

Jaynes, etc.

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Oct 1998

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John Bishop — 30 Oct 1998, 17:16

re Chesterton

No, I never heard of that, and would welcome a summary.

(I notice, Rostrum, that you are at unc.edu--I got my Master's there in 1980, and liked the area--do you?)

The Varieties of Religious Experience (William James) is relevant here; he claims that the experience is the same but expressed differently based on available cultural and linguistic forms. In other words, we should NOT take St. Whoever's words about hearts and fire and lightening literally, but as a best-effort attempt to describe the indescribable.

(On the other hand, I know a woman who says she hears her mother's voice making accusations and complaints. I've asked, and it's not a "literal literal" voice, but it's more than the knowledge that ones' mother would disapprove. Some people may have more vivid imaginations, or more auditory ones--e.g. when I imagine a stellated cube lit from above by a red light, or a green bear with wings, am I hallucinating if I say "I see it"?)

re "Hiro Protagonist"

Yes, I laughed out loud at that one. Quite ballsy on the author's part.

re _Languages_of_Pao_

I read that before I did my Linguistics; I don't remember it.

I do remember that _Babel-17_ and _Hellspark_ tripped the bogometer.

There was a story in Analog a long time ago, the punchline of which was that being able to speak wasn't as important as having something to say. In the story, the hero and the commie-spy-girl are both on "Six", a planet with a dense atmosphere and an iron-age intelligent race which does a lot of gliding in primitive planes. That one wasn't bogus.

Personally, I suspect that some very verbally-oriented people really can't think well outside of language; they falsely generalize to all of us. Those who are visually- or kinesthetically- oriented can immediately see that the assumption is wrong.

As Steven Pinker points out, we can all throw a ball and jump, but most of us can't explain what we are doing. And it clearly takes lots of thinking to do either.

-John Bishop