

PASSPORT TO THE COSMOS

John E. Mack's newest book, *Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters*, is the culmination of five years of additional research (since 1994's *Abduction*) with more than 200 people who have reported encounters with beings often described as aliens ("experiencers"). A trade paperback edition is being released in November 2000. The book is dedicated to the experiencers whom Dr. Mack has worked with over the past ten years.

"I am interested in the meaning of these experiences for the so-called abductees and for humankind more generally," Dr. Mack, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, writes in the preface. "In that sense, *Passport to the Cosmos* is not simply about abductions but has to do with what such anomalous experiences and related phenomena can tell us about ourselves and our evolving knowledge of the nature of reality."

Dr. Mack presents common themes that have emerged in his work with experiencers from the West, as well as experiencers from indigenous cultures from northern Brazil to South Africa.

His exploration of these extraordinary experiences has revealed a consistent environmental message. "I was astonished to discover," Dr. Mack writes, "that in case after case powerful messages about the human threat to the Earth's ecology were being conveyed by the beings to the experiencers in vivid, unmistakable words and images.... Indeed, it seems to me quite possible that the protection of the Earth's life is at the heart of the abduction phenomenon. Perhaps no one has

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"A WILY REALITY": HOW BEST TO STUDY ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCES?

In April 1999, the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) sponsored a two-day conference of academics from different departments at Harvard and other institutions around the country representing many disciplines—psychiatry, psychology, neurology, physics, astronomy, anthropology, ethology, history of science, theology, and philosophy. Their task was to consider how to examine effectively the alien encounter phenomenon and related anomalies of human experience that seem not to reveal their secrets to the familiar approaches of Western medicine and science.

The meeting, funded by the Fetzer Institute, was the outgrowth of an examination of Dr. Mack's research by the Harvard Medical School several years before, which had concluded by recommending that he involve more colleagues in the investigation of the alien encounter phenomenon.

The meeting's attendees deliberated on the following themes:

- Why the alien encounter phenomenon stirs strong reactions and is resisted so strongly
- How to study such matters—developing a "science of human experience"

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*The universe is wider
than our views of it.*

— Henry David Thoreau

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When we created the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) in 1993, we gave careful thought to the selection of our name and articulation of our purpose. “Extraordinary experiences,” as some have wondered, was not merely a euphemism for “alien encounter experiences.” We envisioned PEER as a place for supportive exploration, neutral listening, and open inquiry for people having experiences that challenge our notions of reality and the world in which we live. Our intention was to find language to describe what may not yet be known and hold that challenging place of not knowing as an evolving process of self-inquiry.

PEER is now growing more fully into its name and its purpose, both scientifically and philosophically. Through our own research and through partnerships with colleagues in many diverse fields, we are expanding the depth and breadth of the extraordinary experiences that we explore, while maintaining our primary focus on the alien encounter experience.

This third issue of *PEER Perspectives* highlights this scientific, clinical, and philosophical expansion and what we have learned from the many people and organizations with whom we have the privilege to work. Founding director Dr. Mack’s new book, *Passport to the Cosmos*, underlines the importance of a strong philosophical and cross-cultural context with which to approach extraordinary experiences. PEER’s multidisciplinary study group, held at the Harvard Divinity School and funded by the Fetzer Institute, looked at the responsible exploration of human experiences that don’t seem to “fit” and considered the development of a “science of human experience.” Such a science would include data from what often matters most to us as humans: subjective human experience. At this year’s Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) meeting, scientists and others who have been studying anomalies for some 20 years reflected together on exactly that: the future of science and models that integrate outer and inner methodologies.

This year, PEER’s clinical team expands with the addition of Dr. Jeffrey Rediger, a psychiatrist with a background in philosophy and theology. PEER is also expanding its communications efforts by beginning to employ multi-media such as music, film, and visual arts to more fully illustrate experiences that are often difficult to describe in our current frameworks and language. Through dialogue and collaboration with scientists, researchers, clinicians, artists, and experiencers of the unknown, PEER is committed to the evolution of an integrated and holistic science of human experience.

Within the broader context of PEER’s parent organization, the Center for Psychology and Social Change, PEER’s work encompasses the exploration, integration, and application of extraordinary experiences toward a vision of being fully human, on a sustainable planet interconnected with all beings, within an infinite cosmos. We invite you to partner with us in this shared purpose, offering knowledge to each other which comes through ongoing questioning and authentic self-reflection. We welcome your perspectives.

—KAREN J. WESOLOWSKI

As we more fully enact PEER’s vision, we express deep appreciation for our co-founding colleagues Pam Kasey, Vivienne Simon, Leslie Hansen, Caroline McLeod, and Barbara Corbisier, who remain a part of our extended and growing community.

REMEMBERING THE ETERNAL: PLATO'S VIEW OF "EDUCATION" IN ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCES



*Dr. Michael E. Zimmerman is chair and professor of philosophy at Tulane University, and is clinical professor in the department of psychiatry at Tulane School of Medicine. He has written two books on Heidegger: **Eclipse of Self (1981)**, and **Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity (1990)**. Most recently, he has written **Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Post-modernity (1994)**. He is chair of PEER's Advisory Board.*

People describing the alien encounter experience often say that they receive information of some sort, as if they were being educated about complex topics that may seem crystal clear during the abduction experience, but that may become cloudy or may even seem trivial afterward. The topics are frequently momentous, such as impending environmental calamity, whether brought about by human behavior or by some other cause, perhaps unknown.

Author Whitley Strieber described in some detail the mysterious "secret school" that he attended as a boy in Texas, a school reportedly operated by beings whom he associates with his own abduction experiences. Strieber's account and those of other experiencers are in some ways consistent with findings of folklorists and cultural anthropologists, according to whom people over the centuries have reported being taken to strange places by non-human beings, some of whom reveal delightful or disturbing aspects of previously unknown dimensions of reality. How are we to understand the "educational" aspect of the abduction experience?

In many accounts of the abduction phenomenon, it is suggested that the "education" of abductees goes beyond formal training or technical information received on board ostensibly alien crafts. Many authors have noted the self-understanding and personal identities of some experiencers are forever changed by discovering that they are somehow related to the aliens. Like individuals undergoing shamanistic initiation and near-death experience, experiencers sometimes recall previous lives and dimensions of existence that were forgotten when they were born as human beings. A number of years ago, psychologist Edith Fiore was one of the first to describe cases in which experiencers reported remembering that their "true" identity was not human, but rather alien.

Plato on Reincarnation

The notion that education involves a kind of recollection of forgotten truths was postulated by Plato, the central figure in Western philosophy. Plato adhered to a doctrine of reincarnation, according to which the human soul (psyche) moves to a

new body upon the death of the body previously occupied by the soul. Like other people from pre-modern cultures, he took for granted that the universe has planes that transcend the sensory or material plane. In his dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato describes the eternal soul, imprisoned in the perishable body, as yearning to return to its origin.

Suffering amnesia upon being born into a new body, the soul cannot easily recollect its divine origin, but instead becomes fascinated with sensory and sensual phenomena in a way that attaches the soul ever more to the body. Plato suggested that philosophy involved the process of recollecting what the soul knew before birth and a concomitant process of lessening one's attachment to the body.

As evidence that the soul involves a relationship with the eternal domain, Plato notes that we have knowledge of truths, for example in geometry, that can never be perfectly instantiated in the material world. In his dialogue *Meno*, Plato has Socrates show that a completely uneducated slave boy can come up with a proof for a problem in geometry. How is this possible? Because the slave boy "recollected" what he had known before being born, when his soul dwelled in close proximity to the eternal patterns or forms of which material phenomena are but imperfect replicas.

Education: Drawing Out What We Already Know

Our verb "to educate" is derived from the Latin *educare*, which is related to *educere*, to lead or to draw out. In other words, education involves the process of drawing out what we somehow already know. Can the alien abduction experience be understood as such a process of "education"?

There are intriguing parallels between Plato's account of recollection and the account offered by some abductees of their own experiences, particularly in regard to the notion that experiencers "choose" to be born as humans.

Although many experiencers at first fear and even loathe their captors, some experiencers eventually establish a different, more positive, and even a loving relationship with them. Such experiencers conclude that they themselves originally "chose" not only to incarnate as a human being who would forget his or her original identity at birth, but also to be abducted by the beings with whom the human experiencers are in some sense intimately related.

Many of the experiencers with whom psychiatrist John Mack and PEER clinical director Roberta Colasanti have worked undergo a kind of spiritual growth or transformation in the process of learning about their alien identity. Such transformation may not be limited to the experiencers themselves, Mack suggests, but may have broader implications for the whole of humankind, which is now in the process of

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learning what the experiencers themselves have discovered. A basic shift in our comprehension of human origins, identity, and future would call into question the belief systems that legitimate social and political institutions of all kinds.

If experiencers are the vanguard of a transformational process that will alter humanity's understanding of its origins and destiny, we may well understand why "official" society so strongly resists even mentioning the abduction phenomenon, much less attempting to apprehend what its implications might be for humankind.

Although Plato offers no account of alien abduction, he concludes his famous work, the *Republic*, with a lengthy description of the near-death experience of a noted Greek warrior, Er, who awakened on his own (fortunately unlit) funeral pyre, 12 days after his supposed death, and told a remarkable tale of the realm in which souls dwell before being reborn. Er described how souls were taken before Lacheles, one of the three Fates, who spoke to the souls through an interpreter in the following way:

Souls of a day, here shall begin a new round of earthly life, to end in death. No guardian spirit will cast lots for you, but you shall choose your own destiny. Let him to whom the first lot falls choose first a life to which he will be bound of necessity. But Virtue owns no master: as a man honors or dishonors her, so shall he have more of her or less. The blame is his who chooses; Heaven is blameless.

(Cornford translation)

Obviously, this experience was a life-changing one for Er, who in his near-death condition encountered what others ordinarily forget in the birth process. Many experiencers seem to view the "aliens" as interpreters of far higher powers, as intermediaries who attempt to help us recollect our true origins so that we may live differently in the time that we are incarnated. In the process of recollecting our true identity, we may also choose to align ourselves with a destiny that would otherwise go unfulfilled. Instead of continuing to degrade the planet because humans are gripped by greed, aversion, and delusion, humankind may instead evolve in a way that makes possible more constructive relations among humans and between humankind and the biosphere.

