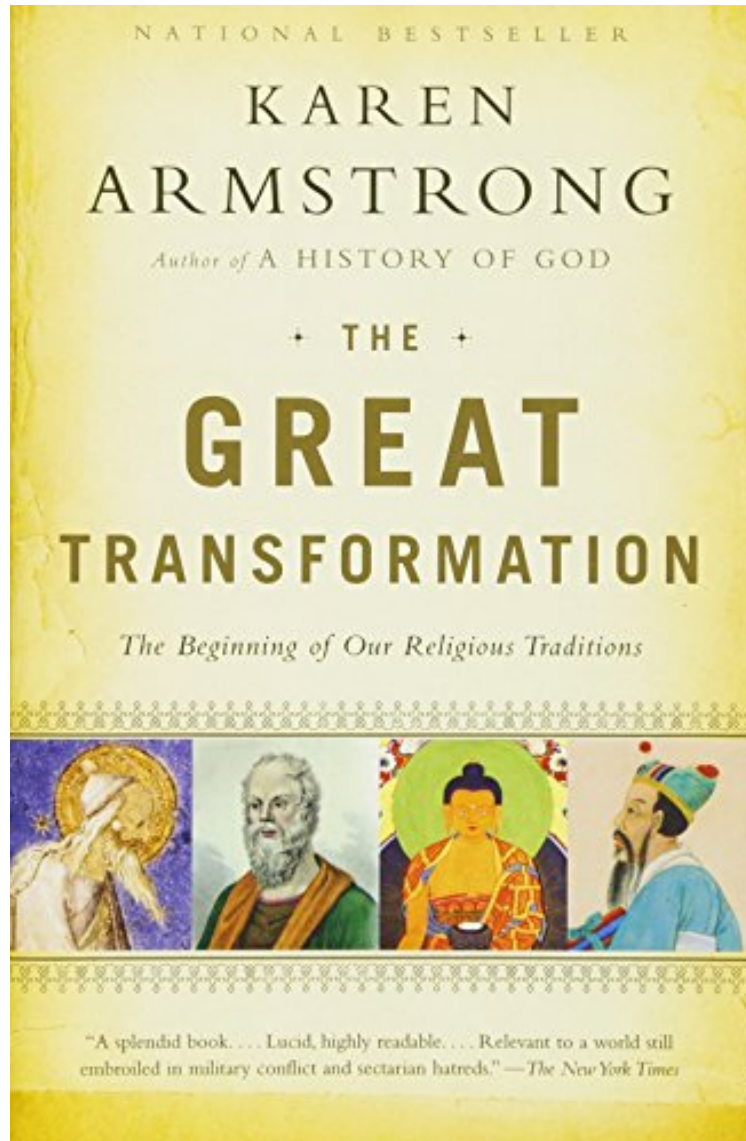


[Library ebook] The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions

The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions

Karen Armstrong

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#67701 in Books Karen Armstrong 2007-04-10 2007-04-10Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x 1.00 x 5.20l, .95 #File Name: 0385721242592 pagesThe Great Transformation The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions | File size: 61.Mb

Karen Armstrong : The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding review of the spiritual origins of humanity By Shawn Thompson aka the intimate ape Whether you believe in religions or not, spirituality or not, this book has a wonderful range of clear, uncluttered, undogmatic and useful insights for the open, enquiring mind about the spiritual origins of humanity. The book is vastly useful because of the intelligent perspective it gives across the origins of spirituality in different places and different cultures and the way it balances and compares the different origins. Armstrong gives us the sense of putting different pieces together in the puzzle of the underlying urge for spirituality in human beings.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "The Great Transformation" is Simply... Great. By Andrew Lvovsky The Great Transformation discusses a novel look on the early religions that shaped us into the human beings we are today. This covers an epoch from around 1600 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E. Karen Armstrong focuses on a central theme surrounding Karl Jaspers proposed Axial Age and invites the reader to analyze key spiritual developments. She envelops the ideals of the early religions quite well, mixing already-known religious notions with a universal underlying message. Armstrong has been known to speak strongly on human compassion or the Golden Rule, and each chapter seems to incorporate this.

Dr. Armstrong starts the book from when the first humans began to resemble an Axial movement. The book's organization is a bit different from others, since each chapter encompasses a central theme rather than a certain people. Slowly but surely, the book starts to pick up and cover different messages for each period of time. For example, there is one chapter that discusses the notion of self-kenosis, which is the process of emptying all the thoughts from one's mind and submitting to a divine will. While I do wish that Armstrong could've organized each chapter or part by each separate culture, I do understand why she didn't do so. It makes sense to want to see what each culture's beliefs were at a certain time period. The supporting evidence was laid out well, and usually at the end of each chapter, she would relate the evidence to how significant it was to the Axial Age.

