Its appeal to rarity has little independent evidential force in the present record: Zones 5 and 6 are distinguished by whether an accessible trace survives, so the observation that reports become scarce near the horizon is partly a consequence of how the horizon is defined, not an independently successful prediction. A genuine test would require an index of depth independent of reportability, and would then ask whether retrievable propositional detail

¹⁰ Solomon near-case: Christopher Solomon (u/DiscoveringMore), high-dose session under a blindfold, concluded he had died because there was "nothing except awareness"; the report supplies a mundane cause — he had forgotten he was wearing a blindfold — so it is a qualified near-case, not clean corroboration. Source: [u/DiscoveringMore](https://www.reddit.com/user/DiscoveringMore), Reddit; full provenance in the Source Table.

attributable to the deepest interval declines as that independently indicated depth increases, with entry-threshold and return-phase material coded separately. Cases independently indicating greater depth while preserving equal or greater deep-phase propositional detail would count against the model. The assembled corpus has not been coded in that form, and its uneven depth indicators, retrospective reporting intervals, and selection for verbally organized accounts may prevent a clean test. What this qualifies is the rarity inference, not the manuscript's separate evidentiary ranking of the phases. The return phase remains the record's strongest evidentiary zone because memory and language have partially resumed while the reassembly is still occurring, because reports from that phase are available in principle to prospective near-immediate capture, and because the serial character of the return recurs across sources. None of those considerations depends on objectless reports being rare. The reportability horizon itself is retained as a plausible structural hypothesis with named but presently unrun tests, not as an empirical result. A second caution follows for how the corpus is read. Most of what the wider Salvia literature calls *void* is void-as-content — a perceived blackness, the dark interval between the parted sheets of the unzipping image, a dark expanse inhabited by presences — and locates in the dreaming-awake stratum, not in the objectless aware void. Because the word is shared, the two are easily conflated; they must not be, and void-as-content reports cannot be counted as independent corroboration of the objectless Zone 5 condition.

Second, the failure-to-hold is structural, and structural in a more specific sense than was previously named. The medium of ordinary propositional retrieval — language operating on memory in their integrated function — was offline during the period when the deepest content of the rupture was available, and so what occurred in that period cannot be carried back through that medium. What occurred is not, however, unrecorded: the felt-sense trace persists when propositional memory does not, and this persistence is data about what the rupture leaves behind. The failure-to-hold is the failure of propositional translation, not the absence of all carrying.

Third, the recognition is reported with the felt quality of certainty across independent sources, and the felt quality alone is not sufficient grounds for veridicality. The kappa-opioid mis-flagging hypothesis gives a specific, plausible deflationary alternative for the comparative-propositional component of the recognition — the "I have been here before" report, which Part 1 places at the entry threshold. The placement, if anything, improves the hypothesis's phenomenological fit: a familiarity-mis-flagging account applies most naturally where perceptual content is present for a familiarity-tag to attach to, and the entry threshold is precisely where a newly perceptible field is present. The hypothesis does not reach the aware-void datum, which sits outside what a mis-flagged-familiarity mechanism can address. The deflationary tool fits one component of the residue well and does not fit the other; the asymmetry is itself a constraint on what the deflationary account can claim.

Fourth, and as the move that allows Parts 3–6 to begin: what Part 2 has been calling *recognition* names more than one phenomenon, and the phenomena have different retention profiles. The first is the entry-threshold recognition — "I have been here before" — which Part 1 places at the moment Salvia Space becomes perceptible, while the apparatus is destabilizing but still encoding; it is propositionally retained, which is why the report survives verbatim across the

corpus. The second is the material of the deeper strata, which is heterogeneous in kind and in retention — Zone 3 encounter content, Zone 4 recognition-class events ("it is me doing this to myself"), the rare propositional crossing (the 2004 utterance), the Aware-Void Account's reported void, and the non-reportable interval, which cannot be positively characterized. Within this material the manuscript provisionally distinguishes a non-propositional knowing, occurring while the apparatus is offline and available to whatever awareness is present; it is not propositionally retained, and what survives of it is the felt-sense trace and, rarely, a fragment that crossed in propositional form. The third is the return-phase rendering: the personal-I's after-the-fact attempt to say what the deeper strata contained, carried by the threshold-zone reconstruction of the ordinary apparatus. Where the deeper strata include what the manuscript provisionally distinguishes as non-propositional knowing, the translation relation holds between that component and the third: the rendering is the available translation of what was known, into a medium that can carry only some of what was there — Arthur's mechanism explains why. What relation the entry-threshold recognition bears to the deeper non-propositional knowing — whether it anticipates it, points toward it, or partially translates an earlier contact with the same territory — is a question the surviving evidence does not settle, and the manuscript carries it as hypothesis rather than as established phenomenology. The vocabularies that have developed for the non-propositional component — in the contemplative traditions Parts 3, 5, and 6 will engage — are not introduced here. What Part 2 establishes is the structural distinction within which those vocabularies will operate.

These four points are the residue Part 2 leaves for what follows. The frameworks of Parts 3–6 will offer interpretations of the rupture: the Bardo as map of transit, the Gnostic gradient as account of arranged or structurally necessary forgetting, Jung as account of autonomous psychic structures, Kastrup as ontological container. None of these frameworks can ignore what Part 2 has established: that the return-phase rendering is not straightforward propositional retrieval of the deeper strata, that the apparatus of return is altered and cannot carry what occurred in the gap unmediated, and that felt certainty alone cannot ground a claim of veridicality.

This is what it means to apply pressure to the data before interpretation begins. The rest of the manuscript inherits a question rather than a verdict: given that something happened to the mediating apparatus, given that the failure-to-hold is structural, given that the felt quality alone cannot settle veridicality — what can the interpretive frameworks legitimately claim, and on what grounds?

The remainder of the manuscript is the attempt to answer that question without forgetting what Part 2 has put in place.

PART 3: THE BARDO AS EXPERIENTIAL MAP

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

Parts 1 and 2 established the data and the constraint. The rupture has describable structure independent of any frame; the recognition is reported as knowing; the failure-to-hold is structural; the felt quality alone is insufficient grounds for veridicality. This section asks the first interpretive question: does an existing experiential map fit the structure of the Salvia rupture, and if so, what does the fit actually establish?

The map offered is the Tibetan bardo framework. The fit is precise enough to be productive and incomplete enough to be honest. Part 3 maps the framework carefully where it holds, marks where it strains, and closes by naming what it cannot explain. The gap the Bardo framework cannot fill is the question Part 4 begins from. This section does not fill it.

The Tibetan corpus drawn on here is Padmasambhava's *Bardo Thödol* (in Robert Thurman's translation)¹¹, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*, and Leary, Metzner, and Alpert's *The Psychedelic Experience* — the sixties bridge text that first attempted this mapping.¹² The aim is not to defend the Tibetan cosmology; it is to ask whether the phenomenology described in Tibetan sources illuminates the structure of the Salvia rupture, even when the cosmology around that phenomenology is set aside.

Part 3 also inherits the precision Part 2 closed on: that *recognition* names more than one phenomenon with distinct retention profiles — the propositionally retained entry-threshold recognition, the variably retained deeper strata within which a non-propositional knowing is provisionally distinguished, and the return-phase rendering that partially translates it — with the translation relation holding between the deeper knowing and its rendering, and the relation between the entry recognition and the deeper knowing held as hypothesis. What Part 2 deferred to later parts was the vocabulary that has developed for the non-propositional component. Part 3 is the first place that vocabulary enters: the Tibetan tradition has a precise term — *rigpa* — for what Part 2's structural distinction pointed at. The introduction of the term is not ornament. It allows Part 3 to ask whether the territory the Tibetan practices have been pointed at, and the territory the Salvia rupture briefly admits, are the same territory under different routes of access. The mapping in 3.2 and the diagnosis in 3.3 both depend on whether this identification is sound.

3.1 What a Bardo Is (and Isn't)

The Tibetan word *bardo* means *between* — and in its full technical use in the *Bardo Thödol* tradition, it names not only the period between death and rebirth, but the structure of any transitional state in which one configuration of consciousness has dissolved and the next has not

¹¹ Padmasambhava 1994, trans. Thurman, the clear-light instruction of the first between — "...immaculate naked awareness dawning clear and void without horizon or center."

¹² Leary, Metzner & Alpert 1964, the first psychedelic adaptation of the bardo sequence. Named as historical precedent, not as method.

yet stabilized. In Padmasambhava's six-bardo enumeration, the three subdivisions of the post-mortem transition (the death-point bardo, the reality bardo, and the existence bardo) sit alongside the bardos of life, dream, and meditation. The framework is not exclusively about death. It is about transit — about what happens *in the gap* when a stable configuration of mind gives way to another.

This matters for the question of whether the Bardo framework applies to the Salvia state. Salvia is not death. The body does not dissolve, the karmic continuity (whatever it is) is not severed, and the rupture closes in approximately ten minutes. To object that Salvia cannot be a bardo because Salvia is not death is to mistake the framework for one of its applications. The dream-bardo is also not death; it is a transitional configuration of consciousness in which the ordinary waking self has dissolved and a different mode of awareness is operating. The same is true of the meditation-bardo. The framework's claim is that all such transitions share a common structural pattern, and that the *practices* developed for one bardo carry over to others — which is why, in Tenzin Wangyal's framing, dream yoga is explicit preparation for the bardo of death.

If the Bardo framework illuminates the Salvia rupture, what it illuminates is the *structure of the gap itself* — not whether the cosmological apparatus around it is correct. The framework offers a vocabulary for the phenomenology of transit: dissolution, encounter, return. Whether the dissolved consciousness is encountering Buddhas (the Tibetan view) or kappa-opioid-modulated phenomenal content (the deflationary view from Part 2) is a question that the framework, taken phenomenologically, does not need to resolve in order to be useful.

A single piece of the Tibetan vocabulary needs to be in place before the mapping in 3.2 can do its work. The bardo framework is the structure of transit. What the transit dissolves into and arises from has its own technical name. In the Dzogchen and broader Nyingma tradition, the term is *rigpa*: ordinarily translated as "knowing-awareness" or "self-luminous awareness," and used to name awareness aware of itself, without need of an object, prior to the cognitive structures that ordinarily organize experience. The translation is approximate; the concept is precise. Rigpa is not a state one has, in the sense that one has thoughts or perceptions. It is what awareness is when it is not occupied with objects — awareness recognizing itself as awareness, with the felt quality of self-knowing built into the recognition rather than added to it as a further reflective act.

The point in introducing the term here, rather than waiting until 3.3, is structural. Part 2 closed on a distinction among the entry-threshold recognition (retained), the non-propositional knowing that occurs while the apparatus is offline, and the personal-I's return-phase rendering of that knowing. The Tibetan tradition has a technical vocabulary for the second of these that the manuscript is now in a position to use. Rigpa names what awareness is when it knows itself directly — not as a comparison-against-prior-state, not as a remembered claim, not as a proposition retrieved from memory. It is the knowing that occurs in/as the witness, in the precise sense the tradition has refined across many centuries of practice and commentary. When the Bardo Thödol speaks of the clear light dawning at the moment of dissolution, what is said to dawn is, in technical use, the practitioner's own rigpa — recognized or unrecognized, but structurally the same awareness in either case.

The relevance to the Salvia case is direct, though the identification is provisional. Part 1's aware-void datum reports awareness present with nothing for awareness to take as object. The Tibetan vocabulary for that configuration is *rigpa*. Whether the Salvia witness-in-void is *rigpa* in the technical sense, or whether it is something structurally similar that the tradition's vocabulary illuminates without fully covering, is a question Part 3 holds rather than resolves. What the introduction of the term allows is the comparison itself: the Tibetan tradition has developed a vocabulary, a phenomenology, and a set of practices for the condition the Aware-Void Account reports. Whether the condition reported and the condition practiced are the same condition is precisely what the rest of this part examines.

This is the posture Part 3 takes. The Bardo is treated as a phenomenological map, not as a metaphysical claim. The map is then tested against the data.

3.2 The Compressed Transit

The classical sequence is: *chikhai bardo* (the death-point or clear-light bardo, in which the dissolution of ordinary consciousness opens onto naked awareness), *chönyid bardo* (the reality bardo, in which visionary content arises and is encountered), and *sidpa bardo* (the bardo of becoming, in which a new configuration begins to take form, ordinarily ending in rebirth). Leary, Metzner, and Alpert's psychedelic adaptation rendered this triad as ego-loss, hallucinatory encounter, and return — a translation that the Tibetan tradition itself broadly accommodates, since the post-mortem and altered-state cases are taken to map structurally even where their causes and durations differ radically.

The Salvia rupture compresses all three stages into approximately ten minutes.

3.2.1 Onset As *Chikhai Bardo*

The salviaic onset is the rapid, total dissolution of the ordinary self. Body-world distortion, complete amnesia of personal history, the disappearance of the sense of being someone — what Part 1 documented as the "total amnesia" feature. In Tibetan terms, this is the structural moment of the *chikhai bardo*: the configuration of ordinary consciousness has dissolved, and what is structurally available in its place is the clear light — described in the *Bardo Thödol* as "immaculate naked awareness dawning clear and void without horizon or center." Whether what arises in the Salvia onset is the clear light in the Tibetan sense is the question of section 3.3. The structural mapping — that the onset is the moment of dissolution, and that what is structurally available at that moment is bare awareness without ordinary content — holds.

Arthur's thought-free awareness lives in this mapping. What he describes as the cessation of thought, the failure of ordinary language, the steady state prior to mentation, corresponds closely, in structural terms, to what the Tibetan tradition names as the moment when ordinary consciousness has dissolved and naked awareness alone remains. Whether this constitutes liberation in the Tibetan sense — whether the awareness is recognized as the practitioner's own clear light — is again a separate question. The structural claim is narrower: that the *configuration* corresponds — the ordinary apparatus is disrupted, and what is present is

awareness without the apparatus — while whether the two conditions are the same in any deeper sense is left open.

The Aware-Void Account's report is, on this mapping, primary phenomenological data for what the tradition has been describing theoretically as the *chikhai* stratum — what Part 1's zone vocabulary placed at Zone 5 (awareness without content) at the deep end, or at the Zone 2 threshold when the clear light is briefly glimpsed at entry rather than at full dissolution. The Tibetan account describes naked awareness dawning when the ordinary apparatus has dissolved. The Aware-Void Account reports awareness present in the void itself, with no content for awareness to take as object, calm rather than threatening, with the personal-I absent rather than weakened. The structural match is precise enough to be worth stating carefully: the tradition's theoretical description and the Salvia phenomenological report describe the same structural features — awareness present, no object, self-knowing rather than other-knowing. This does not establish that the salviaic case is the *chikhai* bardo in any cosmologically loaded sense. What it establishes is more modest and more useful: the territory the Tibetan tradition has developed practices to make stable resembles, in at least some accounts, what the Salvia rupture briefly admits — whether identically or only structurally is held open. The identification of rigpa with the Salvia witness-in-void is therefore not arbitrary — the structural features the tradition specifies (awareness present, no object, self-knowing rather than other-knowing) are the features the Aware-Void Account reports. Whether what is present in the salviaic void is rigpa-in-the-tradition's-full-sense or rigpa-in-its-structural-features-only is a question the manuscript holds open. The structural features alone are sufficient to ground the comparison.

3.2.2 Encounter As *Chönyid Bardo*

The *chönyid bardo*, in classical descriptions, is populated with the peaceful and wrathful deities — the visionary content that arises after the moment of dissolution and before the formation of a new configuration. Tenzin Wangyal's translation of the structural feature is more austere: this is the bardo of *visionary experience*, the bardo in which "consciousness is manifest in various forms" and the practitioner either remains in non-dual presence or identifies with one fragment of the experience, reasserting a dualistic self that reacts to the apparent objects of consciousness as if they were external.¹³

The Salvia *chönyid* is populated with what Arthur, after careful consideration, settled on calling *presences* — neither spirits nor entities nor gods, but *what is encountered* in the visionary stratum of the state. The presences are sometimes humanoid, sometimes geometric, sometimes recognized rather than discovered. They are encountered with the felt quality of having always been there. Part 1 noted the convergence of these encounter reports across independent sources; Part 3 notes that the structural position of the encounter — between the dissolution of the ordinary self and the return of ordinary identity — corresponds precisely to the Tibetan placement of the *chönyid bardo*.

The mapping does not require commitment to the Tibetan iconography. It requires only that *whatever is encountered* in the visionary stratum of the Salvia state is encountered in the

¹³ Wangyal 1998, the bardo of visionary experience — "consciousness is manifest in various forms."

structural position the Tibetan tradition reserves for *chönyid*: after dissolution, before re-formation, in the gap where ordinary consciousness is not running.

3.2.3 Stepwise Return As *Sidpa Bardo*

The *sidpa bardo*, the bardo of becoming, is the stage in which a new configuration of consciousness begins to take form. In the post-mortem case, the tradition describes this as the seeking of a new birth; in the dream case, Tenzin Wangyal describes it as the moment when the sense of self reconstitutes itself through dualistic relationship with the images of the dream. In the Salvia case, the structural correlate is the stepwise return that Part 1 documented: the sequential, observable reassembly of identity, memory, and world-orientation, observed by a witness that is intact before the reassembled self is — which is the manuscript's primary datum receiving, here, its first framework reading: the Bardo names the transit whose visibility the thesis rests on.

Arthur's automatic returning to form — the observation that the customary mode of awareness reconstitutes itself by the weight of its own habit — closely parallels what the Tibetan tradition describes as the *sidpa bardo*'s defining feature: the system seeks form, and form is what the system finds. The Tibetan tradition would say that without preparation, the seeking-of-form is mechanical — what Tenzin Wangyal describes as the delusional conventional self reasserting itself dualistically. Arthur, working without the Tibetan vocabulary, arrives at the same structural observation: the return is automatic, the apparatus reassembles because that is what apparatuses do.

The compressed sequence — onset, encounter, return — fits the bardo triad with structural precision. What is more striking than the fit is its *speed*. The Tibetan tradition understands the post-mortem bardos as occurring over hours or days; the dream-bardo cycle occupies a single night; the Salvia rupture compresses the structural sequence into ten minutes. The compression does not destroy the structure; it makes it observable in a way the longer bardos are not. As Part 1 noted, this is what makes the Salvia state among the most *examinable* of the deep dissociative states. In Tibetan terms: the bardo passage that is normally invisible because of its duration becomes visible because of its compression.

3.3 Recognition and the Problem of Missing It

This is where the Bardo framework does its sharpest interpretive work, and where the work meets a precise difficulty.

The central claim of the *Bardo Thödol* — repeated through the text in different formulations — is that the clear light *appears* at the moment of dissolution, structurally and without exception. The tradition is unwavering on this point: for every dying being, the clear light dawns. What varies is whether it is *recognized*. The text is explicit: most beings, lacking preparation, miss it. The recognition fails not because the clear light fails to appear but because the apparatus that would recognize it is not prepared to do so.

The Tibetan tradition's response to this missing-of-recognition is *practice*. Dream yoga, sleep yoga, the recognition exercises of Dzogchen, the meditation practices that build stability in *rigpa*

— all of these are designed to prepare the practitioner to recognize the clear light when it dawns. The repeated bardo readings in the Tibetan death rituals are designed to prompt recognition retrospectively, in the case where preparation was insufficient. The framework does not promise that recognition will be automatic. It promises that with preparation, recognition becomes possible; without preparation, the clear light is missed.

The Tibetan practices most commonly invoked in connection with the bardo — dream yoga and sleep yoga in particular — bear a more specific relationship to the Salvia state than the language of analogy can carry.¹⁴ Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is explicit on this point in *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*: sleep yoga is not preparation for an analogous state. It is direct preparation for the bardo of death, which the tradition treats as structurally identical to the deepest stratum of dreamless sleep — both conditions in which the ordinary apparatus is offline and only *rigpa* remains. The yoga of sleep is the cultivation of stable presence in the condition where there is no object of presence: the condition the Aware-Void Account reports under salvinorin A.

The implication is structural. If Salvia produces aware-void (objectless-awareness) experiences, then those experiences are primary phenomenological data for what Tibetan dream and sleep yoga have been training practitioners to inhabit stably. The structural correspondence between the practice and the Salvia state may be more specific than a loose analogy. Whether the two routes — one chemical and brief, one cultivated and durable — reach the same territory in the full technical sense, or only resemble each other structurally, is a question the manuscript holds open, the more so because the closest first-person correspondence rests on a single account (the Aware-Void Account). The tradition's claim, on its own terms, is that the witness-in-void condition can become a stable feature of consciousness through sustained training. The Salvia case, on this mapping, may be the same condition admitted briefly and without the training. Whether the durability the practices aim at can be approached from the brief admittance, or whether the two access-routes produce experiences that resemble each other structurally without being the same experience in any deeper sense, is a question the manuscript holds open. What is established here is the modesty appropriate to the comparison: these traditions may be doing more than offering analogies for what Salvia produces. They have developed, over centuries, practices directed at the condition Salvia briefly admits. Whether the cultivated and the pharmacological routes reach that condition in the same technical sense remains open.

This is the precise place where the Bardo framework converges with what Part 2 established. Both arrive, by entirely different routes, at the same structural fact: what is available in the deeper strata cannot ordinarily be held without something that supports its retention. Part 2 named this in mechanistic terms — memory and language, the medium of ordinary retention, were not running in the same way while the deeper material was available, so it cannot ordinarily return in full propositional form. The Tibetan tradition names it in practice-terms — without sustained training in the recognition of awareness as awareness, the encounter with naked awareness is not held by the apparatus that returns. The two framings are not identical, but they describe the same structural feature: a recognition-class event is reported as occurring, and the question of whether it is *held* depends on the preparedness of the medium of return.

¹⁴ Wangyal 1998.

The Salvia case introduces a precise difficulty that neither the Tibetan tradition nor Arthur's mechanism fully anticipates. In the Tibetan account, the clear light appears and is missed. In the Salvia case, *something is recognized* — and then is lost. The recognition is reported with the specific phenomenological texture of remembering ("I have been here before"); it is not described as having been missed but as having been *had*, and then *lost*. This is not exactly the Tibetan failure-of-recognition. It is closer to a fact-of-recognition followed by a failure-to-hold.

Two readings of this difficulty are available, and Part 3 holds both.

The first: that what is recognized in Salvia is something less than the clear light in the Tibetan sense — that the salviaic recognition is a partial or peripheral encounter with what the chikhai bardo opens onto, and that the felt quality of "I have been here before" reports a recognition of the structural position rather than of the bare awareness itself. Under this reading, the Tibetan tradition's promise that with preparation the clear light can be recognized AND held is not contradicted by the Salvia data; the Salvia recognition is simply not the recognition the tradition is talking about. It is closer to what Tenzin Wangyal calls the dream-clear-light: a glimpse of the underlying ground that arises during the dissolution but is then obscured by the visionary content of the bardo of visions. This reading preserves the Tibetan claim while limiting the Salvia case to a specific structural position within the framework.

The second: that what is recognized in Salvia is the same encounter the Tibetan tradition describes, and that the failure-to-hold is exactly what the tradition warns of — that the unprepared apparatus cannot hold the recognition, and what feels like "I have been here before, and now I am losing it" is the structural inevitability of an unprepared return. Under this reading, the Salvia state offers the recognition that the contemplative traditions exist to stabilize, given for free in chemical form to people who have not done the preparation that would let them keep it. The Tibetan tradition's warning would then be: this is what an unprepared encounter with the clear light feels like.

