

**The Book**

**Of the Unknown**

## Introduction

The famous author of horror, H. P. Lovecraft once wrote that fear is nature's strongest emotion. It is fear that drives us, shaping our behaviors, molding our respective scopes of reality. Fear has a root, and this root, the most terrifying of all things existent, is the unknown.

In the previous two books we developed an understanding of what popular science has to say about existence and the universe. The final book of the collection, my favorite, is all about the things that popular science currently discounts or is believed to discount or oppose. By omitting or ignoring a certain range of topics -- those which are over-simplistically and romantically squeezed to fit under the broad label of "the unknown" -- the scientific community manages to limit the effectiveness of our ability to understand reality, while simultaneously repelling both those who have witnessed or those who would simply like to believe in the existence of certain aspects of nature that have yet to be fully explained and accepted by modern science. Many so-called "scientists" (a.k.a. pseudoscientists) try to ignore the evidence for realms existing beyond the accepted scientific framework. Such a forsaking of evidence is the *opposite* of what a true scientist does. A true scientist directly follows the scientific method and takes every last bit of evidence that nature provides into consideration. As the scientific community *does* commonly ignore evidence, it pushes the realm of the "paranormal" into the realm of religion and theism, while grasping onto more "sure" topics of research. True scientists then become ostracized for being interested in this broad field of abandoned topics. The ones that ignore ridicule from the scientific community are those who have little to lose, those who have little reputation to preserve, and therefore, the most respected "scientists" are almost forced to ignore the realm of the "paranormal." When both little known and ill respected scientists make advances in the field of the "paranormal," they are generally given little, if any attention, and consequently remain almost unknown to the public. As the result of this filtering of true scientific knowledge, these little studied subjects are wrongly labeled "paranormal" and are reserved for science's cellar, called the occult. These subjects, which are grouped with other categories, such as the "supernatural" and "divine intervention," are ultimately abandoned to the hands of theistic interpreters.

Perhaps ironically, perhaps not, the idea of an omnipotent Creator is intimately associated with the aspects of nature that we label "paranormal." "God" essentially fills the gap between the known and the unknown. In fact, the terms "the unknown" and "what is unknown" can be replaced for the labels "God" and "Creator" in all Holy Books (except when these labels are broken by mistranslation.) The second that people began to question this man-made quick-fix -- which fills in the gaps of our understanding of reality -- the temporary, weak-bond glue that it is began to lose hold.

People are typically fearful of what they don't understand. This leads to yet another principle separation between the scientist and the preacher. The preacher attempts to resolve this fear by blaming "God" -- a false, solely psychological resolution: the religious placebo. The scientist also fears the unknown, but attempts to resolve his/her fear by finding the true, natural answers to his/her inquiries about the nature of the universe; and, unlike the preacher, s/he can apply this new knowledge to modern technology and *change* our understanding of the universe

for the better.

Sadly, when dealing with the topics classified as the “unknown,” there are many pseudoscientists that either skip the scientific method or omit certain facts to prove their point. Weeding out false facts and conclusions becomes quite a tedious task because of these pseudoscientists. In this book, we will do our best to do just this, finding the true answers to the mysteries of the unknown. Of course, I will not be able to put all of the facts and evidence on the table because of the need for the preservation of space and because of the amount of highly involved topics that we will cover. It is entirely possible that all of the theories presented in this book may not be 100% correct, as they are just theories, but, at the very least, they will be able to show how naïve it is to simply conclude an event to be “supernatural” when our understanding of what is natural is still so primitive. Unlike the pseudoscientist, I *highly encourage* the readers of this book to do further research, and I have confidence that everyone will independently arrive at the same conclusions that this book details.

An important thing to know before exploring the realm of the “paranormal” is that its exploration was not always taboo. Some of the subjects that we classify as paranormal today used to be integral parts of the religions of old, even Christianity. Around the European Renaissance, certain factors began to extinguish these beliefs, such as the introduction of rationalism, pantheism, skepticism, and the Doctrine of Rousseau.

When society accepts the existence of new aspects of nature, the beliefs that it disburses simultaneously begin to change. Our shared structure of belief is based on social norms: our perception of reality is based around whatever we are told is physically possible. Unless we can carry out the very arduous task of reconditioning ourselves, we will forever be shaped by these social boundaries. As the result of these shared ideas regarding our limitations as humans, we rarely ever come close to reaching our full potential. If we don’t consciously realize the existence of this subconscious mind molding, and we don’t forcefully reverse it through additional thought, we will never surpass these limitations. This mind molding is called premature cognitive commitment, and it was proven many years ago in a study at Harvard. The experimenters in this study used baby kittens as their subjects, placing them into two separate habitats where they lived until old age. One half lived in a habitat that contained only horizontal stripes (painted on walls and structures), and the other half lived in a habitat that contained only vertical stripes. In old age both groups could only recognize stimuli that were horizontal or vertical, respective to their habitats. (Shanon; Chopra, pp.106-7) This is the same way that we humans are molded to society: information, when placed into memory, runs through the filter that is our perception, which is shaped by our environment -- selective memory. As society’s understanding of the universe changes, our individual understandings and perceptions also change.

Soon after Christianity lost many of its supernatural beliefs, an entirely new structure of supernatural beliefs arose. This came in the form of the mid-Nineteenth Century’s *spiritualism*. Society quickly extinguished the bulk of this movement, replacing it with a more scientific perspective of the universe. Today’s remnants of the spiritualist movement are typically referred to as New Age groups. Was science’s complete dismissal of spiritualism the correct approach?

Today, scientists are beginning to find out that there are some aspects of spiritualism that at *least* may be valid, and may even be integral components of healthy thinking. I, for one, was raised a materialist with no solid spiritual underpinning, but discovered some of these forgotten aspects of spiritual thinking, which I now use every day to help maintain a healthy mental

balance.

Our society is based on extremes. You can either be monotheistic or pagan, you can be a democrat or a republican, you can be a Good Samaritan or a criminal, and there is simply little room for a median. This is quite unfortunate, seeing how almost all of the truly correct beliefs and stances in the entire world of thought are mediations between two extremes. Materialism and extremist spiritualism are polar opposites, and those who are dogmatic either way are equally wrong. Materialism disregards the concept of a soul and also many of the capabilities of pure energy (its unwound form) that spiritualism suggests exist. Life to materialists is inevitably more so based on possessions than on internal happiness -- a cold way to live out life. On the other hand, following extremist spiritualism is to largely abandon the scientific, materialistic, visible components of life, like those found in modern medicine, for phantom concepts, which are never going to be directly proven by science (although perhaps someday indirectly proven.) This way of thinking avoids some of the questions regarding nature that can only be proven by materialistic, scientific methods. Only by taking an enlightened compromise between the two can a healthy balance be maintained. This is one of the goals of this book: to help break down the barrier that society currently supports between the two.

\*\*\*

When trying to sort through the facts and the myths regarding the paranormal, one runs into some common themes. The most prevalent theme that I have encountered is that all aspects of folklore and legends possess some degree of truth; however, usually only a miniscule and faintly traceable amount. If a legend is absent of any sort of truth, it generally doesn't survive. Truth has a way of binding falsehood in this way. If one accepts part of a story to be true, one is much more likely to take the rest of it into consideration. As the result of this, another theme arises: those who dogmatically believe legends of the "paranormal" are just as wrong as those who dogmatically dismiss them, simply because they do hold a degree -- although probably only a small degree -- of truth.

The most prevalent stories existing in today's folklore generally hold the greatest degrees of truth. An excellent example of this is the lore of vampires. Do blood-sucking, fanged, pale-skinned, hypnotizing charming princes and princesses of darkness, who are highly allergic to sunlight, garlic and silver, really exist? An excellent investigation of such was written by Paul Barber in his article "Staking Claims: Vampires of Folklore and Legend." (Frazer pp.375-8) In it, he recounted an actual statement from an Eighteenth Century man named Peter Plogojowitz during an exhumation of a so-called vampire. "The hair and beard -- even the nails [of the corpse], of which was somewhat whitish, had peeled away, and a new fresh one had emerged under it.... Not without astonishment, I saw some fresh blood in his mouth, which, according to the common observation, he had sucked from the people killed by him." This is quite a shocking revelation; but only to those who are ignorant of why this was witnessed.

Barber went on to explain these observations through modern eyes. On the newly whitish features: during the decomposition of a new corpse, a phenomenon referred to as "skin slippage" occurs, where the epidermis detaches from the dermis, leaving a fresh, white layer. On the hair appearing to have reemerged, as if the corpse had grown a new beard: during "skin slippage" the epidermis falls off, which creates the illusion that the existing hair follicles in the dermis had actually grown. On the nails falling off and growing again: the observation of the growth of "new nails" was probably a misinterpretation: fingernails and toenails do fall off as

nail beds decompose, but the observation that they had regrown was probably the illusion created by what the nail beds now looked like in this state of decomposition. Any learned mortician would recognize all of these descriptions as aspects of a decaying corpse.

On the “fresh blood in his mouth” interpretation: bloats from the gases produced by decomposition put pressure on the lungs, which are rich in blood and deteriorate early on, forcing blood to the mouth and through the nose. Blood coagulates in corpses but may melt again and give the appearance of “fresh blood.” Now, to the untrained observer, this may very well make a strong case for some of the classical characteristics of a vampire. The blood-sucking theorem was probably also amplified by the events in the culture of the time. A disease somewhat prevalent at the time, moribund porphyria was thought to be curable by drinking the blood of others. This disease is the result of a deficiency in the blood that causes the gums to recede (giving the illusion of larger teeth than usual), the skin to thin and consequently lighten, and likely also insanity. These “vampires” were thought to have been lurking the streets at the time, feasting on the blood of innocent victims.

Even the popular notion of corpses coming back to life is backed by eyewitness testimonies. Let’s say the frightened Peter Plogojowitz drove a steak through the corpse’s heart-region because he was convinced that it was coming back to life and drinking the blood of the locals. When one does this, air is pushed up through the esophagus and into the glottis (the voice box.) This would produce a crying or screeching sound, giving the illusion that the corpse had actually awoken. Since exhumations occur during the day, an assumption arose that the vampire slept during the day and awoke at night to drink the blood of others, which later evolved into the idea that the vampire was “allergic” to sunlight. This was later indirectly reinforced by Carolus Linnaeus when he named a Central American blood-sucking bat after the vampire folklore; which, in turn, also added the myth of the vampire’s ability to turn into a bat.

The vampire legend’s other details came about as the result of local superstitions being annexed to it. Since the legend was big in Romania, existing Romanian superstition was susceptible to this, such as the superstition that garlic wards off evil. Now, vampires are not only warded off by it, they are said to be “allergic” to it. Crosses from Christian traditions became part of the lore by assuming the exact same role. Another tradition added by Christians is that vampires -- because they are “evil” and undead -- must be soulless, and therefore will not be able to see their own reflections. The superstition that werewolves can be killed by silver spikes was also grafted onto the vampire lore. Much later, Bram Stoker added the hypnotizing charming aspect of vampires when he created “Dracula”: a combination of his imagination and the legend of the rejoiced Romanian conqueror Vlad the Impaler. Thus, from misinterpretations and superstitions, people created the ever so popular vampire lore.

Such a combination is the typical recipe for *most* folklore and legends. Tales of unicorns -- of single-horned white horses -- may be a misinterpretation of an antelope-like animal that still resides today in locations in the Sahara. The first known recording of one was in the magnificent cave in Lascoux, France that we mentioned in the Book of Thought. So perhaps, since the Earth’s climate was different at the time, such a species did in fact exist in the area and went extinct. If we didn’t find remains of sabretooths and woolly mammoths, would similar legends exist today of these creatures?

Legends of Bigfoot are a similar case. Many cultures have similar legends of hairy, pungent, tall, ape-like anthropoids living in various desolate areas. There’s the Asian Sasquatch. There’s the Tibetan Yeti. The abominable snowman traverses the Himalayas. Canada calls it Bigfoot, with sightings mainly in the British Columbia area. The U.S. has Bigfoot sightings in

the Pacific Northwest and the regions around Eastern Oklahoma. The orang pedek is said to make home in Sumatra. Russians tell of their Almas. Inuit cultures have told of a similar creature. How can such a universally prevalent folklore survive for so long if it isn't bound by some degree of truth?

How about the legend of the Loch Ness monster? Does a Plesiosaur actually reside in the murky depths of the large lake? Something that possesses a long, neck-like figure appears to have to reside there, as thousands of reports account basically the same thing. An alternate theory is that giant, freshwater eels may be the true culprit. Can the legend truly be describing these eels when they bob up to the surface? Possibly, and seemingly most likely.

Our focus, however, is not on cryptozoology (the study of animals that haven't yet been scientifically documented.) If such animals are found to exist, this discovery wouldn't significantly modify the model of theory that we utilize to help understand the nature of the universe. It would simply be another zoological find. This is the way that we filter out what should be covered in this book: if it doesn't drastically change our understanding of the universe, we will exclude it to conserve space.

Of the entire grandiose realm of the unknown, I've selected about 50 broad topics to elaborate on. I believe that once these topics are either truly understood or established as scientific fact, the great majority of the most popular subjects designated as "paranormal" will inadvertently have some light shined on them. The first unit is basically a jumble of many of the subjects dealing with anything involved or associated with UFOs, from alien visitations to earthen phenomena which are confused as being extraterrestrial; the second unit questions the true capabilities of the human mind; and the final unit is about the afterlife, from ghosts to afterlife theories. Brace yourself as we journey into the great mysteries of the unknown.