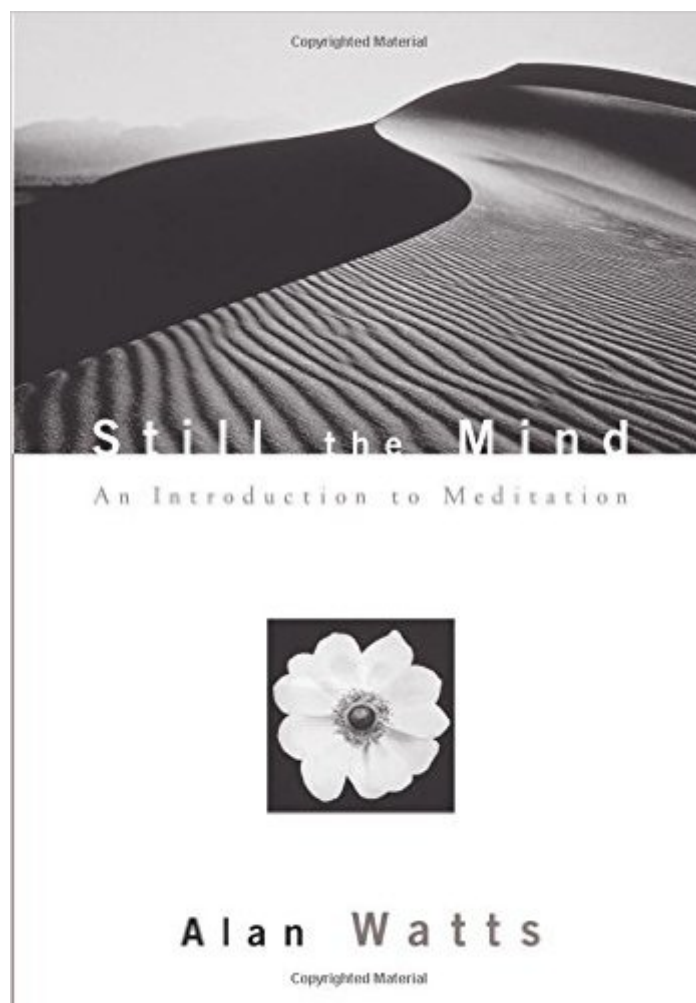


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Still The Mind: An Introduction To Meditation



Synopsis

Mark Watts compiled this book from his father's extensive journals and audiotapes of famous lectures he delivered across the country. In three parts, Alan Watts -- the author of *The Way of Zen* and *The Joyous Cosmology* -- explains the basic philosophy of meditation, how individuals can practice a variety of meditations, and how inner wisdom grows naturally.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Alan watts is a brilliant writer and this book is nothing short of extraordinary. It is a compilation of speeches and seminars the late Alan Watts gave during his lifetime. I read the book knowing little about Zen, but found after reading it that I always knew. That is the beauty of Zen. We have always known the truth - there is a better way to live - only we have been socialized to feel as though we are separate and need to conquer something or everything. Mr. Watts points out that this is a fallacy and that there is no need to feel separate. Instead, he offers that we are a part of one organism and there is no need to conquer. Life is just being in the moment. This book really has made a difference for me.

Watts explains thought and encourages the listener to release the grip of mental chatter and slide into the meditative state that is the wellspring of inspiration. Using humor and allegory, he finds many different ways of stating the truth. Chiding the Western mind for its overuse of force of will and

muscle, Watts emphasizes that if you practice meditation in order to achieve perfection, you're not meditating. Through his own ease of being, he guides a meditation step by step, taking his audience into a gentle, sometimes playful state of mind through his skill as both a meditator and a speaker. Both beginner and experienced meditator will get a lot out of this material.

Of the Alan Watts lecture transcripts in print, this is a good read, though not as tightly edited and expressive as his finest in this line of works, which I believe to be "Buddhism: The Religion of No Religion." The finest points in this book are revealed when Watts' describes the motivation behind meditation, emphasizing the pleasure one receives in the practice in itself, as opposed to practicing in hopes of it producing pleasure in the future. He keenly dismisses practicing any religion out of necessity, obligation, or hope of reward, and instead drives home the notion of religion and meditation as sources of expression and enjoyment. Still, if you are going to pick only one of Alan Watts' lecture series, then "Buddhism: The Religion of No Religion" is vastly superior to this work. If you enjoy any of his lecture series, I strongly urge you to seek out his lengthier written projects like "The Way of Zen." Watts had quite a way of making Zen Buddhism tangible to the Western reader.

Alan Watts was popular about thirty years ago...and still he is untouchable in the arena of those who transmute for Westerners a deep yet very realizable understanding of the mystical path. Think Jung and Campbell - timeless messengers of higher truth. This is no highbrow philosophizing for so-called "adepts." This is the best combination of common person-meets-Zen approach I have encountered. Works well in conjunction with "Undoing Yourself With Energized Meditation and Other Devices" by Christopher Hyatt: both are edgy, at least slightly more hip approaches - that better account for the integral elements of humor and happenstance - than other works on the subject.

I found this wise and insightful book to be the perfect antidote to much of what is wrong with Western spirituality these days. On the one hand, we have the Richard Dawkinses and Sam Harris of this world who try to persuade us that it is all nonsense and that Godless humanism is the way of the future. At the other extreme, we have the Choo Thomases and Todd Burpos of this same world who remain stuck in a 2,000-year Biblical time warp, unable to see that it is time to move on to something that is more relevant to the here and now. Alan Watts may not have all the answers to our search for meaning in life, but it is clear that his view of spirituality is one well worth pondering. He takes us back to the earliest periods of time when mankind first stood up on two feet, stared up at the sky and began wondering what might be out there. He reminds us that then we

were fully part of nature with no desire, as now, to fight and conquer it. Most refreshingly, in sharp contrast to the often complicated and opaque religious views of the founding fathers of Western philosophy (Locke, Leibniz and Hobbes, for example), his view of our place in the universe is compelling, simply because it is so clear and direct and, for that reason, highly believable. At a time when so many faiths exist side by side in our world, whose differences often serve to undermine their stated goals of universal peace and harmony, Watts provides a compelling way forward by proposing that we seek ultimate meaning within ourselves through meditation and cultivating the awareness that now is the only time there is.

i dont know where to start with this book. basically, its been one of those life-changing reads to me, along with siddhartha. the amount of wisdom and philosophical info in here is mind-boggling, but somehow alan watts is able to make you understand as though it were the simplest thing in the world. its as though he were a good friend sitting with you explaining things over coffee. its hard to grasp everything in here in one read because there is so much in this small book. i needed to read it a few times for everything to really sink in. it is so unbelievably enlightening and powerful, i want everyone i know to read it!

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