

Scientism, Atheism, And The Admissibility Of Spiritual Experience

Post by "Cassius" of November 1, 2020 at 4:22 PM

I went back and reviewed the Scientism article. Here's my problem with it -- I think I agree with the direction he is going, but THIS is his conclusion?

Quote

Distinguishing Science from Scientism

So if science is distinct from scientism, what is it? Science is an activity that seeks to explore the natural world using well-established, clearly-delineated methods. Given the complexity of the universe, from the very big to very small, from inorganic to organic, there is a vast array of scientific disciplines, each with its own specific techniques. The number of different specializations is constantly increasing, leading to more questions and areas of exploration than ever before. Science expands our understanding, rather than limiting it.

Scientism, on the other hand, is a speculative worldview about the ultimate reality of the universe and its meaning. Despite the fact that there are millions of species on our planet, scientism focuses an inordinate amount of its attention on human behavior and beliefs. Rather than working within carefully constructed boundaries and methodologies established by researchers, it broadly generalizes entire fields of academic expertise and dismisses many of them as inferior. With scientism, you will regularly hear explanations that rely on words like "merely", "only", "simply", or "nothing more than". Scientism restricts human inquiry.

It is one thing to celebrate science for its achievements and remarkable ability to explain a wide variety of phenomena in the natural world. But to claim there is nothing knowable outside the scope of science would be similar to a successful fisherman saying that whatever he can't catch in his nets does not exist (15). Once you accept that science is the only source of human knowledge, you have adopted a philosophical position (scientism) that cannot be verified, or falsified, by science itself. It is, in a word, unscientific.

Isn't this just an **assertion** that scientism is wrong, without any explanation of what he believes the correct position to be?

I agree that there are severe criticisms to be leveled at people who think too narrowly that what they believe has been established by "the experts" is worthy of deference simply because "they

are the experts." I believe that "the experts" can have just as many prejudices and predispositions and political positions as anyone else, and that every claim has to consider the possibility of corruption, with the most sweeping claims given the most scrutiny.

But this article really isn't saying that, is it? This seems to be saying simply that "nothing is knowable outside the scope of science" and that ends up being circular, because he's never defined what "science" really is. If he is wanting to say that "the five senses are not all there are" or something else specific, then he should say so, but I don't see that he has been clear as to what he is criticizing, with the result being that he opens the barn door wide to all sorts of claims that have no verifiability whatsoever. Am I reading that wrong?

I personally am probably open to a lot more possibilities than the average traditional "empiricist" might be willing to admit, but even so I would demand repeatability and verifiability in some way, or else the claim would have to remain entirely personal and of very limited relevance to anyone else. Correct?