

# The UFO Abduction Phenomenon's Challenge to Consensus Reality

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**ABSTRACT:** *The author describes how he got into the study of the UFO abduction experience, a bit of the history of the field, the phenomenology of UFO abductions, who the abductees are, his use of nonordinary states of consciousness in working with them, some of the physical evidence involved, what effect being abducted has on the abductees, and his interpretation of the meaning of the experience. UFO abductions are not a rare phenomenon and have been estimated to have occurred to three-million Americans. There is a remarkably precise correspondence to the reports. Abductees exhibit relatively little psychopathology. The author uses a combination of hypnosis and a breathing technique as treatment in helping the abductees confront and move through the terrifying memories of the experiences. Abduction events and descriptions of aliens are relatively uniform. There is both subtle and highly robust physical evidence that accompanies some of the abductions. The aftermaths of these events are usually highly traumatic. But in processing these terrors, abductees are often able to find these events a source of transformation, in connecting them beyond themselves. They can provide a sense of purpose, often linked to an environmental awareness and a sense of mission related to our precarious global ecological situation. Their meaning for all of us may lie in challenging, in a powerful and meaningful way, the species-arrogance inherent in our Western cultural paradigm. They challenge our consensus reality in collapsing the boundaries we have placed between the physical and spiritual domains. Considering the global crisis, they may even represent a cosmic intervention or corrective, spoken to us in the only language we are any longer capable of hearing—that of the physical and of high technology.*

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## **The Opening Through Which UFOs Flew**

Because of my work with Stanislav Grof and holotropic breathwork and the way it has brought me on and opened my consciousness, I sometimes say the UFOs [Unidentified Flying Objects] flew in through the hole in my psyche that was opened up by the work that I have done in the transformational area.

Each of us working in the area of consciousness evolution seems to have our limits. Some people say, "Well, that parapsychology stuff is OK, but astrology—I can't buy into that." I know a publisher, who has even published Grof's works, who said that to me. Or people may say, "I can take astrology or parapsychology, but this UFO abduction stuff is too far out; I can't accept that." Well, that was my reaction as well, as I will explain.

One of the things one has to do when working in this field is to disimpact certain of our words. Our language is for the making of categories. But the categories we have do not work very well here. For example, people ask me, "Is it really true?" or "Did this literally happen to people?" "Is it real?" they ask.

Well, *real* is the kind of word that has to be looked at again from this other point of view. Or take the words, *inside* and *outside*—is this something in the *external* world or something in the *internal* world? Again, these categories get shattered.

What I will do now is relate my own experience of how I got into this area; then give a bit of the history of the field—very briefly, because this is a huge subject, a whole domain that I am only going to be able to touch the high spots of; and then I will describe the phenomenology some. I am going to describe who the abductees are, my use of nonordinary states of consciousness in working with them, a little of the physical evidence, what effect being abducted has on the abductees, and finally, how I put together the meaning of this phenomenon.

I refer you to four books in which to explore this further: One is by Kenneth Ring (1985), called *Heading Toward Omega*. Another is by Keith Thompson (1991), called *Angels and Aliens*. Bud Hopkins's (1987) work, titled *Intruders*, is a classic in this field. Finally, there is David Jacobs's (1990) recently published book, *Secret Life: Firsthand Accounts of UFO Abductions*.

### **My Experience With the UFO Phenomenon**

My experience with this phenomenon is fairly recent. In 1989 I was given a paper, written by Keith Thompson, that Stan Grof was preparing for a book. It contained a Jungian interpretation of the UFO phenomenon. I kept asking myself at the time, "Yes, but what is the data? What is really going on here?"

Nothing much happened until a friend—another member of my training group working with Stan Grof—asked me if I wanted to meet Bud Hopkins. I said, "Who's Bud Hopkins?" Hopkins, of course, is the classic pioneer in this field. That was late in 1989. I met him in January in New York. It was one of

those moments you kind of remember the date exactly—January 10th—where something shifts in your life.

When Bud told me about these cases, what was so powerful for me was the very precise correspondence of the experiences people were reporting, coming forth with great reluctance from all over the United States and all parts of the world. When, for example, one experiencer would be shown a picture of the aliens drawn by another experiencer, he or she would react with horror, because that meant someone else was having the experience and their notion that they could somehow dismiss this as a dream was shattered. That response struck me as something that could only occur if something real, and not imaginary, had happened to them. Dreams do not work like that. People do not respond to another's dreams that way. So something in me said there is something going on here that I do not understand.