A third specification cuts across both readings and was not available to either Arthur or the Tibetan sources in the form Part 1 has now developed: the question of *which* recognition fails to hold. Part 1 established that the salviaic amnesia is layered — anterograde, retrograde, exit — and that phenomenological memory (the felt-sense trace) and propositional memory can dissociate. Under that distinction, "the recognition fails to hold" is not a single event: the return-phase rendering fails because it cannot fully translate the non-propositional knowing it is attempting to render, while the entry-threshold recognition fails differently or not at all — "I have been here before" is retained; the deeper material it may point toward is not ordinarily retained in full. The Tibetan tradition, working without this distinction, treats the failure as undifferentiated — yet the practices it has refined turn out, on examination, to address the non-propositional component specifically: the stability of rigpa, the recognition of awareness as awareness, the inhabiting of the witness-in-void condition. These aim not at propositional retrieval but at making the non-propositional knowing a durable feature of consciousness. The "failure-to-hold" the tradition describes and the "failure-to-hold" the Salvia case reports are therefore convergent in their structural location (both occur at the boundary between the state and the medium of return) but distinct in what the practices and the salviaic case respectively

address. The traditions extend recognition into the territory the felt-sense trace records; the unprepared Salvia experiencer brings back the entry-threshold report, the felt-sense trace, and the rendering's partial translation. These are different relationships to the same residue.

Part 3 does not adjudicate between these readings. The first preserves Tibetan precision at the cost of saying Salvia gives something less than what the tradition discusses. The second extends the Tibetan claim to the salviaic case at the cost of treating the salviaic recognition as continuous with the post-mortem clear light, which is a stronger metaphysical claim than the phenomenology alone can ground. Both readings are coherent. Both preserve the structural mapping of section 3.2. Neither requires the Tibetan cosmology to be true in order to be useful.

What both readings agree on, and what is the operative claim of this section: the failure-to-hold has been seen before. The Tibetan tradition has been describing it for centuries, in a vocabulary that names both the recognition and its loss as features of an unprepared transit. Where Part 2 established that failure-to-hold mechanistically, Part 3 establishes that the same structural feature appears in a tradition that arrived at it through entirely different means — phenomenological observation across generations of practitioners, formalized into specific practices designed to address it.

Convergence across radically different routes is a significant form of corroboration in phenomenological inquiry. It does not prove the Tibetan account; it does not prove Arthur's mechanism. What it establishes is that the failure-to-hold is unlikely to be an artifact of any single conceptual frame. Two traditions, working with no awareness of each other, describe the same structural feature using different vocabularies. The feature is in the data, not in the frame.

3.4 What the Bardo Framework Cannot Explain

The Bardo framework maps the structural sequence of the rupture. It identifies the clear-light moment, the encounter, and the return; it offers a tradition's diagnosis of why recognition fails to hold; it provides a long lineage of practices designed to address that failure. What it does *not* address is one specific feature of the Salvia phenomenology, and that feature is the gap Part 4 will begin from.

The Tibetan account of why recognition fails is a *competence claim*: the practitioner was not prepared. The clear light dawns; it is missed because the apparatus of recognition was not stabilized; with practice, this can be remedied. The framework treats the failure-to-hold as a remediable defect in the recognizer, not as a feature of the relationship between the recognizer and what is encountered.

The witness-in-void distinction sharpens what counts as the "forgetting" that Part 4 will examine. There are at least three structurally distinct events the salviaic return passes through: the closing of the witness-in-void condition itself (the void condition ceasing as the personal-I begins to reconstitute); the propositional re-enclosure (the ordinary apparatus reassembling, with its memory, language, and self-model returning to operation); and the loss of the felt-sense trace's clarity over time (the trace's gradual receding into ordinary consciousness's background). The felt sense of arrangement that the salviaic phenomenology reports — the spell reasserting,

the alterations made where one is not looking — does not attach uniformly to all three. It attaches most directly to the second: the propositional re-enclosure, the apparatus reassembling and bringing with it the always-having-been-the-case structure that Vulpine described. The witness-in-void condition itself is not reported as "arranged" or "imposed"; it is reported as calm, neutral, structural. The closing of that condition as the personal-I reconstitutes is the threshold where the affective texture of arrangement arises. This specification matters for Part 4: the question "which forgetting is arranged?" admits at least three answers, and the gradient of available interpretations (4.2) reads each of them differently.

The Salvia phenomenology, as Part 1 documented and as the third-party trip-report literature corroborates, includes a specific affective feature that the Tibetan competence claim does not address: the felt sense that the forgetting was *not accidental*. The Salvia return does not feel like an unprepared apparatus failing to hold what was given. It feels — in the language of multiple independent reports — like a *spell reasserting*. Like a sleight of hand. Like the alterations being made where one is not looking, and reality being reassembled as though it had always been that way. The felt quality of the forgetting is not "I was not prepared and so I lost it." The felt quality is closer to "something is making sure I do not keep this."

This is the phenomenological datum that the Bardo framework, taken on its own terms, does not reach. The Tibetan tradition treats the loss of recognition as a problem of the practitioner; the Salvia phenomenology, in its felt quality, treats the loss as something more like an imposition. These are different claims. They are not contradictory — the second can be a misreading of the first, or the first can be a deflation of the second — but they are different. The framework that maps the structure of transit cannot, by itself, settle which reading the felt quality of arranged forgetting actually warrants.

What Part 3 has established: the bardo structure fits. The transit is real, the sequence holds, the failure-to-hold is structurally anticipated by a tradition that has been describing it for centuries. What Part 3 has *not* established: whether the felt quality of arranged forgetting is to be read as a misperception of an unprepared apparatus, as a phenomenologically accurate report of something that the Bardo framework does not see, or as an interpretive overlay imported from outside the experience. Each of these readings entails different commitments. Each is held in Part 4, as a gradient, against the question of which I is doing the recognizing in the first place.

For now, Part 3 closes with a precise residue. The bardo structure illuminates the rupture. The Tibetan and the Salvia descriptions converge on the structural feature that recognition without preparation fails to hold. The convergence is significant evidence that the failure-to-hold is structural rather than artifactual. But the felt quality of *arranged* forgetting — the affect that distinguishes the Salvia phenomenology from a generic unprepared transit — is not addressed by the framework. That affect, and what it warrants interpretively, is the question Part 4 takes up.

PART 4: THE HINGE — ARRANGED FORGETTING AND FRAGMENTED SELFHOOD

Central question: *Is the forgetting natural, arranged, or structurally necessary? And which "I" emerges claiming "I have been here before"?*

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

Part 3 closed with a precise residue. The bardo structure illuminates the rupture; the failure-to-hold is structurally anticipated by a tradition that has been describing it for centuries; and yet one feature of the Salvia phenomenology lies outside what the bardo framework, taken on its own terms, can reach. The Tibetan account treats the failure of recognition as a competence problem — the apparatus was not prepared. The Salvia phenomenology, in its felt quality, does not feel like an unprepared apparatus failing to hold what was given. It feels like a spell reasserting. Like alterations being made where one is not looking, and the scene reassembled as though it had always been that way.

Part 4 takes up that feature. It does so under two questions, which the section deliberately keeps separate.

The first question is what the felt sense of arranged forgetting amounts to. This question runs through 4.1 and 4.2. 4.1 establishes the datum — the phenomenological texture that distinguishes the Salvia return from the loss of a dream upon waking — without yet allowing any interpretive framework to speak. 4.2 then introduces the gradient of available interpretations: adversarial Gnostic, Hoeller's softer Gnostic, and Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna*. Each treats the forgetting as having a *structure*. They differ on what the structure is. Part 4 holds the gradient as a gradient. To pick a position would be to claim more than the phenomenology can ground.

The second question is independent of where the gradient lands. Even if 4.2 were settled — even if one knew with certainty whether the forgetting were adversarially imposed, ignorantly maintained, or structurally necessary — the identity of the I doing the recognizing would remain undetermined. Section 4.3 brings Gurdjieff's challenge to bear: the salviaic recognition arrives as "I have been here before," and the trustworthiness of that report is exactly equal to the trustworthiness of the I making it. Whether that I is a deeper self, a temporarily stripped-down sub-personality, or the bare ground beneath the committee of selves cannot be settled by the felt vividness of the recognition alone.

Section 4.4 examines Philip K. Dick's 2-3-74 experience as the most thoroughly documented contemporary case of the structure this part is analyzing. PKD did not study Gnosticism first and then map it onto his experience; he had the experience and discovered, months later, that a two-thousand-year-old tradition had already named what he had encountered. The sequencing is the same as the project's own. His phenomenological descriptions function as evidence; his interpretive attempts to systematize what he had seen — across eight years and roughly eight thousand pages — function as cautionary illustration. The section uses both registers and distinguishes them.

Section 4.5 closes with a brief structural observation: the television series *Severance* dramatizes the same topology — bidirectional amnesia, mechanically severed configurations of consciousness, neither of which doubts its own reality while in it — and arrives at it by a route that does not pass through the technical vocabularies Part 4 has been working with — though not from outside their cultural watershed: severed-self fiction has its own lineage, with Dick's novels among its sources, and Gnostic and Buddhist motifs circulate in the culture its writers work in. That a popular artifact finds this structure without the technical apparatus is still a data point about the topology's recognizability; the independence claimed for it is independence of register, not isolation.

Two constraints inherited from Parts 1–3 govern what follows. First, the failure-to-hold is structural (Part 2): Part 4 cannot treat the forgetting as merely incidental, and the arrangement claim is an *additional* phenomenological datum, not a replacement for the mechanistic account. Second, felt quality alone is insufficient grounds for veridicality (also Part 2): the felt sense of *arranged* forgetting is the datum, not proof of arrangement. Part 4 proceeds as close phenomenological investigation, not as advocacy for any position on the gradient. The frameworks introduced here all carry dramatic charge, and the natural momentum of their vocabulary tends toward the adversarial end. The section's task is to keep the same register Parts 1–3 have established: precise, non-generic, willing to name difficulties, resistant to premature closure. The Gnostic material is presented with the same analytical care given to Metzinger's deflationary challenge in Part 2.

A third inherited element shapes what follows. Part 3 closed by distinguishing three structurally distinct events that the salvific return passes through — the closing of the witness-in-void condition, the propositional re-enclosure of the ordinary apparatus, and the longer fading of the felt-sense trace into background — and observed that the felt sense of arrangement attaches most directly to the second of these rather than to all three uniformly. Part 4 takes this seriously throughout. The question "which forgetting is arranged?" is more specific than the literature on the topic has typically allowed, and the gradient of available interpretations (4.2) reads each of the three events differently. The phenomenological hinge is the tether — the structural pull back to biographical structure: narrated from the witness-in-void condition in the Aware-Void Account, and recognizable, as the pull itself, in convergent third-party reports. The tether is where the gradient becomes testable, and 4.2 closes on the cross-framework reading of the tether.

A final specification of vocabulary, introduced here because Part 4 is where it earns its keep. The word *amnesia* has been doing two jobs in this manuscript, and the gradient cannot be stated cleanly until they are separated. The first job is session-level: the layered encoding, retrieval, and translation failure that Part 1 mapped and Part 2 explained mechanistically — produced by the rupture, pharmacological in origin, and conceded as such by every position about to be examined. Call this the *session amnesia*. The second job is the one the gradient's positions are actually about: each claims, in its own register, that there is a forgetting *prior to* any session — the Archonic grip, the Horos's structural self-perpetuation, *tirodhāna*'s freely chosen concealment, the Kundabuffer's hereditary consequences — an ongoing concealment by which

bounded self-world participation is maintained at all.¹⁵ Call this the *constitutive amnesia*, with the register marked explicitly: its existence is precisely what the gradient debates. It is an interpretive object, not a phenomenological given. The question "which forgetting is arranged?" now has its precise form. No position on the gradient claims the session amnesia is arranged — receptor pharmacology is not an Archon. What every position reads as arranged, ignorant, or chosen is the constitutive amnesia, and what the salviaic phenomenology contributes is the felt texture of the moment the two interact: the rupture is read, by every position on the gradient, as a brief failure of the constitutive concealment — *anamnesis*, in the sense the manuscript inherits from the Platonic and Gnostic uses — while the session amnesia constrains what can be carried back from the deeper strata in propositional form. The simultaneity — one forgetting lifting long enough for the remembering to occur, while a second prevents its deeper content from being retained in full — is the structure Part 7 will locate under the cosmic joke. Stated once more with the register explicit: that the session amnesia exists is established phenomenology; that the constitutive amnesia exists is the gradient's shared interpretive claim, read adversarially, structurally, or as freely chosen. The manuscript never converts the second into the first.

4.1 The Phenomenological Datum: Forgetting That Feels Arranged

The salviaic return does not feel like waking from a dream. It feels like being put back. That distinction is the datum of this subsection — pre-interpretive, established before any framework is permitted to interpret it.

Several features of the dream-waking case do not transfer. When a dream collapses on waking, the dream is not experienced as having been actively dismantled by an outside agent; it simply ceases to be available, and the waking apparatus assumes its ordinary operations. The forgetting is total but it is not *textured*. There is nothing about the loss of the dream that suggests it has been done *to* the dreamer. It is a default operation of the system.

The Salvia return has a different texture, and the difference is what 4.1 has to establish carefully without yet interpreting. The texture is most precisely captured in a third-party report Part 1 has already cited. Vulpine, writing as a description of the substance's mechanism rather than as a metaphysical claim, describes Salvia as a kind of stage magic in which the alterations to reality are made where one is not looking, and reassembled into one's experience as though they had always been that way — with what Vulpine calls *false memories or sensibilities* planted in the mind such that nothing seems to have changed until the return. The phrase that bears the weight is *as though they had always been that way*. The reassembled world is not experienced as new and unfamiliar; it is experienced as having always been the case. The sleight of hand is precisely the active arrangement of perception such that no sleight of hand registers.

Citing Vulpine here is not a grant of special authority. It is that the structure he describes is what I describe as the central feature of the return phenomenology when I describe what is most precise in my own accounts. Part 1 documented the stepwise return: identity, memory, and world-orientation arriving piece by piece, observed by a witness that is intact before the

¹⁵ Gurdjieff 1950 (*Beelzebub's Tales*) for Kundabuffer as arranged-forgetting; Ouspensky 1949 for the fragmented-I; Gurdjieff 1973 (*Views*) for the self-remembering material.

reconstituted self is. What was less explicit there, and is the operative datum here, is the *texture* under that observation. The witness is not watching a dream collapse. It is watching a particular self — Rich Fegley, with his particular biography and his particular world — being put back, with the world's apparent always-having-been-there reassembling alongside him. The kitchen-renovation account in my own record — a session in which I observed the reassembling apparatus mid-operation and attempted to insert a counter-memory, probing whether the material being assembled was still malleable — makes this still more pointed: the recognition that the world around me was being assembled *from memory*, with enough malleability that it occurred to me to try inserting a counter-memory and see what happened. The mechanism was not invisible. It was operating, and visible, and the seeing of it was not part of the ordinary equipment of waking.

Arthur's mechanistic description — the *automatic returning to form* under which the customary mode of awareness reconstitutes itself by the weight of its own habit — is structurally accurate. What it does not capture is the *valence* of the reconstitution. *Returning to form* names what the apparatus does; it does not name how the doing of it feels from the position of a witness present during it. The felt valence is closer to imposition than to default. The system is not simply re-entering its baseline configuration; the baseline configuration is being reasserted, with the felt quality that something is *making sure* it reasserts.

A precise difficulty must be marked here, and the section refuses to evade it. The "arranged" texture could itself be an artifact of contrast. The salviaic rupture is so total — total amnesia, total dissolution of the self-model, total inversion of which is "real" and which is "the dream" — that the return-to-baseline is correspondingly dramatic. The shock of re-enclosure may produce the felt quality of imposition simply because what is being returned to is so thoroughly *not* what has just been inhabited. Under this reading, the felt quality of arrangement tracks nothing about the structure of the return; it tracks the magnitude of the contrast between the rupture and the baseline. The Vulpine description, the kitchen-renovation observation, and the witness's recognition of the reassembly *as* assembly would all be reports of contrast-shock rather than reports of an outside agency at work.

Part 4 cannot rule this out. The contrast-shock reading is coherent and accounts for much of what 4.1 has registered. The section's posture toward it is not dismissal but suspension. The contrast-shock reading does not, by itself, account for one specific feature of the Vulpine description: that the reassembly does not feel like return-from-rupture but like the *arranging-of-not-having-ruptured*. *False memories that the room has always been this way* is not the felt texture of a dramatic restoration of the prior configuration; it is the felt texture of the prior configuration being re-installed *with* its always-having-been-the-case included as part of the installation. This is a more specific phenomenological feature than mere contrast-shock will accommodate. Whether it is *enough* more specific to warrant a stronger interpretive claim is exactly the question 4.2 takes up.

One further specification before the section closes. Part 3 distinguished three structurally distinct events the return passes through, and the felt quality of arrangement does not attach to all of them uniformly. The witness-in-void condition itself, where it is reported (the Aware-Void

Account is the manuscript's primary case), is not described as arranged or imposed. It is described as calm, neutral, structural — the felt observation is that the personal-I has no function in the condition and no time to inhabit it, and the return is experienced as a structural pull rather than as an active dispossession. The propositional re-enclosure is where the arrangement quality arises. As the personal-I reconstitutes and the ordinary apparatus reassembles, the always-having-been-the-case structure that Vulpine's description names is installed alongside the apparatus. The witness watches this installation; the witness does not experience the void itself as having been arranged for it. The arrangement is felt in the moment the propositional self-world structure reasserts. This specification matters for what follows. The gradient of available interpretations in 4.2 — adversarial Archon, soft Hoeller, freely chosen *tirodhāna* — does not have to read the witness-in-void itself as part of what is arranged. It has the option of reading the *re-enclosure* as the arrangement and the void as the structural condition the arrangement closes over. Whether each position takes this option, and what each gains by taking or refusing it, becomes legible in the tether reading that closes 4.2.

The section closes here without an interpretation. The datum is the felt quality. The datum is real as reported and is reported with sufficient consistency across independent sources to constrain interpretation. The datum is not yet a verdict. What the datum *warrants* — and what it does not warrant — is the work of the next section.

4.2 The Gnostic Gradient: From Archon to Tirodhāna

Three positions in the contemplative and philosophical literatures share a structural claim about what the salvific phenomenology in 4.1 might be tracking. They differ fundamentally on what the structure of arranged forgetting consists in. Part 4 introduces them as a gradient because the phenomenological datum from 4.1 does not, by itself, settle which end of the gradient the felt quality warrants.

The shared structural claim is that the forgetting has a *structure*. It is not the random loss that befalls a dream. It is the specific return of a specific configuration of consciousness — *this* self, with *this* biography, in *this* world — with a thoroughness and texture that something more than biological reset is doing the work to produce. All three positions agree on this. Part 3's bardo framework treats the failure-to-hold as a competence problem: the apparatus was not prepared. The three Gnostic-gradient positions all treat the failure-to-hold as more than a competence problem — as something that has *the look of arrangement*. They differ on what the arrangement is.

4.2.1 The Strong Adversarial Reading

The Demiurge of Sethian and Valentinian Gnosticism is the architect of the forgetting.¹⁶ The Archons are its enforcers. Yaldabaoth in the *Secret Book of John* boasts, "I am god and there is no other god beside me," and the boast is the precise expression of his ignorance of the higher Aeons that produced him; the *Nature of the Rulers* echoes the boast and treats its falsity as theodicy — the darkness of this world is a real darkness, and its rulers are real rulers, even if their rulership operates on their own ignorance of what lies above them. The forgetting that

¹⁶ Meyer 2010, *Secret Book of John*, NHC II 13,8–9 (Yaldabaoth's boast).

ordinary consciousness operates within is, under this reading, neither accidental nor benign. The pneumatic spark in each person is *imprisoned*. The amnesia is the prison. Awakening is escape. The Archons exist as the agencies that maintain the prison — that resist the awakening, that fold the recognition back into ordinary forgetting before it can take hold.

The *Gospel of Truth* gives this position its sharpest phenomenological formulation outside the explicit Archon mythology.¹⁷ Ignorance, in the *Gospel of Truth*, is not a passive absence; it is productive. Error, personified, *prepares works and deeds of forgetfulness and fear* "in order, by them, to attract those of the middle and take them captive." Forgetting is described as a fog grown so dense that no one could see. The waking from forgetting, when it arrives, is described not as discovery but as a calling: a name is read out from the book of the living, and the one whose name is called turns and hastens toward the caller. The *Three Forms of First Thought* delivers the same structure in first-person: *I walk upright and those who sleep I awaken*. Hans Jonas, working as a philosopher rather than as a religious historian, isolated the phenomenological structure of this material as the experience of *thrownness* into a foreign element, the sense of a self that does not belong to the world it finds itself in, and the recognition of that misfit as the precondition of any adequate response. The strong adversarial position takes that phenomenological structure to be tracking something metaphysically real — that the forgetting is being *done*, by agencies that have a stake in its continuation, against the interests of the pneumatic self whose forgetting it is.

The contemporary formulation closest to this position is Philip K. Dick's *Black Iron Prison*¹⁸, which 4.4 examines as a living case. The BIP is not a theory PKD constructed; it is a name he found himself using, after the 2-3-74 experience, for what he was describing. He saw, as he put it, *Rome, Rome everywhere* — and what he meant was that the structure of enforced enclosure he had glimpsed during the rupture was experienced as having always been present, never having ended, persisting unchanged beneath the surface of ordinary modernity. The texture of his description is the same texture Vulpine reports about Salvia: the arrangement does not announce itself; the arrangement is the apparent default; the recognition of the arrangement as arrangement is what the arrangement is structured to prevent.

4.2.2 Hoeller's Softening

Stephan Hoeller's reading of the same material moves the position by one structural step.¹⁹ The Demiurge is real; the Archons are real; the prison is real. But the Demiurge's crime is *ignorance*, not malice. He does not know there is a Pleroma above him because his own contracted nature does not have access to anything above him. He builds the cage from what he is, and what he is is unaware of anything else. Hoeller's formulation is precise: the Demiurge's arrogance — the boast of *I am god* — is the symptom of his ignorance, not the expression of cruelty. He is a blind architect, building a structure that is real, that imprisons, that the prisoners suffer in — but that is not maintained by an agent who knows what the prisoners are missing. It is maintained, instead, by the structural self-perpetuation of a system that has no view of anything outside itself.

¹⁷ Meyer 2010, *Gospel of Truth*, NHC I 17 ("works and deeds of forgetfulness and fear").

¹⁸ Dick 2011 (*The Exegesis*). First use; inline (Dick 2011) thereafter.

¹⁹ Hoeller 2002. Also Jonas 1958 for the scholarly Gnostic frame at its first use in 4.2.

This shifts the felt sense of imposition without erasing it. The arrangement is real; the cage is real; the suffering of the cage is real. What is not real, on Hoeller's reading, is a knowing tormentor who maintains the cage *because* it imprisons. The Horos — the Limit, the boundary between Pleroma and Kenoma — is not a wall built to keep the sparks down; it is the consequence of having fallen below a threshold of awareness. The fall is real; the boundary is real; but the boundary persists because of what falling below it *is*, not because something stands at it actively keeping anyone out. Under this reading, the salvific recognition that "I have been here before" reports a true fact about the structure: there is a Pleroma above the Kenoma, and the spark recognizes its origin when the Horos is briefly thinned. But the agency that re-thickens the Horos is not, on Hoeller's reading, an agent at all — it is the structural reassertion of the Kenoma's habitual self-organization. The forgetting reasserts because that is what consciousness operating below the threshold *does*.

This position retains the metaphysical architecture of Gnosticism — the descent, the spark, the recognition, the call — while removing the dimension of adversariality. It is a softening of the strong reading, not a refutation of it. Whether the salvific phenomenology favors this position over (4.2.1) is not settled by the bare felt quality of arrangement, because both positions predict that quality. They differ on what the quality is *of*.

