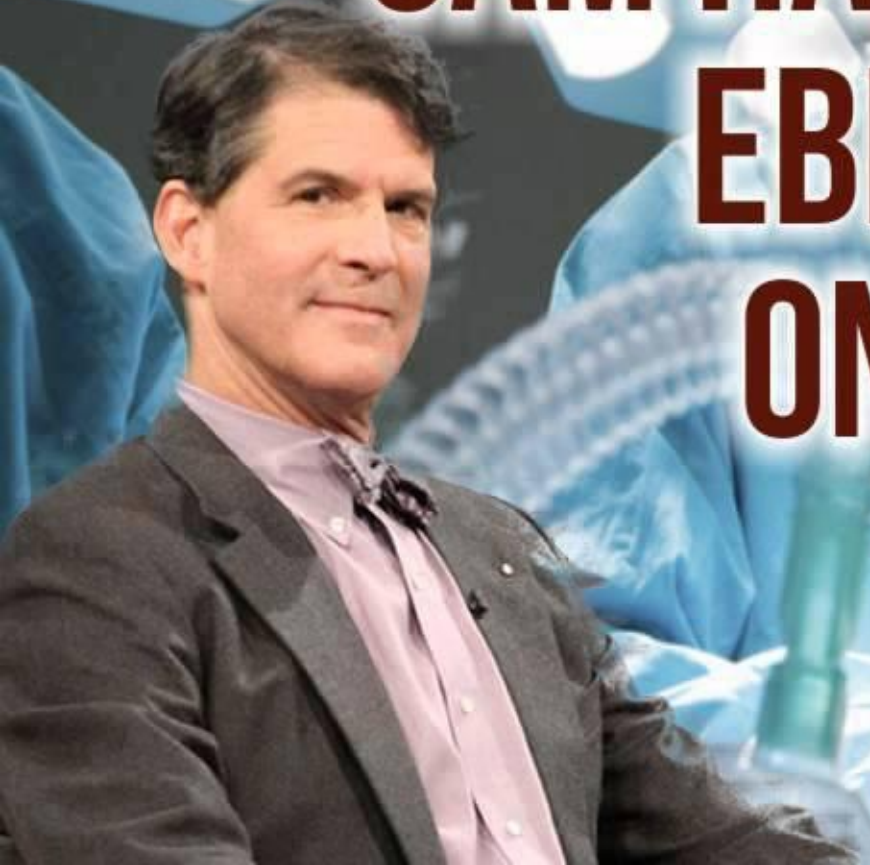


#189 skeptiko.com

**SAM HARRIS WON'T DEBATE
EBEN ALEXANDER
ON NDE SCIENCE**



1
00:00:12,440 --> 00:00:10,790
welcome to skeptic aware we explore

2
00:00:14,780 --> 00:00:12,450
controversial science with leading

3
00:00:17,060 --> 00:00:14,790
researchers thinkers and their critics

4
00:00:18,650 --> 00:00:17,070
I'm your host Aleksic harris and on this

5
00:00:21,560 --> 00:00:18,660
episode of skeptical we're going to do

6
00:00:24,320 --> 00:00:21,570
something a little bit different as you

7
00:00:26,569 --> 00:00:24,330
may have heard dr. Evan Alexander has a

8
00:00:29,540 --> 00:00:26,579
new book out the books titled proof of

9
00:00:32,210 --> 00:00:29,550
heaven and dr. Alexander is going to

10
00:00:33,950 --> 00:00:32,220
appear on skeptic Oh next week in an

11
00:00:36,500 --> 00:00:33,960
interview re recorded a couple weeks ago

12
00:00:38,450 --> 00:00:36,510
it's about an hour long interview all

13
00:00:40,819 --> 00:00:38,460

about the book all about his amazing

14
00:00:43,069 --> 00:00:40,829
near-death experience and how it changed

15
00:00:45,680 --> 00:00:43,079
him from being a very skeptical

16
00:00:47,479 --> 00:00:45,690
traditional neurosurgeon to become

17
00:00:50,270 --> 00:00:47,489
someone who was very interested in

18
00:00:53,119 --> 00:00:50,280
ultimately convinced by the reality of

19
00:00:55,189 --> 00:00:53,129
near-death experience science so you're

20
00:00:58,329 --> 00:00:55,199
gonna hear from dr. Alexander next week

21
00:01:01,040 --> 00:00:58,339
but in the meantime on October 8th

22
00:01:03,410 --> 00:01:01,050
Newsweek magazine published an article

23
00:01:05,900 --> 00:01:03,420
on the book and dedicated their front

24
00:01:07,910 --> 00:01:05,910
cover to this very provocative picture

25
00:01:10,010 --> 00:01:07,920
of this hand reaching up to heaven and

26

00:01:12,650 --> 00:01:10,020

it's all about the book and dr.