Little by little I got drawn into this, and I was referred to cases. By the beginning of June of that same year I had worked with approximately fifty-five individuals—forty-one of whom fulfilled the strict criteria of an abduction case, which include being taken by strange, humanoid creatures into an enclosure, a UFO, and subjected to a variety of procedures, which I will tell you about. My cases include children as young as two years old. The oldest person is fifty-seven.

There is debate in UFO literature as to whether this phenomenon is fundamentally different from the folkloric history of visitation by little people and fairies, and there are some similarities to these phenomena. But what is distinctive about UFO abductions—at least ever since the Betty and Barney Hill case began the current abduction phenomena in 1961—is that these cases have been subjected to firsthand empirical study and are not handed down through an oral tradition. As Eddie Bullard (1982), a folklorist who has looked into this and who is a most experienced person, put it, in UFO cases there is a core phenomenon which is highly articulated and detailed and thus is unlike other folkloric reports, which have great cultural variability.

In his two books, *Missing Time* (1983) and *Intruders* (1987), Bud Hopkins described many of the fundamental features of the phenomenon that I will tell you about. And David Jacobs's (1990) book, more recently, has described for the first time the fundamental elements from the beginning of the abduction, through the procedures that occur on the ship, to the end of the experience.

### **An Estimated Three-Million Americans Abducted**

A Roper poll (1991) based on a sample of six-thousand Americans and conducted from July through September of 1991 asked people whether they had experienced a number of the phenomena associated with UFO abductions—e.g., the experience of being taken through a wall, the inexplicable bright light, strange beings around their bed, or actually seeing a UFO. If people had four out of five of these experiences, it was reasoned there was a likelihood or a good possibility they were UFO abductees. Based on this estimate in that poll, it is conceivable

that as many as three-million Americans have had this experience. So, you see, it is not a rare phenomenon.

It is striking to me that many of my new cases are people who were known to the UFO community but had not come forward before, coming forward only now as it seems to them that more "respectable" people like myself are taking notice. (Well, presumably I am more respectable, although how long that condition will prevail is questionable.) They are saying, "Well, if a Harvard professor can take this seriously, then I can come forward, I can report my experience."

For example, one woman—a thirty-year-old, very stable person, mother of three kids—had this experience of seven little guys coming and taking her through walls to the ship. She would say it was terrifying to her.

Her mother would respond, "Oh, you've had that nightmare."

And she would say, "No, Mother, it wasn't a nightmare. It really happened to me."

And that kept happening to her. Still, all her life her mother would say it was a nightmare. But then she heard about me and thought, "Well, if this man believes it's happening, I can tell him my experience." She was relieved in one sense but crestfallen in another sense to discover that, yes indeed, this is an experience that many people have had.

### **Who Are the Abductees?**

Now, who are the abductees? First of all, it struck me how ordinary these people are. They exhibit relatively little psychopathology, except that which might be considered the result of the impact of this very disturbing experience. I have housewives, clerks, prison guards, a chef in a Boston restaurant. There have been numerous psychological studies of these individuals; none has discovered any psychopathology in great degree that could account for the experience.

Kenneth Ring (1985) has talked about the possibility that there might be some kind of encounter-prone personality. The fantasy-prone personality—a thesis of Keith Basterville from Australia—has not proved out. Yet one of the difficulties involved is to know what is cause and what is effect, because the process of being abducted may begin as early as nursery age. There have been abductions of infants from nurseries, for example.

Also, there has been criticism of the use of hypnosis, which is important in investigating these cases. Yet we have no evidence that hypnosis has introduced distortion into this phenomenon. What hypnosis tends to do is to access memories that have been walled off and are not available to the individual because of the intense traumatic nature of the phenomenon. There is, in addition, the fact that experiencers feel that the aliens have ordered them to not remember, have shifted their consciousness, and have "turned them off" so that they are not expected to remember this. The nonordinary state of hypnosis seems to reverse this amnesia.

## **My Approach in Treating Abductees**

My own approach in treating abductees, which has evolved in investigating this phenomenon, is to use hypnosis in combination with intense focus on the breath. I can not just use holotropic breathwork alone—although that would be interesting—because I need to talk to them. Breathwork precludes talking, for the most part. At any rate, I first establish in an interview, which lasts at least an hour and a half, that the person has the suggestive indicators of abduction—like little guys around the bed or periods of missing time. However, sometimes they will remember the whole abduction experience, even initially. Interestingly, people who have taken psychedelics at some time in their lives tend to remember the experience this way. I do not have enough statistics about this to be sure that this is a robust phenomenon, but there appears to be a tendency for these sorts of people to remember their experiences without a nonordinary state of consciousness and to be able to explore what has occurred to them without hypnosis. But generally when I have used the standard hypnosis approach and relaxation to get someone into a nonordinary state, into a trance, and when they reach a difficult place where some intense anxiety comes or when there is some disturbing sensation in the body, then I will have them focus on the breath and go deep into the breathing. It returns the person into the trance. It also helps them to move through the fear and the stressing-out effect that they are experiencing at the time.

One thing I want to emphasize, because I think it is fundamental in distinguishing this phenomenon from fantasy or delusion or in its diagnosis, is the intense distressing affect that is associated with the recall of these experiences. There are individuals who literally shake with fear confronting the memories of how they were paralyzed or upon seeing again the little aliens with the big black eyes. Their bodies shake, and they scream literally with terror as they remember the intrusive procedures which occurred on the ships. This contrasts with research like Lawson's (1985, 1987), which uses a simulation. Such research asks, "Well, what do you imagine an encounter would be like?" And people can somehow concoct what an abduction would be like if they were to have one. But it is the affective power of the real abduction experience that gives authenticity to it and tells me as a psychiatrist that something powerful and disturbing has, in fact, happened to people.

## **What Is the Abduction Experience?**

So the great mystery remains: What is it? What is it in fact that happens? That is what I will turn to now.

The basic abduction experience occurs almost out of nowhere. The person may have some premonitory suggestion. They will be in their bed or in a car. One woman was in a snowmobile. They may hear a humming. They may see a UFO up close. And then they undergo a change in consciousness. They do not exactly

lose consciousness; there is a period they can not account for. It passes, and then they are kind of woozy at the end of two or three hours when they realize the time has passed. Occasionally they will remember what happened.

What I am going to relate will include the information gotten from the use of the nonordinary state through the technique I have described. They may see light in the bedroom or a beam of light outside. Then they find themselves, against their wills, being carried to the light, through a wall or the window, wherever they happen to be. Their first reaction, when they first recall, is that this just can not be real. It does not fit any laws that we know. Yet they have been witnessed by their relatives to not be present during that time. They are physically gone, and families become very distressed. Mothers become distressed when their children are in fact gone. One of the things most difficult to accept is that this can actually have a literal factual basis. Yet we must acknowledge that facts that do not fit still must be looked at.

### **What the Aliens Look Like**

One of the hardest things for the abductees is to look at the beings themselves. The beings are generally described fairly consistently, despite the fact that until the last several years descriptions in the media were not common. I did not myself know the basic description until about four-and-a-half, five years ago. Usually they are described as small, having large heads and big black eyes. Their eyes are the most prominent feature. They have a kind of rudimentary nose, nostril holes, a slit of a mouth, no ears, and are about three, three-and-a-half feet tall.

Sometimes there is a doctor or a leader who is described as somewhat taller, sometimes with wrinkles in the head. He seems to be the figure who is in charge on the UFO, having long arms, three or four fingers, thin, tapering legs, a chest without forms, and no genitals are seen. Occasionally, there are larger, seemingly human figures that appear to be associated with the little humanoids.

Keep in mind that I hear myself saying these words and I can not believe I am saying them. You probably can not either. Yet this is the consistent account of otherwise normal, healthy, sane people, who do not believe it either. They are only first confronting the truth of it with me or other investigators.

### **Happenings Inside the Ship**

Then the ship is described. Abductees may or may not see the ship from the outside. The next thing they know they are inside the ship, and it has kind of curved walls, a kind of coolness inside. They are naked, and they are subjected to a series of procedures, which include the taking of skin samples, and the insertions of probes of various kinds in the nose. Abductees who do not know each other and have not gotten this information in the media consistently give elaborate and highly detailed descriptions of instruments. The media did not have the details of these reports until fairly recently, and it is still fairly sketchy in the

media, so it is hard to account for this consistency in reports. The most prominent aspect of the experience is the urological-gynecological proings. Instruments are inserted into the vagina. Often, mothers claim to have had fetuses removed. While there is not a physically documented case of fetus removal, the experience is that they have been pregnant and the fetus has been removed. Men have had sperm samples taken against their wills. It is highly distressing. That is one of the most disturbing parts about it. However, I will discuss shortly how that in itself is not the core or most disturbing aspect of the experience as you go more deeply into the phenomenon.

There is also intense probing of the head; sometimes there is the experience of implants being put in. Several of these implants, by the way, have been removed and are currently being analyzed. So far, none of these have been definitely proven to not be made of materials that could be on Earth. There is a lot of research going on about the physical aspects of this, which I will mention in a moment.

The experience ends with the return of abductees via a reversal of the procedure I mentioned. They are usually returned to the place where they had been, but funny things happen there. Their shirts may be inside out. Or they may be placed some place different from where they started out from.

### **The Physical Evidence**

There are accompanying physical dimensions to this phenomenon. These by themselves would not constitute evidence that would satisfy scientists, but in the context of the abductions the physical evidence is highly important. Abductees may wake up with unexplained cuts, scoop marks, or bleeding noses. There is one case in which four or five people were abducted from an apartment and all woke up with nosebleeds the next morning. In association with the experience, they may notice that there is burned earth outside of the apartment from where the UFO landed.

The physical evidence is sometimes subtle. One of the things that is important in terms of consciousness and our notions of reality is that the evidence here has to be taken as a totality. To rely on the physical evidence by itself might not satisfy us. Yet taken within the context of the whole, highly robust psychological experience of this phenomenon, it creates a pattern. So subtler information is something we need to be attentive to as we expand our epistemologies. On the other hand, sometimes the physical evidence is not so subtle. There is a case being explored in New York of a regression hypnosis that Bud Hopkins did. In this case, a woman passed out through a window of an apartment building in which she lived, on the Lower East Side. This was about four years ago. Since then, several witnesses have come forward who were outside the apartment building, who saw the UFO, who saw the beings, and who saw her and the little beings go into the UFO, and then saw the UFO going into the East River. They were on the Brooklyn Bridge or someplace on the street; and they exactly

described, physically from outside the building, what Hopkins discovered and described in the hypnotically regressed abduction experience of the woman. So sometimes you get this highly robust physical evidence, and sometimes the evidence is very subtle.

### **The Aftermath of the Experience**

The fact that these experiences can occur in families adds a deeper and in some ways more troubling dimension to the aftermath of the abduction phenomenon. That is, several members of a family may be taken; the experiences may even span several generations, including parents and grandparents. Yet families have great difficulty talking to each other about it because it violates consensus reality. At any rate, the two fundamental sequellae are the traumatic/post-traumatic nature of the phenomenon—although it is not altogether post-traumatic, as I will explain—and the transformational/growth-enhancing dimension of it.

### **The Traumatic Aftermath**

First the traumatic: The trauma has four aspects to it. The first element is the experience itself—to be paralyzed, to be taken against your will, to be subjected to these intrusive, terrifying procedures. The terror is enormous, and it is buried or repressed for the reasons that I mentioned.

The second aspect is the isolation that these individuals feel. They are very reluctant to tell their parents. They get told they are too imaginative or that they are dreaming. As adults, if the guy who is abducted tells what happened, say, in a bar, he will be told he is crazy. So abductees have each learned, as one of them put it, to go "underground." They do not tell their experiences, so they feel very isolated. They know something of profound importance has happened in their lives, something that has great meaning; but they dare not talk about it.

The third aspect, which is the one that has particular relevance to our discussion, is that it totally shatters their understanding of consensus reality, as of course it does for us. Claire, a woman who was at an M.I.T. conference on UFO abductions, shared that she is the second of four generations of people who have been abducted and is very troubled that she can not protect her little four-year-old granddaughter. She related how her granddaughter draws pictures of how she locks herself in a box so that Mu, the head alien, will not take her sometime. Claire also said—and this is characteristic of what abductees say to me—"I would relish the idea that I'm insane. To accept that this is genuine undermines everything that I have accepted as reality. I like skeptics; they give me an out." Many people have come to me, particularly recently, who have come forward with all the attention that seems somewhat to have legitimized the phenomenon (although not really, it seems still to be mostly "tabloid" material rather than mainstream). But these people will come to me, and I will listen. At the end I can see they are distressed, and they will usually say things like, "I came here to get you to tell me I'm crazy."



