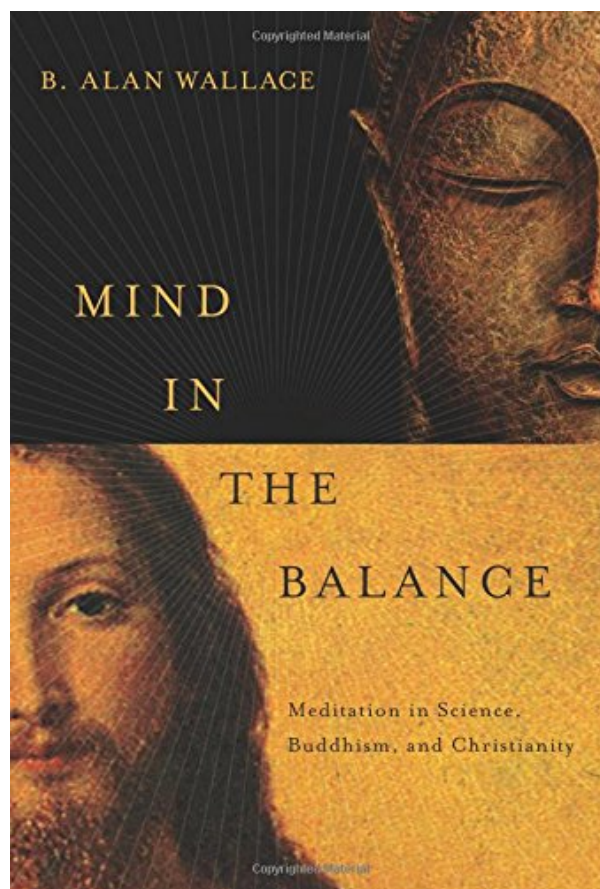
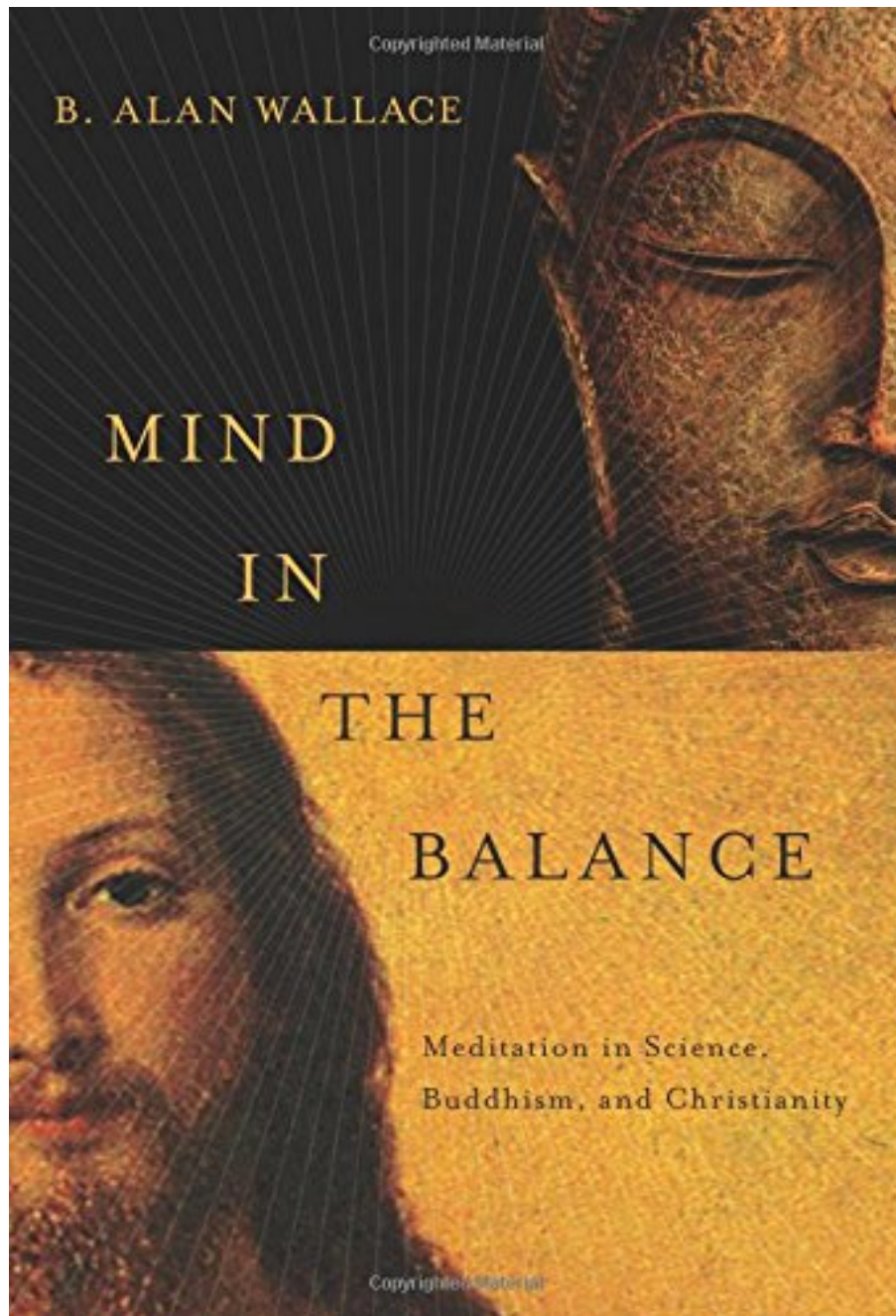


