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Waking Up



Sam Harris
WAKING UP

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Synopsis

For the millions of people who want spirituality without religion, Sam Harris' new book is a guide to meditation as a rational spiritual practice informed by neuroscience and psychology. From best-selling author, neuroscientist, and "new atheist" Sam Harris, *Waking Up* is for the increasingly large numbers of people who follow no religion, but who suspect that Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Rumi, and the other saints and sages of history could not have all been epileptics, schizophrenics, or frauds. Throughout the book, Harris argues that there are important truths to be found in the experiences of such contemplatives - and, therefore, that there is more to understanding reality than science and secular culture generally allow. *Waking Up* is part seeker's memoir and part exploration of the scientific underpinnings of spirituality. No other book marries contemplative wisdom and modern science in this way, and no author other than Sam Harris - a scientist, philosopher, and famous sceptic - could write it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a great book. I was born and grew up in Theravada Buddhist family. Even as a teenager I saw the value in the 4 Noble truths. But I couldn't quite come to grips with the idea of Reincarnation & the Law of Karma. That sounded like a "Celestial Accounting System that worked on Auto Pilot". To me that seems as nonsensical as the "Old Man in the Sky" offered by Abrahamic religions. Especially when as a young Buddhist one of the first things I remember learning is Buddha's admonishment to "Never believe in Dogma. But to sift all teachings (including his) through your own experiential filter. Then if it still seems valid to try it on". When you just take that teaching

into heart and try on the concepts Karma & Reincarnation; it makes the 8 fold noble path a moot point. But Sam Harris brings a new perspective. Damn You Sam Harris! your arguments takes away my excuses for staying away from the meditation cushion. It is a pretty dense subject matter. With a chapter on Consciousness and another one on Self. While some of it was new and interesting, other ideas might take 2nd or 3rd reading to get through my thick skull. I think every Buddhist should read and consider what is laid out here. I highly recommend to anyone who has a intellectual curiosity about spirituality. Yet from my experience I know that only few of the most ardently spiritual would dare to tackle it. Between Sam Harris and Stephen Batchelor's writing they extend the Buddhas admonishment for experiential learning by applying 21st century rationality to the inquiry. These two writers and their writing gives a good intellectual foundation to wade into spirituality with healthy dose of 21st century agnosticism.

This is an important book in many ways. Perhaps most important because Sam Harris has, for the past several years, been a strong and outspoken critic of organized religion of all stripes. And one thing Harris can do better than almost anyone else, is make his case both clearly and powerfully without any added garbage. If you've watched his many videos on YouTube, you know the man can make an argument and stand his ground without wavering one iota. And the depth of his research is impressive. If Harris kept his message in this same vein, he would stay safe and continue to be accepted as a credible spokesman for the atheist perspective for a long time to come. But did he do that with this book? Not on your life. Harris, makes a whole different argument here, one that many may not be familiar with (but that is on display on his blog posts). Religion may be bunkum, he asserts, but spirituality (which may be the foundation of many religions), is a truly worthy pursuit. No doubt that a great many atheists are not going to like this one little bit. After all, atheists can sometimes be as narrow-minded as believers. For many, spirituality is seen as practically equivalent to religion. But in this book he makes a strong case that nothing could be further from the truth. And he doesn't make his arguments in a detached, completely intellectual way. Some might say that Harris has bought the spiritual kool-aid hook, link and sinker. Harris is a long-time (25+ years) meditator, seeker after wisdom, student of a variety of spiritual practices and disciple of various teachers and gurus in several Eastern traditions. He most closely aligns himself with the school of non-duality or the direct path to awakening. And the stories of his search, his teachers and his realizations, were for me, the most compelling parts of the book. Two of the funniest parts, having to do with burst pipes and a rat in Kathmandu, demonstrate that he can easily poke fun at himself. Now, this is going to go far over the heads of a whole lot of people. This is not simple stuff.

It's subtle and deep. And for me, the section on consciousness and the brain wasn't easy reading. Some may have a hard time accepting that his spiritual orientation is nothing but another irrational belief system that he has railed against for so long. So you've got to admit, this guy has guts. First he tears down every organized religion known to man as a bunch of irrational, destructive beliefs that only harm society, and then he takes the position that on the other hand, authentic spirituality is the most worthy pursuit one can possibly engage in. Many people are going to completely misunderstand Harris. (I can't wait to read more of the reviews as they are posted.) But he's also going to wake up a whole lot of people to a new perspective that they had never even considered seriously for a nanosecond. Some of the most highly regarded non-dualist teachers should be celebrating this book as it lends much credence to their teachings. Teachers and authors such as Rupert Spira (check out his YouTube videos), Greg Goode, and others, speak with clarity and authority about the non-dual perspective and are accessible to western seekers. To say that this book is a watershed moment for spirituality might be hyperbole, but just as Harris made it safer for atheists to come out of the closet, he does the same for those on the path of awakening. I can't wait to see what he writes next!

I grew up in a Christian family and then earned degrees in Philosophy and Neuroscience. As an atheist, I've been mourning the loss of faith for years. Just because you want something to be true, doesn't mean it is. Losing one's faith can definitely leave a hole. This is the book that begins to fill the void and emptiness that I've felt from that loss. Thank you Sam Harris. This book will change lives.

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