27

00:01:14,870 --> 00:01:12,660

Alexander's experience great news right

28

00:01:16,910 --> 00:01:14,880

well great news for everyone unless

29

00:01:19,520 --> 00:01:16,920

you're a skeptic and an atheist and

30

00:01:21,980 --> 00:01:19,530

really against this kind of science so

31

00:01:24,920 --> 00:01:21,990

it only took a couple of days for the

32

00:01:27,110 --> 00:01:24,930

skeptics to marshal their response and

33

00:01:29,090 --> 00:01:27,120

they came out in unison really all of

34

00:01:31,310 --> 00:01:29,100

them delivering many of the same talking

35

00:01:34,010 --> 00:01:31,320

points and what I wanted to do today was

36

00:01:36,050 --> 00:01:34,020

break down some of those responses

37

00:01:37,970 --> 00:01:36,060

because I've actually had an email

38

00:01:40,640 --> 00:01:37,980

exchange with a couple of those

39

00:01:43,070 --> 00:01:40,650
respondents Sam Harris who of course is

40

00:01:45,170 --> 00:01:43,080
a very well-known author and atheist I'm

41

00:01:48,320 --> 00:01:45,180
also going to review the response from

42

00:01:49,580 --> 00:01:48,330
our old friend dr. Steven novella host

43

00:01:52,850 --> 00:01:49,590
of the skeptics guide to the universe

44

00:01:55,940 --> 00:01:52,860
and Huffington Post blogger and

45

00:01:58,210 --> 00:01:55,950
best-selling atheist author dr. Vick

46

00:02:00,320 --> 00:01:58,220
Stenger so I have quite a bit to cover

47

00:02:02,720 --> 00:02:00,330
stick around it's going to be kind of

48

00:02:05,720 --> 00:02:02,730
interesting and at the end I'm going to

49

00:02:09,800 --> 00:02:05,730
publish a written response that I have

50

00:02:12,860 --> 00:02:09,810
from dr. Alexander so let's get right to

51
00:02:15,290 --> 00:02:12,870
it the first response to the Newsweek

52
00:02:18,410 --> 00:02:15,300
proof of heaven article that I ran

53
00:02:20,120 --> 00:02:18,420
across was from dr. Vick Stenger who is

54
00:02:22,130 --> 00:02:20,130
a very well-known in the Atheist

55
00:02:22,430 --> 00:02:22,140
community one of the new atheists and

56
00:02:25,250 --> 00:02:22,440
your

57
00:02:28,160 --> 00:02:25,260
here a lot from dr. Stenger coming up in

58
00:02:29,860 --> 00:02:28,170
a couple of weeks when I published the

59
00:02:32,180 --> 00:02:29,870
interview that I had with him

60
00:02:34,550 --> 00:02:32,190
fascinating fascinating stuff you'll

61
00:02:35,030 --> 00:02:34,560
really get a feel for where it's coming

62
00:02:36,260 --> 00:02:35,040
from

63
00:02:38,930 --> 00:02:36,270

I think the interview is going to be

64

00:02:41,510 --> 00:02:38,940

quite controversial and I think you'll

65

00:02:43,490 --> 00:02:41,520

really enjoy it but dr. stager has also

66

00:02:47,120 --> 00:02:43,500

written a response on the Huffington

67

00:02:48,920 --> 00:02:47,130

Post to the Newsweek article on dr.

68

00:02:50,540 --> 00:02:48,930

Alexander's book and I was just going to

69

00:02:52,760 --> 00:02:50,550

highlight one quick - from it because it

70

00:02:56,000 --> 00:02:52,770

really jumped out at me and once you

71

00:02:58,790 --> 00:02:56,010

hear the interview with Vick you'll

72

00:03:01,820 --> 00:02:58,800

really be able to put this small quote

73

00:03:04,040 --> 00:03:01,830

into a larger context of where he's

74

00:03:07,010 --> 00:03:04,050

coming from now he's a smart guy

75

00:03:09,740 --> 00:03:07,020

PhD particle physics good writer

76

00:03:12,170 --> 00:03:09,750

comes across well but when you really

77

00:03:13,670 --> 00:03:12,180

push him he kind of really goes way out

78

00:03:16,430 --> 00:03:13,680

there and here was one of his primary

79

00:03:18,740 --> 00:03:16,440

critiques of dr. Alexander in the email

80

00:03:21,140 --> 00:03:18,750

exchange that I had with him he says

81

00:03:22,310 --> 00:03:21,150

he'll he's a surgeon not a

82

00:03:25,640 --> 00:03:22,320

neuroscientist

83

00:03:29,060 --> 00:03:25,650

why should he know now keep in mind here

84

00:03:31,699 --> 00:03:29,070

that dr. eben Alexander is not only

85

00:03:33,130 --> 00:03:31,709

under Oh surgeon but received several

86

00:03:36,320 --> 00:03:33,140

fellowships from Harvard University

87

00:03:38,120 --> 00:03:36,330

taught and researched neurosurgery at

88

00:03:41,120 --> 00:03:38,130

Harvard Medical School for fifteen years

89

00:03:43,420 --> 00:03:41,130

his curriculum Vita is about as long as

90

00:03:46,610 --> 00:03:43,430

your arm so I don't know if this is just

91

00:03:49,400 --> 00:03:46,620

ignorance on Vicks part or if he's just

92

00:03:51,500 --> 00:03:49,410

blinded by this oh my god we have to

93

00:03:53,479 --> 00:03:51,510

respond to this near-death experience

94

00:03:56,030 --> 00:03:53,489

stuff in the strongest way possible but

95

00:03:57,949 --> 00:03:56,040

it's just a foolish thing to say as a

96

00:03:59,930 --> 00:03:57,959

matter of fact you know we're gonna talk

97

00:04:02,600 --> 00:03:59,940

in a minute about sam harris who has a

98

00:04:04,820 --> 00:04:02,610

PhD in neuroscience from UCLA but isn't

99

00:04:06,560 --> 00:04:04,830

a practicing neuroscientist and we're

100

00:04:09,290 --> 00:04:06,570

gonna talk about Steven novella who is a

101
00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:09,300
whozit neurologist at Yale so both of