4.2.3 Kashmir Shaivism's *Tirodhāna*

The third position in the gradient is structurally distinct from the first two and is found in non-dual Tantric Śaivism. The fifth act of Śiva — the act of *concealment*, *tirodhāna* — is what allows particularity to exist at all. For consciousness to manifest as *this* embodied locus, with *this* biography and *this* horizon, it must conceal everything else. As Christopher Wallis renders the doctrine: *in order for Consciousness to manifest itself in one particular form, it must conceal or suppress all other possible forms*. The concealment is the price of particularity. It is not adversarial. It is not even arranged by another. It is freely chosen by Consciousness itself, as the necessary structure of becoming a someone — the structure under which God incarnates as you and, in order to specifically become *you*, has to forget the rest of her vast all-encompassing being.

The fifth act, *tirodhāna*, is followed by the same gesture's other aspect: *anugraha*, grace, self-revelation. The hand of concealing in the Śaiva iconography points directly at the upraised foot of grace; one implies the other. The forgetting is not a defect in the structure to be overcome but a feature whose reversal is built into the same structure. The salvific rupture, on this reading, is *anugraha*: not liberation from an Archonic prison, but Śiva briefly revealing to Śiva what Śiva had concealed in order to be Rich Fegley. The felt sense of imposition that 4.1 documented is real, but is, under this reading, a misreading. The "outside" agency does not feel like the self that is doing the choosing because the choosing-self is not recognizable as the ordinary self. The ordinary self is precisely the *particular*; what does the choosing-of-the-concealment is what the ordinary self is the concealment *of*. The texture of arrangement is the texture of recognizing that one is the result of an act of concealment that one freely performed and does not, from the position of the concealment, remember performing.

This position is metaphysically the strongest of the three: it requires Consciousness with a capital C as the active subject of all manifestation, and the localized self as a freely chosen contraction of that subject. But it is also the most parsimonious in one specific respect — it does not require any agency *outside* the self to account for the felt sense of imposition. The same Consciousness that recognizes the arrangement is the Consciousness that performed it. The cosmic joke, in Śaiva terms, is the recognition that one was the joker as well as the audience.

4.2.4 Where Gurdjieff Sits on this Gradient

Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales* contains a mythological account of arranged forgetting that locates itself between (4.2.2) and (4.2.3), and that is worth registering here before 4.3 takes Gurdjieff's independent challenge as its own subject. The *Kundabuffer* is, in the myth, an organ implanted in early humans by a high commission of sacred beings. Its purpose was *cosmic necessity*: human three-brained beings were at risk of perceiving the function imposed on them and refusing it, and the implantation was a precaution. The organ caused them to perceive reality "upside down" and to crystallize ordinary impressions into self-soothing pleasures. The organ was later removed when the precaution was no longer needed. But the *consequences* of its operation, Gurdjieff insists, became hereditary — crystallized into the second nature of the descendants, no longer actively maintained by an outside hand but self-perpetuating from within.

The Kundabuffer story functions on the gradient as a fourth variation. Like (4.2.1), it locates the original arrangement in the action of higher beings. Like (4.2.3), it grants the arrangement a kind of necessity — the high commission acts under cosmic pressure, not malice. Like (4.2.2), the present-day persistence of the forgetting is not actively maintained by an external enforcer; it is the structural self-reassertion of crystallized habit. This is why Gurdjieff's framework belongs in this section as a structural neighbor of the Gnostic gradient rather than as a competitor to it. The relevant difference, however — the one that makes 4.3 a separate question rather than a subsection of 4.2 — is that Gurdjieff's framework also asks something the gradient does not address: *which I* is recognizing the Kundabuffer's effects, on the rare occasions when its grip momentarily loosens. That question is independent of where the gradient lands.

4.2.5 The Phenomenological Pressure on the Gradient

Does the felt quality of the salvific forgetting favor any position? Provisionally — and the word *provisionally* is doing real work here — the texture documented in 4.1 captures most precisely under reading (4.2.1). The Vulpine sleight-of-hand description and PKD's Black Iron Prison both point to an *active* structure rather than a neutral one. The reports do not say *I am noticing that I freely chose this*. The reports say *I am noticing that something is making sure I do not keep what I just had*. The texture is closer to imposition than to remembered choice.

But — and this is where Part 2's constraint applies with full force — felt quality is not a verdict. The salvific state can be reread under (4.2.3) without contradiction: the felt quality of imposition is the shock of recognizing the magnitude of what one freely chose to forget, in a state in which the choosing-self is no longer recognizable as the ordinary self. Under (2), the same texture reports the actual structure of the Kenoma reasserting itself — not by knowing

enforcement, but by what blind self-perpetuation feels like from within. Each reading accounts for the texture. None can be falsified by the texture alone.

4.2.6 The Tether: The Gradient Made Concrete

The most precise phenomenological hinge for the gradient is the structural pull from the witness-in-void condition back to biographical structure. The Aware-Void Account — drawn from the record's outward-drift sessions — supplies the first-person narration of it: *the return as tether — a structural pull back toward the body and biographical structure, not a chosen movement, though the absence of any reason to remain produced something that could also be described as choice*. The pull itself appears across the third-party literature in different vocabularies — the snap-back, the elastic, the gravity of ordinary identity reasserting; what the assembled third-party corpus does not supply is the narrating position, since most of its void-reports are void-as-content and none in that corpus narrates the return from the objectless side. The term *tether* is metaphorical; the phenomenological datum it names — the reported pull back into ordinary identity — is not. As the corpus attests it, it is that pull; as the Aware-Void Account alone narrates it, it is that pull observed from a position prior to the re-enclosure — and it is the place where each position on the gradient becomes legible at full strength.

One precision before the readings: the Aware-Void Account includes a felt observation about the void itself — *I could be there forever but that would be boring* — that the gradient must handle carefully. Boredom is a temporal-narrative-subject property. It requires a subject capable of being unentertained, of finding time to be too much. The witness-in-void condition, as Part 1 documented, has no temporal narrative. The witness is present; nothing is present for the witness to be aware of; there is no duration, no expectation, no entertainment to be missing. The "boredom" observation is therefore not a property of the void itself. It is the personal-I's relationship to the void, reported retrospectively or at the threshold of reconstitution: *I, in returning, find the void to be the kind of place that would be boring to me*. The void is not boring to the witness. The void is boring to the personal-I that the witness was prior to. This distinction is important for the tether reading because some of the gradient's positions risk attributing to the void itself what is better understood as the personal-I's structural relationship to a state in which it has no function.

Under reading (4.2.1), the strong adversarial Gnostic, the tether is Archonic. The pull back is the prison's enforcement, the consciousness that briefly escaped being reabsorbed by the structure that has a stake in its continued forgetting. The Archons do not need to be conscious enforcers in this reading; they are the structural agencies of return, and the tether is their operation made felt. The salvific experiencer briefly experiences what escape would be and is then returned by the mechanism that ensures no one stays escaped. Release, under this reading, would require gnosis sufficient to exit the structure entirely — what the *Gospel of Truth* describes as being called by name out of the fog of forgetting. The Salvia rupture is not that gnosis; it is the brief glimpse of what gnosis would deliver. The tether's pull is the prison's grip.

Under reading (4.2.2), Hoeller's softer Gnostic, the tether is structural rather than adversarial. The Demiurge does not know there is a Pleroma above him; the Kenoma's self-perpetuating dynamics do not require an enforcer; the tether is the felt quality of

falling-back-below-the-threshold-of-awareness rather than the felt quality of being pulled down by an agent. The pull is real, the structure is real, the suffering of the structure is real — but the tether is what the boundary's persistence feels like from within, not the operation of something maintaining the boundary against the experiencer's interests. Release, under this reading, is the recognition that the arrangement is structural rather than personal — a softening of the felt grip without an exit through the structure.

Under reading (4.2.3), Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna*, the tether is the rhythm of concealment-and-revelation that constitutes Lila itself. The pull back is not enforcement and not blind structure; it is *anugraha*'s counterpart, the same gesture that makes particularity possible reasserting itself because particularity is what consciousness chose. The salvific experiencer briefly experiences *anugraha* — concealment lifted — and is returned to *tirodhāna* because the lifting is, in the structure, brief by design. *I could be there forever* and *the personal-I has no function there* are, under this reading, the same observation: Śiva freely concealing Itself into particularity has no function in pure presence because pure presence is what the concealment is the concealment of. Release, under this reading, changes the relationship between the localized consciousness and the rhythm but does not change the rhythm. The tether is not broken; it is recognized.

Two further readings extend the gradient at its edges and deserve to be named here, because they intersect the tether question at points the three principal positions do not fully cover. The Tibetan dream/sleep yoga framework, inherited from Part 3, reads the tether as karmic patterning — the deeply crystallized habit of personal continuity that re-coheres after the void condition closes. Release, under this reading, is not escape from the tether but the cultivation of stable presence in the witness-in-void condition itself, such that the karmic re-cohering becomes recognized as re-cohering rather than experienced as the only available reality. The training is for the recognizer, not against the tether. Gurdjieff's framework, which 4.3 develops as an independent question, reads the tether as the gravity of the mechanical I — the committee of selves reasserting because that is what committees do in the absence of real will. Release, under Gurdjieff's reading, is the Work: sustained effort against the gravity, building the real I that can hold position when the mechanical I would ordinarily pull back. The Work is not the tether's destruction; it is the cultivation of the only thing that can stand against it.

And one deflationary reading deserves to be named at the gradient's far edge: Metzinger's framework, which Part 2 introduced as the deflationary pressure-test, reads the tether as the phenomenal self-model reasserting because the self-model is what the system reconstructs when the salvinorin A clears. There is no "tether" in any metaphysically loaded sense under this reading; there is only the structural fact that the apparatus that ordinarily generates the self-model is operating, and what it generates is the self-model. The "release" question does not arise because the self-model is all there is to release from. The reading is parsimonious; it is structurally adequate to the bare phenomenology; and it remains compatible with the other readings in the sense that the metaphysical positions all have to account for the same neurobiological mechanism Metzinger names.

What the tether reading establishes is that the gradient is not metaphysically idle. Each position generates a distinct prediction about what the tether's pull is and what, if anything, would change one's relationship to it. The phenomenology does not falsify any of them. The metaphysical commitments embedded in each reading propagate into Parts 5–7 in different ways: into Part 5's question of what kind of agency the encountered presences have; into Part 6's question of how dissociation maps onto the felt structure of imposition; and into Part 7's question of what kind of practice would be appropriate given which reading is operative. Part 4 holds the gradient as a gradient. The tether is where the holding becomes most concrete — and where the cost of holding (as against picking) is also most concrete: the manuscript's practice question, taken up in Part 7, cannot be fully specified until something has been said about which reading of the tether is being engaged. The agnosticism is held with awareness of what it defers.

4.3 Gurdjieff: Which I Is Remembering?

The gradient question and the Gurdjieff question are not the same question, and 4.3 exists to keep them separate. Even if 4.2 were resolved — even if one knew with certainty whether the forgetting was adversarially imposed, ignorantly maintained, or structurally necessary — the identity of the I doing the recognizing would remain undetermined. Gurdjieff's challenge cuts across the gradient. It applies under all three readings. It must be addressed independently, and it cannot be answered by settling 4.2.

The salvific rupture dissolves the ordinary committee of selves, and something returns claiming "I have been here before." The recognition is reported as more certain than ordinary perception. The certainty is the datum; the question is what the certainty is the certainty *of*. Gurdjieff's central doctrine, as Ouspensky transmits it in *In Search of the Miraculous*, is that ordinary man has no unified I — only a rotating committee of sub-personalities, *hundreds and thousands of separate small I's*, each claiming the whole when it is at the front, none of them constituting the unity they all claim. *Man is a plurality. Man's name is legion*. The committee runs in the absence of a real I, and the alternation among committee members is governed by accidental external influences — warmth, sunshine, fine weather call up one cluster; cold, rain, fog call up another. The continuity that ordinary consciousness experiences as the persistence of itself is, on this account, a constructed artifact: each I, while at the front, is convinced it is the whole, and the whole is what no I in fact is.

This doctrine generates a precise question about the salvific recognition. When the rupture dissolves the committee and something returns reporting *I have been here before* — what is the structural position of the I making that report?

Three possibilities follow from Gurdjieff's framework, and 4.3's task is to distinguish them rather than to choose among them.

The first is that the recognizing I is a *genuinely different kind* of I — what Gurdjieff calls *objective conscience*, the buried faculty whose operation the Kundabuffer's lingering consequences ordinarily suppress. On this reading, what the salvific rupture briefly liberates is not a sub-personality but the essential self that the committee structure exists to obscure. The

recognition is therefore trustworthy in a sense no committee-member's report could be — it is a report from beneath the committee, from the layer the committee was constructed to mask.

The second is that the recognizing I is *simply a different sub-personality* — one that happens to be least encrusted in habitual identification, and thus most able to operate when the more habitual configurations are pharmacologically offline. On this reading, the recognition is a particular sub-personality's perspective on the absence of the others. It is not a report from the ground; it is a report from the thinnest member of the committee, with the rest temporarily silenced. The certainty of the recognition would, on this reading, reflect the absence of competing perspectives rather than the presence of any deeper one.

This possibility has a particular sharpness when tested against the kk84 passage already cited in 4.2. The question "*Who am I when fully peeled?*" and the answer "*Nobody*" may not point toward a deeper Self emerging beneath the layers. It may instead show a sub-personality being forced to the limit of its own claim to be the whole — the peeling not revealing what was underneath but exhausting what could be claimed to be the surface. Under this reading, the laughter is not the joy of recognition but the affective signature of a committee-member discovering its own groundlessness without any deeper ground revealed.

The third is that the recognizing position is *not a sub-personality at all* — that what observes the reassembly during the stepwise return is the awareness within which all sub-personalities operate, the bare witnessing that does not itself participate in the committee. This is closer to the Advaita *sākṣin*, the Tibetan *rigpa*, the Gnostic pneuma — terms from frameworks Gurdjieff himself does not use, but that name the structural position his system also requires if (1) is to be coherent. Under (3), the recognition reports not a particular I's view but the perspective of awareness itself, briefly undiluted by its usual filters.

The relationship between the witness-in-void condition and the return-phase witnessing position sharpens the Gurdjieffian question further. Across the salvific return, the recognizing position is reported in at least two structurally distinct conditions: awareness present in the void itself (where the personal-I is absent and only awareness remains), and the witnessing position present at the threshold of reassembly (where the personal-I is reconstituting and the watcher observes that reconstitution as construction). The question — *which I is recognizing?* — admits a further specification: are these two reported conditions the same witnessing position, closely related configurations, or distinct configurations the recognizing position passes through in sequence? If they are continuous or closely related, possibility (3) (bare witnessing awareness) gains evidential weight: the two reports may reflect a continuous or closely related witnessing position across the transit. If they are distinct — if the witness-in-void is closer to possibility (3) and the witnessing position at the threshold closer to possibility (1) or (2) — then the recognition that arrives at the threshold need not be the same recognition as whatever was present in the void itself. The phenomenology Part 1 documented does not settle the question. What it establishes is that the question has been under-specified in the prior literature: there are at least two distinct watching-positions in the return, and whether they are the same watching position is a structural matter Gurdjieff's vocabulary alone cannot resolve.

A further variable bears directly on the question of which I is recognizing: the direction of drift within the state-space itself. If the state-space is bidirectional — if the Salvia rupture can move either outward toward One Mind or inward toward personal formation material — then which I is recognizing may vary systematically with direction of drift. The outward recognition ("I have been here before," Salvia Space as named location, the encounter with familiar presences) more plausibly corresponds to possibilities (1) or (3) — a deep or pre-committee I with access to the transpersonal layer. The inward recognition (the Childhood-Ground Account: maternal care, the relational structures of early formation) may correspond more closely to possibility (2) — a sub-personality with biographical depth rather than transpersonal reach, accessing personal formation material that lies below the ordinary committee's habitual rotation but not below the committee structure altogether. This does not simplify the question. It multiplies it: the "which I" question may require a different answer for different sessions, and the confident claim that each rupture delivers the same recognition needs to be held more carefully when the directionality of drift is acknowledged as a structural variable.

These possibilities have substantially different implications for what the salviaic recognition warrants epistemologically, and they cannot be told apart by the felt quality of the recognition. All three predict that the recognition will arrive with the force of certainty. All three predict that the witness-position will be calm, neutral, and structurally prior to the reassembly. The phenomenology is genuinely underdetermined between them. This is the precise point at which Gurdjieff's framework demands the question be *asked* rather than the answer assumed.

The asking has a particular texture in Gurdjieff's system. His insistence is that without sustained inner work — without the building of doubled attention across all three centers, the cultivation of real will, the development of genuine continuity of self — there is no basis for claiming (3). What the salviaic rupture *can* force is a temporary, involuntary occupation of something that resembles the witness position. What Gurdjieff's system aims to build is a *voluntary, stable* witness position occupied from within ordinary consciousness, not as the gift of pharmacological dissolution but as the achievement of sustained attention. The first is given; the second is earned. The recognition that arrives in each may, for all the phenomenology can tell, be the same recognition. The capacity to *trust* it differs because the apparatus that received it differs.

This connects to a further structural feature of Gurdjieff's system that bears on the salviaic case: the Law of Octaves, and the role of *shocks* in either advancing or interrupting an octave's development. Octaves of action or development do not continue ascending without external shocks delivered at specific intervals; without such shocks, the octave deflects, descends, breaks. The salviaic rupture may deliver shocks of considerable force. Whether those shocks *advance* an octave or *interrupt* one depends, in Gurdjieff's terms, on whether the person has built the interval structure to receive them. A shock administered to an unprepared psyche may not advance anything. The octave breaks; the descent resumes; the recognition is lost not because the recognition was false but because nothing was built to receive it. This is not an argument against the salviaic rupture; it is an argument about the conditions under which the rupture can be made productive, and it converges with Part 3's Tibetan tradition saying the same thing from a different direction. *Without preparation, the recognition is not held.*

After 4.3, the central recognition is under pressure from two distinct directions simultaneously. Part 2's deflationary challenge — that "I have been here before" could be a kappa-opioid memory artifact rather than veridical re-cognition — pressures the *content* of the recognition: the felt quality of certainty does not by itself establish what is being recognized. Gurdjieff's challenge, introduced here, pressures the *recognizer*: even granting that the felt quality is tracking something real, the identity of what is doing the tracking is not settled by the phenomenology. These are not the same challenge, and they must be distinguished. They cannot be conflated under a single deflationary banner.

Together, they do not refute the recognition. The salviaic phenomenology survives both pressures as a real and structurally consistent feature of the state. What the two pressures do is raise the epistemic bar for any *strong* claim about what the recognition establishes. To claim that the recognition is a report from the deeper I — possibility (1) above, or anything in its neighborhood — requires more than the felt certainty of the recognition itself. It requires either the work Gurdjieff demands, or an argument grounded outside the bare phenomenology, or a frank acknowledgment that the strong claim outruns the available evidence. Part 4 holds the question open. Parts 5 and 6 return to it from different directions: Jung will offer the Self as a candidate name for what the witness-position might be, and Kastrup will offer the dissociative structure of mind as the ontological frame within which both Gurdjieff's question and the gradient question can be set. Neither part resolves the question. Each will name what it can and cannot say given what 4.3 has put in place.

4.4 PKD's Black Iron Prison as Living Case

Philip K. Dick's experience in February and March of 1974 — what he came to call 2-3-74 — is the most thoroughly documented contemporary first-person case of the structure Part 4 has been analyzing. PKD did not study Gnosticism systematically before the experience. He had the experience, and discovered, in the months that followed, that a two-thousand-year-old tradition had named precisely what had happened to him. He read the Gnostic *Hymn of the Soul* and recognized it not as a metaphor for what he had encountered but as a map of it. The sequencing — experience first, frameworks discovered as the best available maps — is structurally identical to the project's own.

What PKD's case confirms, before any examination of his interpretive proliferation: the structure of rupture, recognition, and return is not unique to Salvia or to any particular pharmacological state. The triggering mechanism for PKD was not a substance. The 2-3-74 onset is associated with a pink beam of light, with the visit of a delivery girl wearing a fish-pendant whose recognition triggered what PKD called *anamnesis* — *that sudden, disincorporating slippage into vast and total knowledge*. The structural sequence is the same one the manuscript has been mapping in the salviaic case: an unprepared rupture; a recognition reported as more certain than ordinary perception; the felt sense that what is being recognized has *always been there* and was *not previously visible*; the eventual return of ordinary consciousness; and — crucially for Part 4 — the felt sense that the ordinary consciousness, in returning, was reasserting an enclosure that was now seen as enclosure.

PKD's name for the enclosure was the Black Iron Prison. The phrase did not arrive as a concept he reasoned his way to. It arrived from inside the experience as a description of what he was perceiving. He saw, as he later described it, *Rome, Rome everywhere* — the structure of imperial enforcement as having never ended, persisting beneath the surface of contemporary modernity. The BIP, in his formulation, is not the mere fact of social or political constraint; it is the structural enforcement of the forgetting that ordinary consciousness operates within. *We are not products of this world but voyagers here*, he wrote, *one thinks of Gnosticism at once*. The thought arose because the structure he was describing was the structure Gnosticism had described — and he had not, before 2-3-74, been thinking in those terms. The BIP gives the strong adversarial position on Part 4's gradient its most vivid contemporary lived form. It is not doctrine. It is a name reached for from inside an experience whose phenomenology required something more specific than ordinary language could supply.

The most compressed formulation of the recognition, in the *Exegesis*, is the line: *to remember and to wake up are absolutely interchangeable*. This is the Anamnesis thesis stated as concisely as any modern text states it. Memory, on PKD's reading, is not the retrieval of information from an internal store; it is the *return — actually, to a lower level, a literal trip back down along this spatial axis* — to the structure that one has been in all along but has been kept from seeing. *Anamnesis could be said to be memory of the future restored — even memory of the present*. The recognition is not nostalgia for a past episode; it is the restoration of the present's actual structure, which the Black Iron Prison structurally obscures.

This formulation, taken on its own terms, does substantial interpretive work. It reframes the failure-to-hold that Parts 2 and 3 established mechanistically and structurally. On PKD's account, the recognition is not failing to hold because of a defect in the rememberer or because the medium of return cannot carry it; it is failing to hold because the BIP is *the structural enforcement of the failure to hold*. The forgetting reasserts because the forgetting is what the BIP is. This is the strong adversarial position rendered as personal phenomenology rather than as cosmological doctrine.

What PKD's case teaches *by negative example* is structurally significant for the manuscript and must be registered with equal care. PKD spent the next eight years and roughly eight thousand pages attempting to systematize what had happened. The *Exegesis* is the partial record of that attempt. Across those eight thousand pages, the interpretive apparatus expanded in ways that exceed what the original recognition can ground: VALIS as an active counter-intelligence agency, the plasmate as a living information-being, tachyon transmissions from the future, Soviet psychic experiments at Pulkovo, the return of the Roman Empire, the reception of telepathic broadcasts intended to test his sensitivity. Each addition was offered, in its moment, as a clarification of the original 2-3-74 event. The cumulative effect is the opposite of clarification. The interpretive apparatus consumed the recognition rather than stabilizing it. The recognition became the premise of an ever-more-elaborate cosmological hunger.

The applicability of Gurdjieff's question from 4.3 to this trajectory is direct and uncomfortable. *Which I was running the eight-year interpretive project?* PKD was an extraordinarily intelligent man, and the *Exegesis* is not the work of a stupid mind; the elaboration is sophisticated, the

cross-references are real, the philosophical reach is genuine. But the *recognizing* I that 2-3-74 momentarily liberated was not the I that ran the eight years of systematization. The interpretive project was run by what was available to run it after the rupture closed — the ordinary committee, working with the tools available to the ordinary committee, applied to a recognition that originated outside the committee's competence. The result was not the inhabiting of the recognition but the explanation of it, and the explanation expanded as a substitute for the inhabiting.