Of course, there are many confusing and obscure aspects of the alien encounter experience, including aspects that do not seem to fit into this interpretation. We must not discount the possibility that the alien others engage in complex acts of deception designed to conceal aims that have little or nothing to do with human transformation. Nevertheless, courageous experiencers and people who have taken their accounts seriously do us a favor by sharing with us the possibility that individuals are encountering beings from another plane of reality, a plane to which humankind is somehow related and to which we may return. Recognition of our relation to higher planes, however, is not an excuse for otherworldly flights from responsibility, but instead demands a greater commitment to exhibiting compassion for all life on the blue-green planet. **PP**

PEER VISITS NEW YORK

PEEER visited New York City twice in 1999 to present to the public a summary of our current understanding of the nature and meaning of the alien encounter experience. Each evening was held in the main auditorium of the New York Academy of Medicine on Fifth Avenue.



Dr. John Mack, Roberta Colasanti, and guests spoke at the New York Academy of Medicine

PEER Forum I: A New Relationship

The first PEER forum, held in mid-May, drew an audience of approximately 350 people from New York City, Brooklyn, Staten Island and other nearby locations, as well as a few visitors from out of town. The audience was comprised of a wide spectrum of the public, including counselors, healers, psychologists, psychiatrists, herbalists, engineers, technicians, ministers, and musicians.

"I am interested in exploring some of the new possibilities for human identity and experience," Dr. Mack explained to the audience. "I think of these experiences as a crossing over from what in eastern philosophy is called the subtle realm, crossing over and manifesting in the physical realm across a chasm that western material consciousness has created.

"When these phenomena show up in our world in a way that we cannot deny, this powerfully shatters our worldview—the word almost every experiencer uses—and when you shatter a worldview, then new possibilities emerge. The Earth and everything in the Earth and every human relation becomes sacred. The reverent sense of connection that emerges from this experience when the materialist worldview is shattered transforms our whole relationship to one another and to the planet itself. That is what I find powerful and meaningful."

Karin, a woman quoted in *Passport to the Cosmos*, joined Dr. Mack, PEER clinical director Roberta Colasanti, and a panel of experiencers to share her feelings with the audience.

“The big question, it seems for me, is not ‘What form has this experience taken: Are the aliens real or aren’t they? Are they physical or aren’t they?’ Perhaps the best question is, ‘What is the essence of what we can become as a result of interacting? What do we become when we interact, not only with the experiences and the beings themselves, but more importantly, with each other?’” she asked.

Another experiencer offered, “If there is any intuition I have about what this is all about, it is about human beings reconnecting with the life energy within themselves and within nature. I don’t know if that is the objective of whoever these beings are, but I am interested in what human beings can learn from it, and how human beings can progress.”

Feedback about the event was solicited from the audience. Many felt the experiencers’ spiritual points of view to be interesting, even inspirational, while others questioned whether positive transformation could be the outcome of traumatic encounters.

In an effort to address that question, the second PEER forum was designed to express a more complete range of experiencer reactions—including the initial stages of trauma which many people have difficulty moving beyond without guidance from a qualified therapist.

PEER Forum II: Initiation, Transformation, Integration

The second PEER forum, held in mid-November, formally introduced Dr. Mack’s new book, *Passport to the Cosmos*.

Before the evening’s presentation, a prototype of a musical piece by composer David Ison was played. Another work by Mr. Ison, “The Possibility of Grace,” was performed at the 1999 State of the World Forum at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco before world political and civic leaders.

Mr. Ison’s composition for PEER, “Voices of the Experience,” features the voices of experiencers excerpted with permission from PEER’s clinical sessions. The music moves from rhythms of fear, to a place of unknowing, to reconnection. The excerpts from experiencers were selected to reflect these stages. The cumulative effect of the composition is a journey that is sometimes disturbing and sometimes transcendent.

“Voices of the Experience” was composed to accompany a spiral-shaped walk-through exhibit some 40 feet in length

that was set up in a reception hall. The spiral shape—conceived by graphic artist Paul Williamson and PEER executive director Karen Wesolowski, and underwritten by Trish Pfeiffer—was selected to convey a sense of being on a journey, with each step spiraling closer into the “heart” of the exhibit. In the center one found oneself within a circular “room.” Made of white fabric hung on a spiral framework, the curved panels seemed to have a luminosity, unintentionally recalling the glowing interior of a ship. A written placard quoted philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”

Like the musical composition, this spiral is an example of alternative ways by which these extraordinary experiences can be illustrated transversally.

Beginning the evening’s presentation, PEER’s clinical director Roberta Colasanti, LICSW, provided an overview of the stages of evolution from trauma to transformation that PEER’s clinical team has seen in working with experiencers. She stated that the reactions of fear, denial, compartmentalizing, depression, and intense questioning are all parts of the process of adjusting one’s worldview in the face of conflicting information. Using data from PEER’s 80-subject comparative personality study (see page 9), she examined each of the diagnoses that are typically suggested as explicatory of these experiences, and explained why they fail to adequately account for the phenomenon.

A central question arose from her presentation, namely, “After we have faced the reality of these experiences, what do we do next?”

Dr. Mack then spoke at length about where his exploration of this phenomenon has brought him, and where it may lead our Western culture. Later in the program, they were joined on stage by a woman whose recall of her alien encounter experiences began unexpectedly while she underwent a routine acupuncture procedure.

Rising enthusiastically from the audience at the start of the question and answer period, actor Dan Aykroyd asked how many members of the audience would try to prevent having further experiences if it were possible to do so, and how many would choose to continue having them. A

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Dan Aykroyd (left), the spiral exhibit (center), and Budd Hopkins (right) at the November PEER Forum

FROM • THE • EDGE • OF • EXPERIENCE

CONSCIOUS RECALL OF ALIEN “BOOT CAMP”

BY JIM SPARKS

Editors' Note: PEER's work begins with the specific experiences of individuals. In this section we offer our readers direct access to such reports. At times they may be so unusual that we feel them challenging our basic worldview, and with that our underlying sense of security and sanity. It has been theorized that one reaction by the human mind to traumatic events is to insulate one's daily waking self from the powerful emotions engendered by accessing such imagery and experiences. That is why relaxation techniques or mild hypnosis have sometimes been used to help individuals integrate their experiences. The following account from Florida is from an experiencer who has not worked with PEER. Excerpted with permission from its author, Jim Sparks, it is distinctive for having come without any relaxation process. Mr. Sparks has remembered each incident from the moment it occurred, from the first one in 1988 up through the present day. While many experiencers have conscious recall of some of their alien encounter experiences, the extent of his recall is atypical and is important for researchers.

I like to consider myself a down-to-earth, fairly intelligent, honest person. Prior to 1988 you could never have convinced me that alien abductions really exist...until it happened to me. From mid-1988 until March 1994 my experiences with these intelligent aliens from the far reaches of the galaxy and beyond—or perhaps from other dimensions—was a fascinating hell, like being drafted into an alien “boot camp.” I was forced, completely against my will, to learn an alien alphabet, number system, and symbols. I was forced to partake in bizarre and traumatizing experiments. I felt just like a laboratory mouse.

Here is what dozens of my experiences consisted of: I'm at home, sitting in my living room or lying in bed. I hear a low-pitched whirling sound inside my head, that slowly grows louder. Then I feel a strange sensation from deep within the pit of my stomach, creeping up my torso toward my heart. When this sensation fills my chest, my heart begins to race, and the whirling sound becomes much louder and faster. I become overwhelmed with tremendous fear, and try everything within me to scream but can't open my mouth. The whirling sound becomes so loud I think my head is going to burst. Then I feel this tremendous acceleration, like going down a huge roller coaster, only a hundred times faster. Between my heart racing, the loud whirling sound, and the extreme feeling of acceleration, I often think I am going to die.

Then all of a sudden, everything stops and there is dead silence. My body is completely paralyzed. Slowly I become able to open my eyes.

The first time this happened, the first thing I noticed was my right forearm and wrist leaning against a strange table. The table looked like a large horizontal television or computer screen. It appeared as though I was in some sort of room that was dimly lit, and I had no peripheral vision. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't get up. I could only move



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my head up and down. I thought, “Why am I here? What the hell is this all about?”

Then inside my head I heard a clear, loud voice say, “YOU WILL LEARN THIS.”

The letter “A” appeared on a vertical wall screen, and next to it was some strange version of the letter “A”. My head involuntarily moved down, and I was looking at the horizontal table screen. At this point I could sense that they, or whoever (I was unable to turn my head to see them so I didn't know then that they were aliens) wanted me to write their version of the letter “A” on the table screen with my right forefinger. I was so angry, scared, and disoriented that

in no way, shape, or form was I going to cooperate. I responded by saying “NO!”

Then the real horror began. Again the letter “A” appeared, but simultaneously the air pressure in the room expanded with a sudden jerk. The pressure was very painful to my ears and head. At the same time it felt like a short burst of adrenalin shot through my body causing my heart rate to increase. I somehow sensed that all of this discomfort would increase until I cooperated. The idea of this made me even angrier, so I yelled, “NO! I WON'T DO IT!”

They stepped up the level of anxiety and discomfort to the point where my heart was pounding so hard I thought it was going to stop. The thought of having a heart attack created such intense fear that I couldn't take it any more. I looked down at the table screen, and with my right forefinger traced the first stroke for their version of the letter “A.” Instantly my heart rate dropped to normal, and the anxiety and fear were gone. Suddenly I felt an extremely pleasant sensation, a euphoria. I realized: cooperate, you get pleasure; don't cooperate, you get discomfort and fear.

Again inside my mind I heard them loudly say “A” as it appeared on the wall screen, and at the same time a low level

of discomfort ran through my body. I yelled, “NO! NOT AGAIN!” We went through about a half-dozen levels of pressure and discomfort, and when I couldn’t take it any more, I moved my right forefinger, copying the second stroke to their odd interpretation of the letter “A.” Then again euphoria. As I sat there in this artificially relaxed state I attempted to move, but my body was still completely paralyzed, and my vision was almost a complete blur.

For some unknown reason, I sensed it was time to go, and my eyes involuntarily closed. Once again I heard that low-pitched whirling sound in my head, and that same queer sensation moving up from the center of my stomach toward my chest which caused my heart to race at an incredible rate. Then the whirling sound in my head got faster and so loud it was overwhelming. Suddenly, the extreme feeling of acceleration. Then all at once it stopped, and I found myself at home, lying down flat. For several seconds I couldn’t move or open my eyes.