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Review

Wallace is a master, guiding our inquiry into consciousness in exciting new directions.

(Shift)

Thought-provoking and at times insightful, this volume raises many interesting philosophical issues and presents many useful references.

(Choice)

Anyone interested in understanding more about the mind and consciousness would enjoy reading this book.

(Marcia Howton Inquiring Mind)

Review

Mind in the Balance addresses in a lucid, extremely well informed, and often quite original way what is now widely seen as the greatest lacuna in modern understanding: the actual nature of mind or consciousness. Its consistent advocacy of logical rigor, basis in a truly magisterial knowledge of Buddhist, Christian, and other contemplative practices, deep familiarity with contemporary scientific thinking, and imaginative and creative merging of all of these strands make this book a significant contribution to the field.

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Always challenging and controversial, B. Alan Wallace's abilities as a scholar and writer give this book an accessibility and breadth rarely encountered. As a book intended for a broad readership, *Mind in the Balance* successfully bridges history, theory, Christianity, Buddhism, and science, making it truly unique.

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Mind, intelligence, spirit and reason—Alan Wallace, one of the very best guides on this journey that we have today, brilliantly shows us how they work together in the mystery of human consciousness.

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By establishing a dialogue in which the meditative practices of Buddhism and Christianity speak to the theories of modern philosophy and science, B. Alan Wallace reveals the theoretical similarities underlying these disparate disciplines and their unified approach to making sense of the objective world.

Wallace begins by exploring the relationship between Christian and Buddhist meditative practices. He outlines a sequence of meditations the reader can undertake, showing that, though Buddhism and Christianity differ in their belief systems, their methods of cognitive inquiry provide similar insight into the nature and origins of consciousness.

From this convergence Wallace then connects the approaches of contemporary cognitive science, quantum mechanics, and the philosophy of the mind. He links Buddhist and Christian views to the provocative philosophical theories of Hilary Putnam, Charles Taylor, and Bas van Fraassen, and he seamlessly incorporates the work of such physicists as Anton Zeilinger, John Wheeler, and Stephen Hawking. Combining a concrete analysis of conceptions of consciousness with a guide to cultivating mindfulness and profound contemplative practice, Wallace takes the scientific and intellectual mapping of the mind in exciting new directions.

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Most helpful customer reviews

45 of 49 people found the following review helpful.

Now we're getting somewhere!!

By Matthew J. Schimpf

Mr. Wallace does a Yeoman's job of condensing, polishing, explaining and reviewing ancient contemplative theories & practices; from both Buddhist and Christian perspectives and then uses modern science (quantum physics and neuroscience) to elucidate and flesh out the nature of the archaic but extremely relevant wisdom.

Between rigorously researched historical accounts and postulations of meditative principles, we are treated to exercises with which to practice and integrate those principles. This was quite a boon for me as my next step on the path is to learn and practice some form of meditation, and this book went a considerable distance in whetting my appetite.

The author articulates some very excellent, wise and cogent rationale as to why materialist/reductionist philosophy is just as stagnating, dogmatic and possibly harmful as the medieval R.C. Church and their insistence on the Ostrich maneuver. I think Mr. Wallace would agree fanaticism - any fanaticism - is at least counterproductive and at most, deadly. A Mind that is in balance will serve the world, its people and its master far more productively and joyfully than one in an impulsive, fanatical frenzy.

