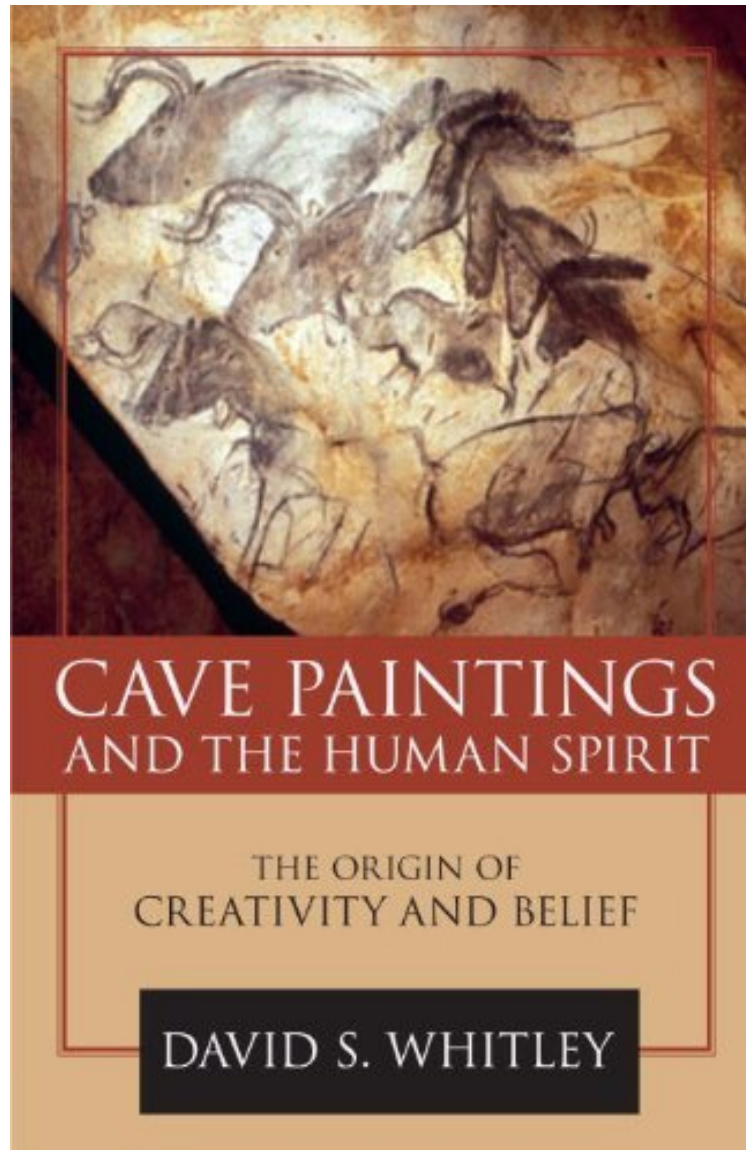


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# Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit: The Origin of Creativity and Belief

*David S. Whitley*

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**David S. Whitley : Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit: The Origin of Creativity and Belief** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit: The Origin of Creativity and Belief:

31 of 31 people found the following review helpful. Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit By Markaeologist As an archaeologist working for the State of California and as a CRM specialist, I have been to (and worked at) many of the

rock art sites discussed in Whitley's book. Also, I have spent much of my life among different Native American communities, so his discussion of shamanism resonated with me. I have been teaching anthropology courses at night at a local Community College and found his insights useful in explaining human beliefs in rock art (so-called for lack of a broad enough and accurate enough defining term...). I read his book and others he has published in tandem with three related recent publications by David Lewis-Williams (the Mind in the Cave, Inside the Neolithic Mind, and Conceiving God) and recommend that those people wishing to learn about cognitive archaeology, religion, first art, shamanism or other "near-the-mark" topics read these four books as a group, in order of publication date. Very enlightening. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A pretty good read, but not essential reading on the subject. By olali For those, like me, who are fascinated by neolithic cave art and all things related, this is a worthwhile read. It is intended for popular consumption but includes an interesting narrative about the recent science and politics of methods to date the art created on cave and other rock surfaces. He is of the school of thought that the paintings were made as part of shamanistic rituals. He attempts to weave in a variety of fascinating research on the subject of shamans and shamanistic trance states, but it does not connect the dots or provide enough concrete examples to convince me one way or the other. IMO His argument for mental illness as a characteristic of shamans in general falls off a cliff, as he is clearly not qualified in this area. It's definitely a theory worthy of scientific study, but by the time he gets to putting forth his ideas, he is focused on more recent shamanism, while the unknowable aspects of our ancestors of 20000-30000 years ago are forgotten. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent read. By M. Engell gave this a top rating because I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Among scientists it is usually not done to value religion as a force of change. This writer can and does. I have read other books about similar subjects and it usually ends up in a useless and fruitless 'is-not-is-too' debate. I liked the style of writing and felt like taking the journeys the writer has made during his career with him, looking over his shoulder as he stepped in to Lascaux cave, the foz coa district with all its open air art or his Mojave desert art. Furthermore Whitley has interesting theories about the origin of religion, that go beyond the usual 'they hallucinated' arguments I have been reading about. Still, this is a scientific book as I see it. Whitley hasn't gone religious. He simply has the ability to understand where it is coming from and explain it to laymen. Definitely worth re-reading!!!

