

Review of: "Experiencing B-Values on the Camino de Santiago: A Journey Toward Self-Actualization"

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This is a very well written, organized, and researched paper on a specific but potentially very interesting topic. The author does an excellent job of examining and classifying the experiences described by pilgrims who have undertaken the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. I have several comments that I believe could be useful in making this paper more relevant to a wider readership.

1. More background on the Camino de Santiago itself would be very helpful. There is very little description of this pilgrimage, its a purported purpose and its history, other than in, a three line footnote.
2. While the extensive use of quotations from the narratives that serve as the basis for this paper are well selected and illustrate, the author's theses, I felt, overwhelmed by all of the quoted material. I think that streamlining these quotations and adding more summary and commentary would create a better balance.
3. The use of Abraham, Maslow's, conceptions, especially his idea of B – values is very useful in this context. I believe, however, that it would be interesting to discuss Maslow's notion of "self-transcendence" as a stage beyond "self-actualization" in relation to the experiences described in this paper. Oftentimes the former is ignored in discussions of Maslow's work, and it would be useful for the author to discuss whether self-actualization and self transcendence are fully compatible.
4. The paper is very long on description, but somewhat short an explanation. As a reader, I was left with the question of why a pilgrimage in a certain part of the world should provide a basis for such deep, spiritual experience and understanding. Why is the pilgrimage special when one of the pilgrims, McManus, writes "anything can be helpful and a path God"?
5. In reading about the experiences of these pilgrims, I could not help but bring to mind those unfortunate souls who in the past, and also at this very moment, travel great distances on foot to escape famine or death in a war zone. In this context, the idea of realizing on the "Camino that people in the world are not alone, and that they are safe because everything is as it should be" is highly disturbing. I believe that the idea that "everything is as it should be" can, under some circumstances, be a very important and enlightening realization. However, under other circumstances, the idea is both absurd and offensive. I think it would be useful for the author to provide some recognition that Maslow's "heaven on earth" B-values are objective ideals that coexist with their "infernal" opposites.
6. As a related aside, I would point out that the philosopher John Leslie (2001) has endeavored to explain the existence of the cosmos by arguing that "the world exists because it should," an argument that echoes Plato's claim in the Republic that "the good" is the "origin of all." Derek Parfit (2011), the British ethicist, believed that Leslie's claim made

sense, but that it was refuted by the horrors of life in this world. The Jewish scholar and mystic, Adin Steinsaltz (1990) offered a dialectical compromise between these viewpoints when he argued that “we live in the worst of all possible worlds in which there is yet hope, and that’s the best of all possible worlds” (because a world of great difficulties and challenges brings out the highest human values. At any rate, the idea of fact coinciding with value, which the author emphasize is in this paper, is a very controversial one. While, given the objectives of this paper, the author is not obligated to address this controversy in detail, I believe that it should at least be recognized.

Overall, I think that this is a very interesting piece of scholarship that can be improved upon significantly through a streamlining of the quoted material and a more in-depth analysis of it.

References

John Leslie, “Existence Because Ethically Required” in *Moral Reality*, ed. Paul Bloomfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Derek Parfit, “Why Anything? Why This?,” in *On What Matters*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 623–48.

“The Mystic as Philosopher – An Interview with Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz” *Jewish Review* 3, no. 4 (March 1990): 14–17. [The Mystic as Philosopher – An Interview with Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz – Aleph Society](https://steinsaltz.org/essay/mystic-as-philosophr/) <https://steinsaltz.org/essay/mystic-as-philosophr/>