My only nit-picky complaints are: 1.) Alan, in most cases painted with a pretty broad brush, I wish he would have added some more detail; 2.) That said, the book could have been a bit longer - expanding on the exercises and maybe some more historical context; 3.) Alan is obviously a very practiced mediator and the language, analogies, metaphors and similes he used were to me; a bit too esoteric. I am at best a nascent practitioner, thus some of the concepts as explained were somewhat daunting.

Great work - 5 stars on the board, but I'm going with a real 4 ½ today.

UPDATE! After reading, rereading and reading again - the last 4 or 5 chapters in this book, I have come to the following two conclusions: 1.) My nit-picks as stated above should be completely ignored; 2.) This work is replete with lucid argument and wonderful, (nearly breathtaking) detailed explanation as to the congruencies and parallels between Eastern & Western contemplative traditions and modern, that is to say: quantum physics. "Mind in Balance" is now in my top three favorites of all time, easily a must read 5 plus star effort.

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Extraordinary

By Brooklyn bookworm

The book deals a devastating blow to the cognitive sciences as practiced today. Wallace argues that cognitive scientists and neuroscientists hold materialism -- the view that consciousness can be explained on a physical level -- as dogma. These fields tend to dismiss what may be learned from direct contemplation of the mind. In a simple and brilliant stroke, Wallace shows materialism to be a faith-based view. Why? The physical basis of consciousness has not been established. Wallace quotes Christoph Koch, a leading neuroscientist at CalTech, who says that the relationship between consciousness and the physical brain remains a mystery.

Another deft move in the book is Wallace's revival of introspection as a means of understanding the mind. He revisits the early history of modern psychology when William James viewed introspection as a research method. Later, during the rise of behaviorism and the cognitive revolution, introspection was pooh-pooed as "unscientific." Behaviorists believed anything that could not be observed and measured empirically was not real. Wallace exposes this as nonsense. He suggests that meditation, being a direct experience of the mind, is akin to James' introspection, and has yielded profound insights into consciousness which can inform the cognitive sciences.

A third line of inquiry explores whether nature has an absolute reality outside of human perceptions, or instead, nature can only be understood through the language and tools we bring to bear on it (a Phenomenalist view). Wallace highlights the work of distinguished contemporary scholars and scientists who have arrived at the latter view. He ties this view back to the Buddhist teaching that the entire world emerges from the "substrate" and returns to it. It is striking that certain strands of Western science and philosophy have ended up in the same territory as Buddhist contemplative wisdom.

Throughout the book, Wallace fishes out prominent and obscure figures from history: Pythagoras, Nicholas of Cusa, Franklin Merrell-Wolff, Richard Feynman, and Dūdjom Lingpa, to name just a few. Wallace nimbly traverses the fields of history, philosophy, science, and religion.

The author's voice is lucid, even-keeled, and confident. But taken as a whole, the book deals a withering blow to certain received truths of Western science. The contrast between the calm lucidity of the prose and the force of its argument is quite pleasing! But the book is much more than a critique of science as we know it; it offers a vision for how a contemplative perspective can enrich scientific inquiry.

Wallace's ideas should be considered carefully by cognitive scientists of all stripes, philosophers of science, and anyone interested in the encounter between Western and Buddhist worldviews. I also give it the highest recommendation to any inquiring person who is willing to let his curiosity lead him into new territory.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

The perfect book

By Sarah Orbanic

This book was exactly what I wanted and needed. I had always wanted to know the origins of meditation and contemplation. There are so many new age gurus teaching new age techniques, and what I wanted was the authentic techniques, that had been tried and tested. I wanted to get as close to the origins as possible, and that's exactly what this book offered me. Raised as a Christian I wanted to know how it all tied into Christianity, and *Mind In The Balance* so nicely brought it all together for me, and really helped create an even less dualistic view for me. I was also interested in what the latest research and studies science had on the subject, and this too was included in the book. I always thought that meditation was just about sitting on my cushion and not thinking about anything. *Mind In The Balance* opened my uneducated view, and offered many different types of meditation that I find exciting "exploration of the mind" as Alan Wallace calls it, is so much better than my previous attempts at spacing out. And one of the greatest gifts this book gave me was a genuine and lasting motivation to explore my mind, and reach my inner depths of perfection. Thank you!!!!

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