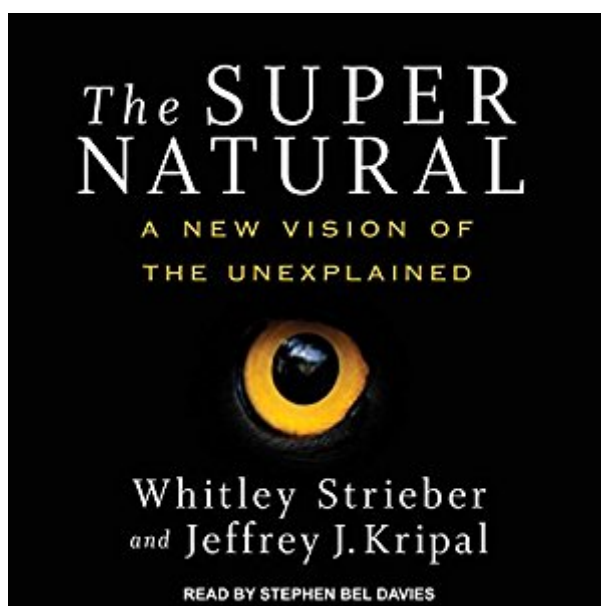


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The Super Natural: A New Vision Of The Unexplained



Synopsis

Whitley Strieber and Jeffrey J. Kripal 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 - 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.

Phenomenology: Though this is a complex philosophical movement, in this context it is simply the practice of engaging/inquiring with experience as it "appears" and temporarily putting aside how it might relate to the "objective world." As Whitney says: "I am reporting a perception, not making a claim, and there is a world of difference between those two approaches." This practice will enable us to be faithful to what actually appeared and is being reported without immediately believing or dismissing it. Making the cut [using phenomenology] will free us to talk about the impossible without it sounding impossible. [Kripal]

Historical contextualization: Kripal argues for the usefulness of contextualizing anomalous experiences while arguing against a prevalent tendency in the academy to using historical contextualization to explain away the possible universal significance of all meanings/truths. Kripal makes a glib and amusing reflection: "I do not think it is too much of a simplification to suggest that the entire history of religions can be summed up this way: strange super beings from the sky come down to interact with human beings, provide them with cultural, technological, legal, and ethical knowledge, guide them, scare the crap out of them, demand their submission and obedience, have sex with them (often forcefully), and generally terrorize, awe, baffle, inspire, and use them." He further argues against reducing myths to misunderstood science or apparently advanced science [UFO] to simply older myths. Instead we should keep the tension between these two reductive tendencies and allow each poll to inform, enrich and challenge our stories.

Hermeneutics (interpretation): He focuses mostly of two aspects of hermeneutics, its suspicious enactments which look for hidden meanings and the feedback loop of understanding between subject who understands and the objects of understanding. This loop is not stable but endlessly influencing and changing each poll. "I

am thinking of films like *The Never ending Story*(1984), *Stranger than Fiction*(2006), and the *Adjustment Bureau* (2011). The story revolves around a protagonist engaging his own life as a fictional story being written either in this world or in another, seemingly by someone else. As he reads and interprets the text of his life, however, he discovers that its story or plot changes. He discovers the circle or loop of hermeneutics. He discovers that as he engages his cultural script as text creatively and critically he is rereading and rewriting himself. He is changing the story. He also spends a lot of time talking about the origin of the idea of the imaginal [both as symbolic and empirical forms]. This is very interesting but a little too complex to talk/quote about in a review.

Erotics: Kripal argues for the centrality of the erotic in this study, the erotic from Plato's Eros, to Freud's Libido to Tantra's energies and transformations. Here he recounts his own interesting experiences in India with the goddess Kali. This also lays a bridge for his sympathetic reading of Whitley Strieber. What was Whitley Strieber's crime? What did he do that was so wrong? Not only did he speak secrets in public, but he spoke reverently and fearfully of a divine presence that was feminine, that broke and rode him like a horse by doing so, he spoke of a presence at the very heart of the unconscious of the religious West, a presence that has been repressed and denied for three millennia. He spoke of Her.

