

Scientism, Atheism, And The Admissibility Of Spiritual Experience

Post by “Elayne” of November 23, 2020 at 9:11 AM

[Don](#) I'm curious why you would say "even you have experienced" peak experiences-- why the "even"? Aren't these just part of being human? I guess there are some people who don't have them but I thought most of us did.

I don't think any religious orientation at all is required for these human experiences... I don't think a person's mind needs to be "prepared" by having any sort of beliefs. There may well be a type of preparation involved, but I think it would be of a different sort and maybe would involve openness to new experience. Willingness to be surprised... willingness to experience intense sensations. Perhaps practice at being fully present and savoring?

As I write this, it occurs to me that perhaps the intensity may be somewhat lessened or moderated, made more manageable, by putting them in a narrative or other framework, including a literalist one. I am able to enjoy them sans overlay, but maybe that's too wild and frightening for many people. I think that is why meditators are encouraged to have a framework and a teacher, because some will be derailed by the uninterpreted experience. There have been cases of psychosis.

So perhaps I should be careful saying the framing isn't necessary, just because I haven't needed it. I guess my frame is that I have confidence in the flexible functioning of my brain and have no fear that peak experiences will disrupt anything-- rather, they enhance pleasure of ordinary life. I hope that a science education would reduce fear for others. It would be interesting to know if psychotic reactions were more common in those who had less confidence in science.