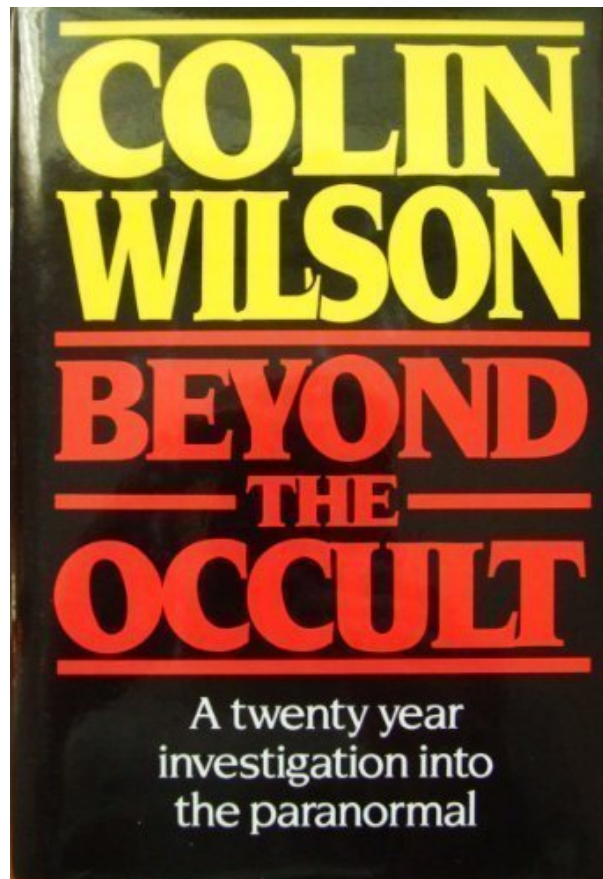
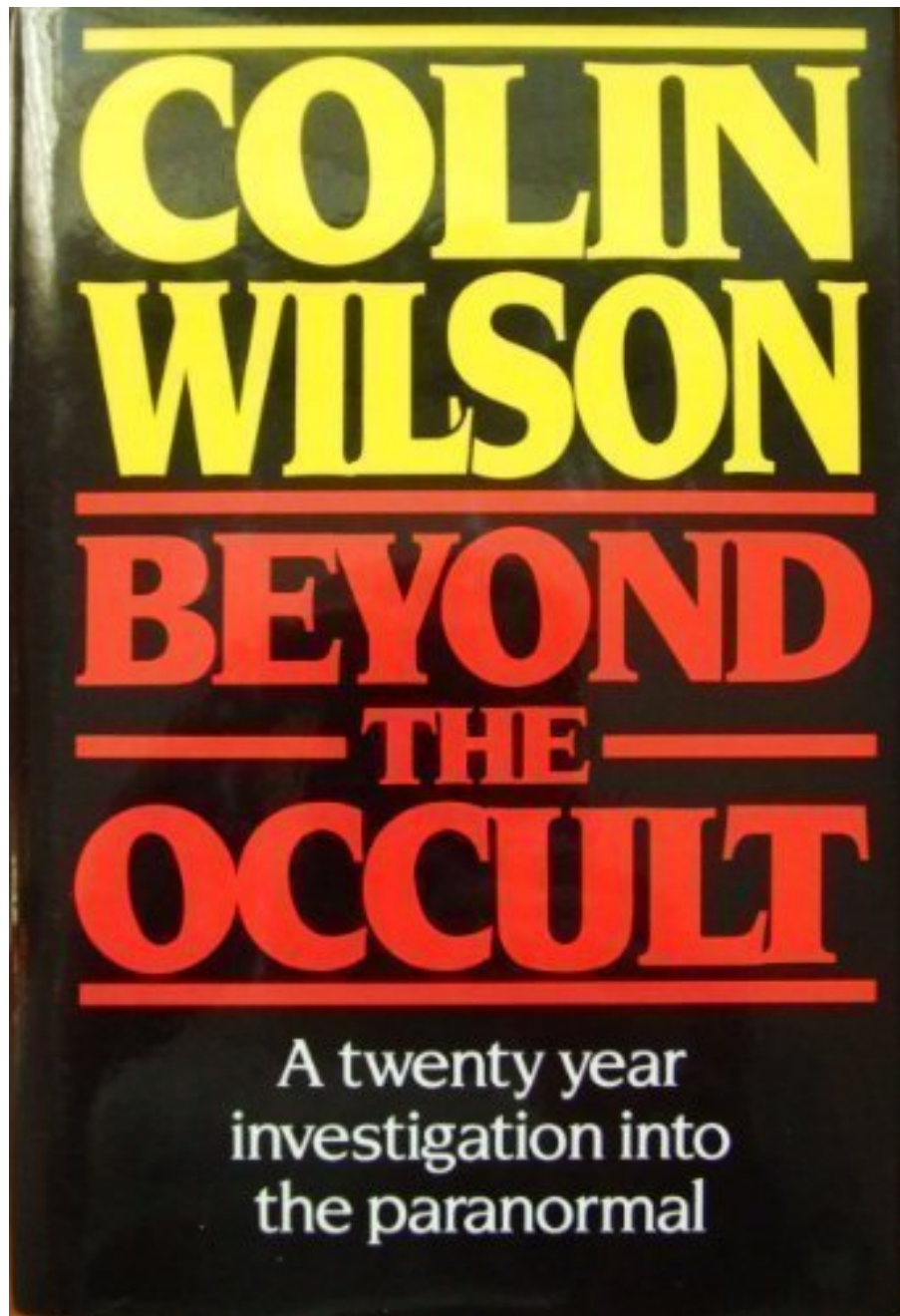