102
00:04:13,550 --> 00:04:11,010
those guys are really highly qualified

103
00:04:15,050 --> 00:04:13,560
but I have to tell you if you really

104
00:04:17,270 --> 00:04:15,060
step back and look at it

105
00:04:20,150 --> 00:04:17,280
dr. Alexander's qualifications for

106
00:04:21,740 --> 00:04:20,160
assessing the medical condition and the

107
00:04:23,720 --> 00:04:21,750
likelihood that this near-death

108
00:04:26,420 --> 00:04:23,730
experience happened the way that he said

109
00:04:28,730 --> 00:04:26,430
it does his qualifications put him in a

110
00:04:31,130 --> 00:04:28,740
much better position for assessing that

111
00:04:34,159 --> 00:04:31,140
I mean right this guy deals with these

112
00:04:36,409 --> 00:04:34,169
kind of patients all the time and he

113
00:04:38,600 --> 00:04:36,419

understands the procedures that you go

114

00:04:41,089 --> 00:04:38,610

he understands what's likely to happen

115

00:04:43,010 --> 00:04:41,099

what's not likely to happen he's reading

116

00:04:45,559 --> 00:04:43,020

the research he's publishing research on

117

00:04:47,480 --> 00:04:45,569

it so that's not to disrespect novella

118

00:04:48,999 --> 00:04:47,490

or Harris they're certainly very

119

00:04:52,159 --> 00:04:49,009

qualified and we have to take seriously

120

00:04:55,850 --> 00:04:52,169

their critiques but it does draw into

121

00:04:57,950 --> 00:04:55,860

contrast just how far on a line Vicks

122

00:05:00,260 --> 00:04:57,960

there is when he says this it's just

123

00:05:03,459 --> 00:05:00,270

kind of curious and I think it further

124

00:05:06,709 --> 00:05:03,469

demonstrates how the skeptical atheist

125

00:05:09,469 --> 00:05:06,719

mindset is so so much like the

126

00:05:11,450 --> 00:05:09,479

fundamentalist Christian mindset it has

127

00:05:13,760 --> 00:05:11,460

a set of beliefs it has this knee-jerk

128

00:05:16,100 --> 00:05:13,770

reaction to it and it just can't get

129

00:05:18,649 --> 00:05:16,110

outside of itself to look at the obvious

130

00:05:21,290 --> 00:05:18,659

foolishness of some of these statements

131

00:05:24,469 --> 00:05:21,300

at least that's my take from this he's a

132

00:05:27,409 --> 00:05:24,479

surgeon not a neuroscientist what should

133

00:05:29,749 --> 00:05:27,419

he know yeah what did he know so let's

134

00:05:31,490 --> 00:05:29,759

move on to the second critique of this

135

00:05:34,879 --> 00:05:31,500

article in Newsweek and it comes from

136

00:05:36,529 --> 00:05:34,889

our old friend dr. Steven novella who as

137

00:05:38,869 --> 00:05:36,539

I just mentioned is a clinical

138

00:05:42,050 --> 00:05:38,879

neurologist at Yale and he's also the

139

00:05:44,240 --> 00:05:42,060

host of very skeptical podcast called

140

00:05:47,149 --> 00:05:44,250

the skeptics guide to the universe and a

141

00:05:49,399 --> 00:05:47,159

lot of people really like Steve he has

142

00:05:51,439 --> 00:05:49,409

this really nice bedside manner persona

143

00:05:53,570 --> 00:05:51,449

that comes across and he's obviously a

144

00:05:56,300 --> 00:05:53,580

very smart guy and if you've followed

145

00:05:57,860 --> 00:05:56,310

skeptic over very long you know that dr.