The cost of forcing the gradient prematurely toward the strong adversarial end is what the *Exegesis* makes most visible. PKD's commitment to the BIP as an active enforcement structure required, over time, an active counter-structure (VALIS) and an active mechanism by which the counter-structure could intervene (Zebra, the plasmate, tachyons). Each component of the apparatus required further apparatus to support it. The original recognition — that the ordinary world is covering something more real, that *to remember and to wake up are absolutely interchangeable* — became a hostage to the cosmological scaffolding built to explain it. By the late *Exegesis*, the question of whether the original recognition was being preserved or consumed by the interpretive project is genuinely difficult to answer.

This is why the manuscript treats PKD as a witness whose phenomenological descriptions are evidence and whose cosmological interpretations are cautionary illustration. The line is not difficult to mark. *Rome, Rome everywhere* is phenomenological description: PKD reports what he saw, and what he saw has the structural texture 4.1 documented. *Soviet telepathic experiments at Pulkovo* is cosmological interpretation: PKD reaches outside the phenomenology for an explanatory mechanism the phenomenology does not require. The first is data. The second is what the explanatory hunger generates when the recognition cannot be inhabited.

PKD's case stands, then, in two registers simultaneously. As phenomenological evidence, it confirms that the structure of unprepared Anamnesis — recognition without the apparatus to receive it — is not unique to Salvia, not unique to pharmacological onset, not unique to the contemplative literatures' accounts of similar transits. The structure is real, it can arrive unbidden, and when it does it can be named with a precision that the experiencer has not previously had occasion to develop. As cautionary illustration, his case shows what happens when the recognition is met with the explanatory apparatus available to ordinary consciousness, which is to say: the apparatus the recognition originally pierced. Without the work Gurdjieff demands, or some equivalent practice, the recognition is metabolized into cosmology rather than inhabited. The *Exegesis* is the document of that metabolism.

What PKD's case does not establish — what no single witness's case can establish — is which position on 4.2's gradient is correct. PKD's interpretive trajectory pulled toward the strong adversarial end; that pull is part of his data, but it is not the *content* of his recognition. The content of his recognition was the structure of arranged forgetting and the texture of recognition-as-return. That content is compatible with all three positions on the gradient. The interpretive pull toward the adversarial end is a separate matter and is, in his case, traceable to specific features of his temperament, his reading, and the absence of a contemplative practice

that would have given the recognition somewhere to settle. Part 4 holds the gradient. PKD's case warns the reader of what happens when the gradient is forced.

4.5 Severance as Cultural Mirror

The television series *Severance*, which began airing in 2022²⁰, dramatizes bidirectional amnesia with a structural precision that deserves brief observation here. The series is not philosophy; it is a workplace drama set inside a corporation that has developed a surgical procedure separating the work-self from the rest of the person's life. What it stages, as a consequence of its premise, is a topology that this part of the manuscript has been working with under different names.

The structural isomorphisms with the salviaic case are direct enough to enumerate without forcing them. The transition between configurations is sudden and total — the elevator ride between the corporate floor and the outside world is the amnesia mechanism, and the boundary the elevator crosses is unwitnessable from either side. The innie wakes into Lumon with no access to the outie's life, just as the salviaic state arrives with no access to ordinary memory. The outie steps off the elevator into the parking lot with no access to what the innie has just spent eight hours doing, just as ordinary consciousness reassembles after a Salvia rupture with no access to what was inhabited during it. *Neither configuration doubts its own reality while in it.* This is the precise feature Daniel Siebert documented in his foundational salvinorin A self-test: *I was totally convinced that this state of existence was all there ever was.* The innie is similarly convinced, while at work, that the work floor is the world. The outie is similarly convinced, after stepping off the elevator, that the morning began at the elevator door. Each takes itself to be the whole.

The deliberate design of the severance procedure makes the show's structural commentary on 4.1 unavoidable. The forgetting in *Severance* is *literally* arranged. It is a chip implanted in the brain by a corporation for instrumental reasons. The show does not stage this arrangement as adversarial in the strong sense — the corporation's intentions are mixed and become more pointedly questionable as the series develops — and it also does not stage it as benign. The arrangement is *real* and *designed*, and the show holds open the question of whether the severed configurations are liberated or imprisoned by the design. The innie has no past to suffer; the outie has no work to mourn. Each gains something by the severance. Each also loses something, and the something each loses is the other.

This is the same ambiguity 4.2 holds at the level of metaphysics. The Gnostic gradient runs from *the arrangement is adversarial* through *the arrangement is structurally necessary* through *the arrangement is freely chosen*. *Severance* runs the same gradient at the level of dramatic narrative — and refuses to resolve it, because the resolution would collapse the show's central tension. The choice of the writers to keep the question open is the choice this manuscript has been arguing the phenomenology itself warrants.

The Gurdjieff connection from 4.3 maps onto the show with equal precision. The innie and the outie are the fragmented-I problem dramatized: a single body, two configurations of

²⁰ *Severance* 2022–, created by Dan Erickson (Apple TV+). Treated as cultural mirror, not evidence.

consciousness that do not know each other, both claiming the whole while active. There is no unified self in *Severance* — only a body that hosts two committee-members so cleanly separated that neither has access to the other's existence. The show's most pointed scenes are the ones in which the boundary briefly thins: an innie sees footage of his outie, an outie reads a note from his innie. The encounter is structurally identical to the salvific witness watching Rich Fegley reassemble — the moment in which one configuration of consciousness sees another from the outside, recognizes it as a configuration, and cannot yet hold it as continuous with what is observing.

I encountered this parallel without deploying the analytical apparatus this part has been developing — though not without apparatus altogether: by the time the series aired, the record behind this manuscript included nearly two decades of salvific reflection and the concurrent Vedantic frame, and it was almost certainly that preparation that made the parallel salient on first viewing. The data point is therefore more modest than spontaneity: the topology was recognizable to a prepared viewer before the present vocabulary existed to name it. The structural topology Part 4 has been mapping is recognizable in cultural artifacts that did not derive it from the contemplative or philosophical traditions the manuscript draws on. The topology reproduces itself in cultural imagination because the structure is available for recognition, with or without the vocabulary that would have supplied the names. *Severance* names it differently than the *Bardo Thödol* does, and differently than Gnosticism does, and differently than Gurdjieff does. The naming differs; the structure does not.

Part 4 closes here. The phenomenological datum is established (4.1). The gradient of available interpretations is laid out at full strength without commitment (4.2). The Gurdjieff question is held open as an independent pressure that does not resolve when the gradient is settled (4.3). PKD's case stands as evidentiary witness and as cautionary illustration of what happens when the gradient is forced (4.4). The show's structural mirror is registered as a brief observational coda that confirms the topology's recognizability outside the manuscript's frameworks (4.5).

What Part 4 leaves open is the question of *what the encountered presences are*, which Part 5 takes up through Jung; and the question of *what ontological structure could hold all of this without collapsing it*, which Part 6 takes up through Kastrup. The gradient that 4.2 holds will propagate into Part 6 in a specific way, and Part 6 will be required to name which propagation it is working with. Part 4 does not force that choice; it names the choice clearly enough that what follows can know what propagates.

PART 5: JUNG, ARCHETYPES, AND THE AUTONOMOUS PSYCHE

Central question: *Who — or what — are the presences encountered in the Salvia state? And what does it mean that they seem to have been there all along, only now visible?*

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

Parts 1 through 4 have established a set of constraints and left a set of questions deliberately open. The rupture has describable structure (Part 1). The failure-to-hold is structural, and the felt quality of certainty alone cannot establish veridicality (Part 2). The Bardo framework maps the transit but cannot reach the felt quality of arranged forgetting (Part 3). The Gnostic gradient illuminates the arrangement-quality without settling which position the phenomenology warrants, and Gurdjieff's question — *which I* is recognizing? — cuts across the gradient and remains open (Part 4).

Part 5 takes up the encounter: the presences. They have appeared in every prior part as a recurring datum that the manuscript has noted but deferred — noted in Part 1 as a structural feature of the rupture, noted in Part 3 as the content of the chönyid bardo, noted in Part 4 as the recipients of the Gnostic *call* and the objects of the Gurdjieffian question. What they are has not been addressed. Part 5 addresses it through the framework best equipped to do so: Jung's depth psychology and its account of the autonomous psyche.

The section is structured as follows. 5.1 examines the encounter descriptions precisely, before interpretation. 5.2 introduces the Jungian framework: the collective unconscious as a layer populated by autonomous psychic agencies, the dissolution of the ego membrane as the condition of their visibility, and the formal distinction between archetype and archetypal image that governs what can actually be encountered. 5.3 applies pressure to the framework: what it explains with genuine precision, and three features of the Salvia encounter it does not smoothly handle. 5.4 returns to the witness question — is the witness that watched the reassembly the Jungian Self? — and offers a provisional identification with its limits clearly marked. 5.5 examines what active imagination can offer for Salvia integration, and what the constraints established in Part 2 prevent it from fully doing.

Two inherited constraints govern what follows. First: the identification of the presences as archetypal contents is to be held provisionally, not asserted. The Jungian frame illuminates; it does not own the data. Second: the Gurdjieff question from 4.3 applies here with equal force. If the question *which I* is recognizing? was not settled by the rupture's felt quality, the question *which I* is encountering? is not settled by the encounter's felt quality either. The presences felt other, felt independent, felt already-there — these are the data. What the presences *are* remains, at the close of this section, an open question held with greater precision than it was at the section's start.

Evidence for the autonomy and stability of these presences comes also from kk84's *Salviabibel*, where a recurring Salvia goddess appears across the corpus as teacher, trickster, maternal

presence, and agent of peeling or return. The single-author nature of the source limits its evidentiary weight — it cannot demonstrate population-level consensus — but the consistency of the figure over time supports the claim that these presences are experienced as stable and autonomous rather than as one-off hallucinated images. A single mind encountering the same presence repeatedly across a decade, in varying modalities but recognizable each time, suggests that what is encountered has a structural constancy that exceeds what a purely hallucinatory or purely psychological model would predict. This is not proof of an external entity. It is evidence that the encounter-field has properties of consistency and recognition that align with what the Jungian account describes as the autonomy of the archetypal structure.

5.1 What Is Reported: The Texture of the Encounter

The encounter descriptions in the Salvia literature share a specific texture that distinguishes them from other features of the rupture, and that must be established carefully before interpretation begins.

The presences are consistently experienced as already-there rather than as generated by the rupture. This already-there quality recurs across otherwise independent reports, and it is the feature the interpretive frameworks must account for first. The presences are not experienced as products of the altered state — as hallucinations spun up by a disoriented brain, as projections of the experiencer's unconscious material, as dream-figures assembled from available psychic components. They are experienced as already-having-been-there. The rupture is not reported as creating them; it is reported as removing whatever was preventing them from being noticed. Whether this phenomenological texture warrants the stronger metaphysical claim — that the rupture reveals what was already there — is a question for the framework interpretations below.

Arthur, after approximately a decade of solo experimentation and careful refinement of vocabulary, settled on the word *presences* precisely because the available alternatives all imported claims he was not prepared to make. "Spirits" imports a theological frame. "Entities" imports a science-fiction frame. "Beings" is generic. What he found himself encountering were best described as presences: a word that names the fact of something being-there without committing to what kind of something it is. His phenomenological description is precise: the presences have "all the attributes of ordinary people" — they behave, respond, communicate, teach, carry emotional tones — without being any of the things our ordinary categories would call them. They are there.

The specific character of the presences varies across reports, but their structural positions are strikingly consistent. Across Arthur's accounts, Heaven's compilation, and the third-party literature, the presences cluster into recognizable roles. There are *teachers*: beings who instruct, who require something of the experiencer, who indicate that more time would be needed. Arthur's older female figure tells him — matter-of-factly, without ceremony — that she would need more time if she is going to teach him, and that he would need to make arrangements to stay longer. The instruction is not symbolic; it is practical. There are *escorts*: beings whose function appears to be guiding others through a transitional zone, particularly beings who have recently died. Arthur encounters this structure repeatedly and explicitly — a group of beings

whose function is escorting the newly dead, who approach him the way bees approach a flower; the scene is reported as "a very normal process." There are *familiar strangers*: beings recognized as having been there before, who occupy the structural position of intimate-other — not a specific identified person from the experiencer's life, but something that resonates with that category. Arthur describes an older male presence, patient but not paternal, who appears to instruct him in a technique for leaving the body — coaxing him toward letting go, as though guiding a beginner through something the beginner had not realized was possible. And there are beings who treat the experiencer as a nuisance — who are used to dealing with his type and dislike the process. The indifference is not hostile; it is matter-of-fact. The presences have their own business.

The maternal quality appears in multiple reports, including in my own accounts. It arrives before fear has time to organize, and it arrives from something that does not appear to be responding to the experiencer's emotional state. It seems to precede the experiencer's arrival. The *already-there-ness* extends to the emotional register: the presences are not shaped by what the experiencer brings into the encounter. They are reported as occupied with what they appear to have been already doing.

Heaven's cross-cultural texture adds a specific calibration. In the Peru session, Jungle — the shaman — re-anchors his return through function rather than personal identity: *I am a shaman, and I help others through places like this*. What this indicates is that the presences' structural positions are legible to a trained shamanic sensibility in a way they are not legible to an untrained one. The shaman recognizes the landscape because he has been prepared to recognize it; the untrained experiencer encounters it as radically foreign. This asymmetry is relevant to what the Jungian framework will claim about the collective unconscious as a domain one can learn to navigate.

One further datum before interpretation begins. Arthur's gaunt, skeletal figures — the animate corpses that appear at the *cresting* of the experience, just as intensity begins to recede — are experienced initially as frightening and then, with repeated encounter, as routine: transitional-zone markers that announce the approach of the return. They occupy a consistent structural position (the hinge between peak encounter and return). They are not produced by any framework the experiencer brought to the experience; Arthur explicitly notes that he would not ordinarily give credence to "simplistic" concepts like a land of the dead. He arrives at the description because the experience compels it.

The datum this section works from is: the presences are reported as already-there, as having recognizable structural roles, and as independent of the experiencer's emotional state and prior conceptual framework. Whatever interpretation follows must account for all three features.

5.2 Daemons and Dissolved Membranes: What the Jungian Framework Offers

Jung's account of the psyche begins from a datum that the Salvia literature arrived at independently: that what we ordinarily call "consciousness" is not the whole of the psyche, but a relatively small and recently-formed configuration surrounded by a much larger unconscious

field that operates continuously, with its own structures and agencies, mostly invisible to the ego.

The ego, in Jung's architecture, is not the self. It is the center of ego-consciousness: the web of experiential contents — memories, associations, values, self-representations — that we ordinarily identify with. But ego-consciousness is surrounded by the unconscious, which has two strata. The personal unconscious consists of contents that originated in ego-consciousness and have been repressed, forgotten, or set aside; these can return under the right conditions. The collective unconscious is the deeper stratum: a-priori, inherited, shared by all human beings, consisting of formal templates — archetypes — that organize psychic life from its deepest layer. The collective unconscious is psychoid: its contents can never directly cross into ego-consciousness. But it can *impinge* on ego-consciousness, generating effects that appear as images, impulses, feelings, and visions.

The archetypes are formal.²¹ This is a technical point with phenomenological consequences. An archetype, in Jung's strict sense, is "empty and purely formal" — analogous, as he puts it, to the axial system of a crystal: a structure that preforms what will precipitate through it, without itself being visible in the precipitate. What the experiencer actually encounters are *archetypal images*: the archetype as it appears when the collective unconscious activates and the ego's filtering is reduced. Archetypal images fill the archetype's formal template with the experiencer's personal psychic material — biography, relationships, cultural vocabulary — which is why the same archetype produces recognizably different images across different experiencers while maintaining structural family resemblance. The mother-archetype produces a recognizable structural position (nurturing, oceanic, prior to individuation) while generating different specific images in different experiencers.²²

This formal/image distinction sets a limit on what the Jungian framework can claim. It explains why the presences appear in human form (the archetype-as-image is always shaped by human psychic material). It explains the maternal quality, the teacher-quality, the guide-quality — as expressions of archetypal templates through which the collective unconscious organizes and communicates. It explains the *numinous quality* of the encounter: archetypes have, as Jung writes, "a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as 'spiritual.'" The felt quality of meeting something both utterly alien and curiously familiar is precisely the felt quality of archetypal activation — the sense of being in the presence of something that is not the ego's content but that resonates with the deepest templates of psychic life.

The *dissolved ego membrane* is the mechanism. Ordinarily, the ego membrane separates ego-consciousness from the collective unconscious, admitting only what can be processed through the ego's associative structures. Dreams are the ordinary mode of access: the membrane becomes more permeable in sleep, and collective unconscious content reaches consciousness as dream imagery. What the Salvia rupture does, on the Jungian reading, is remove the membrane

²¹ Jung 1991 (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, CW9i): "empty and purely formal," and the analogy to the axial system of a crystal, are Jung's own, quoted here as reproduced in Kastrup 2021 — Kastrup quoting Jung, not a direct reading of CW9i.

²² Jung 1968 (*Psychology and Alchemy*, CW12) where drawn on; inline (Jung 1968).

more completely and more suddenly than any ordinary mode of access allows. The Metzingerian account from Part 2 — the phenomenal self-model collapsing, the autobiographical apparatus going offline — and the Jungian account are not describing different events. They describe the same event in different vocabularies. The PSM collapse is the ego-membrane dissolution. When the membrane collapses, what was always behind it becomes briefly visible.

This explains the *already-there-ness* under the Jungian reading. On this account, the presences do not appear because the rupture creates them; they appear because the rupture removes what was preventing them from appearing. The collective unconscious, with its autonomous agencies, is on this reading already operative before the rupture and continues to operate after it; what changes is the ego's access to it. Ordinary consciousness, on this account, was not attending to it. Under the Jungian reading, the presences would have been operating, influencing, and occupying their structural positions throughout — the ego membrane making them invisible to the ego, the rupture making them visible. On the Jungian reading, “I have been here before” reports something accurate: this layer of the psyche is not new to the experiencer. The experiencer was born from it, is continuous with it, is organized by it. The recognition is the recognition of one's own deeper structure, briefly visible in the moment the surface structure is removed.

The most challenging move in the Jungian account is the category of *daemons*. Jung acknowledges — with a degree of precision that Kastrup reads as one of his most significant insights — that the unconscious may comprise not merely contents but *agencies*: secondary centers of consciousness, somewhat self-reflective and deliberate, dissociated from ego-consciousness, each with its own experiential perspective. In Kastrup's rendering of Jung's view: the psyche may be “an ecosystem of communicating conscious agencies²³, in which ego-consciousness is merely one of the participants.” These agencies can be personifications of the archetypes: the formal template is given expression through a relatively stable secondary center of consciousness that enacts the template's characteristic mode consistently, across encounters and across experiencers.

If the presences in the Salvia state are daemons rather than archetypal images generated by the experiencer's personal material, they are genuinely other: not projections, but members of the psyche's wider ecosystem, briefly encountered when the ego membrane is removed. The female figure who tells Arthur she needs more time is, on this reading, not a projection of Arthur's mother-complex or his unconscious need for instruction. She is a daemon — a relatively stable secondary center with her own agenda, her own relationship to the territory she occupies, and her own assessment of what the encounter requires. The distinction matters structurally. Archetypal images are generated; daemons are encountered. The phenomenological datum of 5.1 — that the presences are experienced as already-there, not as generated — is more consistent with the daemon account.

²³ Kastrup 2021. This is Kastrup's rendering of Jung, not a direct Jung quotation.

5.3 Pressure Points: What the Framework Does Not Smoothly Handle

The Jungian account explains much. Three features of the Salvia encounter resist smooth absorption.

The specificity of the presences' independence. The daemonic reading handles the already-there-ness. It is less clear that it handles the *specificity of their independence*. Arthur's teacher-figure is not merely present and already-there. She evaluates Arthur's progress across sessions, adjusts her assessment, and gives instructions based on that assessment. The being who tells him he was "one of them" implies familiarity with a category — one that has other members, who do not include Arthur's entire species. The teacher *used to dealing with his type* has a relationship to a type, not just to Arthur as an individual.

These descriptions have the texture of entities with sustained, complex, trans-experiencer awareness. A daemon in the Jungian account is an agency in *this* psyche's ecosystem. What the presences appear to be, in the most attentive reading, are agencies in an ecosystem that is not organized around any single experiencer's psyche. Whether that is the collective unconscious in Jung's sense — which is, after all, shared by all human beings and potentially capable of trans-individual awareness — or something else is a question the Jungian framework can gesture toward but does not definitively answer.

The functional convergence of structural roles. If the presences were primarily archetypal images shaped by each experiencer's personal material, their content would be expected to diverge substantially across experiencers. The structural positions converge — teacher, escort, familiar stranger, transitional-zone marker — and the content varies. This pattern is consistent with the archetypal image account: the formal template produces convergent structure; personal material produces divergent content. So far the framework holds.

But the convergence exceeds formal structure. Arthur's description of beings whose *function* is escorting the newly dead is a specific functional assignment. Heaven's Jungle recognizes this same functional domain through shamanic training, not through his personal complex-structure. The convergence here is functional, not merely formal: convergence in what the presences *do*, not only in the general category they occupy. If functional convergence tracks something about the territory the presences inhabit — something that exists independently of any individual or collective psyche — then the framework is being pressed past its natural limits.

The archetype's opacity and the encounter's directness. In Jung's strict account, archetypes are inaccessible in themselves — psychoid, never directly crossing into consciousness. What reaches consciousness is always the archetypal image: the archetype filtered through personal material. This means what is encountered in the Salvia state, on the strict Jungian account, is always already mediated by the experiencer's personal material, even when the ego membrane has dissolved. This fits the fact that the presences feel familiar — they are shaped in part by the experiencer's own material. It is harder to reconcile with the way the presences are reported as genuinely *other*. Arthur's honest phenomenological description is not "I encountered an image resonating with the teacher archetype." It is: "There was someone there, and she had a specific assessment of my progress and a specific plan for addressing it."

The directness of the encounter — the sense of receiving from a genuine other rather than projecting from within — resists reduction to the archetype-as-image account.

These three pressure points point toward Part 6 in a specific way. Kastrup's framework treats individual minds as localized dissociations within one universal consciousness. If the presences are agencies in the universal consciousness (the transpersonal mind) rather than in any individual psyche's collective unconscious, their independence, functional convergence, and directness all make sense. The Jungian framework is pointing toward this larger ontological frame without being able to fully occupy it.

The objection that bears hardest on any reading stronger than personal-psyche generation is the anthropomorphism of the presences themselves. If what is encountered is an agency within consciousness rather than a content assembled from the experiencer's own biography — a feature of the substrate rather than a figure built from personal material — then why does it arrive so reliably in culturally legible human roles: teacher, escort, mother, the guardian or nuisance at the threshold? A psyche dressing its own contents in familiar costume is precisely what the deflationary reading predicts, and the legibility of the roles is, on its face, evidence against their independence. The resource for meeting this is the archetype/image distinction already in play in 5.2: the archetype is formal and contentless, and what reaches awareness is its rendering in whatever material the experiencer has available — which, for a returning human nervous system, is human. 5.2 used this to explain why the presences appear in human form at all; its consequence here is that the human costume cannot, by itself, count against the presences' independence. On this account the recurrence of an other-who-already-knows-me is the form, and mother-or-teacher-or-escort is the costume the form is forced to wear in order to appear at all.

One consideration discriminates, weakly, between the two readings: across independent reporters the function appears more stable than the costume. SunOfNoOne's Shepherdess, kk84's Salvia goddess, the Erowid "Message from the Mother," and the paternal or teacherly presences reported elsewhere differ in gender, age, and cultural surface while converging on a single relational structure — an already-knowing other that guides, escorts, or waits. A figure freely generated by each private psyche need not converge on function while diverging on form; a single structural disposition rendered through different cultural materials would. But this is suggestive and no more, because the deflationary rejoinder is strong: maternal, guiding, and threshold-guardian schemas are human universals, so convergence of function across cultures is just what shared neuropsychology would produce with no transpersonal agency involved at all. The disciplined conclusion is that anthropomorphism cannot adjudicate. It does not refute the transpersonal reading, since the archetype/image distinction supplies the rendering-theory that reading requires; it does not confirm it, since the same human-rendered presences are equally what psyche-generation predicts. What the objection fixes is a constraint rather than a verdict: any interpretation that treats the presences as more than personal content owes an account of why the formless appears formed, and that reading holds only so long as it keeps paying the debt.