BEYOND THE OCCULT BY COLIN WILSON



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- Gordon Stein, Univ. of Rhode Island

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By Colin Wilson. A twenty-year investigation into the paranormal. ISBN 0-88184-520-5. Colin Wilson (*The Occult ; The Misfits*) maintains that a belief in telepathy and precognition is compatible with science, arguing that mystical and paranormal experiences involve a widening of one's ordinary field of perception. A well-documented synthesis of research into the paranormal, this lively, succinct narrative hops from ESP to mediumship, out-of-body travel, spirit possession, poltergeists, near-death visions and reincarnation. Wilson weaves in the psychic or mystical experiences of Blake, Goethe, Jung, Maupassant, Arthur Koestler, Dylan Thomas, Philip K. Dick, others. He grounds his beliefs in the theory of an "information universe," in which everything that ever happened is somehow on record, and in the view that so-called occult powers are latent in each of us as part of our unfulfilled evolutionary potential.

- Sales Rank: #2054615 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Carroll n Graf Pub
- Published on: 1989-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 6.25" w x 1.25" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 381 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Consciousness, cosmology and spirituality

By Peter Uys

This book was published 20 years after the author's bestseller *The Occult* and reveals the results of his further research in a grand treatise on the complete spectrum of the paranormal and the mystical, including ESP, clairvoyance, psychometry, precognition, psychokinesis, dowsing, poltergeists, spirit possession and reincarnation. He expertly links the latest scientific thinking in the fields of physics and cosmology with fascinating experiences and phenomena in the realm of the paranormal. To my mind, he succeeds in formulating a coherent general occult theory that holds water. He echoes the thoughts of other writers in the field of consciousness and cosmology, that we are evolving and are fast approaching the edge of a quantum leap into a vastly expanded human consciousness. I loved his discussion of mystics, writers and artists like Gurdjieff, Graham Greene and Sartre. In particular, I enjoyed his dissection of existentialist writers like Sartre and their negative view of the world, as a case of experiencing a reduced consciousness. The peak experience on the other hand, is the result of expanded consciousness and can be cultivated successfully. I was fascinated by many of his ideas, like the one that human beings are colonists in the world of matter, like a vanguard sent in to explore this reality. There are fascinating speculations on the nature of time, parallel universes or other dimension and the question of whether we are only dealing with aspects of the human psyche or whether conscious entities are real. The work of scientists like Niels Bohr, David Bohm and Kark Pribram is discussed, including theory of the hologramatic universe. His research is quite rigorous and sometimes the text may appear a bit repetitive as he returns again and again to earlier examples from literature or from real life experiences to make a point or a connection. Ultimately this is necessary for the book to work as well as it does. His conclusion is that the majority of mankind accepts mental stagnation as a norm (ordinary consciousness being stagnation) and makes no effort to build its insights into a pyramid. When this situation changes, humans will enter the next stage of evolution. The book concludes with a vast bibliography and a detailed index. *Beyond The Occult* remains a stimulating and mind expanding read and I recommend it to all people who are interested in cosmology, consciousness and spirituality.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

What if it's not "paranormal" after all?

By Takis Tz.

Colin Wilson investigates the world of the "paranormal" by adopting a scientific approach to the issue. For those that might off hand think this is not possible this book is highly recommended. The author begins by pointing out the overwhelming quantity of evidence on what is called paranormal and that includes telepathy, time travel, astral projection, spirits, poltergeist and in general anything that conventional science refuses stubbornly to deal with on the grounds that "it can't happen".

But, it does happen and it's been happening for 10s of centuries, indeed since the beginning of recorded history as we know it.

The premise that our brain possesses hidden powers upon which some people "stumble" by accident while others practice on after they discover them is dominant in the book. In that respect Wilson attributes normality to the paranormal, after all our brain is tremendously unexplored and the notion that anything we don't understand (or don't know about) is not happening is absurd and has caused embarrassment to mainstream scientists many times in the past.