This ‘transport-and-training’ cycle occurred to me two or three times a week for several weeks. Then I was left alone for a few weeks, but it resumed, exactly where the prior lesson had left off. In each session they’d teach me to draw their equivalents to our letters, until I learned their entire alphabet. Then a second stage began. They forced me to draw symbols that condensed many letters into a single shape. And with each symbol came particular motions of energy within my body. For example, if I moved my finger stroke to the right, I could feel a sort of magnetic, or electric, flow throughout my whole body moving to the right. Likewise for strokes that moved to the left, up, down, in angles or circles. I got the sense that I was learning the basic principles of telepathic communication. Any form of disturbance in this field could be detected in the mind and body. In a sense it was like Morse Code, only much more complicated. Instead of using electrical instruments to detect the code, they were teaching me how to use my mind. This was fascinating but difficult.

Back at home after an abduction, my new relationship with energy would continue for a while. Sometimes when I got angry, small objects flew off a shelf or table. “How queer,” I sarcastically thought, “so now I’m a magnet.” And I’d feel static electricity around my body. These effects lasted from a day upward to a few weeks, depending on the length of time I’d spent in the abduction experience and how frequently I’d been abducted. I call that “The Residual Effect” because it occurs only after an abduction, that is, after being in the aliens’ presence, being in their electric or magnetic field, and after being transported in that difficult, accelerated way.

It is one thing to be completely traumatized by these alien intrusions, but it’s another to have to face the ridicule that talking about this subject brings. I learned the hard way that you can’t just talk to anybody about this phenomenon. When I went to my family, they tried to have me institution-

alized. When I went to the church, they said it was demonic. Even my closest friends turned their backs on me and said I was crazy. Not to mention the absolute chaos this caused in my marriage.

Although I’ve seen my wife on board, interacting with the aliens, she won’t admit any of it in public. “They’re my ‘helpers from heaven’,” she’s told me, implying she’s had experiences with them since childhood. “But we’re not allowed to talk about it,” she insists – even between the two of us. “Don’t ask me anymore, because I won’t talk about it,” she told me during the first weeks of my experiences. When I’d try, in those first few weeks, to talk about our experiences to family and friends, she’d say, “I don’t know what Jim is talking about.” After the company would leave I would ask her, “Why did you say that? Why won’t you back me up?” And she’d say, “I don’t want people to think I’m crazy.”

On April 22, 1994, I had an abduction experience that changed everything. I wasn’t paralyzed, I was allowed to walk around somewhat from room to room, and help other abductees by calming them in their panic. I seemed to have earned the aliens’ trust, but it did leave me with more unanswered questions.

Mr. Sparks’ book-length narrative is scheduled for publication in 2001. Its working title is Star People: Outsiders – Them or Us? PP

REFERRALS

Due to challenges integrating unusual experiences, PEER offers a Therapist Consultation and Referral Network as a service to people having alien encounter and other anomalous experiences.

These therapists are either already seeing experiencer clients in their practices or have expressed an openness to doing so.

With the referrals we include our *An Experiencers’ Guide to Therapy* to assist in interviewing and selecting a therapist who best fits your goals.

If you know a therapist interested in working with individuals having unusual experiences, or someone who would like a referral, write to:

PEER, P.O. Box 398080, Cambridge, MA 02139, or send a request by e-mail to: peer@peermack.org

An Experiencers’ Guide to Therapy
and an online referral list is
available on our website,
www.peermack.org

RESEARCHING ANOMALIES

PROJECTS IN PROCESS

MULTIPLE WITNESS STUDY

This pilot project aims to further the understanding of the alien encounter phenomenon by investigating cases in which two or more individuals shared the same anomalous experience. The study is entitled, "Comparative Narratives of Reports of Multiply Witnessed Anomalous Experiences Commonly Called 'Alien Abduction': A Pilot Study." By determining the underlying consistencies among the accounts of various individuals in a thorough and systematic manner, the researchers hope to further understand the alien encounter phenomenon. PEER is currently analyzing data from the Multiple Witness Pilot Study.

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY OF MEMORY

This study, being conducted by colleagues in the department of psychology at Harvard, looks at whether memory, or its impact on the body, can be physically measured in some way. The laboratory methodology—previously utilized with victims of sexual abuse, Vietnam veterans, and individuals with panic-disorder—measures how an individual's recollection of a traumatic experience affects certain physiological responses, including pulse-rate, and muscle tension. The subjects listen to pre-recorded excerpts of various types of experiences, including scripts of their own traumatic narratives, intended to provoke different types of memories and emotions while physiologic statuses are monitored. This study—consisting of a group of experiencers and a control group of non-experiencers—tests whether experiencers, when listening to accurate accounts of their abduction narratives, will demonstrate significant changes in their physiology. Data for this study is currently being collected.

SOCIETY FOR SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION CONSIDERS THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

The Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE), comprised of 800 scientists and other professionals from more than 45 countries, has been studying unexplained phenomena for the past 20 years. The Society publishes the peer-reviewed quarterly *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, and holds annual meetings for the presentation, review, and critique of research into anomalies—findings that may not “fit” into current operating frameworks.

This year's SSE meeting was held in June at King's College in London, Ontario. “The Future of Science” theme was represented by diverse papers ranging from astrophysicist Seth Shostak describing the work of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute, to physicist Alex Berezhin applying countable infinities to unexplained results, and physicist M. Srinivasan reporting on the analysis of subatomic particles through psychic perception. Dr. Wayne Jonas, former director of the Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health, presented homeopathy as a case study of how to develop research strategies for studying difficult problems. Futurist John Petersen provided a challenge to our species: either adapt rapidly to an extraordinary new world based on our technological and scientific trajectory or—given unprecedented population growth and environmental degradation—risk extinction. He underlined the social importance of researching anomalies, using the term “wild cards” to describe unpredictable events, such as sudden discoveries, that have the potential to dramatically change even the most momentous trajectories.

Researchers also covered a variety of anomalous experiences, including a cross-cultural study of anomalous dreams by psychologist Stanley Krippner, a paper entitled “Near-Death Experiencers: Out of Their Bodies or Out of Their Minds?” by psychiatrist Bruce Greyson, and a report by psychiatrist Jim Tucker on children's accounts of past lives. PEER clinical director Roberta Colasanti presented the initial findings of PEER's Multiple Witness Pilot Project, which looks at external as well as subjective dimensions of the alien encounter experience.

Several talks shared in PEER's purpose of contributing toward a science and a philosophy of human experience. Robert Jahn, professor and dean emeritus of Aerospace Engineering at Princeton and founder of the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) lab, offered a tentative model to explore mind/matter interactions. Noting, as have many others, that the current scientific framework does not seem adequate to account for all that is being discovered and reported, Jahn proposed a model that traces the influence of the conscious mind on the subconscious and then the possible subconscious mind on subatomic matter. Reminding conferees that “anomalies are the precious raw material from which the next evolution of science emerges,” Professor Jahn provided a vision for a science and a society of the future that support the integration of the intuitive and the intellectual within the human psyche.

Evan Pritchard, adjunct professor of philosophy at Marist College, encouraged scientists of the future to look toward the past: to broaden the application of comprehensivism within academia, a holistic approach to knowing the world practiced by ancient cultures and his Native Algonquin people. Psychologist Imants Barušs, author of *Authentic Knowing: The Convergence of Science and Spiritual Aspiration*, spoke of the implications of altered states of consciousness for future

SCIENCE IN ACTION

science. Emphasizing the need for ongoing self-awareness of worldview, he also underlined the integration of subjective ways of knowing (dreaming, meditation, etc.), stating simply that, if the topic of research is consciousness, then a responsible researcher will be trained in his own consciousness and its various subtle states. Harvard psychiatrist and PEER founding director John Mack presented his evolving ideas on the topic of “Looking Toward a Science of Human Experience,” again reminding the group of the importance of worldview and of awareness of how we gain knowledge (epistemology) and why we gain knowledge.

The meeting concluded with a lively and relevant panel discussion on the public-scientist interest gap: How might we address the increasing difference between what the public thinks is important and what scientists consider important? Who and what decides which areas are worthy of inquiry and public money? Wayne Jonas cited alternative medicine as an example of the public dramatically closing the gap simply by spending their own private money on practices such as acupuncture, homeopathy, and “energy” medicine. Stanford physicist Peter Sturrock underlined the differences in models of reality as a source of the gap. University of Virginia astrophysicist Charles Tolbert delineated the reasons the scientific community objects to investigating certain areas of public interest. PEER lab manager Brenda Dunne noted the growing interest of bold young scientists as a resource for closing the gap, reminding the group that “anomalies research is not for wimps.”

Dr. Mack and PEER have been invited to host this annual meeting of scientists studying anomalies in 2002 in Cambridge, which will be accompanied by educational outreach about anomalies to the national science media and to academics in the Boston and New England area.

More information about the Society for Scientific Exploration, including the complete schedule of this year’s meeting and a list of the speakers and their topics, can be found at their website: www.scientificexploration.com **PP**

TRANSPERSONAL COSMOLOGY

As we bring the various sciences—social, physical, and natural—to bear on the alien encounter phenomenon, we find that key clarifying concepts are emerging which might best be described as forming a field of inquiry called “transpersonal cosmology.”

Transpersonal, because the experiencers emphatically report sensations and outcomes that go beyond the usual ego-state of daily life, more akin to the mystic’s transcendent experiences and to the out-of-body traveler’s multidimensional perceptions.

And *cosmology*, because the information gained from alien-contact experiences deals with matters as broad as the structure of our universe in both its macro (intergalactic) and micro (subatomic) dimensions. In this they remind one of many near-death experiences. Indeed, the similarity of key elements of alien-contact experiences to mystical, transcendental, multidimensional, and near-death experiences suggests that the label “transpersonal cosmology” might serve investigators in these various fields as a common ground on which to build knowledge of significant value for the related, established sciences of psychology, anthropology, and physics. **PP**

PERSONALITY STUDY

A study conducted by PEER in 1998 utilized standard psychological tests for the purpose of determining the mental states (including suggestibility, hypnotizability, and personality disorders) of people reporting to have been abducted by alien beings. PEER compared 40 individuals describing their abduction experience with a control group of 40 non-experiencers of comparable age, race, gender, and educational background.

