

Scientism, Atheism, And The Admissibility Of Spiritual Experience

Post by "Elayne" of November 23, 2020 at 8:49 AM

[Don](#) Oh, sorry, I was unclear-- I do agree with you, at least partially! I was siding with you against a purely literalist interpretation.

I think your idea about the answer to "what it was about" is definitely interesting, and although I don't interpret the experiences that way, the idea of other Epicureans doing so doesn't create any objections for me.

For me, I prefer to add as little as possible, interpretation-wise-- I find that leaving it un-analyzed retains the pleasure of the memory more intensely.

I mean this in a different way from looking at the evolutionary and neurological basis-- there are mechanisms, but that is different from what you are talking about. Discussing mechanisms doesn't dent the experience for me.

Ok, I've just realized why I don't do what you describe-- that would be an instrumental process. Using the experience to accomplish another goal. Which for me automatically downgrades the pleasure of the primary experience.

Writing a poem about it doesn't have the same effect, because in that case I'm just trying to evoke the memory of those feelings.

Thank you for triggering that insight-- I haven't really put words to that before.

This is one of those things where I think it depends on the individual, so people can experiment with whether they want to use such experiences instrumentally or leave them as they are-- whichever brings them the most pleasure.

That could be said about a literalist interpretation too, except in this philosophy, if such an interpretation clashes with findings on material reality, it seems to me it would be booted... I'm just not sure how to support doing so without more of Epicurus' writings. I don't think he would cling to saying the things about elementary particles that are now clearly wrong-- but is there anything in the text to back me up on that? Something to suggest "if I find an error in what I've

said here, I will change my mind." If so, the same line could be applied to literal images from outer space.

I see no clear bright line, if we take any non-sense/feeling evidence as factual-- anything a person or group of people experiences as strongly and definitely communicated straight to their brains from outer space or wherever would have to be regarded on the same basis as repeated measurements of a physical item. Nobody here is saying that, but what establishes a limit? Are we going to say we are limited to whatever Epicurus said? Are we limited by logic (egads)? Are we limited by baseline commonality of experience, and if so, why would that line be drawn to exclude atheists who don't attach supernatural meaning but also to exclude those who say it is fundamentally supernatural-- such a position would still be a minority position.

I also think the literalist interpretation is material in name only, because it doesn't admit the possibility of sensory falsifiability. There's always a material god of the gaps to retreat to, if a person decides in advance or against sense evidence that the gods are literally a source of images in the brain, based on inner certainty. It is like slapping a word "material " on a supernatural paradigm. I don't think Epicurus would be pleased-- but I can't prove it. I hope I am missing some way of doing so.