146

00:05:59,749 --> 00:05:57,870

novella has been on this show a couple

147

00:06:02,240 --> 00:05:59,759

times and I've appeared on his show once

148

00:06:04,969 --> 00:06:02,250

and you also know if you've dug into

149

00:06:09,050 --> 00:06:04,979

those shows that while like I say he's a

150

00:06:11,629 --> 00:06:09,060

really smart guy he's very very light on

151
00:06:13,909 --> 00:06:11,639
near-death experience science I mean he

152
00:06:15,529 --> 00:06:13,919
just doesn't know the research and if

153
00:06:17,659 --> 00:06:15,539
you want proof for that go back to the

154
00:06:19,850 --> 00:06:17,669
last time that he was on skeptic oh I

155
00:06:21,529 --> 00:06:19,860
mean he not only failed to back up a

156
00:06:23,510 --> 00:06:21,539
couple of his assertions but at the end

157
00:06:25,100 --> 00:06:23,520
of that interview we left it that let's

158
00:06:26,839 --> 00:06:25,110
come back on and have a debate and

159
00:06:29,600 --> 00:06:26,849
Steve's going to provide this big list

160
00:06:31,790 --> 00:06:29,610
that he had of all the NDE research that

161
00:06:33,439 --> 00:06:31,800
proved his point and when I preempted

162
00:06:35,179 --> 00:06:33,449
that by publishing here's the research

163
00:06:37,700 --> 00:06:35,189

that I think you're going to publish and

164

00:06:40,100 --> 00:06:37,710

here's how it's been responded to by the

165

00:06:41,179 --> 00:06:40,110

near-death experience researchers that

166

00:06:43,999 --> 00:06:41,189

we've had on the show

167

00:06:45,740 --> 00:06:44,009

Steve disappeared and I've followed up

168

00:06:48,139 --> 00:06:45,750

with them multiple times on that and I

169

00:06:49,399 --> 00:06:48,149

know he's busy and all that but really

170

00:06:50,030 --> 00:06:49,409

when you piece the whole thing together

171

00:06:52,010 --> 00:06:50,040

what you

172

00:06:53,750 --> 00:06:52,020

see is somebody who's really not dug

173

00:06:55,580 --> 00:06:53,760

into the research really doesn't know

174

00:06:57,260 --> 00:06:55,590

there's no other way to say it what he's

175

00:06:59,600 --> 00:06:57,270

talking about when it comes to

176
00:07:01,040 --> 00:06:59,610
near-death experience science that's not

177
00:07:03,290 --> 00:07:01,050
to say that he doesn't know what he's

178
00:07:05,570 --> 00:07:03,300
talking about when it comes to Neurology

179
00:07:07,340 --> 00:07:05,580
I'm sure he's really qualified and he's

180
00:07:10,190 --> 00:07:07,350
just a really smart guy in general but

181
00:07:12,340 --> 00:07:10,200
as you'll see in his blog post here he

182
00:07:14,510 --> 00:07:12,350
can be a little bit sloppy sometimes

183
00:07:17,810 --> 00:07:14,520
here's what I mean this is from his

184
00:07:20,210 --> 00:07:17,820
October 8th blog post titled proof of

185
00:07:23,270 --> 00:07:20,220
heaven question mark emphasized the

186
00:07:25,850 --> 00:07:23,280
question mark Steve States while his

187
00:07:28,730 --> 00:07:25,860
that as dr. Alexander's experienced is

188
00:07:31,640 --> 00:07:28,740

certainly interesting his entire premise

189

00:07:35,180 --> 00:07:31,650

is flimsily based on a single word in

190

00:07:37,280 --> 00:07:35,190

the above paragraph while he assumes

191

00:07:39,560 --> 00:07:37,290

that the experience he remembers after

192

00:07:42,650 --> 00:07:39,570

waking from a coma occurred while his

193

00:07:44,960 --> 00:07:42,660

cortex was completely inactive he

194

00:07:47,330 --> 00:07:44,970

doesn't even seem aware of the fact that

195

00:07:49,580 --> 00:07:47,340

he's making that assumption or that this

196

00:07:51,860 --> 00:07:49,590

is the central premise to his claim as

197

00:07:53,780 --> 00:07:51,870

he does not address it in his article

198

00:07:55,070 --> 00:07:53,790

well now of course Steve's at a

199

00:07:57,470 --> 00:07:55,080

disadvantage here but wait I'm gonna

200

00:07:59,450 --> 00:07:57,480

stop apologizing for Steve I do that all

201
00:08:01,100 --> 00:07:59,460
the time I mean he says these stupid

202
00:08:02,870 --> 00:08:01,110
things and then I wanted a pathologizing

203
00:08:04,640 --> 00:08:02,880
for the guy and I'm not gonna do it here

204
00:08:06,860 --> 00:08:04,650
Steve you should have read the book I

205
00:08:09,530 --> 00:08:06,870
read a pre-publication version of the

206
00:08:12,290 --> 00:08:09,540
book and dr. Alexander addresses this

207
00:08:14,450 --> 00:08:12,300
directly in great detail or at the very

208
00:08:16,700 --> 00:08:14,460
least Eve you should have dropped him an

209
00:08:18,860 --> 00:08:16,710
email as a professional courtesy I'm

210
00:08:21,260 --> 00:08:18,870
sure he would have as he did to me

211
00:08:24,020 --> 00:08:21,270
provide a written response to your

212
00:08:26,840 --> 00:08:24,030
embarrassingly simplistic claim about

213
00:08:28,970 --> 00:08:26,850