On the whole, the study demonstrated that those reporting alien abduction experiences and those not reporting them were similar in most aspects. In addition:

- *Those who reported encounters with alien beings are not more likely to suffer from psychological disorders than non-experiencers.*
- *Experiencers are not more vulnerable to forms of personality or perceptual manipulation (e.g. hypnotic suggestion) than non-experiencers.*
- *Those who have reported an abduction experience are not more susceptible to modes of fantasy than other non-experiencers, thus refuting the idea that reports of alien abduction are products of an over-active imagination.*

A scientific paper detailing the study’s findings has been submitted for peer-review publication.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

INTEGRATING EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES



PEER clinical director Roberta L. Colasanti, LICSW, co-founded the Behavioral Medicine Department at Harvard Community Health Plan, where she worked for 14 years. She co-created the "Ways to Wellness" program at HCHP and has developed and led symptom-specific groups for ambulatory care patients.

At PEER, Ms. Colasanti directs the Therapist Consultation and Referral Network and collaborates with Dr. Mack by interviewing and working with individuals describing anomalous experiences.

At the Mutidisciplinary Study Group Meeting held by PEER at the Harvard Divinity School, PEER's clinical director Roberta Colasanti spoke about the people who come to PEER for clinical assistance in working with extraordinary experiences. This article is excerpted from her presentation.

John E. Mack, M.D., with whom I have worked since 1995, has described the process of integrating extraordinary experiences into one's life as being similar to a mystic's journey, beginning in trauma and working to transformation.

I'd like to discuss some of the stages that people go through as they make this journey. As I describe them, I would like to underscore that these stages do not necessarily present themselves in a linear order in each person with whom we work. However, most people seem to visit these stages at some point.

Bear in mind that the experiences we describe as "alien abductions" tend to begin in childhood and recur for many years, possibly throughout one's lifetime.

Therefore at the initial interview my intention is to find out a bit more about why the person is driven to make this journey at this time.

Many times they come because their day-to-day lives and their experiences have become compartmentalized. They deny their whole selves. It may feel like they are living dual lives, and that causes enormous anxiety and tension.

There are different ways in which people deny the experiences. One way may be to simply never talk about it. They maintain isolation regarding their experiences; they deal with night terrors and other aftereffects of their experiences,

or their recollections of them, on their own.

For example, one woman shared that at about the age of 19 she and a friend would drive down the same street every day between school and home. On their way home in the afternoon they were getting off the highway at an exit by a lake. She said, "Within a matter of seconds from driving down this highway, the next thing we knew it was dark, and we were several miles down the road, driving off a different exit, and we were both looking at each other with a sense of fogginess." Yet they never spoke about it, and she decided it must have been a dream. People will often speak about an experience as a dream, even as they are speaking about it as though it is happening in real time. The language of it often gets a bit challenging and our job is to probe some of the ways that they use language to convey their experiences.

In the instance of the young woman and her friend on the highway, it was an interesting choice of language for her to describe the event as a dream. "You were driving at the time?" I asked her, and she replied, "Yes, I was driving at the time." So even though it is nonsensical to be driving and dreaming at the same time, holding the experience as "a dream" seems to make it more tolerable for the individual. Indeed, finding ways to tolerate and make sense of the experience is a key factor in all the stages that people move through.

Another way people cope is by deciding that they are crazy. They may say, "Given what I'm experiencing and given the way the world is supposed to work, the only narrative that fits is that I must be crazy." The cognitive dissonance between what is happening and what the culture is saying to them doesn't make sense, so the explanation of mental illness presents itself as being more tolerable.

People will often come in after something has triggered a flashback or recollection and the dualism starts to fail. They start to put some pieces together and they need to come in to address it. At such a moment, the first reason that folks will come in to work with us is because they have entered a stage of either terror or awe. They have usually just been terrorized by what they've been experiencing or have remembered. The

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trauma of it is astronomical, and they describe an immense sense of awe as they ask how this could be happening.

The implication for their lives is of concern. Many ask how they can return to living a life within the expected norms if a whole other world is true for them.

Once people begin to investigate this, they will often say that it is as though they have passed a permanent threshold. The reality they once accepted without question has been irrevocably changed. Once they have made a decision that this is indeed happening in their lives and they are having these experiences, the world as they knew it ceases to be.

There is a stage that I call *transformation*. Perhaps not all experiencers go through this stage, but people John [Mack] and I see do so fairly consistently.

Transformation is a stage in which experiencers will speak fondly of a sense of great connection that they feel with all life and the universe. They potently experience a massive sense of consciousness and connection, which many describe as God, Source, the Creator, or more generally as love.

People will regularly speak about their fear of the grey beings [a type commonly reported], while simultaneously describing how when they look into the beings' eyes—or sometimes simply when they are with them and somehow manage to move past their fear—their sense of connection to the beings is incredibly transformative. It transforms who they are and how they see themselves as individuals in the world. They will often decide they are not victims of this experience but have in fact, at some point (they are not necessarily sure when) chosen this experience. Many suggest the choice was made “before they were incarnated into human form.”

At this stage there is often paradoxically great grief and depression. I work with clients who have on occasion become suicidal regarding the realization that their lives are not always at one with this connection to Source. Many experiencers speak about wanting to return to that connection and of the difficulty being in this human form. They may ask, what is the point of this human form? What is it that they want to do? What is being human all about for them? This questioning is quite an intense stage, and we work closely with people at this time.

This stage is about what meaning these experiences have for people, and in what reality they hold the experiences. We are very clear in our work with them that we can never say for certain what these experiences are. This is a mystery. But they need to integrate and understand how to bring their experiences into their world.

This integration takes different forms. I have been impressed by the amount of transformation that can occur



PEER CLINICAL TEAM EXPANDS: INTRODUCING DR. JEFFREY REDIGER

My name is Jeffrey Rediger and, as a fourth-year psychiatry resident, I am excited to be a new part of the PEER community. As a seminary graduate with a deep and long-

lasting interest in the objective ways in which deeply personal spiritual experiences can manifest themselves in our daily lives, I have come to be fascinated by the types of questions and clinical experiences going on at the Center.

My first encounter with PEER occurred last spring when John Mack invited me to join a small group of remarkable individuals for dinner, some of whom had reported experiences with extra-terrestrial beings. Prior to this time, I had never seriously considered such encounters, assuming that they most likely represented phenomena that were best understood as growing out of a complex nexus of personal needs and cultural conditions. I was shocked, therefore, to speak with people who, on the basis of my clinical experience, were clearly sane and credible individuals whose lives were replicating in a startlingly clear way the patterns of classic and authentic spiritual development that I had spent so much time in seminary seeking to understand and appropriate.

I could only have held onto my former assumptions by rejecting not only my clinical intuition and the way I had come to think about my own spiritual experiences, but also what I had learned from classic spiritual texts.

Something new is afoot in the minds and hearts of many people around us. Not new in the sense of pattern or substance, but new in terms of prevalence and proximity. I feel privileged to be part of a community that is seeking to understand just this. **PP**

within one's professional life. Some people have left their professions to go into the healing arts. One gentleman, formerly a chef, is now an acupuncturist; one woman, formerly a special education teacher, now has a thriving practice as an intuitive diagnostic. Many people speak about a kind of vibration and energy that they feel during their experiences,

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- The margins of science and spirituality: scientific and religious ways of knowing
- Ontology and worldviews: how these might be affecting our perception, understanding, and study of the encounter phenomenon and other anomalies of human experience
- Implications for psychology, psychotherapy, and the mental health field.

A unique feature of this academic conference was that six experiencers of alien encounter took part in some of the deliberations with the academics, contributing a degree of detailed knowledge and concrete reality to the discussions that powerfully affected some scholars, accustomed in other academic venues to merely picturing in their minds the topic of their studies.

Ontology and Worldviews

Early in the deliberations, philosopher and meeting chair Michael Zimmerman (Tulane University) observed that the alien encounter phenomenon is, to quote colleague Loyal Rue, an ontological and epistemological "goldmine" because it forces us to examine so many of our basic assumptions about what is real and how we decide what is real. Anthropologist Charles Laughlin (Carleton University) agreed, stating that anomalous experiences are of particular importance because "they bring theoretical views into question if we pay attention to them."

The conferees wrestled with the question of where to place the alien encounter phenomenon in the framework of their particular worldviews. On the one hand, some felt that objective and subjective reality represent a kind of irreducible dichotomy, even hard-wired into the human nervous system. Others were not so sure that this stark split is valid. Still others emphasized that dimensions of reality, not simply subjective, but beyond what is immediately observable to the five senses need to be studied in their own right. This "third realm"—variously called "daimonic reality," the "soul realm," the "implicate order," the "subtle realm," or the "mundus imaginalis"—seems to exist "beyond the veil" of our sensory existence, and elements from this realm may even cross over to manifest in the material world. But when

that occurs, a kind of trickster element or archetype may come into play, making a purely sensory/empirical approach even more difficult. For this reason historian of science Anne Harrington (Harvard University) called the alien encounter phenomenon "a wily reality," as she struggled to place it within more familiar frameworks.

In the end, there seemed to be almost a consensus in the group that we need to return to the experiences themselves, the irreducible human encounters with the world. But this, several members observed, is not as easy as it sounds, for we always face the fact that any reports we receive are one or more steps removed from the actual experience. The structuring of language, the process of interpretation, and further distortions of reporting separate the investigator from an individual's actual experience. Several experiencers acknowledged how difficult they have found it to find words that accurately convey the nature of their encounters. Psychiatrist Bruce Greyson (University of Virginia) cautioned against trying to understand anomalies like alien encounters and near-death experiences through laboratory or clinical replication, for in such efforts the full extent and true nature of the experience may be lost.

Resistances

Resistance to accepting the reality of what people describe as an alien encounter experience appears to

follow a pattern that many people confront when reporting an anomaly that is hard to explain by the theories of Western science. Those who do such research challenge what Gene Taylor, a lecturer in the history of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, called "fundamentalism in science," and therefore find themselves facing disbelief, ridicule, or avoidance, and sometimes even professional harassment and persecution, personal attack, and social ostracism.