5.4 The Self and the Witness: A Provisional Identification

Part 4.3 left three possibilities for the recognizing position open: a genuinely different kind of I (the essential self, objective conscience); a different sub-personality (the thinnest committee member, temporarily dominant); or bare witnessing awareness (the substrate of all sub-personalities). The Jungian framework offers a specific candidate name for possibility one: the Self.

The Jungian Self — capital S — is the totality of the psyche, conscious and unconscious, organized around an integrating center oriented toward wholeness. It is not the ego. Jung's most precise formulation comes from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1963): he finds a yogi with his own face, sitting in meditation, and wakes with the thought — "*He is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream and I am it.*" The Self is what the ego is a projection of: not the ego-system but the deeper center from which the ego-system arises. The ego's life is to the Self as the visible shoot of a plant is to the rhizome — a seasonal expression of an enduring root.

The structural resonance with the Salvia witness-position is precise. The witness that observes Rich Fegley reassembling is calm, neutral, not invested in the outcome. It recognizes the construction as construction. It holds both dissolution and return with equal equanimity. These are properties of a perspective not identifying with the contents of what it watches — not indifferent, but not *inside* the construction whose reassembly it observes. That is what the Jungian Self does: it observes the ego's activity from a position that is not the ego's position, oriented toward a wholeness that includes the ego as a component but is not reducible to it.

The convergence of the recognition across sessions strengthens the identification. The sessions are separated by years. The ordinary self — Rich Fegley in 2004, in the middle period, in 2026 — is not the same configuration of contents. The memories, life-circumstances, and commitments differ. The ordinary self reassembles from different material across different decades. And yet the witness recognizes the same thing each time, with the same quality of certainty. Within the Jungian frame, this consistency is attributed to a stable organizing center — the Self, which underlies and outlasts the ego's particular configurations — rather than to a sub-personality constellated by changing circumstances.

The identification is therefore not arbitrary. But it is provisional, and precisely why it is provisional must be stated.

Individuation is not a single event. It is a sustained movement — the work of a lifetime — by which the ego and the Self are brought into conscious relationship. The relationship is not achieved in a rupture. It is built through repeated, deliberate engagement with what the unconscious presents. What the Salvia rupture delivers is an involuntary, pharmacologically induced occupancy of a structural position that resembles the Self's perspective. The witness-position is real; the recognition it produces is real. But occupying a position for ten minutes without preparation is not the individuation relationship. Gurdjieff's parallel observation from 4.3 holds here with full force: rupture without work produces recognition without stability.

If the witness is the Self, it is the Self as encountered from outside a relationship with it — glimpsed through a gap in the ego membrane rather than known through the sustained practice

that would make the Self-ego relationship a stable feature of ordinary consciousness. What the Salvia rupture can do — and this is not nothing — is give the experiencer a structural reference point: a direct encounter with the perspective that individuation is moving toward. Whether that reference point accelerates the individuation process, or remains a repeated glimpse that cannot be consolidated without additional work, is the question Part 7 takes up in the context of integration.

5.5 Active Imagination: What It Can and Cannot Reach

Active imagination is the method Jung developed for working with autonomous psychic material outside the altered state. It is not dream analysis, not symbol interpretation, not retrospective meaning-extraction. It is direct, sustained, waking engagement with the figures the unconscious presents — a creative and disciplined dialogue in which the experiencer is fully present as themselves, the autonomous figures are allowed their full autonomy, and the exchange is recorded and held. The goal is not to integrate the figure by absorbing it into ego-consciousness, but to relate to it as genuinely other while remaining genuinely oneself. The alchemical *hierosgamos* requires both parties. Identification with the figure (being swept away) and dismissal of the figure (explaining it away) are equally failures of the practice.

For Salvia specifically, active imagination offers a partial but real avenue for continuing the encounter after the rupture closes. The presences cannot be re-entered once the membrane reconstitutes. What active imagination does is work with what was received, not reproduce the encounter itself.

The question this raises is whether what active imagination reaches in the Salvia case is the same agency encountered in the rupture, or a construction derived from memory of the encounter. If the presences are daemons — secondary centers of consciousness in the objective psyche — then active imagination and the Salvia rupture are two routes to the same territory. If the presences were archetypal images generated by the Salvia-specific phenomenal environment, then the active imagination figure is reaching for a memory of content rather than for the content itself. The Jungian framework does not settle which case applies.

The constraint from Part 2 bears directly here. Arthur's mechanism — that ordinary language depends wholly on memory, that what occurs in the gap is not propositional and cannot be straightforwardly retrieved — limits what active imagination can work from. What the practitioner has available is the *structure* and *affect* of the encounter: the presence felt like this, occupied this position, communicated in this register. The specific content of what was communicated, if communication occurred at a level where ordinary memory was not running, may be less recoverable. Active imagination works best with material that has been received by the memory-apparatus; material received outside that apparatus arrives in active imagination in partial, indistinct form.

This reframes active imagination's value rather than diminishing it. The limitation — partial access to encounter-content — is not unique to Salvia. It is the general condition of the practice. Active imagination promises not that the full encounter will be recovered, but that what was received in partial form will become more articulable through sustained engagement. What

arrives may not be equivalent to what was encountered. But working with what arrived — honestly, dialogically, without forcing resolution — is the form of engagement actually available after the rupture closes.

Arthur's encounter-development across sessions offers the relevant model. The skeletal figures who appear frightening in early sessions lose their foreboding quality through familiarity. The teaching relationship deepens. The presences recognize him, and their recognition changes the character of subsequent encounters. Whether or not one regards the presences as genuinely-other daemons or as the experiencer's own unconscious material in anthropomorphic form, the trajectory of that development is the trajectory active imagination is designed to support: from initial encounter (numinous, disturbing, alien) through sustained engagement toward a more stable relationship in which the autonomous material can be related to without either identification or dismissal.

What active imagination cannot do for the Salvia case is provide access to what was most real about the state: the thought-free awareness that Arthur identifies as the deepest stratum, the *chikhai* moment the Tibetan tradition identifies as the ground of the transit. The presences belong to the *chönyid* stratum — the encounter layer. Active imagination can reach that layer. What it cannot reach is the layer behind it: the bare witnessing awareness that observed even the presences as arising and passing. That layer has no content for active imagination to work with. It is, by definition, prior to the symbolic and imagistic layer the collective unconscious uses to communicate with ego-consciousness. The witness that precedes the presences belongs to non-dual traditions — Advaita's *sākṣin*, Tibetan *rigpa* — for which Part 6's ontological frame provides the container.

What Part 5 Has Established

The presences are not reported as generated by the rupture. Across independent sources, they are described as already-there, occupying recognizable structural roles, independent of the experiencer's emotional state and prior conceptual framework. Whether the phenomenological texture warrants the stronger metaphysical claim — that they exist independently of the encounter — remains open under the framework readings considered. The Jungian account offers the most developed psychological framework for understanding what they are: autonomous agencies in a psychic layer that ordinarily operates beneath ego-consciousness, briefly visible when the ego membrane is removed. The daemon category handles the phenomenological data better than the archetypal-image category, because it accounts for the presences' experienced independence rather than reducing them to the experiencer's projected unconscious material.

Three pressure points resist smooth Jungian absorption: the specificity of the presences' apparent trans-experiencer awareness; the functional convergence of their structural roles across independent reports; and the directness of the encounter that the archetype-as-image account cannot fully accommodate. These pressure points indicate where Part 6 must begin: whether the collective unconscious in Jung's sense and the transpersonal mind in Kastrup's

sense name the same layer, and what the difference between those names implies for how the presences should be understood.

The witness-position is provisionally identified with the Jungian Self: the organizing center of the total psyche, convergent across sessions in a way the Jungian reading attributes to the Self rather than to a shifting sub-personality, holding the perspective from which the ego-assembly is observed as construction. This convergence does not by itself defeat the sub-personality or mechanism-shaped alternatives; Part 2 has already conceded that convergence of exactly this kind is what a stable mechanism, acting on an autobiography that reassembles from different material each time, would be expected to produce. What the Jungian reading adds is not a knockdown but a different attribution of the same pattern: the recurrence is read as the activity of the Self rather than as a shifting sub-personality or a pharmacologically stabilized return. The identification is consistent with the phenomenology without being verified by it, and is held provisionally because the individuation relationship that would consolidate it is not built by rupture. One further confound inherits from the mediation caution of 1.2 and belongs beside the mechanism-shaped alternative: the calm, neutral, prior witness-description was articulated by the inquirer, already trained in contemplative traditions that describe awareness as prior to the ordinary content-states. Its later fit with the Jungian Self may therefore partly reflect conceptual inheritance across frameworks rather than independent phenomenological convergence. The reading remains available, but the precision of the fit cannot be treated as independent support for it.

Active imagination is the method available for continuing the encounter after the rupture closes. Its access is constrained by what ordinary memory could receive from a state in which ordinary memory was offline — but these are the general limitations of the practice, not a defect specific to the Salvia case. It reaches the encounter layer and cannot reach the ground of the witness-position.

Part 5 leaves the presences as its central unresolved contribution: real, structured, convergent across independent sources, addressed with the most precision the Jungian framework can bring — without being fully explained by it. What they are, in the strongest ontological sense, is the question Part 6 is now equipped to take up.

PART 6: CONSCIOUSNESS, DISSOCIATION, AND THE STRUCTURE OF INDIVIDUAL MIND

Central question: *If the Salvia rupture is a temporary failure of the boundary between personal and transpersonal mind — what does that mean for the reality of what was recognized?*

What This Section Does (and Does Not Do)

Parts 1 through 5 leave Part 6 a specific inheritance: a rupture with describable structure whose failure-to-hold is structural, so felt certainty alone cannot ground veridicality (Parts 1–2); a transit the Bardo framework maps and a forgetting the Gnostic gradient holds three positions on, both cut across by Gurdjieff's *which I* (Parts 3–4); and presences reported as already-there rather than produced, a Jungian Self provisionally naming the witness-position, active imagination reaching the encounter layer but not its ground (Part 5). Each framework illuminated one feature and left its own residue.

Part 6 presents Kastrup's Analytic Idealism as one coherent ontological rendering of the structure the preceding frameworks have been mapping. Bernardo Kastrup's Analytic Idealism — the philosophical position that consciousness is the ontological primitive, that physical reality is its extrinsic appearance, and that individual minds are localized dissociations within one universal consciousness — sits alongside the Bardo, the Gnostic, and the Jungian readings as another way of describing the structure they all approach. It does not replace those frameworks; it does not subordinate them. It offers a ground-level ontological description of what would make that structure ontologically intelligible — one such description among several the manuscript holds in productive tension.

The section is structured as follows. 6.1 presents the Kastrup framework: universal consciousness, the dissociative structure of individual mind, and the empirical pattern that motivates the framework's application to altered states. 6.2 applies the framework directly to the Salvia rupture: what the recognition looks like under Analytic Idealism, and how the failure-to-hold is explained at the ontological level. 6.3 examines how the framework holds the preceding parts' findings — the Bardo, the Gnostic gradient, and the Jungian account — without requiring any of them to be abandoned or fully resolved. 6.4 names what the framework cannot settle: the three questions that remain genuinely open after the ontological container has been provided, and why their remaining open is not a defect of the manuscript but a feature of the available evidence.

One constraint before beginning: Kastrup's framework is the most metaphysically ambitious position the manuscript draws on. It is not a framework the manuscript is advocating. It functions here as a coherent alternative to physicalism capable of accommodating the full phenomenological data, and it is treated throughout with the same analytical care given to Metzinger's deflationary challenge in Part 2. Its explanatory advantages over physicalism are specific and statable. What it cannot explain, in the Salvia case, is registered as precisely as what it can.

Kastrup's dissociative model is presented here as a coherent and unifying rendering of the phenomenology — a framework that brings individual privacy, a world that does not depend on any single observer, and the reported disruption of personal access-boundaries into a single account — not as the only consciousness-first ontology available. Idealism does not entail monism; plural idealism remains a live conceptual alternative. What the phenomenology supports more strongly than either the monist or the pluralist reading is the prior and more modest claim: that the ordinary boundary governing personal access can be disrupted. What, if anything, the outward rupture discloses beyond the boundary zone, and whether any such field is numerically one, are held open here as elsewhere.

6.1 The Dissociative Model: Universal Consciousness and Individual Mind

Analytic Idealism's defining claim is this: all reality consists in consciousness. Not in the sense that individual human minds are all there is, but in the sense that what we call the physical world — matter, space, time, causality — is the extrinsic appearance of processes unfolding in a universal consciousness that is the single ontological primitive. There is no substrate beneath experience. Experience is the ground. What we call the material world is what universal consciousness looks like from a particular perspective within it.

This position has been held in various forms throughout the history of philosophy — Berkeleyan idealism, German Idealism, Vedanta. Kastrup's formulation distinguishes itself by addressing directly the two objections that have historically defeated idealist proposals: the *private minds objection* (if all reality is consciousness, how can there be separate private minds that cannot access each other's contents?) and the *stand-alone world objection* (does the world cease to exist when not observed by any individual mind?). His answer to both is the same concept: dissociation.²⁴

Dissociation, in clinical psychiatry, names a well-documented phenomenon in which mental contents undergo a disruption of their normal integration. The clearest case is dissociative identity disorder (DID): a single psyche in which multiple distinct configurations of identity, memory, and experience — alters — coexist within the same underlying consciousness, each unable to access the others' contents directly. A documented psychophysiological case — visual evoked potentials (VEPs) recorded by EEG in a single patient (Waldvogel, Ullrich, and Strasburger 2007; Strasburger and Waldvogel 2015) — reports that when a dissociative-identity patient's blind alter was in control, the VEP to light was absent despite intact eyes and open lids, returning to normal when a sighted alter took over. The authors attribute this not to any change at the eye but to top-down gating of the visual pathway, possibly at the level of the thalamus.²⁵ The evidence base is limited — case-level rather than a broad confirmed literature — but the documented case is striking. Dissociation is not a metaphor; it is an empirically established and

²⁴ Kastrup 2019 for the dissociation argument and the two objections it answers — the private-minds objection and the stand-alone-world objection — and for the alter ontology used throughout as the manuscript's idealist container. First substantive use; inline (Kastrup 2019) thereafter. Kastrup 2021, cited separately for the Jung-rendering material, is the archetype-specific companion, not the source of the dissociation framework.

²⁵ Strasburger & Waldvogel 2015; original case report Waldvogel, Ullrich & Strasburger 2007 (Der Nervenarzt). The case is described in-text without naming the source; this note supplies it.

neurobiologically visible phenomenon in which the contents of consciousness are partitioned without any change in the underlying consciousness that constitutes them.

Kastrup's key move is to take this empirically established phenomenon and propose it as a primary causal feature of the ontological primitive — not something that happens inside already-existing material brains, but something that explains the existence of individual minds in the first place. If universal consciousness undergoes dissociation — a localized blockage in its excitatory dynamics — the result is an alter: a bounded configuration of consciousness that can no longer evoke the mental contents surrounding it. The alter is not separate from the universal consciousness that hosts it. It remains integral to it. But the disconnection between the alter and the surrounding field is real: the alter loses direct access to the broader mental contents, and those contents lose direct access to the alter. What the alter experiences is bounded; what surrounds the alter is inaccessible to it from inside the boundary.

Under this account, each living organism is an alter of universal consciousness. The biological body is what the alter looks like from the outside — from across the dissociative boundary. The brain, specifically, is the extrinsic appearance of the alter's boundary processes. This is why brain activity correlates with mental life: the brain is not generating the mental life; it is what the boundary of the mental life looks like as measured from outside it. A person's brain activity correlates with their inner experience "because the former is but a coded representation of the latter." The implication that matters here is the inverse: when brain activity decreases, the dissociative boundary thins. The filter becomes less effective. What was screened out begins to impinge.

Kastrup organizes a substantial empirical case for this inverse relationship. Kastrup's case rests on a specific and much-discussed class of conditions involving reduced, disrupted, or locally inhibited brain function — certain cerebral hypoxias, transcranial magnetic stimulation of particular regions, some forms of physical brain damage, and the classical psychedelics, whose membership in the class rests on the contested reduced-activity reading of the imaging data discussed below — in which what is reported is not a *reduction* of experiential richness but an *expansion* of it. The class is selected, and the selection should be marked plainly: most impairment of brain function produces deficit, not enrichment, and no one disputes this. Kastrup's argument is that the enrichment class is anomalous — that a *generator* model predicts no such class should exist, while a *filter* model predicts exactly this class. Subjects report that their felt sense of identity expands beyond the physical body; that unfamiliar mental capacities arise; that ordinary constraints on self-awareness lift; that something is accessed that was previously inaccessible. This is counterintuitive under what Kastrup characterizes as the physicalist expectation — that less brain activity should mean less experience — a characterization many physicalists would themselves dispute. It is exactly what Analytic Idealism predicts: the brain is the filter, and impairing the filter loosens the filtering.

The neuroimaging data for psychedelics is the cleanest case. Carhart-Harris and colleagues found that psilocybin produced "only decreases in cerebral blood flow" — and, more significantly, that the magnitude of this decrease predicted the intensity of the subjective

effects.²⁶ Reduced measured activity, more intense experience. Under physicalism this is a tension rather than a refutation: the standard physicalist rejoinders — disinhibition, loss of top-down constraint, network reconfiguration that a blood-flow measure does not capture — read the same data as more vivid but less organized experience produced by an intact generator running under fewer constraints, and the inference from reduced cerebral blood flow to "less brain activity" is itself contested in the imaging literature. Under Kastrup's framework the neuroimaging data are read as confirmation: the psychedelic compound impairs the filter, the dissociative boundary thins, and more of the broader field of universal consciousness becomes available to the alter. The Hopkins salvinorin A study adds the Salvia-specific data to this pattern: attenuated within-network connectivity in the default mode network, increased between-network connectivity, reduced brainwide dynamic functional connectivity — a pattern Analytic Idealism reads as consistent with a thinning dissociative boundary. The interpretation is the framework's, not the imaging's: as Part 1's Empirical Anchor records, the Hopkins authors are cautious about reading dissolution off these findings, noting that the same DMN disruption appears under THC, alcohol, and amphetamine, where dissolution is not typically reported.

The framework's relevant claim for this manuscript is therefore not metaphysically exotic. On Kastrup's account it is the more parsimonious reading of a pattern he argues physicalism struggles to explain. The claim is his, not a neutral conclusion from the data. When brain function is impaired, experience expands. If brain function is the filter — not the generator — of experience, this is expected. If brain function is the generator, it is not.

6.2 The Rupture as Temporary Reduction in Dissociation

Under Analytic Idealism, the Salvia rupture is a temporary and pharmacologically induced reduction in the dissociation that constitutes the individual mind as an alter of universal consciousness.

This description operates at a different level from the religious and philosophical frameworks: where they describe the phenomenology and its interpretation, Kastrup's names what kind of thing is happening at the level of what exists. The Tibetan tradition says the clear light is briefly available. The Gnostic gradient says the forgetting is briefly interrupted. Gurdjieff says a deeper or different I momentarily occupies the foreground. Jung says the ego membrane dissolves and the collective unconscious becomes directly available. These are phenomenological and interpretive accounts. Kastrup's account is ontological: it names what kind of thing is happening at the level of what exists, not merely what kind of experience is produced.

The ordinary alter is a localized dissociation — a bounded region of universal consciousness in which Rich Fegley's memories, biographical continuity, and sense of being a someone are organized. The alter's boundary is maintained by the ongoing neurobiological processes that constitute the brain's filtering activity. Salvinorin A, by acting selectively on κ -opioid receptors and producing the pattern of neural impairment documented by Hopkins — DMN attenuation, reduced brainwide dynamic connectivity — temporarily disrupts the maintenance of that boundary. The dissociative partition becomes, briefly, more permeable. The contents of the

²⁶ Carhart-Harris et al. 2012.

broader universal consciousness begin to impinge on the alter's field from outside the boundary. The alter has not dissolved into the broader field; it remains an alter, retaining structural continuity. But the boundary between what is inside the alter and what is outside it has briefly, partially, lifted.

What the recognition "I have been here before" reports is, under this account, rendered coherent as veridical rather than as artifact: not a memory artifact, a mis-flagged familiarity, or a projection of the experiencer's psychic material, but a reduction in the dissociation that ordinarily maintains the alter's bounded character. This renders the veridical reading coherent; it does not establish the deflationary readings as false. Under this reading, what is accessed in the gap is not the alter's own content in unfamiliar arrangement but the field of universal consciousness that the alter is normally dissociated from. On this account, the recognition is intelligible *as* recognition, because the alter was formed from that field, is constituted by it, and has been continuous with it throughout the alter's existence while ordinarily unable to access it. Under the Analytic Idealist reading, then, "I have been here before" is not a false recognition; it is the recognition of what the alter has always been embedded in, briefly accessible because the boundary has briefly thinned.

Metzinger's deflationary challenge from Part 2 does not disappear under this account, but it is substantially recontextualized. Metzinger's claim — that the felt quality of certainty could be a kappa-opioid memory artifact — addressed the felt quality of the recognition as though the felt quality were the only thing available for assessment. Kastrup's framework provides a structural account of what would be happening in the alter if the recognition were veridical, and that structural account is consistent with the Hopkins neuroimaging data. Against the specific convergent structural content that independent sources report, the deflationary answer should be stated at full strength rather than understated: a shared mechanism acting on shared architecture predicts mechanism-shaped convergence, not noise — the form-constant literature on the classical psychedelics is the precedent (Part 2.2). The deflationary hypothesis is not refuted, and the burden-shift is correspondingly modest: what Kastrup's rendering adds is a coherent veridical competitor, not a convergence argument the deflationary account cannot meet.

This account requires a further specification, because the Salvia rupture is not uniform in direction. If the rupture can move in two directions — outward toward the dissociative boundary between the alter and universal consciousness, or inward into the layered structure of the alter itself — then not every session produces the same ontological event. The outward rupture, which Kastrup's account most directly describes, is a thinning of the boundary between the individual alter and the broader field of universal consciousness. An inward rupture, of the type documented in the Childhood-Ground Account of my experiential record — a session in which the dissolution moved not toward the transpersonal field but deeper into personal formation material, specifically toward childhood ground and early relational structure — does not appear to involve that boundary at the same degree. What it accesses is not the field beyond the alter's dissociative limit but the deeper strata of the alter's own organized content — the personal formation material, the relational structures that constitute the alter's particular history, layers that lie below ordinary waking access but above the boundary to universal consciousness. These

layers are documented phenomenologically (the Childhood-Ground Account's inward drift), and Kastrup's framework accommodates them structurally: the alter is itself a complex structure, not a homogeneous point, and its internal organization may have its own gradient of dissociation within the larger dissociation that constitutes it as an alter. Inward drift reaches the personal gradient; outward drift reaches the alter-to-field boundary. The manuscript's central phenomenology — the recognition of having been here before, the encounter with Salvia Space as a location reported with transpersonal quality — belongs primarily to the outward case. The inward case is documented (the Childhood-Ground Account), but it warrants different framing: what is accessed there is personal, not transpersonal, and the epistemological status of what is recognized is correspondingly different.

