

Is this all there is?

Apparently so. Since becoming aware of the possibility of something like enlightenment while in college I have lived with the “belief” that I, and everyone, has the ability to have an experience like those described by many religious mystics. I think of it as a kind of combination of experiencing every day reality more intensely and a greatly increased awareness of my connection with all that exists.

My guess was that these experiences would fall into two categories. One would be experiences that lasted for a specific period of time (seconds, minutes, hours, days...), and the other would be permanent changes that would significantly change all future experience. I think I have had some of each. Those in the first category never approached the level of intensity I assume is possible.

I think it’s hard to be aware of those in the second category. I like to describe them as “paradigm shifts”. They are difficult to see because they change the “lens” through which reality is perceived and this means we can no longer see what we used to see. We may sense that “something has changed” but we may not be able to verbalize the nature of the change. It’s kind like trying to remember what it was like to be five years old.

The question “Why does anything exist at all?” points me in the direction of the kind of experience I have been seeking better than any other brief statement.

I like to say that I don’t believe in “believing”. I want all my beliefs to be assumptions. It’s OK with me to acknowledge that I see some assumptions as having a very high probability of being correct.

I have lived my life as if some assumptions were correct. The “belief” described in the first paragraph is one of those.

In the last few years I have come to accept that I am very unlikely to have any stronger “enlightenment like” experience than I have already had. This is a little disappointing.

However, given the assumption that this is all there is, I find (or maybe I want to believe) that I am still reasonably pleased with the life I have had and am continuing to have.

Though my hold on the following thought is tenuous, I hold it as best I can. I can, sometimes, see that those things I most wish had never happened (mainly the end of my marriage and the separation from my young sons that this entailed) are important to my life being as full and intense as it has been. To the extent that I am able I try to accept that my failures are as important to having lived a full life as my successes. This perspective is relatively new to me, probably growing on me in the last ten years.