One reason some traditional academics feel they must forcefully reject taking such anomalies seriously was given by Harvard professor of medicine Arnold Relman in a letter he wrote to Dr. Mack as part of the conference's deliberations: "If these stories are believed as literal factual accounts, they would contradict virtually all of the basic laws of physics, chemistry, and biology on which modern science depends." Although that may have been true for what science believed a generation ago, recent developments in



Chalkboard with emergent themes (top); Ms. Colasanti, Dr. Zimmerman (meeting chair), and Dr. Mack at the Multidisciplinary Study Group

quantum physics and superstring theory actually support multidimensional aspects of experiencers' reports. The conferees, while willing to debate a wide range of ontological possibilities, showed that they were not exempt from the traditional resistance. In other words, people like NASA engineer Paul Hill, whose views were presented by Harvard-Smithsonian astrophysicist Rudy Schild, are still rare. Hill voluntarily side-tracked his career when he went against the accepted grain by systematically studying what he could not deny was the reality of several striking unexplained aerial phenomena. The study group was left with the sense that much more can be understood about the cultural, political, and psychological forces that underly the resistance to shifts in worldview.

Methodology and Ways of Knowing

Although the study group agreed that there was a need for "good science" or a "responsible epistemology" to study an anomaly like alien encounter experiences, they perceived only the faintest outlines of what a "science of human experience" would be like. PEER clinical director Roberta Colasanti and Dr. Mack summarized the basic phenomenology of encounter reports, the way that they work with experiencers and the impact that these encounters have had on their lives. Although a good deal of the experience is often consciously recalled, clinicians find that an altered state—a modified hypnosis or relaxation exercise—can be useful to access and work through certain traumatic imagery and memories.

Mack and Colasanti emphasized that their method of exploration and study is of necessity clinical, intersubjective, intuitive, and collaborative. No claim of subject/object separateness was made. Experimental replicability, they asserted, is not possible. Therefore, they compare accounts they receive with those of other investigators, assess cultural factors, and make judgments about the reliability of the experiencers' reports. Psychological studies that compare abduction experiencers to matched controls (such as the study presented by PEER research associate Caroline McLeod), and neurophysiological assessments that demonstrate specific EEG patterns in experiencers (presented by University of Illinois psychiatry professor Norman Don and Brazilian clinical psychologist Gilda Moura), strengthen the notion that the

encounter reports are real. But such studies still may not reveal the source of the experiences. Accompanying physical evidence, such as small body lesions following encounters, possible recovered implants (a subject of great controversy), multiply witnessed encounters, or the sheer power of the physiological reactions of individuals when they recall their experiences (several have said, "every cell in my body is vibrating") provide corroboration that something important has happened. But so far the principal source of data remains the testimony of the experiencers themselves, so Mack has placed great value on a research strategy that includes refined techniques of sifting, evaluating, and comparing those reports from this country to those from other cultures (detailed in chapters 7 to 10 in his *Passport to the Cosmos*).



Academicians, therapists, and experiencers convened at the Harvard Divinity School

Science and Spirituality

Alien encounter reports and related anomalous phenomena may demonstrate a connection between science and spirituality or, more precisely, between scientific and spiritual ways of knowing.

As the study group examined this, some came to feel that light and energy, in both their observable and subjective dimensions, may lie at the heart of reality itself, and, therefore, may reveal science and spirituality to be two ways of approaching one fundamental truth. The experiencers themselves contributed greatly to this viewpoint, documenting in

detail how the intense vibratory power of their experiences opened them to a profound sense of the interconnection of all being.

Toward the end of the meeting, Professor Anne Harrington, reporting for the subgroup on energy that emerged from the discussions, said, "the very concept of energy shifted and became larger, much more multifaceted." Alien encounter experiences, she noted, might start out "feeling like it's electricity and end up feeling like it's related to God." In support of this, Reverend Joseph Gibson noted that in Christian Orthodox traditions reference is sometimes made to the "energies of God" instead of simply to God.

Implications for the Mental Health Field

The personality study by Caroline McLeod and colleagues,

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along with related research, has shown that considerations of character structure and psychopathology seem to have little to tell us about the nature and meaning of the alien encounter phenomenon. Insofar as such pathology is present, several members of the study group noted, it appears to be of the reactive sort, like post-traumatic stress disorder and related conditions. Several conferees, especially those in the mental health field, could not help wondering how many people with other traumatic or unusual conditions are poorly understood and badly served when approached only from the perspective of a psychopathologically or psychodynamically-oriented psychology. Eugene Taylor and others pointed out the potential value of broadening personality theory and psychology itself to focus more on notions of self-realization, contextualized understanding, and transcendence.

Recommendations, Future Directions and Studies

Several ideas about future directions for study emerged from the meeting. These included:

- 1) Methods of science must fit the subject being considered. In the case of the alien encounter phenomenon and related anomalies, a science of human experience needs to be developed that can combine empirical study with the communication of subjective experience.
- 2) Multidisciplinary approaches and the development of strategies for communicating and networking across a variety of professions are important for exploring a field that seems not to fit into the province of any single discipline.
- 3) New ways of knowing need to be explored, especially those which are intersubjective, holistic, intuitive, and body-based.
- 4) The mental health field itself is in need of transformation from its orientation toward pathology and defect to an "alternate psychology of self-realization."
- 5) Anomalies are central to the progress of science, for they challenge preconceptions and force us to open our minds to new dimensions of reality.

6) Careful phenomenological description and greater precision of language are essential in the study of anomalous experience so that investigators can know better whether they are studying the same phenomena.

7) More emphasis needs to be placed on the meaning and implications of anomalous experiences, and less upon the question of whether they are real in a narrowly material sense.

8) Greater philosophical sophistication than most of us possess is essential to understand phenomena that so radically challenge Western ontological and epistemological assumptions.

9) A number of suggestions for specific further studies emerged, some of which have since been undertaken: applying existing, advanced measures of post-traumatic stress to alien encounter experiencers under laboratory conditions; conducting in-depth interviews of experiencers about technological and cosmological information they received during their experiences; replicating brain-wave studies of experiencers across diverse cultures.

A Conclusion

Early in the meeting anthropologist Charles Laughlin remarked that what we commonly call non-ordinary states of consciousness many other cultures consider to be part of normal reality. This observation brought attention to the culture-bound nature of today's academic consensus. What is thought to be "anomalous," "paranormal," or "supernatural" in one culture may be an aspect of everyday reality for another, in which perception itself may be quite different. For this reason there seemed to be an urge in the group to go "back to the drawing board" and emphasize that future investigations should, as historian of science Anne Harrington expressed it, be "grounded in the human beings who are experiencing the encounters."

*For a complete list of references, see www.peermack.org **PP***

PEER VISITS NEW YORK, *from page 5*

majority raised their hands in favor of continuing to have such experiences.

An experiencer in the audience spoke of her heightened compassion for humanity that arose from having interactions with beings whose telepathic communications seem to flow into her body. She asked the audience to consider how we as a culture could communicate with each other and diminish our isolation from one another—an isolation which, like many experiencers, she feels quite profoundly and is painful for her to see around her.

She spoke of the difficulty of living in a culture that does not value or trust other people, let alone visitors from afar.

Pioneering researcher Budd Hopkins joined the conversation to suggest that until we are able to interact with the beings as equals, we should hold them with the same distrust that some people hold the United States government.

The event drew a lot of interest from the media with coverage from Jane Hanson of NBC television, the *New York Times*, and the *Boston Globe*. An audio excerpt of Jane Hanson's interview with Dr. Mack can be found on PEER's website, www.peermack.org **PP**

AT THE FORUM

The past year has been an exciting time for those committed to a mission of expanding awareness of extraordinary experiences within a context of social change. Through various forums, conferences, and informal meetings, academicians and concerned citizens alike from across the globe have met with one another to discuss issues surrounding this evolving consciousness. The following is a summary of some of the events that have occurred since the past issue.

February 1999: Istanbul, Turkey

The first opportunity of 1999 to share PEER's research with the citizens of another continent came from Turkey, at the invitation of 34-year-old Turkish businessman Haktan Akdogan. On the 10th and 11th of February 1999, Istanbul was host to the country's first-ever conference on alien life, amid a backdrop of civil unrest following the detention of Kurd rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

An audience of mostly young adults filled an enormous 2,000-plus-seat auditorium for two days to hear from several speakers, including Dr. John Mack, Budd Hopkins, and Michael Lindemann. Media coverage of the event was intense with more than 30 reporters in attendance. In 2000 Dr. Mack returned to Turkey for the second year of this symposium.

May 1999: London, England

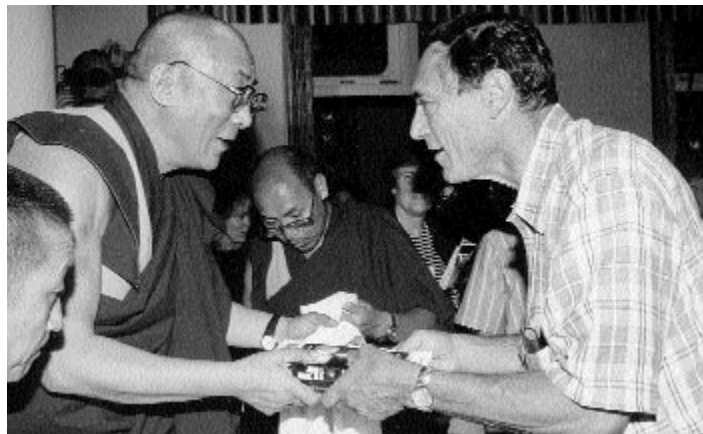
Convened by Center for Psychology and Social Change board member Trish Pfeiffer, this two-day conference—Otherworld Reality: Exploring the Ontological Status of Imaginal Consciousness—was an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the “marginal” reality underlying anomalous experiences and states of being. An interdisciplinary group of academics representing the fields of philosophy, psychology, history, and the natural sciences delved into many of the questions and uncertainties surrounding such anomalies as visionary states, encounters with other-world beings, out-of-body experiences, and hallucinogenic states.

The gathering concluded with a panel discussion led by psychologist Stanley Krippner. The panel addressed some of the major philosophical issues underlying extraordinary phenomena, including problems with language, ontology versus phenomenology, and the role of consciousness in physical reality.

May 1999: San Marino, Italy

In late May, Dr. John Mack and Karin, an experimenter featured in *Passport to the Cosmos*, were invited to discuss the work of PEER at the 7th World Symposium on Unidentified Flying Objects and Related Phenomena in the Republic of San Marino, Italy.

Monsignor Corrado Balducci expressed the need for cultures to respect testimony of witnesses, because it is through human beings' perceptions that we ultimately come to know reality in its fullness. Cultures must credit people's perceptions, the monsignor suggested, for if they do not, the institu-



His Holiness the Dalai Lama greets Dr. Mack

tions cease to develop and become a hindrance to the people's growth.