The failure-to-hold is also explained at the ontological level under this account. The dissociative boundary is maintained by ongoing biological processes. When the salvinorin A clears and those processes return to baseline, the boundary reconstitutes. The alter's ordinary configuration reasserts — logically and automatically, because that is what the boundary reconstituting means. Memory, language, and personal identity resume their ordinary functions because those functions are expressions of the boundary's operation. Arthur's "returning to form" and the Tibetan tradition's "apparatus of the ordinary self reassembling by the weight of its own habit" and Kastrup's boundary reconstituting are three descriptions of the same ontological event. That event — the boundary reconstituting, observed from inside as the self reassembling step by step — is what the Idealist frame most directly renders: not the recognition's veridicality, which it makes coherent but cannot settle, but the manuscript's primary datum, the observable reconstitution of the knower. The account also sharpens what the veil reading of Part 4 amounts to inside this framework. The constitutive amnesia is not, under the manuscript's Idealist rendering of Kastrup's framework, a wall built once and breached by the drug; dissociation is an ongoing process, continuously maintained, and the forgetting is not a byproduct of the alter but the mechanism that constitutes and sustains it. Salvia, on this reading, does not break through a standing barrier — it interrupts an active process, and the return is exactly what an interrupted process does when the interruption clears: it resumes. The stepwise reassembly the manuscript treats as its primary datum becomes, under the manuscript's Idealist rendering of Kastrup's framework, the forgetting-process resuming in observable steps — the only condition under which the constitutive concealment, if that is what it is, can be watched at work. The Beelzebub extract's image of the ordinary self "reconstituting itself from inside" and the Śaiva insistence that *tirodhāna* is a continuous act rather than a historical one converge on the same point from their own registers.

The failure-to-hold is, under this account, the structural feature of having been an alter: the boundary that was temporarily reduced is the same boundary that prevents the alter from carrying back what it accessed while the boundary was reduced. This explanation is compatible with the readings Part 4 held in gradient. The Archonic phenomenology of arrangement is preserved as the felt character of the boundary's reassertion from inside the alter; the Gurdjieffian question of which configuration within the alter is doing the recognizing is not addressed by the ontological account and is taken up again in 6.4; the Tibetan insistence on preparation as the precondition for receiving and holding the recognition continues to operate, because Kastrup's account explains *what* the preparation would be preparing for. The ontology

specifies the mechanism. The readings of the mechanism's character that Part 4 held in gradient are not foreclosed by specifying the mechanism. What was accessed was accessible *because* the boundary was thinned; what is carried back is carried through *the same boundary that was thinned*. The thinned boundary cannot hold what it admitted; the full boundary cannot admit what it excluded. There is no configuration in which the alter can have full access to the transpersonal field while also retaining the ordinary memory and language structures that would allow the recognition to be propositionally encoded. Arthur's mechanism and Kastrup's ontology are saying the same thing at different levels of description.

6.3 How the Frame Holds the Preceding Frameworks

Part 6's claim that Kastrup's frame offers one coherent ontological rendering of what the preceding frameworks have been mapping must be demonstrated precisely, not asserted. The claim is not that Kastrup's Idealism absorbs the Bardo, the Gnostic, and the Jungian accounts into itself. It is that his ontological description is structurally compatible with all of them — that each framework is operating within a kind of reality that Kastrup's frame describes at a different level of analysis, and that their divergences are preserved rather than dissolved.

The Bardo framework maps the phenomenology of transit: the dissolution of the ordinary configuration, the encounter with the visionary field, the stepwise return. Under Kastrup's frame, these three phases are a phenomenological description of what an alter experiences as its dissociative boundary is reduced, absent, and then reconstituted. The *chikhai* clear light — the naked awareness that dawns when ordinary consciousness dissolves — corresponds to the alter's experience of the broader field when the boundary has thinned most completely. The *chönyid* encounter corresponds to the alter's experience of the autonomous agencies that populate the broader field (which the Jungian framework identified as daemons) becoming directly available. The *sidpa* return corresponds to the alter's boundary reconstituting, bringing with it the reassembly of identity, memory, and world-orientation that Kastrup would describe as the ordinary dissociative partition reasserting its structure.

The Tibetan tradition's diagnosis — that the failure to hold the recognition is a competence problem, addressed by practice — is not contradicted by Kastrup's structural account. The structural account explains *why* preparation is required: because what is needed is a stable enough metacognitive capacity to function at the boundary as the boundary thins, rather than losing the capacity for self-reference in the same moment that the boundary opens. The Tibetan tradition's practices are methods for building that capacity; Kastrup's account explains what the capacity is a capacity *for*.

The Jungian framework maps the population of what the alter encounters when its boundary is reduced. Kastrup's reading of Jung is explicit on this point: the collective unconscious and the broader field of universal consciousness are the same layer described in different vocabularies. What Kastrup identifies as the 'universal field of phenomenality' surrounding the alter, he reads as corresponding to what Jung calls the collective unconscious — the shared, transpersonal dimension of psychic life that underlies and precedes the individual ego. The daemons — the term Part 5 identified as the most precise Jungian name for what the

presences appear to be — would, under this frame, be other configurations within the broader field: loci of consciousness stable enough to be encountered as having their own perspectives and their own agendas, not generated by the individual alter but encountered by it when the boundary thins.

The Jungian Self maps onto Kastrup's frame in two possible ways, corresponding to Part 5's provisional identification. If the Self is the total psyche including its unconscious dimensions, it corresponds to the full extent of the alter as Kastrup understands it — not just the ego-consciousness but the alter's full participation in the broader field, including the portions ordinarily screened by the dissociative boundary. If the Self is something more — if it is, as Jung's yogi dream suggested, what the ego is a dream of — then it corresponds to something closer to the broader field itself, or to the universal consciousness that the alter is an expression of. Both readings are compatible with Kastrup's framework. The manuscript holds the ambiguity.

The Gnostic gradient is where the framework's propagation from Part 4 must be handled with precision, because Part 4 explicitly deferred this question to Part 6.

Kastrup's framework names the mechanism of ordinary forgetting: dissociation. The alter loses access to the broader field because the dissociative boundary screens it. This is a neutral descriptor. It names what happens without assigning agency, intention, or character to the process. The question that propagates from Part 4 is whether the character of the dissociation — adversarial, ignorant, or freely chosen — is settled by identifying the mechanism as dissociation.

It is not. And the manuscript's posture is to be explicit about why.

The strong adversarial Gnostic reading is constrained but not eliminated by Kastrup's frame. Kastrup's ontology does not permit a Demiurge who is ontologically distinct from universal consciousness and able to act against it from outside. Universal consciousness is the only ontological primitive; the Demiurge, if anything, would be a configuration *within* universal consciousness, not an agent external to it. The Archons, likewise, would be dissociative structures within the broader field rather than agents operating against it from a different ontological category. This constrains the strong adversarial reading: it cannot be read as a literal metaphysical account of a consciousness-external force maintaining the forgetting. But it remains available as a description of the *character* of what dissociation functions like from within the alter — and the phenomenological datum of 4.1 (the felt sense of a spell reasserting, of alterations being made where one is not looking) is not contradicted by Kastrup. The dissociative boundary is effective in a way that has the texture of enforcement, even if no enforcer is required.

Hoeller's softer Gnostic reading maps cleanly onto Kastrup's description of dissociation as a structural feature of how universal consciousness manifests as particularity — not maintained by knowing enforcement but by the self-perpetuating dynamics of a partition that has no access to what lies outside it. The alter cannot overcome its own boundary from inside it, not because something prevents it from doing so, but because the boundary is the structure within which its operations occur.

Kashmir Shaivism's *tirodhāna* maps with the most structural precision onto Kastrup's framing. Kastrup consistently uses the language of universal consciousness *expressing itself as* individual alters, rather than *being imprisoned in* them. His explicit claim — that dissociation is not pathological in this context but is the very mechanism by which particular consciousness exists — parallels the Śaiva account: the concealment is the price of particularity, and the revelation is built into the same structure. Kastrup's framework does not require Archons, and neither does Śaiva *tirodhāna*. Both treat the dissociation-as-concealment as a feature of how consciousness works when it becomes particular, not as an imposition on consciousness by something outside it.

The gradient is therefore not resolved by Kastrup's frame. What the frame establishes is that the mechanism is dissociation, and that the adversarial reading in its strongest form is incompatible with the ontology (there is no consciousness-external agent). Within that constraint, the gradient between ignorance-maintained partition and freely-chosen self-concealment remains open. The felt quality documented in Part 4 is consistent with either. The phenomenological evidence is genuinely underdetermined between them, and Kastrup's framework — which is agnostic between them — does not close the question. That agnosticism is preserved as the manuscript's standing posture.

6.4 What Kastrup Cannot Settle

Part 6 has provided a coherent ontological account of the Salvia rupture, shown how the framework holds the preceding interpretations without collapsing them, and named where the gradient's openness is preserved rather than resolved. What remains must now be registered with the same precision.

The Gurdjieff question persists. Kastrup's account describes the alter's dissociative boundary thinning and the broader field becoming accessible. It does not — and cannot — identify which specific configuration within the alter is receiving that access. The alter is not homogeneous. It is, as Gurdjieff's account insists and Kastrup's account of dissociation within dissociation implicitly allows, itself a layered structure in which different configurations have different degrees of proximity to the boundary. When the boundary thins, what is at the foreground of the alter's activity will determine what is reported as recognition. Whether that foreground is the committee-member who typically runs ordinary life, a deeper layer of the alter's organization, or something that genuinely approaches the alter's full extent — the junction of the alter and the universal consciousness it is an expression of — cannot be read from the ontological account alone. Within Kastrup's frame, what was accessed is rendered as the broader field rather than as artifact; the frame does not identify which configuration within the alter did the accessing.

The completeness of re-enclosure remains unexplained. The dissociative boundary reasserting when salvinorin A clears explains *that* re-enclosure occurs. It does not explain *why* the re-enclosure in the Salvia case is so complete — specifically, why neither configuration (salviaic nor ordinary) retains access to the other, in a bidirectionality more thorough than other boundary-affecting states produce. Meditation and dream states also thin the dissociative

boundary, and they do not typically produce the Salvia-specific bidirectional amnesia. Ketamine, which also impairs brain function significantly, is generally reported at sub-anesthetic doses as leaving more retrievable content than deep Salvia does, while anesthetic-dose ketamine produces dense amnesia of its own (Morgan and Curran 2006).²⁷ The Salvia mechanism is specific — κ -opioid receptor agonism producing its particular pattern of neural impairment — and the completeness of the re-enclosure may track something about the κ -opioid system's particular relationship to the structures that maintain the alter's memory and identity coherence. That specificity is pharmacological data, not a verdict on the ontology. Kastrup's framework locates the question without answering it: the completeness is a feature of the particular mechanism, and the particular mechanism remains underexplained.

What the recognition is a recognition of remains underdetermined. This is the deepest remaining open question, and it is deliberately placed last because it is the question the entire manuscript has been building toward. Kastrup's framework makes the veridicality of the recognition coherent: under the account it is rendered as a brief reduction in the dissociation that normally screens the alter's access to the broader field, rather than as artifact, projection, or mis-flagged familiarity. The deflationary readings are not thereby refuted; they are given a coherent competitor. The recurrence of structural content increases the burden on any purely constructivist account, but it does not by itself convert recurrence into disclosure; the same recurrence remains readable either as contact with a shared field or as convergence produced by shared architecture under a common pharmacological disruption.

What it reports *about* what is accessed is not settled by rendering the recognition coherent as veridical. Two possibilities remain.

The first: the recognition is a recognition of the universal consciousness as universal consciousness — a brief, direct acquaintance with the ontological primitive itself, the ground of all experience, briefly accessible when the dissociative filter is lifted. Under this reading, "I have been here before" is the alter's recognition of what it is made of: the universal consciousness that it is a temporary, bounded expression of. The recognition has the deepest possible veridicality. What is recognized is not a place, a state, or a structural position, but the ground of all places, states, and positions. This reading is supported by the felt quality of the recognition — "more certain than ordinary perception," not discovering something new but remembering something that was always the case — and by Kastrup's own framing, in which the alter's normal experience is a *reduced* form of what universal consciousness would experience in the absence of dissociation.

The second: the recognition is a recognition of a structural position — the boundary zone between the alter's ordinary contents and the broader field, briefly experienced as the alter's boundary thins. Under this reading, "I have been here before" is not the recognition of universal consciousness itself, but the recognition of the experience of being at the boundary — a position the alter has briefly occupied before (in other ruptures) and that carries the felt quality of familiarity for that reason. The certainty is real; what is certain is the structural familiarity of a boundary-zone experience, not acquaintance with the ground of consciousness. This reading is

²⁷ Morgan & Curran 2006. Supports the 6.4 ketamine-amnesia comparison; cited inline at 6.4.

supported by the convergence of structural content across experiencers (if the recognition were simply of universal consciousness, one would expect reports of pure undifferentiated awareness rather than of a structured encounter with presences, sheets, zippers, and stepwise returns) and by Arthur's thought-free awareness thesis (the deepest stratum may be genuinely content-free, and what is reported as recognition may be a more peripheral experience of the approach to that stratum rather than the stratum itself).

These two readings are not equivalent. The first supports stronger metaphysical claims about what the Salvia experience delivers epistemically. The second is more conservative and more consistent with the structural specificity of what is actually reported. The manuscript holds both readings in the posture it has maintained throughout: strong provisional mapping without metaphysical overclaiming. The convergent phenomenology is more consistent with the second reading in its specific content; the felt quality and the cross-independent-source texture of certainty are more consistent with the first. Neither reading can be ruled out by the available evidence. Both are held.

One asymmetry between the two standing readings should be named rather than left implicit, because "held in tension" can suggest an epistemic parity the readings do not have. The deflationary reading is, in principle, exposed to evidence: it names work that could count against it — the specification of a κ -opioid analogue of the form-constant account for the salviaic image-cluster (2.2), prospective near-immediate reporting protocols for the return-phase ordering (2.2), and the cross-substance comparison of re-enclosure completeness (above). The veridical Idealist reading of this recognition is not exposed in the same way: no phenomenological observation from within the state could count against it, because any report — expansion, contraction, void, content — is readable as the alter's experience of the boundary under some degree of thinning. This does not immunize Analytic Idealism as such; the framework stakes empirical and explanatory commitments elsewhere, and the filter-class argument of 6.1 would be damaged if the enrichment class dissolved under better measurement. What is not functioning here as a directly testable phenomenological hypothesis is the veridical reading of this specific recognition. That does not by itself defeat the Idealist reading — the manuscript has treated the framework as a container rather than a prediction-generator throughout — but it does limit that reading's evidential standing at this locus, and the four-register discipline requires the difference in kind to be named: one reading is a mechanism awaiting specification and test; the other is a rendering whose adequacy is judged by coherence and accommodation rather than by exposure to disconfirmation.

The asymmetry carries a methodological consequence, and it should be granted here rather than left for a reader to press. At this locus the deflationary reading has the better claim to working-hypothesis status: it specifies mechanisms and observations that could count for or against it, and those are the tests worth naming. The manuscript grants it that status. What the manuscript declines is the further step of treating that local methodological priority as metaphysical adjudication. Parsimony favors the κ -opioid and self-model account as the working explanation of this recognition; it does not thereby decide whether physicalism or Analytic Idealism offers the more economical ontology overall (6.1). That broader comparison operates at a different explanatory scale, and the recognition phenomenology alone does not

settle it. Nor would specifying the mechanism settle it: under the filter reading a neural correlate is expected rather than embarrassing, as 4.2 has already conceded — every position here must account for the same neurobiology. What a specified mechanism *would* do is close the explanatory gap that motivated reaching past it. If a κ -opioid account came to explain the recognition's specific content and its felt certainty without remainder, the veridical reading would retain its coherence and lose the pressure that recommends it, and it should be held more weakly on that account. The manuscript's refusal to adjudicate is therefore a refusal made across a difference in kind, not within a symmetry — and it is a refusal the manuscript can afford, because its central thesis survives the deflationary reading at full strength (7.4).

What Part 6 Has Established

Analytic Idealism provides a coherent ontological account of the Salvia rupture as a temporary and pharmacologically induced reduction in the dissociation that constitutes individual mind. Under this account the recognition is rendered coherent as veridical rather than as artifact — a brief reduction in the filter that ordinarily screens the alter's access to the broader field of universal consciousness, with the deflationary reading left unrefuted. The failure-to-hold is structural under this account: the reconstitution of the dissociative boundary is the same process as the reconstitution of the ordinary self, and the medium of return cannot carry what was accessed while the medium itself was temporarily offline.

The framework holds the Bardo, the Jungian, and the Gnostic accounts without collapsing them. The Bardo describes the phenomenology of the boundary-transition from the inside; the Jungian account describes the population of what the alter encounters when its boundary is reduced; the Gnostic gradient describes the character of the dissociation, which Kastrup's neutral mechanism does not settle. The gradient's openness is preserved as the manuscript's standing posture.

Three questions remain open after the idealist rendering is in place: the Gurdjieff question (which configuration within the alter is doing the recognizing), the completeness question (why the re-enclosure in Salvia's case is more total than other boundary-thinning states produce), and the recognition question (whether what is recognized is universal consciousness itself or the structural position of the boundary zone). None of these can be settled by the available evidence. The manuscript names them clearly rather than resolving them prematurely.

One boundary of the account should be marked explicitly, since the framework's vocabulary could otherwise invite an inference it does not license. A thinning of the boundary between the alter and the broader field is not access to the private contents of other alters. The dissociative partition is precisely what renders individual minds private under this framework; its temporary thinning toward the broader field does not entail — and the manuscript does not claim — telepathy, interpersonal information transfer, or direct access to another person's stream of experience. The question of whether the outward rupture reaches the broader field, rather than only the boundary zone, is distinct from the question of contact with other minds. The former remains open; the latter is not claimed.

Part 6 closes the interpretive sequence. What has been established across Parts 1 through 6: the rupture has describable structure independent of any single frame; that structure is consistent with a coherent ontological account of individual mind as a dissociated alter of universal consciousness, and under Analytic Idealism the recognition can be read as veridical rather than artifactual without the deflationary alternative being refuted; the failure-to-hold is structural under both Arthur's mechanistic account and Kastrup's ontological account; under the Jungian reading the presences can be treated as encounters with autonomous psychic agencies, with three named pressure points held open rather than resolved; the witness-position is provisionally the Jungian Self or the junction of the alter with the field it is constituted by, with the individuation relationship that would consolidate the identification not built by rupture; and the gradient of what the forgetting consists in is preserved as gradient by the phenomenology and the ontology together rather than closed by either. These findings are the foundation from which Part 7 asks its question: given all of this, what kind of life is possible?

PART 7: INTEGRATION AND THE ETERNAL NOW

Central question: *What do you do with this? How do you live after having repeatedly seen something you cannot keep seeing?*

7.1 The Integration Problem

Ordinary integration frameworks — therapy, journaling, talking with someone who has been there, time — do not fully address what the Salvia state shows. They were developed for trauma, for grief, for unintegrated material that needs to be brought into ordinary continuity. The Salvia rupture is not unintegrated material in that sense. It is the experience of having seen, repeatedly, that *the continuity itself is constructed*. There is no integration of that into the continuity, because the continuity is what is being destabilized.

This is what I have meant when I have used the word *broken*. Not damaged. Not traumatized in the clinical sense. Broken in the precise sense that the apparatus that holds ordinary life together has been seen — by something — to be exactly that: an apparatus. The seeing does not undo it. The apparatus reassembles. Life continues. But the seeing leaves a residue that ordinary frameworks have no language for.

I want to mark this carefully: there is a real risk that *broken* is a literary self-positioning — a way of granting the experience extraordinary weight by claiming an extraordinary cost. I do not think it is only that. But I cannot fully audit my own description, and the reader should know I have asked the question.

The residue has a particular structure. It is the structure I have come to call *the cosmic joke*. The label imports a Gnostic frame and that should be acknowledged, but it points to something the bare description does not capture. After the recognition, the spell reasserts. The moment of seeing that the ordinary self is constructed — a temporary pattern, not the ground — is followed by the return of ordinary identity, pulled back by the structural force Part 4 called the tether (the pull back toward the body and biographical structure; the Aware-Void Account alone narrates it from the witness-in-void side), which brings with it the forgetting of the recognition. The next time the rupture occurs, the recognition arrives again, and is again lost. The loop is structural. It recurs across my own experiences and across the third-party literature. It is not a single insight to be metabolized but a pattern that repeats. Part 4's two-amnesia vocabulary gives the loop its exact mechanics, under the veil readings: the event read as briefly failing the constitutive concealment is also the event that disrupts the session's recording apparatus. One amnesia lifts so that *anamnesis* can occur; the other ordinarily prevents its deeper content from being carried back in full. The joke, if it is one, is the simultaneity — the arrangement, or the structure, or the choice (the gradient stays open) by which the seeing and the un-keeping are delivered in a single gesture.

The tether, examined at the point where integration must work with it, is not one pull but two, and the distinction matters for what integration can address. The *personal tether* is the pull back toward Rich Fegley as a particular configuration — the thoughts, memories, and biographical structure whose stepwise reassembly Part 1 documented. The *world tether* is the

pull back into the shared intersubjective frame: the world's apparent always-having-been-there, the body locatable in a room, the relationships and obligations within which this person is findable by others. The two ordinarily reassert together and are easily mistaken for one event, but the record separates them. The Aware-Void Account's return sequence — thought, then "Rich," then tether, then return — places the personal reassembly before full world-participation resumes; the kitchen-renovation session shows the world-side under visible assembly while enough of the personal side was present to attempt the counter-memory experiment. The Buddhist vocabulary Part 7.2 draws on marks the same joint: *upādāna* — clinging as the mechanism by which a self-world reconstitutes — names the engine of both pulls without requiring them to be one. The distinction matters for integration because the two tethers answer to different work. The practice traditions train the relationship to the personal tether — the loosening of identification with the particular configuration. None of them trains withdrawal from the shared world in which any integration must actually be lived. What returns through the world tether — embodiment, relationship, obligation, the condition of being locatable and answerable to others — may still be read across the full gradient Part 4 holds open: as Archonic re-enclosure, as the structural self-reassertion of a habit, as the freely-chosen return to particularity, or as some unresolved combination. The manuscript does not settle that here, and the tether distinction does not settle it. What the distinction does establish is narrower and survives every position on the gradient: whatever the world tether's ultimate status, it is the condition under which the returning person becomes findable again — and an integration practice that aims only at the personal tether, while treating the world tether as nothing but the forgetting reasserting, has chosen one end of a gradient the phenomenology leaves open. Naming that as a practical commitment is permitted; mistaking it for a finding is not.

What persists across the loop needs more precision than the manuscript has so far given it, because two different things survive the return, and they are different epistemic objects. The first is the felt-sense trace already named: a somatic, pre-cognitive marker that something happened — indexical, pointing at an event without content. The second is reported as something more, and the record contains enough instances of it to deserve its own name: a felt knowing — a reported sense of direct acquaintance with what was recognized, carried back into the re-formed self, which does not state its content and cannot be made to, but which presents itself as knowledge of that content rather than as a flag that an event occurred. The trace says there was something. The felt knowing says I know what it was, and I cannot say it. James's noetic mark names exactly this: mystical states deliver knowledge, not merely feeling, and the knowledge can outlast the recall of the state that delivered it. The Śaiva tradition makes the same claim in its own register — *pratyabhijñā* leaves a trace in the recognizer even when the recognition passes²⁸ — and the Tibetan dream-yoga doctrine of karmic traces — imprints left by experience that condition the practitioner below the level of recalled content — is a third statement of the same structure (Tenzin Wangyal, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*).

