

## English abstract

*At the borders of the mind*

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Extraordinary experiences, normatively named as “supernatural” or “paranormal”, are frequent among people. Yet in the western countries, the societal attitudes towards them are highly loaded. What is common to the experiences is that they are sensuous, lonely, unspeakable and difficult to share with others. The origin and the essence of the experience is a puzzle for people who have them. Are they real or are they signs of mental illness? According to medical and other sciences the experiences are classified and valued as pathological and abnormal. For artists, they are a part of creative work. Within the religious discourses, they are merely appreciated, as they currently also are within the new age and other esoteric and occult movements of the post-secular societies.

This anthology is about the first-person experiences from more than two hundred spontaneous letters, which were sent to the research project *Mind and the Other*. The project was funded by the Academy of Finland. In the letters the writers asked the researchers for explanations for the experiences but also help with stigma that was described as being a usual concomitant of the attempts to share the experiences with the authorities. In this anthology, eight scholars from different research domains, from the studies of cultures to psychiatry, examine the letters through an extensive research literature. The main aim of these analyses is to contribute to the understanding of the human mind. The authors also want to help eliminate the stigma of the experiences and to understand them as a special way of studying reality and the experiences’ relation with it.

The book is directed to various audiences, the most important being the letter authors themselves. It is also directed to scholars in several academic domains, as well as to the general public.