September 1999: Dharamsala, India

Dr. John Mack traveled to Dharamsala, India, where he was part of a symposium invited to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to explore how to create a culture of peace. The convener of this meeting was the Association for Global New Thought, with co-direction from the Synthesis Institute and the Dearborn Institute.

In an interview with New Dimensions radio, Dr. Mack was asked what came into focus from being in Dharamsala.

“What I take from this is a skillful means of interrupting cycles of violence. The strategies, or new forms of power, have to be much more imaginative, inventive, and powerful than ever before.

“Power is the latent, creative energy in the universe. Power is not dominating another person, or conquering another nation.

“The problems in the world, in a large part, derive from the fact that the people who are willing to use that power destructively are less afraid to use it, than those of us that seek a higher level of consciousness. It's as if a higher level of consciousness is synonymous with a retreat from power. But it must not be that way. We must use new, imaginative ways of compassion, persuasion, influence, saying no... All kinds of things which are non-violent, but are also powerful.”

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October 1999: State of the World Forum, San Francisco

The State of the World Forum, held October 1 to 6 in San Francisco, gathered more than 800 luminaries, leaders, and futurists from around the world to develop and examine systemic solutions that impact business, politics, and human development into the next millennium. It is in a spirit of mutual respect and inquiry that discussions are held, accentuating the ethical and spiritual aspects of the issues as they arise. The annual conferences seek to quite literally explore the "state of the world" in all its multidimensionality. This Fifth Annual State of the World Forum was a special anniversary event launching the forum's millennium programs.

Dr. John Mack and Dr. Michael Zimmerman (see p. 3), participated in "A Conversation at the Edge of Human Knowledge and Experience" with philosopher Rick Tarnas, author of *Passion of the Western Mind*, and transpersonal psychology advocate Georgia Kelly. They were joined by an experiencer who shared lessons she feels we are expected to learn from alien interactions with humankind. Dr. Mack also contributed to a forum moderated by Daniel Sheehan featuring Donald Beck, Guru Charan, Brian Greene, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Ralph Potter, Beverly Rubik, Brian Swimme, Richard Tarnas, and Marianne Williamson.

A high level of engagement was reported during this and many other conversations that addressed the edge of humankind's understanding, and PEER is looking forward to continuing relationships with many of the people who shared in this dialogue.

February 2000: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Psychiatrists and other mental health professionals often see clients whose experiences seem unfamiliar and do not fit the categories of the DSM-IV, the standard manual for psychological diagnoses. Our tendency in such cases may be to treat the experiences as pathological or to force them into categories to which they do not belong. On February 2nd, Dr. Mack and Roberta Colasanti, LICSW, spoke at the psychiatry Grand Rounds of the Cambridge Hospital to address how worldviews shape how we think about cases, and what clinical approaches may be more helpful to people who bring their unusual experiences to therapists.

May 2000: IF Conference, New York

Budd Hopkins' annual Intruders Foundation conference was held May 6, 2000 in Flushing Meadows, New York. The day-long conference on the UFO abduction phenomenon featured presentations by Dr. John Mack, former British Ministry of Defense employee Nick Pope, Budd Hopkins, Anna Jamerson, and a panel discussion. Audiotapes are available from Budd Hopkins' Intruders Foundation.

Upcoming: Off-Broadway, New York

PEER staff and experiencers shared their knowledge with the artistic directors of an off-Broadway ensemble theatre company, Collision Theory, who are developing a play about alien encounters. The production, tentatively titled *The Abduction Project*, is planned to debut spring 2001 at the HERE Arts Center in New York City. For more information: www.collisiontheory.org

IN THE NEWS

On the 21st of May 2000, the *Boston Sunday Globe* reported on a **French study by high-level officials about UFOs**. The report, titled "Les OVNI et la Défense: A quoi doit-on se préparer?" ("UFOs and Defense: What must we be prepared for?"), was published in France in June 1999. The report is a comprehensive assessment of the UFO phenomenon prepared by **COMETA**, a French committee of former auditors of the French Institute for Advanced National Defense Studies.

"The number of sightings, which are completely unexplained despite the abundance and quality of data from them, is growing throughout the world," the team declared. Of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, they conclude that "strong presumptions exist in its favor and if it is correct, it is loaded with significant consequences."

The study's originators include four-star General Bernard Norlain, former commander of the French Tactical Air Force and military counselor to the prime minister; General Denis Letty, an air force fighter pilot; and Andre Lebeau, former head of the National Center for Space Studies, the French equivalent of NASA. An English translation is expected in 2001.

Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Laurel Chiten has begun production of an independent documentary film, *Touched By An Alien*, which focuses on three people whose lives have been touched by the alien encounter phenomenon. Dr. Mack and experiencers from PEER are among the voices heard in this film, which has been filming in the United States and the United Kingdom. Also among the participants is British author Patrick Harpur.

Ms. Chiten's previous films include *The Jew in the Lotus*, about author Rodger Kamenetz's exploration of eastern spirituality, and the 1996 Emmy Award nominee, *Twitch and Shout*, about people with Tourette Syndrome. Both films have been shown on PBS and have received numerous accolades. To learn more and/or to help fund the film's completion, write to Blind Dog Films, P.O. Box 238, Waban, MA 02468, or visit www.blinddog.net

BOOKS OF NOTE

THE BROADER CONTEXT

A well-rounded understanding of the context that renders certain experiences extraordinary calls for reading in the philosophy and history of science, myth and folklore, trauma, frontier sciences, and social change, as well as accounts of the experiences themselves.



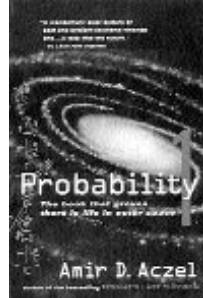
Varieties of Anomalous Experience edited by Etzel Cardena, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2000, 440 pages)

Written in two parts, this highly anticipated APA publication first delves into the fundamental conceptual and methodological issues surrounding the study of scientific anomalies, and then proceeds to systematically review a number of phenomena deemed irregular by today's scientific standard. Topics include: hallucinatory experiences, past-life and alien encounter experiences, as well as several phenomena termed "transcendent transformations": near-death experiences, anomalous healing, and mystical experiences. The book is objective in its approach, focusing a chapter at a time on research into each phenomenon, thus allowing it to be a useful tool to the clinician, scientist, or layman interested in the study of anomalous experiences.

The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory by Brian Greene (NY: Norton, 1999, 448 pages)

This Columbia University professor's book is a progress report on his and other physicists' current quest to resolve major contradictions between their current understanding of the universe in its largest, inter-galactic realm

(Einstein's General Theory of Relativity) and its smallest, subatomic realm (quantum mechanics). Intriguingly, their proposed solution, known as "superstring theory," depends on additional dimensions in space and time that seem to correspond to perceptions of alien encounter experiencers.



Probability 1 by Amir D. Aczel (NY: Harcourt, 1998, 230 pages)

Serving as a complement to recent advances in space science, Bentley College statistics professor Amir Aczel argues in favor of the existence of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. Integrating a multitude of scientific discoveries including Watson and Crick's double helix molecule (DNA), and Darwinian natural selection, as well as previously established mathematical formulas such as the famous Drake equation, Aczel demonstrates with great lucidity that the probability for the existence of intelligent life on other planets is far greater than one casually assumes.

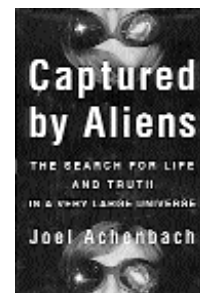
Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research by Stanislav Grof (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 345 pages)

An overview of psychiatrist Stanislav Grof's pioneering work in transpersonal psychology, a discipline influenced by Eastern philosophies which holds that people possess the ability to transcend our more base motivations. This book summarizes many ways in which this transcendence may develop, including through non-ordinary states of consciousness, spiritual emergencies, religion, and the experience of death and dying. Grof also touches on how alien encounter experi-

ences may be viewed as spiritual emergencies. Applying one of Carl Jung's concepts, Grof feels that such encounters are likely a manifestation of archetypal elements from the collective unconscious, and should be treated as a legitimate phenomenon in that respect.

Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America by Eugene Taylor (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999, 317 pages)

Dr. Taylor, a historian of psychology at Harvard University, chronicles individual and collective anomalous experiences in the U.S.—from Quakerism and Christian Science, through homeopathy and mesmerism, to today's "folk psychology" and the academic study of these experiences by scientific psychotherapy, transpersonal psychology, and the psychology of religion. He concludes that these "shadow cultures" exist not in opposition to science but as an integral, if more occult, part of it. Anyone interested in or having what may be considered extraordinary experiences by our Western culture's standards will find this comprehensive work insightful in placing such experiences and their impact within a historical and cross-cultural context of social change.

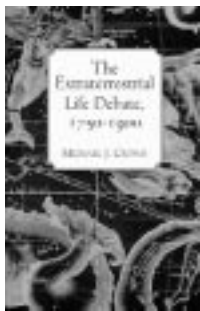


Captured by Aliens: The Search for Life and Truth in a Very Large Universe by Joel Achenbach (NY: Simon and Schuster Press, 1999, 415 pages)

Washington Post reporter Joel Achenbach provides a witty and entertaining account of the recent history of the search-for-extraterrestrial-intelligence movement. From the beginnings of the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute to the mysterious ide-

ology and ultimate demise of the Heaven's Gate cult, Achenbach elucidates the disparities between the concepts of scientific evidence and faith. After recounting the personal journeys of many of the key players the author concludes that the extraterrestrial mystery is far from being resolved, as science has yet to provide any substantial evidence of alien life.

RESEARCH COMPILATIONS



The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, 1750-1900

by Michael Crowe
(Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1986, 1999, 680 pages)

This book is an excellent exploration of astronomers' and philosophers' fascination with the idea of extraterrestrial life. Crowe investigates in detail how the idea of extraterrestrial life shaped, and was shaped by, new scientific and astronomical discoveries, religion, and the Enlightenment. Crowe focuses on the plurality-of-worlds and extraterrestrial life debates as part of the intellectual history of ideas over two centuries. Though not directly about ufology, it is an excellent survey of one ideological framework to which ufology owes allegiance.

