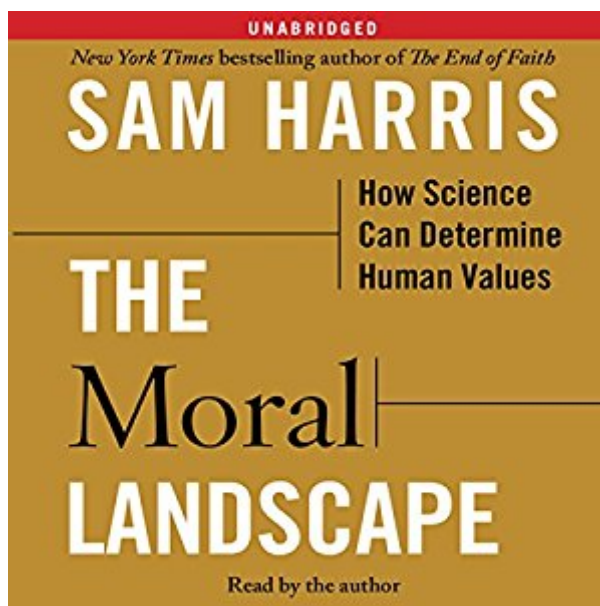


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The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values



Synopsis

Sam Harris's first book, *The End of Faith*, ignited a worldwide debate about the validity of religion. In the aftermath, Harris discovered that most people—from religious fundamentalists to nonbelieving scientists—agree on one point: science has nothing to say on the subject of human values. Indeed, our failure to address questions of meaning and morality through science has now become the most common justification for religious faith. It is also the primary reason why so many secularists and religious moderates feel obligated to "respect" the hardened superstitions of their more devout neighbors. In this explosive new book, Sam Harris tears down the wall between scientific facts and human values, arguing that most people are simply mistaken about the relationship between morality and the rest of human knowledge. Harris urges us to think about morality in terms of human and animal well-being, viewing the experiences of conscious creatures as peaks and valleys on a "moral landscape". Because there are definite facts to be known about where we fall on this landscape, Harris foresees a time when science will no longer limit itself to merely describing what people do in the name of "morality"; in principle, science should be able to tell us what we ought to do to live the best lives possible. Bringing a fresh perspective to age-old questions of right and wrong and good and evil, Harris demonstrates that we already know enough about the human brain and its relationship to events in the world to say that there are right and wrong answers to the most pressing questions of human life. Because such answers exist, moral relativism is simply false—and comes at increasing cost to humanity. And the intrusions of religion into the sphere of human values can be finally repelled: for just as there is no such thing as Christian physics or Muslim algebra, there can be no Christian or Muslim morality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Harris has an uncanny ability to make thoughtful points and really intriguing ideas about subjects you would have thought you already knew you believed something else. Very condensed argument that doesn't need to be drawn out and as thoughtfully presented as I could ask for. Very air-tight arguments.

This book methodically breaks down the ways we perceive and fail to perceive reality and morality. It is dense with detail, scientific study, and critical thinking. It is a slow burn of a read, but rich in content. A must read.

Top Notch. Took me a month to work through and reread a couple of times. Worth it.

The short version of my personal anecdote is this: no other book, or movie, or TV show, or video game, or anything, has influenced my worldview and thinking habits more dramatically than *The Moral Landscape* has. It liberated me from the ever-powerful illusion of free will; it served as a gateway to my awareness of other great thinkers like Steven Pinker; and is the most proximate cause for my fascination with, and decision to major in, neuroscience. (I've since read Sam Harris's other books--damn, can he write--and *The Moral Landscape* is tonally distinct from his first two. The words aren't on fire, burning with urgency as seemed to be the case in *The End of Faith*, for example. So for those bloodthirsty for a Hitchensian take-down of theists, your desires aren't likely to be serviced here) So, yeah, I recommend *The Moral Landscape* to people who would recommend it to anyone after reading it, which is everyone.

Another great read from Mr. Harris. I so appreciate how he asks the hard questions and holds us to be intellectually honest. So many, including scientists, delude themselves secondary to their mortal insecurities. Thanks you again Sam PS the unfortunately issue is that social science tells us people only will believe what they want to believe and arguments of logic frequently do not change minds.

I think Harris has done a great service to us as we think about morality. I will I hope everyone concerned about morality considers what he has to say and incorporates it into their work. I look forward to when science can precisely determine well-being. Additionally, some of his criticisms of

religious Scriptures are strawmen. No one takes the Bible more literally than the skeptic.

Harris's Opus. This is where he takes you after you have read *The End Of Faith*. Optimistic and solution oriented. Fabulous read especially with the Harris's fantastic wit.

I found that the main argument of the book resonates really well with me. I feel that Harris is on the right track by trying to define morality in terms of well-being, and that he is correct in thinking that a science of morality can eventually be developed. Harris is trying to make an argument about the importance of a science that doesn't really exist yet. As such he sets himself up for a hail of criticism, which of course he has drawn in abundance. However, considering the prevailing view that such a science is impossible, and even to a degree "Immoral", I sympathize with his stated mission in writing the book. As long as the book is read more as a mission statement and less as a full fledged review of an existing (of even emerging) scientific field, I think a lot can be gained from the book. I know that for me personally a lot of previously fuzzy thoughts and instincts about morality became more crystallized as a result of the book.

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