Traumatic secret: Here he writes about how trauma can often be a breaking open into both madness or/and transcendence. Near death experiences, traumatic abuse, violent accidents and alien encounters are often described by people as moments of breakage from a social/egoic trace into greater numinous[awe full reality] space. It is only a thought. I do not know. I want to be very humble here and stress the complexities. Still, here is the thought. If the ego is ready to let go, then it will be more likely to experience an encounter with the sacred Alien or Other as extremely positive, as redemptive, as ecstatic. If, on the other hand, the ego is not ready to let go of itself, then it will be more likely to experience an encounter with the sacred as extremely negative, as terrifying, as destructive.

My only criticisms of the book are some of its looseness with terms toward the end. There is a lot of imprecision in the use of the word mystical. All anomalous experiences get packed into the tent of mystical experiences at times which is not helpful. Whitley's experiences are not the same as Meister Eckhart's of the Godhead. I understand how interpretively they may be using similar devices [Hermeneutics] but the phenomena they talk about is vastly different in my opinion. Also mystical practices are concerned with stable changes of states and character, while altered states are not necessarily so concerned. There is some overlap but I think it has to be spelled out much more clearly to be knowledge enhancing and not just mudding the water. Also some of the riffs on the physical sciences and

quantum physics are cringe worthy. I think the perspective is important but just like Kripal brought a sophisticated humanities perspective, you need a sympathetic scientist [there are a few] to really get any substantive insights from the scientific viewpoint. Anyway, I only talked about some of the frames that are explored much more in depth in the book. For anyone with an interest in Ufo's, paranormal studies, or religious studies this is highly recommended. If you don't have an interest in any of these three why did you read this review?

During the winter of 1973/74, I was presented with a forced introduction to the UFO phenomenon that would create a life-long interest in this subject. This forced introduction was while I was a First Lieutenant in the 90th Strategic Missile Wing, Strategic Air Command, F.E. Warren AFB, Cheyenne, Wyoming. The SAC base was heavily involved with UFO incidents during that time period and I was a direct witness to these events. The UFO phenomenon has been a special interest, but not an obsession, since that winter long ago. Many books on the subject have been purchased and read, and many old colleagues have been spoken to over the years. I feel that I do have some knowledge of this subject. This book, the Super Natural by Whitley Strieber and Jeffrey Kripal, with Mr. Strieber being a world famous "Abductee" with many books to his name, is a new and very different interpretation of the age old phenomenon of the UFO and the existence of the extraterrestrial or the interdimensional being. This book is not an easy read by any means and in many places one must, at times, re read a paragraph. I did find the book very interesting. While I firmly believe, from what I have personally witnessed, read about, and through long discussions with fellow USAF officers from the old days, that the UFO and its occupants are physical. They may be extremely advanced compared to us, but their ships are nuts and bolts, so to speak, and the creatures within them, are physical beings. Throughout the book, the idea that the creatures (extraterrestrials), or interdimensional beings are more, much more, is a concept that is difficult to get your hands around. The two authors speak of the brain, the mind, even the soul, as interacting and interconnected to the (saucer) pursuit of the truth. In that it is much more than physical. How much of the timeless UFO Phenomenon is inside our brain, mind, and our soul? Not that the UFO and all that is encompassed in that word, is an illusion. It is not an illusion in any sense of the word. But something far different and a different reality that we do not understand. This is the question that this book attempts to probe and gives a new perspective to the entire question of life in our universe. While I may not agree with small portions of their theories and their perspective outlined in their book, I recommend that everyone should read it, and that the reader attempt to open his mind to a far different approach to the study of the craft, the occupants, and the abductions and what it may all mean for all of us.

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