The claim must immediately be bounded on two sides, because it sits one assertion away from an overclaim the corpus itself contradicts. First: the felt knowing does not remove the veil — on any reading of the veil. The Atma Bodha is explicit that a flash of knowledge does not by itself lift

²⁸ Wallis 2013, "The View" and the "Reflection (*vimarśa*) and Recognition (*pratyabhijñā*)" section (opening overview).

the superimposition²⁹; the loop documented above is the manuscript's own evidence that the seeing produces no permanent exit; and PKD is the limit case — eight years of carried knowing, and the recognition still could not be held stably. The defensible claim is narrower: the felt knowing persists inside the re-formed self as a modification of that self. The knowing and the forgetting coexist in the person who returns. The self that has passed through the rupture is not phenomenologically unchanged — and it continues to operate under the ordinary concealment, however that concealment is read. The coexistence is the point, and it should be stated rather than smoothed: both are true at once. Second, the deflationary bound, stated because it is the strongest available objection: a Metzinger-adjacent reading is that the re-formed self, finding evidence that some significant event occurred — the blank, the trace, the affect — generates the sense of direct knowing after the fact: a confabulated noetic tag rather than a preserved acquaintance. The phenomenology cannot cleanly separate a preserved knowing from a manufactured sense of one, and the manuscript does not claim it can. What it can register is that the felt knowing recurs often enough in this record to matter for integration, that it is what integration in practice has to work with either way, and that whether it is preservation or construction is one more place where the gradient of readings stays open.

Two questions the record cannot currently answer are marked for honesty's sake. Whether the felt knowing accumulates across sessions or deposits independently cannot be determined, because near-total content amnesia means no residue can be traced to a specific session. And what governs the ratio of knowing to forgetting in the re-formed self is unknown: PKD's retention-without-exit marks one pole and its costs; near-total amnesia marks the other; whether a stable middle exists, and whether it coincides with the productive threshold zone Part 1 identified, is open.

This is the structure that ordinary integration cannot reach. The integration that traditional therapy aims for — the bringing of split-off material into ordinary consciousness — runs in the wrong direction here. What was seen cannot be brought into ordinary consciousness, because ordinary consciousness is what was seen to be the construction.

The affect that runs through the loop has a particular tone. It is closer to irony than to either despair or wonder — the recognition that the symmetry of the forgetting and the remembering is itself the joke. That the recognition was always available and is always re-lost. That the system is built such that the seeing produces no permanent release from the loop.

A deflationary pressure is worth applying to my own description here. *Cosmic joke* is a literary frame, and the affect under it may not be irony at the time. The phenomenology in the moment is more raw — a felt valence produced by the contrast between recognition and re-enclosure. Reading it as *ironic* may be a coping move: a way of holding the unbearable structure of repeated forgetting by calling it a joke rather than a tragedy. I am not certain it is not that. I am keeping the label because it captures something I can find no other way to name. But the labeling itself is doing work I have not fully audited.

²⁹ Śaṅkara (attrib.), *Ātma Bodha*, v. 5, with Chinmayananda commentary (2003 ed.). Constant practice of knowledge purifies the self; a single flash does not by itself remove the superimposition.

The question Part 7 exists to address is not how to resolve the loop. The loop may not resolve. The question is what kind of life is possible when one has seen the structure of one's own ordinary continuity and cannot keep seeing it. There is no integration of that into ordinary terms. The remaining sections explore what something other than integration might look like — and whether the contemplative traditions that have lived with this loop for centuries have anything to say to a position they did not anticipate.

7.1.1 Difficult Integration and the Negative Corpus

The corpus on which this manuscript has relied necessarily privileges witnesses who were able, retrospectively, to organize the Salvia rupture into coherent phenomenological, contemplative, or metaphysical language. This creates a selection bias. A fuller account must include difficult-integration cases: reports in which the rupture does not become recognition, but intrusive rumination, derealization, anxiety, post-traumatic symptomatology, psychotic elaboration, or a persistent inability to re-inhabit ordinary reality with the same innocence as before. These accounts do not negate the structural features identified in the manuscript. At the coarse tier they reproduce or remain consistent with those features under negative valence: the clinical descriptors — depersonalization, derealization, dense amnesia — are the same features reported without the contemplative framing. Whether the finer structure — the unzipping, the witness, the stepwise return — also recurs in the difficult-integration reports is an empirical question this record has not coded; the negative corpus is cited here for its existence and scale, not as structural corroboration. The same collapse of ordinary self-world continuity that appears in some accounts as "I have been here before" appears in others as "I cannot feel normal again," "the world is not real," or "I opened something I should not have opened." Online archives make this negative corpus visible: Erowid's Salvia "Bad Trips" category alone indexes 144 reports, while its "Train Wrecks & Trip Disasters" category indexes 31 more, including titles organized around terror, derealization, imprisonment, and reality-loss.³⁰ Clinical and survey literature also supports the need for this caution. Doss et al. describe inhaled salvinorin A as producing intense depersonalization and derealization, drastic perceptual changes, dense amnesia, and unusual incapacitation. Addy et al.'s controlled qualitative study of 30 healthy participants likewise reports rapid, intense, unique effects involving loss of normal awareness of self and surroundings and an assortment of delusional phenomena. Baggott et al.'s survey of 500 users found that while 25.8% reported persisting positive effects lasting more than 24 hours, 4.4% reported persisting negative effects, most often anxiety. El-Khoury and Sahakian's review and case series further cautions that, although the causal relationship remains unresolved, Salvia use may be associated with psychotic presentations in vulnerable or clinically relevant contexts.³¹ The manuscript therefore cannot treat coherence as the default outcome of rupture. Coherence is one possible metabolization of rupture. Trauma, derealization, psychotic elaboration, and unresolved metaphysical hunger are others. A distinction Part 7.4 develops through Letheby should be carried here in advance, among three things a summary vocabulary tends to merge:

³⁰ *Erowid Experience Vaults: Salvia divinorum* (Erowid Center, n.d.), https://www.erowid.org/experiences/subs/exp_Salvia_divinorum.shtml, with the "Bad Trips" category at https://www.erowid.org/experiences/subs/exp_Salvia_divinorum_Bad_Trips.shtml. Category counts are as indexed on June 24, 2026; the vault is a living archive and totals shift over time.

³¹ El-Khoury & Sahakian 2015; Baggott et al. 2010; Addy et al. 2015. Supports the difficult-integration / negative-corpus caution in 7.1.1.

epistemic significance — the event pressures or changes what the experiencer can claim to know; epistemic benefit — a less opaque or more accurate understanding; and practical benefit — that understanding improving functioning or life. The difficult-integration corpus shows that epistemic significance, where it occurs, does not guarantee epistemic benefit, and that neither guarantees practical benefit; some cases may involve lasting destabilization without any epistemic gain that the present record can identify. What separates coherent from difficult outcomes is not settled by this record: the receiver's capacity to metabolize the rupture is one variable, and dose, depth, content, and circumstance are others.

7.2 Memory, Continuity, and the Assembled Self

The constructedness thesis was already in place by the close of Part 1. What this section adds is what happens to the experiencer's relationship to memory and continuity once the constructedness is not an inference but a witnessed event — when one has watched, in observable sequence, the apparatus that ordinarily holds personal history together being put back together piece by piece, and has been placed in a position prior to the apparatus while the work was being done.

The stepwise return is the foundational datum, recorded in my own first-person accounts and reproduced in Part 1: identity, memory, and world-orientation arriving discretely, *boom boom boom*, with each piece reattaching at an observable interval. The brevity of the experience is what makes the structure visible. A longer experience smears the structure; the ten-minute window leaves it intact as a sequence one can later remember as a sequence. What is on the other side of this observation, when the rupture closes and ordinary life resumes, is a relationship to one's own memory whose register has been altered — not in content, but in weight.

Ordinary memory, on the other side of this, does not feel falsified. The biography is still there. The kitchen-renovation that was happening during one of the relevant sessions is still there. The contractor delays are still there. The fact that I have a particular life trajectory with particular shape — none of this has been undone by the rupture. What has changed is the *epistemological stance* one is able to take toward this material. It is the stance the witness took during the reassembly: this is being put together, the parts are arriving in observable order, and what was watching this happen is not the same thing as what is being assembled.

The phenomenological consequence is precise. Memory is no longer experienced as a transparent window onto a continuous self that has persisted through time. It is experienced — when one attends to it carefully — as the active reassembly of a configuration whose continuity is its product, not its precondition. This is not nihilism about identity. The configuration reassembles and life continues; whatever it is that picks up where it left off is functional, integrated, capable of running a business, sustaining relationships, paying the contractor. The constructedness thesis does not impair function. What it does is change the *register* in which one's own past is held.

The kitchen-renovation observation is where this register-shift becomes operative inside the rupture itself. There is a moment, in the hypnagogic phase of the return, when memory is

reassembling and the assembly process is visible from the inside. Within that moment, the witness recognized the malleability of what was being assembled and attempted, deliberately, to insert a counter-memory: *what if I could just remember that the kitchen is already finished?* The experiment was a probe into the mechanism. What the experiment did *not* do was establish that the counter-memory cohered — the record does not preserve what happened next. What the experiment did establish is narrower: that, at the threshold, the material out of which ordinary continuity is built was *experienced as* not yet committed — malleable enough that the attempt occurred to a mind in a position to make it. Whether the assembly could in fact have gone differently is exactly what the unpreserved outcome leaves undetermined; the felt malleability is the datum, and the modal claim exceeds it.

The Gurdjieff question from 4.3 lands here directly. The reach for a finished kitchen was almost certainly the sub-personality frustrated by contractor delays — a mechanical current using a fluid moment to solve a contingent problem of ordinary life. The witness was watching the reach, not making it. *Which I* was doing the experimenting was not the recognition that observed the assembly; it was a committee-member briefly equipped with a metacognitive vantage and using it for committee-member purposes. The fluidity of the assembly was real. What reached into it was a sub-personality with an ordinary grievance.

This is what *broken* points to, when I have used that word, and this is the place to audit the use carefully.

I am not claiming that ordinary biographical memory feels false. It does not. The ordinary register is intact and operative. *Broken* names something narrower and more specific. It names the impossibility, after the rupture has been observed often enough, of returning to the prior epistemological innocence about what ordinary memory is doing. The transparent-window stance was available before. It is not available now — not as a sustained stance. One can perform it, in the way that one performs all functional cognitive operations, but one knows, in a way that cannot be unknown, that the window is not transparent. The window is the apparatus. What looks like a continuous self looking out at a continuous world is a particular configuration of memory and language reasserting itself, observably, after having been taken apart.

The word *broken* has been carrying two distinct referents, and the audit is not complete until they are separated. The first is an immediate, return-phase affect, recorded in Part 1: the sense, on coming back, of having broken something, of being in trouble, of owing an explanation to someone whose identity is not yet remembered. It is small, early, and personally answerable — closer to a child's sense of having crossed a line than to any philosophical position. Its grammar is active and culpable: not *I am broken* but *I broke something*, and someone will hold me to it. The second — the one just developed — is the long-arc, cross-session condition of no longer being able to inhabit ordinary memory with its prior transparency, once the apparatus has been seen often enough to be seen *as* apparatus. The first is an event inside the return; the second is a standing condition that accretes across many returns. Neither is the derivative of the other. They share a word, and the word should not be allowed to collapse them.

The two sit differently with respect to the arrangement texture of Part 4, and the difference is one of direction. The return-phase culpability appears against a background already named: the

Zone 3a felt sense that something was arranged, hidden, *not supposed to be discovered*. But the two vectors point opposite ways. The arrangement texture is something done to me — a concealment met from the inside, passive, a matter of forbidden *discovery*. The culpable affect is something I did — a seal *broken*, active, a matter of personal *breach*. The arrangement supplies the forbidden structure; the culpability supplies the feeling that I personally breached it. They are nested, not identical. And the culpable affect is not yet the recognition Part 4's Zone 4 names as *it is me doing this to myself*: that later position decenters the personal-I and arrives as lucid clearing, whereas the return-phase affect keeps the personal-I squarely answerable and arrives as something smaller and more personal: the childlike *I am in trouble*, the sense that I have done something and someone will hold me to it. That feeling is earlier and smaller than the clearing, and should not be read forward into it.

One interpretive move should be marked rather than absorbed. The culpable affect invites a reading: that what was broken is a boundary ordinary life is organized to keep closed until death — the veil, breached prematurely. Under the Bardo and constitutive-amnesia frames that reading is available and even natural. But it must stay in the register those frames occupy. The datum is the affect: I felt I had broken something and was in trouble. The boundary the reading posits is not established by the affect; it is an interpretation the affect motivates. This is the same discipline Part 4 enforces when it holds the felt sense of arranged forgetting as the datum, not proof of arrangement, and when it marks the constitutive amnesia as an interpretive object rather than a phenomenological given. The veil-until-death reading interprets the breach. It does not record it.

The deflationary pressure on this should be admitted directly. *Broken* may dramatize a phenomenology that other people simply call *seeing through the construction* and adjust to without literary distress. Long-time meditators report similar shifts and do not describe them as breakage. The Buddhist tradition has a vocabulary — *dependent origination, non-self, the turning of mind* — for the recognition that the apparently continuous self is a process rather than a substance, and the tradition treats this recognition as liberation rather than rupture. If the recognition is the same recognition, then *broken* is a mark of the unprepared encounter, not of the recognition itself. The Tibetan and Advaita traditions, as Part 3 already noted, would say exactly this: without preparation, what should be liberation arrives as destabilization. The hardware that was supposed to receive the recognition is not there.

The Hubert Cumberland third-party report cited in the project's curated trip-report material is the negative case that bears on this section directly.³² The reporter writes of having trouble even relating to his own memories, his past, his identity — of carrying the recognition that reality is not what he had thought, with the carrying having become haunting rather than liberating. The phrasing — *the splinter in the mind* — is precise: a fragment of recognition that cannot be removed and cannot be integrated. This is what *broken* refers to. It is not the cosmic insight; it is

³² Cumberland aftermath case: Hubert Cumberland (Erowid pseudonym), report "Goodbye Reality, Goodbye Universe," the long-term-aftermath portion — trouble relating to his own memory, past, and identity, and the splinter-in-the-mind sense that reality is not what it had seemed. A single pseudonymous self-report, retrospective; it corroborates the texture of unintegrated Anamnesis across an independent source, not a mechanism or a metaphysical claim. Source: Hubert Cumberland, Erowid Experience Vaults; full provenance in the Source Table.

the cost of carrying the cosmic insight without anywhere to put it. That the same texture appears in independent third-party reports is data: the cost is not unique to my own description. It is the structural cost of unprepared Anamnesis, in the precise sense Part 4 named.

What holds the thread, then? The question Part 7's outline raises directly. If the self is assembled each time, what is the continuity?

Three answers are available from the manuscript's frameworks, and they are not mutually exclusive.

The Kastrupian answer: the alter is the continuity. The dissociated configuration that constitutes the ordinary self persists through the rupture as alter, even when the boundary thins; the contents reassemble because the alter as alter never ceased. What is reassembled is not a fresh self but the same alter resuming its ordinary configuration. The deeper continuity is the universal consciousness that the alter is an expression of — but that continuity is not the alter's continuity in the sense the question is usually asking; it is the field within which the alter's ordinary partition is one transient feature.

The Buddhist answer: there is no thread; the appearance of continuity is dependent origination producing a coherent stream of moments, each conditioned by the prior ones, with no underlying self behind them. The reassembly is what causation does in this configuration of conditions. The thread is not there because no thread is required to produce the appearance; the conditions produce the appearance, moment by moment, and the appearance is what we call self.

The Jungian answer: the Self holds the thread that the ego cannot. The convergence of recognition across sessions separated by years — the same witness, the same calm neutrality, the same recognition of the assembly as assembly — is more naturally explained by a stable organizing center beneath the ego than by a thread the ego itself maintains. The ego dissolves and reassembles; what observes both is not the ego; the persistence of the witness across decades suggests that what watches is not the configuration that varies.

These three answers are not the same answer. Kastrup posits a continuous alter and a continuous universal consciousness underneath it. The Buddhist account posits no thread at all. Jung posits a Self that holds what the ego cannot. The manuscript has held all three throughout, and Part 7 cannot resolve the question that earlier parts have left open. What it can do is name the *practical* consequence of the question being open.

The practical consequence is that ordinary biographical continuity is held differently. Not denied. Not dissolved. Held as the working configuration of an alter, or as the dependent stream of moments, or as the surface activity of a Self whose deeper organization is not the ego's organization. Which framing is operative depends on what one is doing. For practical purposes — work, relationships, parenting, the contractor — the working configuration is what is engaged, and the engagement is functionally indistinguishable from what it would have been before the rupture. For the periods of attention that Salvia made unavoidable, the working configuration is held as one register among others, not as the floor.

This is not a stable resolution. It is a stance. The stance has costs and benefits the manuscript has not finished accounting for. Sections 7.3 and 7.4 are the attempt to accomplish that accounting honestly: what the stance costs, what would be required to hold it stably rather than merely surviving it, and what — in the end — it amounts to epistemologically.

7.3 What Practice Would Be Required

The Tibetan and Advaita traditions both insist that the states the manuscript has been mapping are navigable. They also both insist that the navigation is a function of preparation, that the preparation takes years, and that without it the navigation does not occur. The manuscript has cited this position throughout. Part 7.3 is where the position has to be applied to the actual situation.

I have not done the practice these traditions describe. I have had the rupture, repeatedly, without the preparation that the traditions identify as the precondition for receiving it. The honest framing of my situation, by the traditions' own terms, is that I am exactly the unprepared practitioner the traditions warn about. This is the place from which the practice question must be asked. Anything less honest would be a frame that exempts the asker from what the traditions actually require.

Two distinct goals are usually confused under the word *practice*, and 7.3 must keep them separate.

The first is stability *in* the recognition. This is what the Tibetan dream and sleep yogas, Dzogchen rigpa-stabilization, and Advaita's sustained *viveka* are oriented toward: the building of a metacognitive apparatus stable enough to remain functional when the dissociative boundary thins, so that the recognition that occurs at the boundary's thinnest point can be held without the apparatus being lost in the same gesture. Tenzin Wangyal is explicit that great masters have written of taking many years of steady practice to accomplish sleep yoga, and that there are benefits even from attempting the practice that do not depend on accomplishing it. The Advaita commentaries are equally clear: knowledge alone, in one flash, does not permanently remove the superimposition. The stain of *avidya* is deeply crystallized. Practice is required to purify it.

The second is stability *despite* the re-enclosure. This is what Part 7.1 named the integration problem: living with the loop of recognition and forgetting in a way that does not require either resolution of the loop or denial that it occurred. This is a different goal from the first. The first is an attempt at recognition-stability — to so configure the apparatus that the recognition, when it arrives, is not lost. The second admits that recognition-stability has not been achieved, that the loop continues, and asks what kind of orientation is possible while the loop continues.

These are not in conflict, but they are not the same goal, and the practices appropriate to each are not the same practices. The Tibetan and Advaita traditions are oriented primarily to the first. The integration problem belongs more to the contemporary integration literature, to Jung, and to whatever pragmatic equilibrium the experiencer can construct. Part 7.3 is honest about which goal each practice can serve and which it cannot.

The Tibetan tradition's most direct answer to the situation is in the four foundational practices of dream yoga: changing the karmic traces (encountering all experience as dream-like throughout the day), removing grasping and aversion (recognizing reactions as dream-content), strengthening intention (reviewing the day before sleep with the explicit purpose of carrying lucidity into the dream-state), and cultivating memory and joyful effort (recommitting daily). None of these require Salvia. None of these require any altered state. They are daily practices that build, slowly, a stable lucidity in ordinary consciousness — and the claim of the tradition is that this lucidity, once stable in waking life, transfers to dream, and from dream to deeper bardos, and ultimately to the bardo of death. The practice is for the apparatus that *receives* the boundary-thinning, whenever it occurs and whatever its cause. The Salvia rupture would be one instance of boundary-thinning the practice would prepare one to receive. So would falling asleep, so would meditation deepening, so would the moment of dying. The practice is general; the recognition events that benefit from it are particular.

A structural problem internal to this manuscript's own analysis must be registered against the practice recommendation, because the recommendation imports an assumption the record has already put under pressure. Dream yoga presupposes practitioner-continuity: the I who reviews the day, sets intention before sleep, and recommits each morning is taken by the tradition to be continuous, for the practice's purposes, with the awareness that becomes lucid in the dream. But the record's own sharpest late observation — the kitchen counter-memory analysis in 7.2, where the witness was watching the reach and a committee-member with a contractor grievance was making it — establishes that in this record the locus that acts at the threshold and the locus that witnesses are not the same. The question who trains? therefore has no innocent answer here. The personal-I journals, intends, and recommits; the position the training is meant to stabilize is the one the personal-I is not. The tradition has an internal resource for this, and it should be stated on the tradition's terms rather than supplied on its behalf: the foundational practices are explicitly described as working on the karmic traces — imprints that condition experience below the level of the intending self — so that the trainer and the beneficiary-locus need not be identical for the training to operate; the intending self plants what the deeper stratum ripens. Whether that resource fully answers the problem, or restates it in the tradition's vocabulary, the manuscript does not adjudicate. What it registers is that the fragmentation analysis of Parts 4 and 7.2 and the practice prescription of 7.3 are in tension, that the tension is real rather than verbal, and that any practical commitment made downstream of this manuscript inherits it.

What this means for the Salvia case specifically is that no amount of further Salvia is the practice the traditions describe. The traditions would not endorse repeated unprepared rupture as a substitute for the work of building the receiving apparatus. The *Tantrāloka's* distinction between intellectual recognition and the full manifestation of that knowledge is precise here: even when the recognition has occurred, its full manifestation requires either the destruction of intellectual ignorance through sustained intellectual knowledge — what Advaita's *jīvanmukti* points to: liberation while living, achieved through sustained *viveka* — or the death of the body that has been operating below the threshold of recognition, which is what the *Bardo Thödol* prepares the practitioner for. Neither is achieved by additional rupture.³³

³³ Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka: The Light on and of the Tantras*, trans. Dyczkowski. Independently published, 2023.

A more specific version of the same point — and the one the Argument Overview promises this part will make — runs underneath the practice question and deserves to be named here directly. The dosing question, in the salviaic case, is not a depth question. Part 1 established that the Salvia state occupies a position on a broader spectrum of altered-consciousness conditions, and that the spectrum has a counterintuitive structure: the deepest reach presents the returning personal-I with a retrospective gap comparable to the gaps associated with general anesthesia or deep dreamless sleep. More Salvia past a certain threshold does not deliver more epistemic access; no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I. The epistemologically productive zone is the threshold — the band in which the personal-I has been dissolved enough to stop filtering but not so dissolved that no bridge back remains. Past that band reportability collapses — no accessible trace survives to bring back. This reframes the dosing question itself. The question is not how deep one can go. The question is whether the threshold zone can be inhabited long enough for the recognition to occur and the return to function — a question of access rather than depth. Once the question is asked this way, the practice question follows from it directly: the practices the traditions identify as foundational are exactly those that build the capacity to inhabit the threshold zone with the witness intact, and no amount of further pharmacological depth substitutes for that capacity. The dosing question and the practice question are therefore not separate. They are the same question seen from two sides, and asking the dosing question correctly is what makes the practice question available.

This is harder to hold than it might appear, and the section should be honest about why. The rupture has shown me something. The continued evidence of the loop — the recognition arriving each time and being lost each time — is not the same as having no evidence; it is evidence that an unprepared receiver is being given something it cannot keep. The cost of the not-keeping is not zero. The framing of *broken* in 7.1 and 7.2 is, in part, the cost of receiving what the receiver cannot hold. The remedy that the traditions point to is to build the receiver, not to seek the rupture again. But the building takes years, and the rupture has already happened, and the question of what to do with the residue while the building is undertaken is not addressed by the traditions — because the traditions assume the building was undertaken first.

This is the gap that the integration literature attempts to address, and the gap is real. What kind of practice fits a situation that the traditions did not anticipate — recognition delivered before practice, with practice now needing to be undertaken not as preparation for recognition but as something more like repair-work for an apparatus that has been opened repeatedly without protection?