the extent to which the guy analyzed his

214

00:08:31,820 --> 00:08:28,980

medical conditions in the likelihood

215

00:08:33,770 --> 00:08:31,830

that what you're proposing happened look

216

00:08:37,370 --> 00:08:33,780

back to the blog post later Steve writes

217

00:08:40,250 --> 00:08:37,380

of course his brain did not instantly go

218

00:08:42,589 --> 00:08:40,260

from completely inactive to normal or

219

00:08:45,140 --> 00:08:42,599

near-normal waking consciousness that

220

00:08:48,440 --> 00:08:45,150

transition must have taken hours if not

221

00:08:50,240 --> 00:08:48,450

a day or more so this then is Steve's

222

00:08:53,480 --> 00:08:50,250

explanation for what happened and then

223

00:08:55,490 --> 00:08:53,490

Steve writes Alexander claims there's no

224

00:08:59,060 --> 00:08:55,500

scientific explanation for his

225

00:09:00,590 --> 00:08:59,070

experience but I just gave one this is

226

00:09:03,380 --> 00:09:00,600

really interesting in a couple of ways

227

00:09:05,420 --> 00:09:03,390

first it's interesting

228

00:09:07,519 --> 00:09:05,430

again a Steve had read the book he'd

229

00:09:10,880 --> 00:09:07,529

find that one of the most amazing things

230

00:09:13,220 --> 00:09:10,890

about dr. Alexander's experience is that

231

00:09:14,870 --> 00:09:13,230

his physician is in the other room with

232

00:09:16,699 --> 00:09:14,880

his wife talking about whether they

233

00:09:19,940 --> 00:09:16,709

should terminate use of the ventilator

234

00:09:22,190 --> 00:09:19,950

and they go in and dr. Alexander pops

235

00:09:23,900 --> 00:09:22,200

out of this coma and he starts reaching

236

00:09:26,150 --> 00:09:23,910

for the ventilator tube and starts

237

00:09:28,040 --> 00:09:26,160

pulling on the tubes and then just his

238

00:09:30,650 --> 00:09:28,050

eyes wake up and he starts talking and

239

00:09:32,509 --> 00:09:30,660

in his book you'll read a letter for his

240

00:09:34,490 --> 00:09:32,519

physician that not only says this but

241

00:09:36,530 --> 00:09:34,500

says that it's absolutely stunning an

242

00:09:38,360 --> 00:09:36,540

amazing medical miracle that something

243

00:09:39,860 --> 00:09:38,370

like this could happen so that's one

244

00:09:40,819 --> 00:09:39,870

part of it Steve just doesn't know what

245

00:09:43,639 --> 00:09:40,829

he's talking about

246

00:09:45,769 --> 00:09:43,649

but the other part of it that I think is

247

00:09:48,350 --> 00:09:45,779

really interesting because it gets to

248

00:09:51,590 --> 00:09:48,360

the heart of the skeptical atheist

249

00:09:54,050 --> 00:09:51,600

response here is that why does Steve and

250

00:09:56,449 --> 00:09:54,060

these other atheists because Sam Harris

251
00:09:58,690 --> 00:09:56,459
really makes the same point why do they

252
00:10:01,550 --> 00:09:58,700
think that they only have to offer a

253
00:10:03,769 --> 00:10:01,560
scientific explanation why aren't they

254
00:10:06,139 --> 00:10:03,779
obligated to offering a better

255
00:10:08,829 --> 00:10:06,149
scientific explanation because hey by

256
00:10:12,260 --> 00:10:08,839
any measure this is an extraordinary

257
00:10:14,449 --> 00:10:12,270
medical case Steve seems to miss that

258
00:10:17,870 --> 00:10:14,459
Steve seems to miss that an e coli

259
00:10:19,730 --> 00:10:17,880
spinal meningitis infection is rare and

260
00:10:22,610 --> 00:10:19,740
for it to take hold of someone out of

261
00:10:24,980 --> 00:10:22,620
the blue this quickly is even rarer for

262
00:10:28,340 --> 00:10:24,990
someone to spend six days in a coma and

263
00:10:30,620 --> 00:10:28,350

wake up is rarer still all medical

264

00:10:33,170 --> 00:10:30,630

knowledge confirms this but what's even

265

00:10:35,660 --> 00:10:33,180

rarer is for someone to regain

266

00:10:39,019 --> 00:10:35,670

consciousness and have a crystal-clear

267

00:10:41,600 --> 00:10:39,029

memory of everything that happened while

268

00:10:43,970 --> 00:10:41,610

they were in coma and for them to go do

269

00:10:46,730 --> 00:10:43,980

independent research on near-death

270

00:10:49,910 --> 00:10:46,740

experience science and confirm that

271

00:10:53,180 --> 00:10:49,920

their experience fits perfectly with

272

00:10:56,120 --> 00:10:53,190

thousands of other accounts so the real

273

00:10:59,509 --> 00:10:56,130

question is why in light of all that

274

00:11:02,389 --> 00:10:59,519

does Steve feel it's adequate to provide

275

00:11:04,519 --> 00:11:02,399

such a silly explanation for what

276

00:11:06,740 --> 00:11:04,529

happened an explanation that any

277

00:11:09,560 --> 00:11:06,750

neurologist any neurosurgeon any

278

00:11:11,689 --> 00:11:09,570

neuroscientist would laugh at unless

279

00:11:14,240 --> 00:11:11,699

they knew that they had to defend it

280

00:11:16,580 --> 00:11:14,250

because not to defend it would open the