After reading this book, I can definitely say that I recommend The Great Transformation to anyone who is interested in seeing how early religions and philosophies were all intertwined in one form or another. It is a very interesting read, and Armstrong does a fantastic job with laying down her arguments and specifying certain areas of uncertainty.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant Study of Axial Age By Carrington Ludd Karen Armstrong's brilliant study of the Axial Age offers a vast overview of the development for the first of concepts that we identify today with some of the major religions and think of as normal human(e) ideas. She ranges over nine or ten centuries studying the cultures of Israel, Greece, China and India and comparing their development in great detail from the ninth to the second century BCE. But then she goes on to discuss how this major shift in world thinking continues to influence today, even as she treats in less detail major shifts since the Axial one. Perhaps the book is a bit too long, a bit repetitious, but it is full of original insights and I daresay no one reading it will be as thoroughly conversant with all four major cultures as Armstrong is. Bravo, bravo!

From Karen Armstrong, the bestselling author of *A History of God* and *The Spiral Staircase*, comes this extraordinary investigation of a critical moment in the evolution of religious thought. In the ninth century BCE, events in four regions of the civilized world led to the rise of religious traditions that have endured to the present day: development of Confucianism and Daoism in China, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, monotheism in Israel, and philosophical rationalism in Greece. Armstrong, one of our most prominent religious scholars, examines how these traditions began in response to the violence of their time. Studying figures as diverse as the Buddha and Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah, Armstrong reveals how these still enduring philosophies can help address our contemporary problems.

From Publishers Weekly It's not what one may expect from a book about the development of the world's religions: "Crouched in his mother's womb, he lay in wait for his father, armed with a sickle, and the next time Uranus penetrated Gaia, he cut off his genitals and threw them to the earth." However, the Greek myth of Cronus clearly illustrates Armstrong's main thesis, that the "simultaneous" development of the world's religions during what Karl Jung called the axial age, is a direct result of the violence and chaos, both physical and spiritual, of past civilizations. Armstrong, a former nun turned self-described "freelance monotheist," has enough background and personal investment in the material to make it come alive. Her delivery is crystal clear, informative and, though somewhat academic, easy for the layman to understand. Her voice is straightforward yet wrought with palpable concern. This reinforces the book's goals of creating a clear understanding of where religious developments have come from and explaining how today's "violence of an unprecedented scale" parallels the activities that created the "axial age" in the first place. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Bookmarks Magazine If you've already written God's biography (*A History of God*), surely it's a cakewalk to tackle the era before His ascendancy in theological affairs. But making sense of four disparate cultures and religious traditions in the space of 400 pages proves to be a risky proposition for Armstrong. Critics agree that her central theme, "the gradual elimination of violence from religion" (*New York Times*), makes for compelling reading, as does her weaving together of similarities among disparate faiths. Though her analysis shines, many reviewers feel the book suffers from too broad a focus; centuries are foreshortened, and even her supporters feel her conclusion doesn't do the book justice. With classic titles like *The Battle for God* and *Islam: A Short History* in her bibliography, the "runaway nun" remains

our preeminent writer on popular religion, but this tome might best be reserved for her hardcore followers. Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From Booklist*Starred * The foremost English-language historian of religion today, whose *A History of God* (1993) has become the standard popular work on the great monotheisms, expands upon German philosopher Karl Jaspers' characterization of the long period preceding the rise of Rome--900 to 200 B.C.E.--as the Axial Age. That at first puzzling geometric metaphor crystallizes Jaspers' sense, which Armstrong clearly shares, of that immense era as pivotal in human consciousness. During it the major religious traditions began and refined the moral attitudes they manifest to this day. Commencing as tribal and aristocratic, the pre-Christian religions became personal and democratic as the realm of divinity came to be perceived as transcendent. Most important was the development of nonviolence as a holy ideal, not least because the early religions initially employed violence in their rituals and justified violence by their adherents. The Aryans of northern India and the Chinese, both initially violent, attempted to constrain belligerence and avert chaos by fashioning what became Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism and Taoism, respectively. Meanwhile, the smaller civilizational formations of the Jews and the Greeks responded to experiences of, respectively, periodic near-obliteration and social collapse with monotheism and philosophical rationalism, respectively. Armstrong tells this huge story in 10 chapters that each relate historically parallel developments among the Indians, Chinese, Greeks, and Jews. Magisterially but companionably, she unfolds the successive movements that molded religious consciousness in each nation, explaining them with such clarity that this book ranks with *A History of God* as one of her finest achievements and an utterly enthralling reading experience. Ray Olson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved