



The Transcendental Temptation: A Critique of Religion and the Paranormal

By Paul Kurtz



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In this landmark work, Paul Kurtz examines the reasons why people accept supernatural and paranormal belief systems in spite of substantial evidence to the contrary. According to Kurtz, it is because there is within the human species a deeply rooted tendency toward magical thinking—the “transcendental temptation”—which undermines critical judgment and paves the way for willful beliefs.

Kurtz explores in detail the three major monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—finding striking psychological and sociological parallels between these religions, the spiritualism of the nineteenth century, and the paranormal belief systems of today. This acclaimed and controversial book includes sections on mysticism, belief in the afterlife, the existence of God, reincarnation, astrology, and ufology. Kurtz concludes by explaining and advocating rational skepticism as an antidote to belief in the transcendental.

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Editorial Review

Review

"If everybody on the planet read this book, the world would be a better place, thanks to Paul."

-**Michael Shermer**, author of *The Believing Brain*

"Well-written, readable, and carefully researched compendium of the skeptical challenge and position. . . . This is a must."

-**Choice**

"A practical and eloquent manual for every woman and man seeking to live a sensible life with meaning. It shows the way forward for both the individual and all of society. Writing with a gentle hand, Kurtz has presented philosophy in a manner that is interesting and digestible to all. This book will appeal to a wide variety of readers because it addresses real beliefs held by real people in the real world.... Kurtz explores many popular irrational beliefs and convincingly argues that humankind can and should do better. Readers will appreciate Kurtz's positive and constructive tone throughout this extraordinary book. He writes not only about colossal failures of reason but also of our wonderful ability to think things through and get it right. This invaluable book offers much needed direction toward a better world for all."

—**Guy P. Harrison**, author of *Think: Why You Should Question Everything*

"A very important book ... clearly written and forcefully argued."

-*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

About the Author

Paul Kurtz (1925-2012), professor emeritus of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was the author or editor of more than fifty books, including *The Transcendental Temptation*, *The Courage to Become*, and *Embracing the Power of Humanism*, plus nine hundred articles and reviews. He was the founder and chairman of the Center for Inquiry, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. He appeared on many major television and radio talk shows and has lectured at universities worldwide.

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Susan Negri:

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