What do you make of the criticism that religious experiences are too amorphous and carried to yield conclusions with regard to the existence of God?

In my own opinion, religious experiences are the weakest argument for the existence of God posed in the book “Philosophy of Religion” through Chapter 5. Religious accounts are varied, illogical, and are only presented to one person at a time. This makes it very hard to prove that they are actual events put in place by divine beings, or if they are imagined by the one who experiences them. This makes them very hard to believe.

Many religious stories are very unlikely to be true, but are more interesting to think of as metaphors. For example, the Garden of Eden is very unlikely to have ever existed. It is much more interesting to think of the Garden of Eden as a metaphor for free will. In the garden, Adam and Eve never had free will, they simply ate, drank, and slept without ever having an independent thought. By eating the apple they demonstrated their ability to think and make decisions on their own, therefore gaining the ability of free will. Of course, the price for this was steep, as they were thrown from the garden and forced to find food and water on their own. But to gain the ability of free will it was probably worth it.

Maybe religious experiences could be taken less for the events that “occurred”, but should be heard for the message that they say. A good example of this is the 10 commandments. It would be difficult to say that God literally gave Moses two stones etched with the 10 commandments. Much more likely is the possibility that Moses ascended a mountain and etched the stones himself. But the message that is told by the 10 commandments is invaluable. The 10 commandments are just 10 things that people should do to prevent chaos. Saying that they were commandments from God, however, gave Moses instant credibility to his peers, and people listened, not because the 10 commandments are reasonable, but because people believed they were commandments from God.