

Give Us an Example of God!

Post by “Julia” of July 10, 2024 at 1:35 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

she very clearly witnessed the visual features of two, very important people from her past, who had both died under tragic circumstances. They both looked like they were at their prime (ageless) and they were perfectly blissful (happy), figures that, as she explained, ultimately provided her with comfort.

There are no outside persons inside my mind like that, so I would not expect to at some point have an experience of this kind. For me, death was different every time:

It was terror and fright.

It was despair and frantic effort.

It was abandonment and sadness.

It was erratic chaos and powerlessness.

It was relief and release in death by a thousand cuts.

[Quote from Twentier](#)

While on a soup of opiates, going through organ-failure

I am tempted to say her medication and condition influence her state of mind and allowed her to paint a more pleasant picture. For example, many opiates are serotonergic, which makes them pleasant and soothing, even beyond their specific opioid effects. She was probably cared for externally, so her fight was internal. That isn't always the case.

For example, when I ended up in hypothermia as a teenager, I had been injured and left for dead in difficult terrain. I knew where I was, so I knew what I had to do: 1. reach a path around six hours below my position, 2. three hour hike to nearest settlement. I soon resigned from life – paused, cried, made my peace; quickly, no daylight to waste! – and turned off all complex thought, so as to function like an autopilot in highway hypnosis, as if in trance. I remained in this thoughtless, un-aware, mindless state until I had reached the path and eventually lost consciousness while dragging myself towards the settlement. By chance, I was found, woken up – and immediately resumed on my 2nd mission objective: reach the settlement. The lady who had found me wanted me to stay put. I thought "Settlement!" and brushed her off. She wanted me to conserve my strength. "Settlement!", one step. She wanted me to stay in place until

mountain rescue arrives. "Settlement!", another step. She said this and that, and I thought "Settlement! Settlement!", and just kept executing my task. The lady didn't make sense. She wasn't part of the plan. To me, she was just an odd and oddly persistent obstacle. If I hadn't been found, I'd simply have slipped away while asleep. If so, then what's my point with this story?

Did I dream, maybe? I don't remember - but I'm quite certain that my dream would have been about walking or crawling, about reaching my goal, about survival. Just like the two helpers which appeared for your wife were there to help her reach her goal. You see, to survive any given situation, we must survive it two-fold: as a body, and as a person. She could not do anything much for her body. It was being cared for. She had to focus on her survival as a person (and indirectly help her body in doing that). For a person to survive, it needs a secure attachment (the experience of a bond with other people), needs their attention/attunement/presence/connection as a person (instead of just the existence of a warm body in proximity; classic example here is the Still Face Experiment, less well-known is that the same thing happens with slightly delayed video feeds), and for enough space in that connection for any feelings; otherwise, defence mechanisms are activated to self-regulate, instead of regulating oneself through interaction with another; these are compartmentalisation, flattening of affect, et cetera. However, most defences are expensive cognitively (which wastes precious biochemical energy), and they keep the body in a higher state of arousal (in the sense of alertness/ready-ness) for a longer time. To avoid all that, it makes sense to have happy, friendly helpers guide the way, soothe the mind, and allow it to *effectively* regulate the autonomous nervous system, allow it to *effectively* send whichever signals the body needs to survive.

I survived as a person, because I wasn't even present as one. I came-to in a medical facility, even though I was awake the whole time. Shutting off conscious awareness is a dissociative defence, helps to conserve energy and allows to keep the physical state of high arousal going for however long is needed, which made sense in my example. I'd say that doesn't make one or the other more or less of a near-death experience. It just makes them different experiences.

And with that little opening speech, I circle back to the gods: I don't think near-death experiences are very consistent, and I think they very much depend on who you ask and what they've experienced: pharmaceuticals, social context, age (especially child vs teenager/adult), type of survival situation, cultural backdrop. With the experiences so different, can we really conceive of them as to "pertaining to gods"? Shouldn't we rather think of them as nature's hopefully-not-last gift to us? Or should we rather redefine "god" in terms of what you've said below, regarding altered-state-of-mind experiences, more along the lines of "plant teachers", along the lines of shamanic and faith traditions which managed to continue their use of "divine rituals" of this type - which really is (or rather: was) quite omnipresent globally for most of humanity's existence 😊

[Quote from Twentier](#)

I had way too much nitrous oxide before/during a procedure, and I was absolutely sure I was going to permanently lose consciousness. Nonetheless, the experience was calming: life was what it was, what's left is what it is ... might as well smile. This is common with the ego death.

I hear you, but I'd like to note that - In my humble opinion - the calm "might as well smile" experience would more likely have been due to the pharmacology of nitrous oxide, than be secondary to the experience of ego death. Would you clarify which way you meant it? 😊

[Quote from Twentier](#)

To spontaneously witness the form of a 20-something friend during "dream-states" at various points in one's life would have been much more significant to a non-"photo-centric" world.

I agree. 👍

[Quote from Twentier](#)

2. I live in a prohibitory era with regards to psychedelics. [...] The point is, the average ancient Greek was not exposed to "Reefer Madness" and "Just Say 'No'" and would have been more likely to associate religion with the state of divine intoxication and the rituals used to induce it.

I agree. 👍

PS: Regarding the two-foldedness of survival, If your body survives, but you as a person don't, your body will exist, but have "lost its mind", one way or another; the simplest example is stupor, a "lights on but nobody home" type situation in which the body is physically fine and awake, but there's no activity relating to the outside world. The human just sits and stares. Countless other ways are possible, but this is Epicurean Friends, not Trauma Therapy dot com - just thought I should clarify that I meant it literal and not in some esoteric woo-woo type way