281

00:11:19,130 --> 00:11:16,590

door to the reality of near-death

282

00:11:21,640 --> 00:11:19,140

experience so check me out on that see

283

00:11:24,260 --> 00:11:21,650

if you can find a case of someone

284

00:11:27,500 --> 00:11:24,270

spontaneously waking up out of a coma

285

00:11:29,570 --> 00:11:27,510

after having an e coli spinal meningitis

286

00:11:32,390 --> 00:11:29,580

infection and then having a

287

00:11:34,700 --> 00:11:32,400

crystal-clear vivid memory of what

288

00:11:36,710 --> 00:11:34,710

happened during their coma I think I

289

00:11:39,350 --> 00:11:36,720

believe dr. Alexander when he says

290

00:11:42,200 --> 00:11:39,360

there's no medical history of that ever

291

00:11:45,140 --> 00:11:42,210

happening finally Steve wraps up his

292

00:11:47,810 --> 00:11:45,150

blog post with this Alexander in my

293

00:11:50,540 --> 00:11:47,820

opinion has failed to be true to the

294

00:11:52,790 --> 00:11:50,550

scientist he claims to be he did not

295

00:11:55,910 --> 00:11:52,800

step back from his powerful experience

296

00:11:57,380 --> 00:11:55,920

and ask dispassionate questions well

297

00:11:59,390 --> 00:11:57,390

again I don't know how to counter this

298

00:12:01,700 --> 00:11:59,400

other than to say that's completely

299

00:12:03,080 --> 00:12:01,710

wrong it's exactly what the book is

300

00:12:05,570 --> 00:12:03,090

about if you read the book you'll find

301
00:12:07,700 --> 00:12:05,580
that's exactly what the guy did he

302
00:12:09,770 --> 00:12:07,710
dispassionately step back from his

303
00:12:11,570 --> 00:12:09,780
experience he didn't know anything about

304
00:12:13,790 --> 00:12:11,580
near-death experience he didn't read

305
00:12:15,920 --> 00:12:13,800
anything about near-death experience he

306
00:12:18,620 --> 00:12:15,930
went and documented his account as best

307
00:12:20,870 --> 00:12:18,630
he could then he did as much research as

308
00:12:22,670 --> 00:12:20,880
he could as a neurosurgeon as a

309
00:12:24,800 --> 00:12:22,680
neuroscientist to try and come up with a

310
00:12:26,600 --> 00:12:24,810
conventional explanation for this he

311
00:12:28,310 --> 00:12:26,610
talked to many of his colleagues many of

312
00:12:30,380 --> 00:12:28,320
the brightest and well-respected people

313
00:12:32,180 --> 00:12:30,390

in the field he tried to come up for an

314

00:12:34,190 --> 00:12:32,190

explanation for this and the best

315

00:12:36,770 --> 00:12:34,200

explanation that he could come up with

316

00:12:40,010 --> 00:12:36,780

related back to near-death experience

317

00:12:42,620 --> 00:12:40,020

science so again Steve is being sloppy

318

00:12:46,970 --> 00:12:42,630

in his analysis and he winds up being

319

00:12:50,240 --> 00:12:46,980

completely wrong okay finally become too

320

00:12:52,610 --> 00:12:50,250

well-known atheist and author sam harris

321

00:12:54,590 --> 00:12:52,620

who does as I mentioned have a PhD in

322

00:12:57,290 --> 00:12:54,600

neuroscience although he's not actively

323

00:12:59,420 --> 00:12:57,300

working in the field now Sam Harris is

324

00:13:02,450 --> 00:12:59,430

an interesting guy because on one hand

325

00:13:04,130 --> 00:13:02,460

he's this fire-breathing atheist that

326

00:13:06,800 --> 00:13:04,140

for many folks who go for that kind of

327

00:13:09,730 --> 00:13:06,810

stuff really admire him for but in the

328

00:13:12,650 --> 00:13:09,740

last few years he's been found

329

00:13:14,420 --> 00:13:12,660

backpedaling on the party line at times

330

00:13:16,520 --> 00:13:14,430

and he's taken a lot of heat for this

331

00:13:19,490 --> 00:13:16,530

for example even in this post which is

332

00:13:22,000 --> 00:13:19,500

very very critical of dr. Alexander he

333

00:13:24,800 --> 00:13:22,010

writes as many of you know I'm

334

00:13:27,950 --> 00:13:24,810

interested in spiritual experiences of

335

00:13:29,420 --> 00:13:27,960

the sort Alexander reports hmm even more

336

00:13:32,690 --> 00:13:29,430

interesting is this

337

00:13:34,670 --> 00:13:32,700

I remain agnostic on the question of how

338

00:13:35,570 --> 00:13:34,680

consciousness relates to the physical

339

00:13:37,550 --> 00:13:35,580

world

340

00:13:39,650 --> 00:13:37,560

now that might slip by for most

341

00:13:41,810 --> 00:13:39,660

skeptical listeners and sound pretty

342

00:13:44,930 --> 00:13:41,820

benign but for the true hardcore

343

00:13:47,269 --> 00:13:44,940

believers in atheism if they're really

344

00:13:49,579 --> 00:13:47,279

paying attention that's quite a

345

00:13:51,889 --> 00:13:49,589

statement and again you get the sense

346

00:13:54,560 --> 00:13:51,899

that he has to tread very lightly here

347

00:13:57,440 --> 00:13:54,570

so as not to offend his fan base but

348

00:13:59,420 --> 00:13:57,450

then when he turns his attention on dr.