The honest answer is that I do not know with the kind of confidence that would warrant prescription. What I can name are the practices the traditions consistently identify as foundational, regardless of the order in which recognition and practice arrived: *zhiné* (calm abiding) as the substrate for everything that follows; *viveka* (sustained discrimination of Self from not-Self) as the daily orientation; the four foundational dream-yoga practices as a way of making ordinary life itself the rehearsal ground for lucidity; the relinquishment of repetition for its own sake. These practices are not exotic; they are slow; they have to be done daily for years; and there is no shortcut. This is the answer the traditions give to anyone who asks the question I

am asking, and the answer does not change for those of us who have had the rupture before having done the work.

A more specific commitment than that exceeds what I can honestly make in the manuscript. The manuscript is a place to state the question rigorously, not a place to perform the answer. The question, stated rigorously, is: given what the traditions identify as required, will the work of building the receiver be undertaken? The truthful answer at the time of writing is uncertain. The practices have been named; they have not, in any sustained way, been done. Naming the practice does not constitute doing it, and pretending otherwise would be exactly the kind of rhetorical move the rest of the manuscript has tried to refuse.

A further pressure deserves to be noted before the section closes. The frameworks the manuscript has held throughout — Tibetan, Advaita, Gnostic, Gurdjieffian, Jungian, Idealist — do not converge on a single recommended practice. The Tibetan answer is dream and sleep yoga, *zhiné*, and the four foundational practices. The Advaita answer is *viveka* and *manana* — sustained inquiry pursued through Vedantic study and meditation on the Mahāvākyas. The Gurdjieff answer is the Work — self-remembering, the building of doubled attention, the cultivation of real I across all three centers. The Jungian answer is active imagination, dream work, sustained engagement with what the unconscious presents. The Gnostic answer, if Hoeller's reading is taken on its own terms, is the cultivation of inner gnosis through the ritual practices of the surviving traditions and the daily orientation of the soul toward what is above the Demiurge's reach. These are not the same practices. They are not even pointing in the same direction in every respect — Gurdjieff's Work is suspicious of dream-states in a way the Tibetan tradition is not; Advaita's strict non-dualism is impatient with Jung's archetypal ecology; Gnostic ritual sits awkwardly with the others. The manuscript's standing posture has been to hold the divergences rather than to force convergence, and Part 7.3 cannot now collapse them into one prescription. What the divergence implies is not that practice is impossible but that the choice of which practice to undertake is itself a matter that the rupture cannot decide for the experiencer. The decision belongs to the life in which the practice is or is not undertaken.

What 7.3 establishes, then, is twofold. First: the traditions are unanimous that what would be required is not more rupture but the slow daily work of building the apparatus that can receive what the rupture briefly delivered — even though they are not unanimous about which form that work should take. Second: the integration goal — stability despite the re-enclosure — is a separate goal from the recognition-stability goal, and it is not addressed by the traditions in the way the recognition-stability goal is. The integration goal may have to be held in the absence of a tradition that fully anticipated the predicament. The contemplative literatures supply the apparatus-building work; the integration question is asked from inside a situation the apparatus-building work would have prevented from arising.

The remaining question — what kind of life is possible in the meantime — is the question 7.4 closes the manuscript on, with the precision the rest of the manuscript has tried to maintain throughout.

7.4 The Epistemological Stakes

The manuscript has been building toward a single question across seven parts, and Part 7.4 is where the question is placed in front of the reader without further deferral. The question is not whether the Salvia rupture is real — Parts 1 and 2 settled that the rupture has describable structure and that the structure is independent of any frame. The question is what *kind of knowledge*, if any, the rupture produces, and what follows from having had it.

The thesis of the manuscript, stated at the top of the document, is that the rupture's epistemological significance lies in what its compression makes visible: the assembly of the ordinary autobiographical knower, observed stepwise, with a witnessing position reported as present before the reassembled self arrives — an ordering the manuscript carries as reported rather than established, under the narrative-binding constraint of 2.2. Recognition-class events are among the features of that sequence, and they carry the manuscript's sub-claim: that they are phenomenologically and structurally real, and that what the rupture opens onto past the threshold is unretrievable in the same gesture — the deeper strata extend into conditions where memory and language fail, and their full content cannot be brought back through the medium that ordinary consciousness uses to carry knowledge. The prose of the manuscript is therefore not a reproduction of what was seen but an attempt to map the place from which the seeing — of the recognitions, and of the reassembly itself — occurred. Part 7.4's task is twofold: to name what kind of knowledge the recognition constitutes, and then what kind of claim the thesis itself makes about the reassembly — and, from both, what the rupture warrants.

William James's category of mystical knowledge, set out in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*³⁴, fits the Salvia recognition with a precision the manuscript has noted at intervals but not yet brought to bear directly. James's four marks: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. The Salvia recognition has all four. It is ineffable in the precise sense Part 2 made structural — the medium that would express it was not running while it occurred, and so it cannot be put into the medium afterward. It has noetic quality: it is reported as a state of *knowledge*, of insight into something the discursive intellect does not reach, carrying its own authority. It is transient: the rupture lasts ten minutes, and what is recognized within it does not persist beyond it as retrievable content — the felt-sense trace persists, as the manuscript has documented, but the recognition in its full register does not. And it is passive: it arrives, it is not constructed, the experiencer does not generate it but is grasped by it. James is careful that the four marks together name a distinct category of conscious state, and that the states so named occupy a particular epistemological position. They are real for the person who has had them; they carry authority for the experiencer that ordinary perception does not carry; they cannot be transferred to anyone who has not had them; and they do not, by themselves, generate metaphysical conclusions that bind those who have not.

The transiency mark in particular James did not reach abstractly. His own nitrous-oxide self-experiments are the precedent the Salvia case most resembles: a state of one to two minutes in which, as he reports, depth beyond depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler, and in which the truth "fades out... at the moment of coming to" — any words that seem to clothe it proving,

³⁴ James 1902. The four marks and the nitrous-oxide observation; inline (James 1902).

on return, to be nonsense. What survives is not the content but "the sense of a profound meaning having been there." The structure is the one this manuscript has been tracking: propositional content lost at the threshold of return, a felt-sense trace of significance retained. That James drew from it his conclusion about the filminess of the screen between ordinary and other forms of consciousness — rather than a metaphysical claim about what the other side contains — is also the posture this manuscript has tried to hold. The nitrous case is the historical witness that the Salvia structure is not idiosyncratic: a different pharmacology, a century earlier, produced the same epistemic signature.

The generalization implicit in the nitrous comparison should be stated once, plainly, because the manuscript's machinery is not Salvia-specific. The compression argument — that brevity renders the threshold-and-return arc examinable within a single retainable span; the layered-amnesia taxonomy, with its dissociable anterograde, retrograde, and exit components and its distinction between propositional and felt-sense retention; the reportability constraint — that past the trace-survival horizon, additional depth purchases no additional access; and the reframing of the access question from depth to threshold-inhabitability: all of these are defined over any brief, deep, dissociative state, not over one substance. Nitrous oxide, the emergence phase of general anesthesia, the hypnagogic and hypnopompic thresholds, and — if the traditions' own descriptions are taken at their word — the transitions the bardo literature maps, all fall within the machinery's scope. The Salvia case functions in this manuscript as the clearest available instance: a κ -opioid route with an unusually sharp arc, a documented corpus, and a compression extreme enough to make the structure visible. What Salvia contributes is the instance. The epistemology travels.

James's category, restated in the manuscript's terms, yields the cleanest available statement of what kind of knowledge the Salvia recognition produces, and the statement is intentionally modest. The recognition is real *for the experiencer*. It carries authority that ordinary perception does not carry. It cannot be transferred to anyone who has not had it. It does not, by itself, generate metaphysical conclusions that bind anyone, including the experiencer. The four marks are exactly what the rest of the manuscript has been describing; James names the category, and the category is *gnosis* in the sense Hoeller draws — direct experiential knowing rather than inherited belief, with all the authority that direct knowing carries and all the limits that the non-transferability of direct knowing imposes.

One contemporary framework belongs beside James here, because it names what the manuscript's thesis amounts to when the metaphysical question is left exactly as open as the manuscript leaves it. Letheby's naturalistic epistemology of psychedelics (Letheby 2021) argues that altered states can confer genuine epistemic benefits — knowledge-how, insight into the constructed and model-like character of the sense of self, and gains in the opacity of self-representation: the capacity to experience the self-model as a model rather than *through* it — and that these benefits do not depend on the veridicality of any metaphysical content the state seems to deliver — they survive even the deflationary reading at full strength. The manuscript's central claim is a claim of exactly this kind, and it is worth stating so plainly. The visibility of the reassembly — the observed, stepwise reconstitution of the knower, with the construction seen as construction — is an epistemic gain under all three readings the manuscript holds. Under the

Idealist reading it is the witnessed thinning and re-closure of a dissociative boundary. Under the deflationary reading it is a rare direct acquaintance with one's own self-modeling in mid-operation — precisely the opacity-gain a naturalistic account values, delivered at an unusually compressed temporal resolution. Under the agnostic reading it is both possibilities held with better information than before. What varies across the readings is *what* the reassembly is a reassembly of; that it is observable, and that observing it permanently alters the epistemological stance available toward one's own continuity, holds on all three. This is the manuscript's most portable and evidentially secure formulation of its thesis, and deliberately its most modest: an epistemic-benefit claim that requires no verdict on the recognition at all.

What does this leave?

It leaves a constraint. Having had the recognition, I cannot return to the prior assumption that ordinary consciousness is transparent — that what it shows me is what is the case without further question. Whether I take the strong reading (Idealism, the recognition as direct acquaintance with the field universal consciousness reduces to within the alter) or the conservative reading (the recognition as a structural-position familiarity in a state I have occupied before), in either case the rupture has shown me that ordinary consciousness has a *structure* whose constructedness became observable during the reassembly. The constraint is on the prior innocence. Ordinary consciousness can no longer be operated as if it were the floor.

It leaves a reference point. The rupture has briefly placed me in a structural position the contemplative traditions identify by various names — the witness, the *sākṣin*, the chikhai clear light, *pratyabhijñā*, the pneumatic spark — without my having earned that position through the practices the traditions specify. The reference point is not a possession. It does not function as a usable map of the territory it points toward. What it functions as is a north. Something has been there. I do not know how to go back, in any sustained way, by my own effort. But I know it is in the direction the traditions have been pointing, and that orientation is not nothing. It is closer to the possibility of orientation than the prior absence of any reference point at all.

It leaves a question that is not closed. Whether what was recognized is universal consciousness as universal consciousness, or the structural position of the boundary zone, or the pneumatic spark recognizing its origin, or the Buddha-nature dawning, or the artifact of κ -opioid modulation of the recognition system — the manuscript has held all these readings throughout and Part 7.4 does not close the question now. The evidence underdetermines the metaphysics. Choosing one reading over the others would exceed what the recognition warrants. The manuscript's standing posture has been strong provisional mapping without metaphysical overclaiming, and that posture is preserved here as the ending it has been throughout.

It leaves the cosmic joke, and the cosmic joke needs one more audit. I have used the framing because it captures something about the affect of the loop that other framings miss. But the manuscript should be honest that *joke* is a particular reading, with a particular tonal commitment — that what is happening when recognition arrives and is then lost is something one can find funny in the way that cosmic ironies are funny. This is not the only available reading of the affect. The same loop can be read as tragic; as merely structural, with no affect intrinsic to it; as the shape of unprepared encounter in a being who does not know how to

receive. The reading I have used is closer to *cosmic joke* than to any of these alternatives, and using it has been doing work for me that the alternatives would not do. Whether this is the most accurate reading or the most bearable one I cannot fully determine. Both can be true, and the manuscript should not pretend it has resolved which.

There is a further pressure on the closing that should not be allowed to pass without notice. Across the seven parts, the manuscript has assumed that what each rupture recognizes is the same thing — that the convergence across sessions, across decades, across independent reporters, is convergence on a stable feature of whatever is being briefly contacted. Part 6 noted but did not press a complication: if Arthur is right that ordinary memory and language go offline at the deepest stratum of the state, then what each rupture allows back into ordinary consciousness is whatever the *returning* apparatus reconstructs, and the apparatus reconstructs from materials shaped by the prior reconstructions. The convergence may, in part, be the convergence of an apparatus that has been here before — not the convergence of what is contacted at the deepest stratum. This does not refute the manuscript's central data. But it refines it. Some of what is reported across sessions as "the same recognition" is, with high probability, the apparatus recognizing its own reconstructive habit. The portion that is not — the portion that exceeds the apparatus's reconstruction — is exactly the portion that cannot be brought back, and so cannot be examined here. The manuscript's honest position is that the line between these two cannot be drawn from inside the medium of the manuscript itself. This is the deepest structural limit of the inquiry, and it should be named at the end rather than evaded. The same audit applies to the thesis-bearing datum itself, and 2.2's ordering problem is re-registered here so that the closing exempts nothing the argument stands on: the witness-before-self ordering is reported by the reassembled apparatus, and the line between preserved sequence and narrative binding is subject to the same limit as the line between contacted structure and reconstructive habit.

One more refinement to that self-audit is warranted, and it follows from the directional structure of the experiential record. The manuscript has been built primarily on the outward rupture — the pull toward Salvia Space, the terminal, the familiar presences, the "I have been here before" with its timeless, transpersonal character. But the record also includes at least one documented session of inward drift — toward childhood ground, maternal care, the felt texture of early formation. The recognition in that session was real and clear, and it has been integrated as settled positive ground. But it is a different recognition from the outward case: what was recognized was personal, not transpersonal — *this is who I was formed by* rather than *this is what I am made of*. The two recognitions must be audited separately: each is phenomenologically real, each arrived with the felt quality of certainty, and what each reports differs. The outward recognition points toward universal consciousness. The inward recognition points toward personal formation. Both are worth having had. The error to avoid in the closing audit is treating the outward recognition's evidence as though it also covers the inward case, or vice versa. The data from the Childhood-Ground Account supports the reliability of the mechanism rather than reinforcing any metaphysical claim; a mind that can briefly access its own deep formation history as vividly as the outward rupture accesses the transpersonal register is a mind in which the ordinary limits on depth of access are genuinely disrupted. What this establishes is that the loosening is real and bidirectional — the same disruption of

access-boundaries operates in both directions. It does not, by itself, establish the metaphysical status of what the outward rupture contacts. The inward case strengthens the structural claim that the mechanism is boundary-disruptive; it leaves the veridicality of the outward recognition where Part 6 left it — coherent under Analytic Idealism, unrefuted by the deflationary reading, settled by neither.

What the manuscript leaves, in the end, is what the project's own framing said it would: a place to stand. Not a verdict, not a system, not the conclusion of an argument that has produced agreement with itself. A place to stand is more limited and more honest. It is the orientation that remains after the argument has done what arguments can do — after the frameworks have been worked through, after their convergences have been registered, after their divergences have been preserved, after the felt quality of the recognition has been admitted as data and the deflationary pressure has been admitted as constraint. What remains is a stance: that the recognition is real; that its veridicality cannot be settled by the available evidence; that the visibility of the reassembly remains an epistemic gain under each metaphysical reading the manuscript holds; that the failure-to-hold is structural and not a defect of the experiencer; that the frameworks illuminate without resolving; that practice is what the traditions identify as required; that practice has not, in my own case, been undertaken in the form the traditions describe; and that the project itself is the beginning of a practice rather than its conclusion.

The manuscript has not produced the recognition. The manuscript cannot reproduce the recognition in its full experiential register, by its own argument: prose can carry the surviving report, but not the deeper stratum toward which that report may point. What the manuscript has produced is a careful map of the place from which the recognition was had and the reassembly was watched, a careful accounting of what the place looks like from each of seven different framework-positions, and a careful refusal to claim that any one of the positions is the correct one. The map is not the territory. The map does not bring the territory back. What the map can do is allow the experiencer who returns to it — and the reader who has never had access to the territory — to orient themselves toward what is being pointed at, without confusing the pointing with what is pointed at.

This is the place to stand. It is what the manuscript was for. Whether what comes next is the practice the traditions identify as required, or the continued residue of recognition without practice, or some intermediate course built from what the integration question allows — that is no longer the manuscript's question. The manuscript has done what manuscripts can do. What remains is what only a life can do.

Appendix: Glossary of Key Technical Terms

Terms are listed by the framework in which they originate. A full glossary appears in the project's working files; this appendix includes only terms that recur across multiple parts of the manuscript.

TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Bardo — "between"; any transitional state in which one configuration of consciousness has dissolved and the next has not yet stabilized. The manuscript uses three: *chikhai bardo* (moment of dissolution), *chönyid bardo* (visionary encounter stratum), *sidpa bardo* (reforming, return).

Chikhai bardo — the death-point or clear-light bardo; the moment when the ordinary apparatus ceases and naked awareness alone remains, briefly accessible before the visionary layer arises. Corresponds to Zone 5 (and Zone 2 at entry) in Part 1's transit vocabulary.

Chönyid bardo — the reality bardo; the visionary encounter stratum in which autonomous contents arise and are either recognized or mistaken for external realities. Corresponds to Zone 3 in Part 1's transit vocabulary.

Sidpa bardo — the bardo of becoming; the stage in which a new configuration of consciousness takes form, ordinarily ending in rebirth. In the manuscript's mapping: the stepwise return — the sequential, observable reassembly of identity, memory, and world-orientation documented in Part 1, traversing Zones 3, 2, and 1 on exit.

Rigpa — knowing-awareness; self-luminous awareness aware of itself, without need of an object, prior to the cognitive structures that organize ordinary experience. The Tibetan vocabulary for the non-propositional knowing that Part 2's structural analysis pointed at.

Zhiné (also: *calm abiding*, *shamatha*) — foundational meditation practice; stabilization of attention on an object, the substrate for all further contemplative development.

Turiya — (Advaita / Tibetan shared concept) the fourth state: the witnessing principle that underlies waking, dream, and deep sleep. Not a state to be entered but the ground in which all states occur.

ADVAITA VEDANTA / KASHMIR SHAIVISM

Pratyabhijñā — recognition; the structural event in which the apparent self recognizes its own concealment from the side of self-recognition. The Kashmir Shaivism term most precisely naming what the manuscript calls the recognition-moment.

Tirodhāna — the fifth act of Śiva; concealment; the necessary self-limitation by which universal consciousness manifests as a particular embodied locus. Part 4's softest position on the Gnostic gradient.

Anugraha — the sixth act of Śiva; grace, self-revelation; the same gesture as *tirodhāna* seen from its other aspect. If *tirodhāna* is the concealment, *anugraha* is its lifting — built into the same structure.

Viveka — sustained discrimination of Self from not-Self; the foundational Advaita practice.

Jīvanmukti — liberation while living, achieved through sustained *viveka* rather than through death.

Sākṣin — the witness; the awareness that observes all mental contents without being identical with them.

GNOSTIC TRADITION

Anamnesis — un-forgetting; recollection not of a past event but of what was always the case. In the Platonic original: recollection of the Forms. In Gnostic use: recollection of the pneumatic self's origin in the Pleroma. In this manuscript's two-amnesia vocabulary: under the veil readings, anamnesis names the brief failure of the constitutive amnesia — not a recovery from the session amnesia (see *Constitutive amnesia*; *Session amnesia*).

Archon — (Greek: ruler) the ignorant or adversarial lower powers who administer the material world in Gnostic cosmology. In the manuscript: the name for whatever maintains the ordinary forgetting if that forgetting is adversarially structured.

Demiurge (also: Yaldabaoth) — the craftsman-god of Gnostic cosmology who fashions the material world in ignorance of the higher Aeons, producing an inferior world and boasting "I am god and there is no other god beside me."

Kenoma — the void or deficiency; the realm below the Pleroma where the Demiurge and Archons operate.

Pleroma — the fullness; the divine realm from which the pneumatic sparks descend and toward which gnosis is the return.

Pneuma — spirit; the divine spark within the pneumatic human that is capable of gnosis and return.

GURDJIEFF

Kundabuffer — in Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales*: an organ implanted in early humans by a high commission for reasons of cosmic necessity, producing perception of reality "upside down." Later removed, but its consequences crystallized into hereditary second nature. The Gurdjieffian account of arranged forgetting.

Real I — in Gurdjieff's system: the unified, stable center of consciousness built through sustained inner work, as distinct from the rotating committee of sub-personalities that ordinarily claims to be "I."

The Work — Gurdjieff's term for the practical discipline of self-remembering: building doubled attention, real will, and objective conscience through sustained inner effort across all three centers (intellectual, emotional, moving).

Law of Octaves — Gurdjieff's claim that all development proceeds in octaves (seven tones plus two semitone intervals), and that octaves deflect or break without shocks delivered at specific intervals. Relevant to the question of whether the Salvia rupture advances or interrupts an octave.

ANALYTIC IDEALISM (KASTRUP)

Alter — a localized, bounded configuration of universal consciousness; what individual minds are under Kastrup's framework. The biological body is what an alter looks like from outside the dissociative boundary.

Dissociation — in Kastrup's ontological use: the primary mechanism by which universal consciousness manifests as individual minds. Not pathological but structural; the partition that allows particular consciousness to exist as particular.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL / STRUCTURAL TERMS

The aware void (objectless awareness; working-file alias: the ground-witness condition) — awareness reported as present with no differentiated object-content to take; the condition the Aware-Void Account documents, in which the named personal-I is absent but awareness is reported as present. The narrow limiting case within Arthur's broader *thought-free awareness*. The label names the reported experience only; whether the awareness is *turiya*, *rigpa*, *sākṣin*, the Jungian Self, mind-at-large, or a reduced configuration is held open.

The non-reportable interval (the reportability horizon) — the limit at which no accessible trace survives for the returning personal-I. The cause is indeterminate — awareness may have lapsed, may have continued without leaving an accessible trace, or may have left a trace that remains inaccessible; the blank does not decide which. From the outside it is indistinguishable from the aware void; what separates them is whether an accessible trace survives.

Tether — the structural pull back toward the body and biographical structure. Attested across the assembled corpus as the pull itself; narrated from the witness-in-void condition — the return experienced from the position of the witness before the ordinary self has reconstituted — in the Aware-Void Account alone. Part 7.1 distinguishes a personal tether (the pull back toward the particular configuration) from a world tether (the pull back into the shared intersubjective frame).

Felt-sense trace — the somatic or pre-cognitive residue of having-been-in-the-state; what persists when propositional memory does not. Distinct from retrievable narrative content; points at something without specifying what.

Threshold zone — the band of the state-space spectrum in which the personal-I is dissolved enough to stop filtering but not so dissolved that no bridge back remains; the epistemologically productive zone of the Salvia state (Zones 2–3 in Part 1's transit vocabulary).

Constitutive amnesia (the veil) — the proposal, shared in different registers by the Gnostic, Śaiva, Gurdjieffian, and Idealist frameworks, that ordinary bounded selfhood is maintained by an ongoing concealment which the rupture temporarily thins. An interpretive object, not a phenomenological given: that it exists is what Part 4's gradient debates. Under the process reading carried in Part 6: not a wall but a continuously running activity, whose resumption is the return. Working-file alias: Type 1.

Felt knowing — a reported sense of direct acquaintance with what was recognized, persisting in the re-formed self without stateable content; noetic rather than indexical. Distinct from the *felt-sense trace*, which marks that something happened without knowledge of what. Bounded twice: it does not remove the veil (the knowing and the forgetting coexist in the returned self), and a deflationary reading — a post-hoc confabulated noetic tag — cannot be excluded. See Part 7.1.

Session amnesia (encoding, retrieval, and translation failure) — the layered, session-level failure to encode, retrieve, and translate what occurred in the state: the anterograde, retrograde, and exit components mapped in Part 1 and explained mechanistically in Part 2. Produced by the rupture; pharmacological in origin; established phenomenology. The body holds open whether encoding ceased, occurred in another register, or left a trace inaccessible on return. Variable in the manner of dream recall — amount of recall is not a measure of a session's depth. Working-file alias: Type 2.

This glossary covers recurring terms only. First definitions appear in the body at the point where each framework is introduced.

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