After Contact: The Human Response to Extraterrestrial Life by Albert A. Harrison, Ph.D. (NY: Plenum Trade, 1997, 363 pages)

The SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute listens to radio waves from outer space for signs of intelligent civilization. In this book, psychologist and University of California professor Albert Harrison tries to assess what might happen if SETI succeeded. How might the public, the media, and government react to clear evidence that we are not alone in the universe? Drawing upon what anthro-

pology, sociology, and other sciences already have learned about how cultures are affected by others of vastly different technology, Harrison's conclusions also carry implications about alleged government secrecy regarding claimed UFO sightings and alien encounters.

The Abduction Enigma by Kevin Randle, Russ Estes, and William Cone, Ph.D. (NY: Tom Doherty Associates, 1999, 416 pages)

After two of this book's three authors declare that they believe extraterrestrials have visited Earth, they and their colleague interpret several published investigations of claims of alien encounter to be only the result of therapist influence of vulnerable clients. Science has not proved with physical evidence that abduction is real, they conclude. And they find little reason to expect that a science of multidimensional experience would be worth developing, as they reject laboratory findings on such paranormal phenomena as telepathy.



UFOs and Abductions: Challenging the Borders of Knowledge

edited by David M. Jacobs
(Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000, 382 pages)

Temple University professor of history David Jacobs edits this compilation of viewpoints on the UFO and abduction phenomena by various authors. The underlying theme: the phenomenon needs to be given more careful consideration by both the research and intellectual communities. Contributors include: Stuart Appelle, Ph.D. (professor of psychology, State University of New York, College at Brockport), Budd Hopkins (founder, Intruders Foundation), Michael Persinger, Ph.D.

(professor of psychology and neuroscience, Laurentian University) and John E. Mack, M.D. (professor of psychiatry, Harvard Medical School). Topics include the intellectual resistance to ufology as a discipline of study, the relation of myth and legend in UFO studies, as well as the phenomenology, history, and methodology of the abduction phenomenon. The volume concludes with a chapter by Jacobs that lists potential research directions which may help to further our understanding of the UFO and abduction phenomena. Those interested in the place of UFO and abduction research within mainstream academia will find this a comprehensive and worthwhile read.

The Missing Times: News Media Complicity in the UFO Cover-Up by Terry Hansen (NY: Xlibris, 2000)

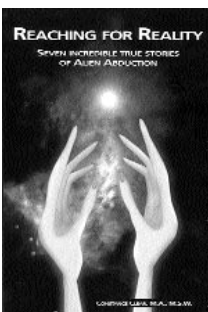
Hansen's interest in media complicity with government sources began when an apparent overflight by UFOs of ICBM silos went unreported in the national media. The omission led Hansen to explore the role national-security plays in the U.S. press, both in wartime and at peace. Hansen argues that misrepresentation of many subjects is due in part to relationships that have developed between press and government, such as the employment of former CIA operatives as journalists in the country's most prestigious news organizations, including the *New York Times*. Far from being a conspiratorial tract, this book also explores personal motivations that may impair honest reporting of potentially disturbing material. Hansen's examination of the UFO subject extends to a 1999 report by former high-officials of the French government on the subject of the UFO presence (see IN THE NEWS, page 16), which itself describes methods of disinformation employed by the U.S. government to manage public perception of the UFO situation. *The Missing Times* is available only by mail order from www.xlibris.com/bookstore



The UFO ENIGMA:
*A New Review of
the Physical Evi-
dence* by Peter A.
Sturrock, Ph.D.
(NY: Warner Books,
1999, 404 pages)

Dissatisfied with both government-sponsored and amateur investigations into the UFO phenomenon, philanthropist Laurance Rockefeller invited professional physical scientists from Stanford, MIT, and similar institutions to evaluate the UFO phenomenon from the stance of “hard science.” This book, written by the chairman of that scientific panel, reports on their evaluation, which concluded that science could benefit from continued study of the UFO phenomenon. Professor Sturrock also presents a valuable review of other broad investigations into UFO sightings, including several from other countries.

INDIVIDUAL FIRSTHAND REPORTS



**Reaching For
Reality: Seven
Incredible True
Stories of Alien
Abduction** by
Constance Clear,
M.A., M.S.W. (San
Antonio: Con-
sciousness Now,
1999, 230 pages)

Ms. Clear is a psychotherapist with several clients who have written here their life-changing experiences of encounters with aliens. The book was written to be helpful to persons puzzled or troubled by having had similar experiences. Although the book’s aim is clinical rather than scientific analysis, many of the cases are sufficiently detailed to be of value to scientists wanting to conduct their own analyses of such data.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

With respect due to John E. Mack, M.D., his statement that the “UFO abduction phenomenon appears to be a powerful example of a ‘daimonic’ reality” (*PEER Perspectives* no. 2) left me cringing. Before the word “daimonic” becomes the new criterion for that reality (Patrick Harpur’s book notwithstanding), classical meanings might apply first. The Latin root word, *daemon*, is defined as “a spirit, an evil spirit.”

For second-and-third century apologists all “daimons are evil,” whereas, “they denoted good spirits as ‘angeli.’”

Tertullian writes that “daimones have their bodies nourished by sacrificial smoke, blood and burnt offerings” (at *Apologia* 22.6).

Athenagoras also linked cult images and daimons. The daimones, he states, “operate invisibly in the material world over which they exercise direct control,” and in blood rituals, “they engross themselves in the blood from the sacrifices and lick all around.”

These classical sources are consistent, in their writings, as to the daimones being inimical and not beneficial to humans. Thus, in the present time, to

figure “the UFO phenomenon as (appearing) to be a powerful example of a daimonic reality” risks assigning to this new nomenclature, a classical nomenclature belonging to a specific set of non-material beings called daimones.

Stephen Bickford

PEER responds: *The term “daimonic reality” was used with respect to its original meaning, as illustrated by Patrick Harpur in his book Daimonic Reality. Harpur describes the ancient historical worldview of another part of reality in which unseen intelligences may operate.*

In describing this “other world,” we did not mean to classify the reported aliens as “demons” in the Christian sense.

Your point that confusion may arise from the nomenclature is valid, yet the historical view of daimons (the inhabitants of such a world) is actually more diverse than you suggest. Harpur explains that polytheistic religions featured a worldview with a “seamless continuity between gods and [a multitude of] daimons” (p. 54).

LETTERS, continued on back cover

INTEGRATING EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES, from page 11

and will then use this in a healing capacity to help other people.

Acceptance is a later stage. At this stage a person will say something to the effect of, “I don’t care what the culture is saying anymore, this is happening to me.” They do not need verification from an external authority. There is an incredible relief and a sense of being securely grounded when they reach this stage and are comfortable saying, “I know myself, and what I know about me tells me I’m having this experience, and that’s good enough.”

They are now deciding the answers to the questions raised earlier: “What is my place in this human form? What am I supposed to be doing and choosing now?” Many times they decide they want to educate others about these experiences. They want to speak more formally about what they have learned. It may start with only their own family, or their closest friends. Sometimes there are venues in which they may reach more people. PEER provides some of these opportunities.

Ultimately, the voices of the experiencers may help others who are having similar experiences. Further, their voices can help humankind reach a level of understanding about our place and our potential in the cosmos. **PP**

PASSPORT TO THE COSMOS, from page 1

been more surprised than I have that the damage we have been inflicting upon the Earth's life forms appears not to have gone 'unnoticed' by whatever intelligence or creative principle dwells in the cosmos, and it is providing some sort of feedback to us, however strange the form this has taken appears to be."

In an interview soon after publication (see opposite page), Dr. Mack said, "I have come to feel this phenomena is a very complex engagement of a larger intelligence ('Source' is the word most often used) through perhaps intermediaries (the 'aliens'), towards some apparent end, which is the evolution of consciousness and the preservation of this planet.

"The people who have the experiences move. They change. They grow. They transform. They become Earth-conscious. That is why I seek to give them voice, for they become passionate on behalf of the stewardship of the Earth."

Passport to the Cosmos is arranged in topical chapters that explore the emergent themes through the lenses of philosophy, anthropology, theology, developmental and transpersonal psychology, trauma theory, consciousness research, and physics. These explorations are laid out in four sections. The first one introduces the phenomenon and asks the reader to question the way in which one's worldview affects the ability to integrate new information.

Next, Dr. Mack explores the theme of "protecting the Earth," an environmental message many experiencers receive, and examines reported reproductive procedures that seem to suggest a "hybrid project" has joined humanity and the alien beings in a sense that may be both literal and symbolic.

A cross-cultural perspective is explored at length in the third section. The experiences and philosophies of experiencers who have lived in indigenous cultures—including Native American Choctaw member Sequoyah Trueblood, Brazilian shaman and anthropologist Bernardo Peixoto of the Ureu-eu-wau-wau ("People of the Stars"), and South African sangoma Vusumazulu Credo Mutwa—are compared and contrasted with those of experiencers whose upbringing has been solely in the Western worldview. Dr. Mack suggests that much can be learned from indigenous cultures about ways to approach this phenomenon that may enhance both the acquisition of information and our integration of it.

The final section of *Passport to the Cosmos* explores the trauma and transformation that experiencers go through as they enter into a relationship with their experiences. The experiences, Dr. Mack concludes, ask much of the participants—experiencers, researchers, and the greater public alike. However, Dr. Mack believes that if humanity can successfully move beyond the terror of the unfamiliar on both an individual and institutional level, we can learn much more about humanity's relationship to the cosmos in which we live.

Response to the hardcover has been largely supportive. *Publishers Weekly* declared "Here is a fascinating foray into an exotic world." *Mensa Bulletin*, the magazine of American Mensa, wrote that Dr. Mack "has earned the right to be accorded some consideration." Albert Harrison, professor of psychology at U.C. Davis, wrote "Largely because of its conspicuous attempts to be even-handed and the introduction of cross-cultural material, *Passport to the Cosmos* breaks new ground.... A credible work on an incredible topic." Gordon Creighton, editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, wrote, "Until today very few researchers have pondered long, it seems, over this question of 'other realities'... Dr. Mack's new work takes us quite a further step forward."

Soon after the hardcover's release, calls and letters from the public were arriving at PEER daily. A stockbroker from Cocoa Beach, Florida, wrote, "Why do we pick up books we have never heard of, and then are tremendously influenced by them forever? Yours has done that to me. *Passport to the Cosmos* has opened up an entirely new perception of the universe for me."

During an interview on NBC's *The Today Show*, host Matt Lauer asked Dr. Mack, "Why would it benefit me to read these people's stories in this book?"