349

00:14:02,540 --> 00:13:59,430

eben Alexander and the near-death

350

00:14:04,880 --> 00:14:02,550

experience account he gets right down to

351

00:14:07,010 --> 00:14:04,890

business and gives people what they want

352

00:14:09,760 --> 00:14:07,020

to hear here's what he says in his blog

353

00:14:12,620 --> 00:14:09,770

post titled this must be heaven

354

00:14:15,889 --> 00:14:12,630

Alexander's account is so bad and

355

00:14:17,480 --> 00:14:15,899

reasoning so lazy and to densha's by the

356

00:14:19,280 --> 00:14:17,490

way that's a word I have to admit that I

357

00:14:21,500 --> 00:14:19,290

not only had to look up but I had to

358

00:14:22,699 --> 00:14:21,510

press the little audio button next

359

00:14:24,889 --> 00:14:22,709

through it just so I could make sure I'd

360

00:14:26,630 --> 00:14:24,899

pronounced it right anyways so lazy and

361

00:14:29,180 --> 00:14:26,640

to dentists that it would be beneath

362

00:14:32,060 --> 00:14:29,190

notice if not for the fact that it

363

00:14:36,110 --> 00:14:32,070

currently disgraces the cover of a major

364

00:14:38,600 --> 00:14:36,120

news magazine so I read this and first

365

00:14:40,910 --> 00:14:38,610

of all having read dr. Alexander's book

366

00:14:42,380 --> 00:14:40,920

again something that sam Harris clearly

367

00:14:45,670 --> 00:14:42,390

hadn't done hadn't read the book and

368

00:14:48,440 --> 00:14:45,680

having interviewed dr. Alexander twice

369

00:14:50,120 --> 00:14:48,450

again something Sam Harris has never

370

00:14:51,860 --> 00:14:50,130

done never corresponded with him never

371

00:14:54,019 --> 00:14:51,870

emailed him or tried to get any kind of

372

00:14:56,000 --> 00:14:54,029

clarification but anyway since I had

373

00:14:58,010 --> 00:14:56,010

this background with even Alexander I

374

00:14:59,660 --> 00:14:58,020

knew that Sam Harris was completely full

375

00:15:02,750 --> 00:14:59,670

of it as a complete nonsense

376

00:15:04,730 --> 00:15:02,760

I mean lazy reasoning here's a guy in

377

00:15:06,769 --> 00:15:04,740

even Alexander who spent months

378

00:15:08,600 --> 00:15:06,779

devouring every paper he could get his

379

00:15:10,250 --> 00:15:08,610

hands on that might explain what

380

00:15:12,079 --> 00:15:10,260

happened to him I already went through

381

00:15:14,090 --> 00:15:12,089

and you read in his book and hearing his

382

00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:14,100

interview all the things he did to try

383

00:15:19,340 --> 00:15:17,010

and understand what's going on I mean if

384

00:15:20,990 --> 00:15:19,350

anyone is being lazy here you'd have to

385

00:15:23,180 --> 00:15:21,000

say it's Sam Harris he didn't read the

386

00:15:25,940 --> 00:15:23,190

guy's book before firing off this

387

00:15:27,710 --> 00:15:25,950

incredibly incendiary blog post but

388

00:15:30,650 --> 00:15:27,720

leaving all that aside the other thing I

389

00:15:32,720 --> 00:15:30,660

thought when I read this was great let's

390

00:15:35,030 --> 00:15:32,730

have a debate I thought here's this

391

00:15:37,850 --> 00:15:35,040

highly influential guy in sam harris

392

00:15:40,130 --> 00:15:37,860

who's spouting off about NDE science

393

00:15:41,960 --> 00:15:40,140

when he clearly has no idea what he's

394

00:15:43,460 --> 00:15:41,970

talking about I thought what a great

395

00:15:45,920 --> 00:15:43,470

opportunity

396

00:15:48,680 --> 00:15:45,930

even Alexander will tear this guy apart

397

00:15:50,870 --> 00:15:48,690

and I'd kind of like to see it I have to

398

00:15:52,820 --> 00:15:50,880

admit so I fired off an email Sam Harris

399

00:15:54,920 --> 00:15:52,830

told him that I hate I had just finished

400

00:15:56,450 --> 00:15:54,930

talking to Alexander and that and I felt

401
00:15:58,400 --> 00:15:56,460
pretty confident that I could get him

402
00:16:00,650 --> 00:15:58,410
interested in this debate I said do you

403
00:16:02,870 --> 00:16:00,660
have an hour to spare to maybe square

404
00:16:05,210 --> 00:16:02,880
off against this guy well wouldn't you

405
00:16:07,280 --> 00:16:05,220
know Sam Harris a little bit too busy to

406
00:16:09,950 --> 00:16:07,290
debate to face off with the guy that

407
00:16:13,190 --> 00:16:09,960
he's so fiercely and personally attacked

408
00:16:16,040 --> 00:16:13,200
but he did offer this in an email to me

409
00:16:19,610 --> 00:16:16,050
check this out he says there's nothing

410
00:16:21,470 --> 00:16:19,620
to debate he can't reasonably claim that

411
00:16:24,170 --> 00:16:21,480
the relevant parts of his brain were

412
00:16:27,170 --> 00:16:24,180
quote unquote completely shut down it's

413
00:16:29,210 --> 00:16:27,180

just not a factual statement and yet

414

00:16:31,940 --> 00:16:29,220

everything in his account hinges on

415

00:16:34,370 --> 00:16:31,950

making that claim and even if I granted

416

00:16:37,460 --> 00:16:34,380

that his brain was shut down it's not

417

00:16:39,200 --> 00:16:37,470

shut down now and there's absolutely no

418

00:16:41,240 --> 00:16:39,210

way for him to establish or even

419

00:16:44,000 --> 00:16:41,250

subjectively know that he didn't have

420

00:16:47,180 --> 00:16:44,010

this experience as his brain was coming

421

00:16:48,590 --> 00:16:47,190

back online sound familiar it's exactly

422

00:16:50,660 --> 00:16:48,600

the same thing you heard from Steven

423

00:16:52,520 --> 00:16:50,670

novella and explanations exactly the

424

00:16:56,510 --> 00:16:52,530

same but never mind and then he wraps it

425

00:17:00,440 --> 00:16:56,520

up by saying end of debate as far as I'm

426
00:17:02,480 --> 00:17:00,450
concerned so you got a love the way he

427
00:17:05,960 --> 00:17:02,490
starts this there's nothing to debate

428
00:17:09,020 --> 00:17:05,970
and ends it end of debate as far as I'm

429
00:17:11,540 --> 00:17:09,030
concerned no this is obviously over the

430
00:17:14,390 --> 00:17:11,550
top arrogance but it's more than that as

431
00:17:18,110 --> 00:17:14,400
I alluded to earlier it's a dead

432
00:17:20,840 --> 00:17:18,120
giveaway that Sam Harris is totally in

433
00:17:21,530 --> 00:17:20,850
the dark about near-death experience

434
00:17:24,020 --> 00:17:21,540
research

435
00:17:26,180 --> 00:17:24,030
I mean sure dr. Alexander's case is

436
00:17:27,770 --> 00:17:26,190
remarkable it's a medical miracle that

437
00:17:30,530 --> 00:17:27,780
defies a conventional medical

438
00:17:33,350 --> 00:17:30,540

explanation but what really makes his

439

00:17:35,950 --> 00:17:33,360

account so amazing is that it perfectly

440

00:17:38,570 --> 00:17:35,960

fits into a larger body of

441

00:17:40,940 --> 00:17:38,580

overwhelmingly compelling evidence that

442

00:17:43,430 --> 00:17:40,950

concludes that millions of people have

443

00:17:46,070 --> 00:17:43,440

had these profound hyper conscious