The magnificent prehistoric art discovered in caves throughout France and Spain raises many questions about early human culture. What do these superbly rendered paintings of horses, bison, and enigmatic human figures and symbols mean? How can we explain the sudden flourishing of artistic creativity at such a high level? And in what ways does this artwork reflect the underlying belief system, worldview, and life of the people who created it? In this fascinating discussion of ancient art and religion, Dr. David S. Whitley—one of the world's leading experts on cave paintings—guides the reader in an exploration of these intriguing questions, while sharing his firsthand experiences in visiting these exquisite, breathtaking sites. To grasp what drove these ancient artists to create these masterpieces, and to understand the origin of myth and religion, as Whitley explains, is to appreciate what makes us human. Moreover, he broadens our understanding of the genesis of creativity and myth by proposing a radically new and original theory that weds two seemingly warring camps from separate disciplines. On the one hand, archaeologists specializing in prehistoric cave paintings have argued that the visionary rituals of shamans led to the creation of this expressive art. They consider shamanism to be the earliest known form of religion. By contrast, evolutionary psychologists view the emergence of religious beliefs as a normal expression of the human mind. In their eyes, the wild and ecstatic trances of shamans were a form of aberrant behavior. Far from being typical representatives of ancient religion, shamans were exceptions to the normal rule of early religion. Whitley resolves the controversy by interweaving the archaeological evidence with the latest findings of cutting-edge neuroscience. He thereby rewrites our understanding of shamanism and its connection with artistic creativity, myth, and religion. Combining a colorful narrative describing Whitley's personal explorations at key archaeological sites with robust scientific research, *Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit* makes for engrossing reading. It provides a profound and poignant perspective on what it means to be human.

"A beguiling and compelling take on the precise moment in history when art and religion first collided and human civilization began. At the same time, it's a fascinating inside look at the life of a working archaeologist who seeks to answer the ultimate question of what distinguishes us from other creatures on earth. An accomplished and important book by a gifted author --- exciting, provocative, and illuminating." --Jonathan Kirsch, Author of *The Grand Inquisitor's Manual: A History of Terror in the Name of God* "New finds, new insights, new ideas, therefore new disputes are enlivening study of the famous painted images in the Ice Age caves. David Whitley, himself active in the field, gives an enticing personal account - informed, smart, sharp" --Christopher Chippindale, Museum of Archaeology Anthropology, University of Cambridge, England "The cave paintings of France and Spain, which date from 35,000 to 10,000 years ago, have posed an intriguing enigma since they were first recognized. Experts have debated, and ordinary people have wondered, why they were painted and what they might mean. David Whitley's take is one of the more original interpretations, and certainly an interesting one. And the man can write. His descriptions of the sites and

the art in the caves are captivating and poetic. And the man can write." --Jean M. Auel, Author "A beguiling and compelling take on the precise moment in history when art and religion first collided and human civilization began. At the same time, it's a fascinating inside look at the life of a working archaeologist who seeks to answer the ultimate question of what distinguishes us from other creatures on earth. An accomplished and important book by a gifted author --- exciting, provocative, and illuminating." --Jonathan Kirsch, Author of The Grand Inquisitor's Manual: A History of Terror in the Name of God "New finds, new insights, new ideas, therefore new disputes are enlivening study of the famous painted images in the Ice Age caves. David Whitley, himself active in the field, gives an enticing personal account - informed, smart, sharp" --Christopher Chippindale, Museum of Archaeology Anthropology, University of Cambridge, England "A beguiling and compelling take on the precise moment in history when art and religion first collided and human civilization began. At the same time, it's a fascinating inside look at the life of a working archaeologist who seeks to answer the ultimate question of what distinguishes us from other creatures on earth. An accomplished and important book by a gifted author --- exciting, provocative, and illuminating." --Jonathan Kirsch, Author of The Grand Inquisitor's Manual: A History of Terror in the Name of God "New finds, new insights, new ideas, therefore new disputes are enlivening study of the famous painted images in the Ice Age caves. David Whitley, himself active in the field, gives an enticing personal account - informed, smart, sharp" --Christopher Chippindale, Museum of Archaeology Anthropology, University of Cambridge, England

About the Author David S. Whitley, PhD (Tehachapi, CA), who has served as Chief Archaeologist at UCLA, is a Principal at ASM Affiliates, Inc., an archaeological consulting firm. He is also an adjunct professor in the School of Geographical Sciences at Arizona State University and the author of Introduction to Rock Art Research, selected by Choice in 2006 as an Outstanding Academic Title.