"The purpose of doing this work," Dr. Mack replied, "is to open us to the idea that the universe may be vastly more interesting, containing entities, energies, beings that we did not know existed. When we open that consciousness, we open to a larger reality. We're not simply Earth-bound in our consciousness as if we were the top intelligence in the cosmos. We come more modestly to realize we are in connection with energies, beings, whatever it may be that is beyond ourselves. And that would be a very healthy development for this species, it seems to me."

On that theme, Dr. Mack replied to radio host Bob Hieronimus' inquiry about why he chose the title *Passport to the Cosmos*. "Passport is a word used to maintain borders between countries. These experiences, by cracking open that ethno-national bias or restricted consciousness, if you will, that mistaken identity that we are simply members of a certain country, people discover they are citizens of a much larger reality, of a cosmic reality. They are citizens of universal experience. And the universe is not particularly concerned with white people, black people, Americans versus Russians—the universe as far as I can tell is not dividing itself that way. The idea of the title is that this experience can expand our sense of who we are beyond our national prejudices."

Passport to the Cosmos was released in the United Kingdom in June 2000. A Japanese translation may follow in 2001. For more information, visit www.passporttothecosmos.com **PP**

*"This experience
can expand our
sense of who
we are beyond
our prejudices"*

ON HUMAN IDENTITY

In a conversation about PEER's work as a project within the Center for Psychology and Social Change, Karen Wesolowski interviewed Dr. John Mack about the relevance and larger context of researching alien encounter and other extraordinary experiences. The following remarks are excerpted from that interview.



The most important change that is needed by humanity now is to move beyond the boundaries of a limited group identity to a larger sense of being human.

When you open self to a connection beyond the material world, beyond the Earth to a larger firmament, to a larger identification with all-that-is, a sense of the sacredness of everything emerges. It opens one to a sense of the divine, what people often call God. And when that occurs, everything you do, everything you see, every material or non-material object, every person, whatever or whomever you encounter becomes a part of that sacred universe.

Any trauma may carry with it the possibility of personal transformation and growth. But the "alien encounter" experience seems different to me because of its specific capacity to shatter the boundaries of the psyche and to open consciousness to a wider sense of existence and connection in the universe.

The so-called alien encounter phenomenon seems to belong to that particular class of phenomena, not even generally accepted as existing by mainstream Western science, that seems not to be of this visible, known, material universe and yet appears to manifest in it.

This engagement with an intelligence ("Source" is the word most often used) through intermediaries (the "aliens"), appears to be part of the evolution of consciousness and the preservation of this planet.

What I find touching about the alien encounter phenomenon is the subtle way that it coaxes us, opens us, sometimes with tough love, sometimes by a seeming indifference, to exceed our expectations. Its methods are to invite, to coax, to show, to give opportunity, but not to do it for us, which is, at its highest level, the way that a person—a parent perhaps—tries to create growth for a child.

Rilke put it perhaps more beautifully than anyone else has. His definition of devotion was the unswerving commitment to standing guard over the privacy of another. He explained the value of this manner of commitment in the following way:

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole and against a wide sky.

So, to people who ask why the aliens do not help us overcome our ecological and social problems directly, I would suggest that most of what goes on here is not being done for us; it is showing a way, which is similar to what occurs in the most profound spiritual traditions. Ultimate responsibility for growth is left to each of us.

—JOHN E. MACK, M.D.

P·E·E·R

Program Purpose

As a project of the Center for Psychology and Social Change, the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) explores and integrates extraordinary experiences within a context of personal, societal, and global transformation.

PEER contributes to the scientific and philosophical exploration of experiences that do not fit our usual understanding of reality. Motivated by the understanding that expansions of human knowledge come with the exploration of unexplained phenomena, the program fosters conditions for candid inquiry through:

- careful observation
- open dialogue and
- development of a network of compassionate support for individuals reporting anomalous experiences.

PEER was founded in 1993 by Harvard professor of psychiatry John E. Mack, M.D., and colleagues as a research and education project of the Center for Psychology and Social Change, a Massachusetts 501(c)(3) nonprofit public benefit organization.

PEER's work is made possible by private donations and also by research grants from private foundations. We invite you to join our growing community by partnering with us in these exciting times. All donations are tax-deductible.

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MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM

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BOOKS

Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters by John E. Mack, M.D. In *Passport to the Cosmos*, Dr. Mack demonstrates how the alien encounter phenomenon calls for a revolutionary new way of examining the nature of reality and our place in the cosmos. For Dr. Mack, the alien encounter phenomenon is nothing short of a cosmic wake-up call to humans that we live in a world filled with spirits and beings who can cross the barrier we have placed between the material and immaterial worlds. Drawing on the rich tradition of non-Western and indigenous cultures, which more readily accept that we live in a multidimensional universe, Dr. Mack persuasively shows that by broadening our definition of “what is real,” we can begin to explore a phenomenon that has deep and lasting implications for humanity. For more information visit www.passporttothecosmos.com Hardcover (1999), 306-pages, \$20; trade paperback (2000) \$14.

Alien Discussions: Proceedings of the Abduction Study Conference held at MIT, Cambridge, MA, in June 1992, edited by Andrea Pritchard, David E. Pritchard, John E. Mack, Pam Kasey and Claudia Yapp. An excellent multidisciplinary introduction and research reference to the abduction phenomenon. Hardcover, 684 pages, was \$65, new lower price, \$40.

Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens by John E. Mack, M.D. “John Mack has written a gripping and fascinating book. As with Frazier’s *The Golden Bough* and as with William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and perhaps as with the Brothers Grimm, *Abduction* is a book that repeatedly leads the reader to psychologically important sources of wonder about worlds beyond our ken.”—George E. Vaillant, M.D. Hardcover (1994), [sold out]; revised trade paperback (1997), [sold out]; revised paperback (1995), \$6.99

A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T.E. Lawrence by John E. Mack, M.D., 1998 trade paperback edition of the 1976 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of T.E. Lawrence, “Lawrence of Arabia,” reprinted by Harvard University Press with a new preface, \$19.

VIDEO

John E. Mack, M.D. & Budd Hopkins: A Dialogue on the Alien Abduction Experience, filmed live in Boston, moderated by Christopher Lydon of National Public Radio’s award-winning talk program *The Connection*. Approximately 1 hour, VHS, \$29.95. (International customers please note: this video is not available in PAL.)

AUDIO

John E. Mack, M.D. & Brian L. Weiss, M.D.: “Past Life” Experiences, a PEER dialogue at Interface with Dr. Brian Weiss, author of *Many Lives, Many Masters*. Includes an introduction by John Mack, a presentation by Brian Weiss and audience Q&A. Recorded November 1993. 2 compact discs, \$15.

Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens by John E. Mack, M.D., an abridged version of the book on audio tape, read by Josef Sommer. 2 audio cassettes, \$17.

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

PEER Perspectives (this newsletter). Available issues (please specify): #1, #2, #3. Donation of \$4 requested per issue.

Research Bibliography, a 4-page list of relevant book titles, book chapters, and journal articles. Donation of \$1 requested.

Experiencers’ Guide to Therapy, an 8-page guide that explains the ways in which therapy may be helpful, describes the major therapeutic professions, and provides suggestions for how to choose a therapist. Donation of \$1 requested.

CenterPiece magazine, a 32-page publication of the Center for Psychology and Social Change, Winter 1995/1996, includes a summary of the preliminary findings from PEER’s Extraordinary Experience Survey, by Caroline McLeod, Ph.D., \$3.95.

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As a project of the nonprofit public benefit organization the Center for Psychology and Social Change, the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) explores and integrates extraordinary experiences within a context of personal, societal, and global transformation.

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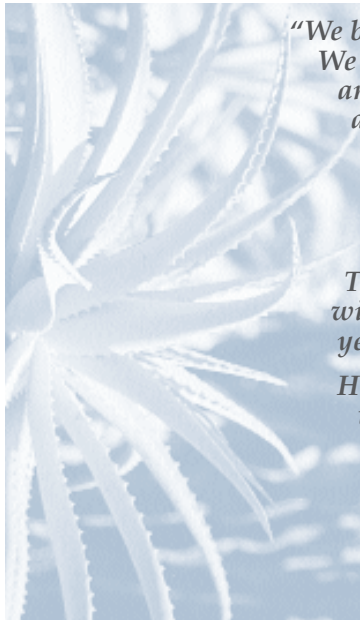
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*"We began as a mineral
We emerged into plant life
and into the animal state,
and then into being human,
and always we have forgotten our former states,
except in early spring when we
slightly recall being green again.*

*That's how a young person turns toward a teacher.
That's how a baby leans toward the breast,
without knowing the secret of its desire,
yet turning instinctively.*

*Humankind is being led along an evolving course,
through this migration of intelligences,
and though we seem to be sleeping,
there is an inner wakefulness that directs the dream,
and that will eventually startle us back
to the truth of who we are."*

*—Rumi
13th Century*

The health of humankind and the health of the Earth cannot be separated.

**Calling upon all human beings to recognize and act on
this understanding is the mission of the Ecopsychology Institute.**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS, from page 19

For example, "the ancient Greeks believed that individuals were attached at birth to a daimon who determined, wholly or in part, their destiny," and Plato, writing in the *Timaeus*, "identified the individual daimon with the element of pure reason in man so it became 'a sort of lofty spirit-guide, or Freudian super-ego'," though Harpur notes that daimons "are as likely to represent unreason or at least be equivocal" (p. 40–41).

The transformation of the term daimon into the Christian definition began with the earliest of the New Testament writings, the epistles of St. Paul. "The complex daimonic realm such as the one revered by Graeco-Roman polytheism was subsumed under the Christian angelic realm and all the old daimons were, of course, classed with the demonic angels who had been cast out of heaven..." The early Christian theologians Tertullian and Athenagoras cited in your letter are of course using this later definition.

This change of meaning is regrettable if it limits our ability to access historical views of the nature of the world. We will endeavor to use the term with care.

This letter is to thank you first and foremost for the great work PEER is doing on behalf of individuals in need of support as they deal with their unique experiences, and on behalf of the human service community who, too, are in need of support as they provide professional services for these individuals. PEER's impact, however, can and will be seen in many social, educational, and political arenas as our society deals with change in our overall worldview.

The high quality of content and presentation of *PEER Perspectives* serves as a worthy reflection of, and resource for, the successful realization of PEER's mission.

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