444

00:17:48,440 --> 00:17:46,080

experiences at a time when they had no

445

00:17:50,900 --> 00:17:48,450

brain or at the very least a severely

446

00:17:53,870 --> 00:17:50,910

compromised brain that isn't supposed to

447

00:17:56,660 --> 00:17:53,880

work in that way so if the fact that sam

448

00:17:58,700 --> 00:17:56,670

harris is afraid to face even hallux

449

00:18:00,170 --> 00:17:58,710

in a debate if that doesn't make you

450

00:18:02,510 --> 00:18:00,180

wonder about the strength of his

451
00:18:06,100 --> 00:18:02,520
argument then the fact that he seems to

452
00:18:08,960 --> 00:18:06,110
be completely unaware of the over 65

453
00:18:11,600 --> 00:18:08,970
peer-reviewed clinical experiments that

454
00:18:14,390 --> 00:18:11,610
corroborate dr. Alexander's experience

455
00:18:17,300 --> 00:18:14,400
well that should be the clincher in

456
00:18:19,850 --> 00:18:17,310
establishing that this is just more kind

457
00:18:22,040 --> 00:18:19,860
of political dribble that were feeding

458
00:18:23,780 --> 00:18:22,050
the Atheist crowd stuff that they want

459
00:18:24,790 --> 00:18:23,790
to hear and wrapping it up in the way

460
00:18:27,830 --> 00:18:24,800
that sounds

461
00:18:29,390 --> 00:18:27,840
scientific or medical and and by the way

462
00:18:31,310 --> 00:18:29,400
if you really want to get into the

463
00:18:33,890 --> 00:18:31,320

medical part of this and the more

464

00:18:36,920 --> 00:18:33,900

formalized arguments that one harris

465

00:18:39,470 --> 00:18:36,930

gives and then doctor even alexander

466

00:18:41,960 --> 00:18:39,480

refutes i would direct you to the

467

00:18:44,900 --> 00:18:41,970

skeptical website where i've posted a

468

00:18:47,870 --> 00:18:44,910

write-up that dr. alexander has given me

469

00:18:50,690 --> 00:18:47,880

in response to dr. Harris's critique of

470

00:18:52,340 --> 00:18:50,700

the blog so i emailed sam harris and we

471

00:18:54,140 --> 00:18:52,350

emailed back and forth and i said hey if

472

00:18:56,090 --> 00:18:54,150

i get a response from even alexander

473

00:18:58,280 --> 00:18:56,100

i'll publish that and he was like great

474

00:19:00,410 --> 00:18:58,290

go ahead and do it so that's exactly

475

00:19:02,420 --> 00:19:00,420

what i'm gonna do if you want to wade

476

00:19:04,130 --> 00:19:02,430

through that you'll see these guys are

477

00:19:06,050 --> 00:19:04,140

talking about stuff that I don't fully

478

00:19:08,030 --> 00:19:06,060

understand and I could read it into the

479

00:19:09,740 --> 00:19:08,040

podcast but I wouldn't really know what

480

00:19:13,220 --> 00:19:09,750

I'm talking about but I'll tell you this

481

00:19:17,630 --> 00:19:13,230

if sam harris wants a tangle with eben

482

00:19:18,710 --> 00:19:17,640

Alexander bring it on and if you don't

483

00:19:20,900 --> 00:19:18,720

want to face him

484

00:19:22,700 --> 00:19:20,910

please don't tell us that you're too

485

00:19:25,610 --> 00:19:22,710

busy that you can write these blog posts

486

00:19:28,040 --> 00:19:25,620

that take you hours to do and you can't

487

00:19:30,200 --> 00:19:28,050

face off with the guy for an hour what I

488

00:19:31,910 --> 00:19:30,210

think you'll find when you listen to dr.

489

00:19:33,860 --> 00:19:31,920

Alexander next week and when you read

490

00:19:35,210 --> 00:19:33,870

the book and when you read the appendix

491

00:19:37,940 --> 00:19:35,220

to the book where he gives kind of the

492

00:19:40,940 --> 00:19:37,950

more detailed medical explanation for

493

00:19:43,250 --> 00:19:40,950

what went on you'll clearly see who

494

00:19:45,200 --> 00:19:43,260

really holds the cards in this case and

495

00:19:47,360 --> 00:19:45,210

who's just blowing smoke well that's

496

00:19:49,070 --> 00:19:47,370

gonna do it for this intro to a very

497

00:19:51,410 --> 00:19:49,080

interesting interview with even

498

00:19:53,960 --> 00:19:51,420

Alexander and this kind of firestorm of

499

00:19:55,970 --> 00:19:53,970

controversy that sprung up from his book

500

00:19:57,980 --> 00:19:55,980

proof of heaven which I totally

501
00:19:59,210 --> 00:19:57,990
understand it's a very provocative title

502
00:20:00,800 --> 00:19:59,220
that you know they're trying to sell

503
00:20:02,480 --> 00:20:00,810
books so we all understand why they

504
00:20:04,820 --> 00:20:02,490
write titles like that but nonetheless

505
00:20:07,400 --> 00:20:04,830
we could have all anticipated that it

506
00:20:09,800 --> 00:20:07,410
would generate quite a response from the

507
00:20:10,520 --> 00:20:09,810
Atheist skeptical crowd at another point

508
00:20:13,640 --> 00:20:10,530
you know by the

509
00:20:16,550 --> 00:20:13,650
way I keep saying atheism scepticism

510
00:20:18,470 --> 00:20:16,560
synonymous I mean do you need any more

511
00:20:20,420 --> 00:20:18,480
proof you have two of the big names in

512
00:20:23,300 --> 00:20:20,430
atheism Sam Harris

513
00:20:25,850 --> 00:20:23,310

Vick Stanger you have big name in the

514

00:20:27,350 --> 00:20:25,860

skeptical movement a J ref director or

515

00:20:29,300 --> 00:20:27,360

some kind of title that Steve novella

516

00:20:31,430 --> 00:20:29,310

has they're all singing out of the exact

517

00:20:34,040 --> 00:20:31,440

same hymn book so let there be no debate

518

00:20:36,740 --> 00:20:34,050

about whether or not those organizations

519

00:20:38,810 --> 00:20:36,750

are virtually synonymous anyways please

520

00:20:40,250 --> 00:20:38,820

check out dr. Alexander's write-up

521

00:20:42,440 --> 00:20:40,260

please join us on the forum for a

522

00:20:44,780 --> 00:20:42,450

discussion on these topics the place to

523

00:20:49,160 --> 00:20:44,790

reach us of course is at skeptic Oh calm

524

00:20:51,410 --> 00:20:49,170

that's s ke PT i ke o calm you can link

525

00:20:53,480 --> 00:20:51,420

up there to any of our almost 200

526

00:20:55,550 --> 00:20:53,490

previous shows into a Facebook email

527

00:20:57,110 --> 00:20:55,560

link to me an email link to a forum or a

528

00:21:00,110 --> 00:20:57,120

place where you can just leave a comment

529

00:21:02,330 --> 00:21:00,120

on the website I'm sure we'll get lots

530

00:21:05,230 --> 00:21:02,340

of comments for from this show I know

531

00:21:08,510 --> 00:21:05,240

that I know that these are very touchy

532

00:21:10,940 --> 00:21:08,520

sacred items for a lot of atheists and

533

00:21:13,430 --> 00:21:10,950

skeptics and but the only way we make

534

00:21:15,410 --> 00:21:13,440

progress is by confronting these issues

535

00:21:18,020 --> 00:21:15,420

head-on and really and really hashing

536

00:21:20,660 --> 00:21:18,030

out different opinions so that's it for

537

00:21:22,940 --> 00:21:20,670

this week as I just mentioned we'll be

538

00:21:25,760 --> 00:21:22,950

back with the full interview with dr.