It should go without mentioning that such an undertaking as this book here should be approached by the

reader with the utmost state of openmindedness. If there is anything to be discovered and understood about realities we don't seem to accept yet we must first consider them as a possibility to begin with.

"Beyond the occult" is written (as are most C. Wilson books) with a very philosophical aspect to it without at any point being inaccessible or difficult. In fact, this book will engulf you no matter what your stance is on the subject alone on the charismatic way it is written, laid out in its contents and explored. Wilson successfully binds "conventional reality" with that of the paranormal without insulting the intelligence of those who tend to think on more "down to earth" terms. There is no issues being shoved down anyone's throat and the author's own scepticism and questioning is also involved as he has for years investigated this extremely interesting area.

If you want to start your reading on this area but feel spooked and don't know where to begin then this is definitely your door into the other side. Approach without fear.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A Very Important Book, Both as Research and as Original Thought

By Ileana Grams-Moog

This book, first published in 1988, is the culmination, to that point, of Wilson's lifetime of thinking about the problem he first delineated in *The Outsider*, published when he was barely out of his teens. Here's the problem: most of life seems banal and boring, and yet there are moments that reveal a completely different truth: life is inherently fresh, vital, and interesting in every tiny detail, and we are privileged to be experiencing it. In *The Outsider*, he defines Outsiders as those who refuse to settle for the ordinary experience of life, but then mostly come to grief trying to solve the problem of how to experience life as it seems in those rare moments of ecstasy. *Religion and the Rebel*, published in 1957, was a followup attempt to answer this question in a deeper and more coherent way.

Wilson, pretty much self-educated, is an extraordinary scholar and writer, with a gift of condensing huge amounts of material into a form that is clear, fascinating, and eventually coheres as part of a long movement to a conclusion about the problem he is addressing. *The Outsider* and *Religion and the Rebel* were both organized around brief biographies of authors who had addressed what Wilson calls the Outsider problem. Even now, many years later, the books are well worth reading for their information and insights about the writers covered in them. I first read *The Outsider* when I was a fifteen-year-old misfit, and felt its impact as an almost physical shock. It was the most exciting book I had ever read--but it didn't seem to offer much solution, only a delineation of the problem, and the sense that I wasn't alone. I found a used copy of *Religion and the Rebel* several years later and bought it, but never read it through, as it seemed not to have much in the way of an answer either. Several years ago, I read *The Occult*, and then *Beyond the Occult*, as part of a search for information about a range of strange phenomena. Good as both books were on that score, I wasn't really interested in their larger message.

However, a week or so ago, I found *Religion and the Rebel* and actually began to read it. From a teenage misfit, I turned into a professor of philosophy, now retired. How many books written by an amateur scholar in his twenties, more than fifty years ago, could be read today, by a philosopher in her sixties, and found worth reading? Not many, I'll bet. But this was--very much so. Further, because I have matured, I understood that this book, *The Occult*, and *Beyond the Occult*, are part of the single project I outlined in my first paragraph. So I reread both of the latter. This review is based on my rereading.

In *Beyond the Occult*, Wilson explains that he wrote *The Occult* because he was asked to, and that he began as a sceptic about the whole topic. Like all who examine the evidence impartially, he says--and I agree, having had the same experience--, he ended as a believer in many occult phenomena, and with a theory, expressed fairly clearly in *The Occult*, that could be called a Unified Theory of the paranormal. He also

answered, more deeply than before, his question of how to maintain the freshness of vision about life that we experience at peak moments. But, he says in *Beyond the Occult*, he grew dissatisfied with his Unified Theory because it did not cover certain phenomena, such as evidence of survival of death, possession, and some others, adequately. *Beyond the Occult* is his continuation of his double project in *The Occult*: to survey fairly the evidence for a number of paranormal phenomena and come to what he feels are reasonable conclusions about their truth-status and implications, and to show how paranormal phenomena of all kinds shed light on the nature of reality and what our attitude to life should be. In my opinion, he succeeds in the first project brilliantly, and in the second one very well.

Like *Beyond the Occult*, *The Occult* surveys a breathtakingly wide sweep of phenomena in a way that is always fascinating, meticulously well-researched and balanced--a rare combination. It is even rarer to find a thinker who is willing to believe things he'd much rather not believe because the evidence seems to warrant it. Wilson is one of those rare thinkers. But even more rare and amazing is that the rebellious and morose youth who wrote *The Outsider* has deepened and expanded his conviction that saying Yes to life is a truer response than saying No. In *Beyond the Occult* he shows us why he thinks this is true in a way which both illuminates the meaningfulness of paranormal phenomena, and their ultimate insignificance compared to the project of taking our lives as precious gifts, worthy of our best efforts to use them well.

My one criticism is that, at least as of when he wrote this book, he still has no real clue as to the contributions Eastern thought, and especially Buddhism, have to make to solving the Outsider problem. But then, that's something I plan to write about myself, as part of a similar project.

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