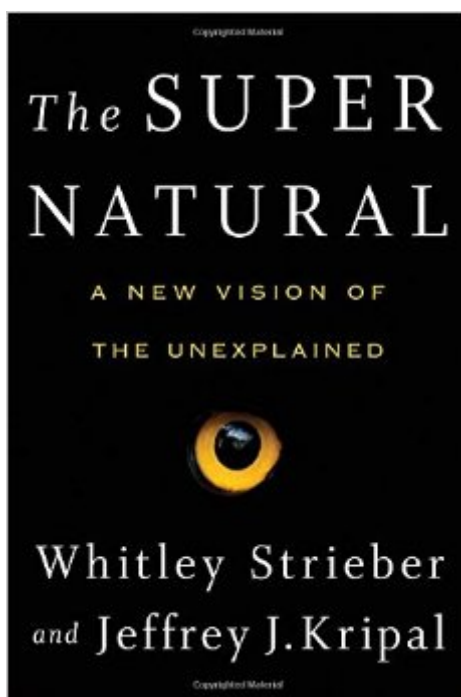


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The Super Natural: A New Vision Of The Unexplained



Synopsis

Two of today's maverick authors on anomalous experience present a perception-altering and intellectually thrilling analysis of why the paranormal is real, but radically different from what is conventionally understood. Whitley Strieber (Communion) and Jeffrey J. Kripal (J. Newton Rayzor professor of religion at Rice University) team up on this unprecedented and intellectually vibrant new framing of inexplicable events and experiences. Rather than merely document the anomalous, these authors--one the man who popularized alien abduction and the other a renowned scholar and "renegade advocate for including the paranormal in religious studies" (The New York Times)--deliver a fast-paced and exhilarating study of why the supernatural is neither fantasy nor fiction but a vital and authentic aspect of life. Their suggestion? That all kinds of "impossible" things, from extra-dimensional beings to bilocation to bumps in the night, are not impossible at all: rather, they are a part of our natural world. But this natural world is immeasurably more weird, more wonderful, and probably more populated than we have so far imagined with our current categories and cultures, which are what really make these things seem "impossible." The Super Natural considers that the natural world is actually a "super natural world"--and all we have to do to see this is to change the lenses through which we are looking at it and the languages through which we are presently limiting it. In short: The extraordinary exists if we know how to look at and think about it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is about a shamanic postmodern tantra of alien communion. I loved this book and I was a

little disappointed toward the end as well. Basically this book alternates chapters by Whitley Strieber and Jeffery Kripal riffing/reflecting on each other's thoughts. The subject is primarily Alien contact experiences. Strieber talks mostly of his own experiences, the development of his thought on the experiences and how he relates this to Kripal's concerns. Kripal brings different frames that he thinks will enhance the conversation. Many of these frames are implicitly used by Whitley and other writers of anomalous experiences but often implicitly, by making them explicit we gain greater control over the kind of story we make, the kind of study we undertake. Of the multiple frames Kripal introduced I found the following six most useful: Comparison "if we collect enough seemingly anecdotal or anomalous experiences from different times and places and place them together on a fair comparative table, we can quickly see that these reports are neither anecdotal nor anomalous. We can see that they are actually common occurrences in the species. They are part of our world. They are "natural," as we say, even if each of them is also rare with respect to any particular individual, and all of them are "super," that is, beyond how we presently understand how this natural world works. • This is basically the first step anyone takes when getting interested in any anomalous/rare experiences, search through history and see how common it is, what variations there are.

I am a Religious Studies professor whose area of expertise is in Neoplatonism, the intellectual and spiritual expression of Plato's philosophy that witnessed its most recent flowering in the genius of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists. The same interest in experiential thinking that drew me to the Neoplatonists also drew me in the early 1990's to stories of encounters with UFOs, abductions by aliens, and the trauma of the "experiencers." • I had the good fortune of attending a conference in 1992 organized by MIT physicist David Pritchard and Harvard psychiatrist John Mack where I met literally hundreds of people who had experienced "contact." • Two things I noticed: (1) these were affable and ordinary people and (2) they were also anything but ordinary in that they were remarkably open, intuitive, and sensitive in a way that seemed consistent with people who have had mystical experiences. And they also seemed to carry with them an aura of some kind of mystery and magnetism. Later, after attending one of John Mack's PEER meetings in the Cambridge Hospital with a philosopher friend of mine, my colleague "a brilliant abstract thinker" said he found the atmosphere and intensity of these "experiencers" to be unbearable. As they shared their stories the room became palpably charged, disorienting, and he was desperate to get out. These experiencers evoked something of the presence they described. Whatever else the UFO phenomenon is, it is certainly a spiritually transforming event and these individuals

breathed it.

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