

Pony Ride to an Awakening: The Journey of a Mystic

Hedin E. Daubenspeck

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Hedin E. Daubenspeck's didactic spiritual memoir *Pony Ride to an Awakening* is about self-actualization and shared wisdom.

Daubenspeck's life story is told from his upbringing in southwestern Oklahoma to his midlife spiritual crisis and resultant pursuit of higher consciousness. The text itself is a searching one: There are discussions of psychic abilities resulting from near-death experiences and spiritual emergencies and of déjà vu, intuition, and psychic healing. Warnings against those who abuse spiritual gifts, including church leaders turned sexual predators, charlatans charging thousands of dollars for dubious spiritual services, and individuals practicing black magic are shared via discursions. Elsewhere, recommendations for facilitating spiritual experiences and gaining an awareness of the spirit realm are made alongside general encouragements to seek personal enlightenment.

Representing a breadth of metaphysical knowledge, the text devotes considerable space to defining and elaborating upon spiritual terms: "The mystical sense of *claircognizance* (often referred to as our 'sixth sense') is the ability to receive knowledge intuitively. (We don't know how we know, we just know.)" Such definitions are succinct and clear. However, the book is less systematic in its encouragements toward spiritual awakening. In the place of pragmatic advice and guided instructions are gentle but vague gestures toward enlightenment that make room for a variety of worldviews: "This book is a brief summary of my experiences and practices. Maybe you do not have a burning passion but only a curiosity about spirituality. Nevertheless, I hope this book has been informative." However, the text's reticence to assert an explicit call to action makes it unpersuasive.

In addition to its imprecise guidance, the book exhibits a general lack of focus. Its chapters, which are quite short, revolve around clear themes but often fail to articulate overarching messages, lessons, or points, making them unmemorable. Further, not all of their material is original: A chapter that details Buddha's Eightfold Path is filled with block quotes from other texts. And the supplementary materials contribute to the book's sense of rudderlessness, as with the paintings and "About the Artist" sections that appear at awkward intervals throughout the text and the notes on meditation that are placed just after the introduction, where one might expect the first chapter to start.

An enthusiastic memoir, *Pony Ride to an Awakening* is about the metaphysical search for spiritual wisdom. It includes life lessons for fellow seekers, too.

HANNAH PEARSON (December 25, 2024)

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