And I will say, "I don't understand this. It's a deep mystery to me. I've seen many people like you, and it's not an expression of madness."

And to them that is a loss, because it strips away the defense of denial that used to tell them this can not be so.

The fourth aspect of the trauma resides in the fact that the experience can recur at any time. Unlike many other traumas, it is not over, when it is over.

### **The Transformational Aftermath**

The second important dimension of the UFO abduction phenomenon, and one I want to underscore, is the element of transformation. What I and others who have worked with the trauma of this have discovered is that the abductees begin to feel that their experiences were for a purpose or had a positive meaning to them. That is, when the trauma has been fully experienced and processed intensely in the nonordinary state of consciousness, after more than one—say, two, three, or four hypnosis sessions—something begins to happen in the abductees and in their perceptions of their experiences. They feel that the experience is expanding their consciousness, that they are connecting with themselves, that they are opening up to a whole new perspective on the universe.

One man went through just incredible terror. He had a sperm sample taken from him against his will, and he was screaming and yelling on the bed as I worked with him in hypnosis. At the end he said, "You know, John, the physical terror is minuscule compared to the terror of acknowledging that this is real, of having to look into the eyes of the aliens." The eye contact, which is sometimes strongly resisted, is a very powerful, confirming matter for these individuals. The terror of that acknowledgment is much greater, as this man said, than the physical reality of being overwhelmed and taken on the ship. I have seen this pattern in case after case.

Another important transformational aspect pertains to the intense information that abductees are given on the ship about the global crisis. For example, they may be shown a wasted landscape after nuclear war or environmental destruction. They may see the Earth dying, with polluted atmosphere and foul rivers. In response to this, and almost uniformly, they develop a powerful environmental consciousness. Some of them go so far as to drop the jobs they have been doing.

However, it should be noted that this deep transformation only occurs when they have worked intensely with their experiences in a nonordinary state of consciousness. These transformations do not normally occur spontaneously; the abductees have to go deeply into the experience, it seems. But when they do, many find that they can bring the experience forward into the work they do in the world. One woman has begun teaching environmental studies in a school; one has become a massage therapist; another has become an acupuncturist. They tend towards work that is more connecting, more transpersonal if you will.

Another transformation that happens is the intense bonding that occurs with the aliens after a while. What was originally an intensely traumatic experience turns into an extraordinarily meaningful relationship. From fear of looking into the eyes, they come to look deeply into those black eyes of the aliens. One woman described it as being fifty times more powerful than any experience she had had of connecting with another person on Earth. So they feel this bonding relationship with something beyond themselves.

Recently I have been getting cases that take this even further. In deep trance one young man, for example, began to talk about an inter-species mating process going on. He said there is a connecting going on beyond the Earth, beyond ourselves, that that is what is happening with the mating of these two species against our will. I do not think one can understand this sort of thing without some sense of a larger design, or a divinity, or an *anima mundi*. There is this feeling of inter-species connecting on a very powerful level. What this one man said to me is that these beings with huge heads have been too much observing and not enough feeling and that they look to us for feeling. Creation of hybrid babies, occurring as a result of this inter-species mating process, appears to be an important purpose in abductions. The aliens are very interested in watching mothers nurture these hybrid babies, whose characteristics are a mix between human beings and the aliens. This young man—Dane was his name—claimed that he learned through connecting with the aliens that we have become too disconnected from our feelings and that this mating process is to somehow "open up the heart-mind"—those were his words. We have lost or we need to develop the heart-mind. The heart has a mind and an agenda all its own to bring us back home, all of us, by which he meant back to God, or the evolution of consciousness back to our Ground of Being.

### **The Meaning of Abductions**

The last part I wish to relate is how I put the whole phenomenon together, what meaning I have been able to derive from the whole structure of this. This is made difficult by the fact that the aliens do not necessarily tell you what they are up to unless, as they put it, we are ready to hear it. Furthermore, a theory of this phenomenon would have to account for a number of disparate matters. It would have to account for the fact that these people are otherwise quite ordinary and sane. It would have to account for the sightings of UFOs that accompany some of them, the physical phenomena that are sometimes associated with them, and the fact that they occur to children as young as three years old.

### **Challenging Our Species-Arrogance**

First, this phenomenon has challenged our sense of reality more powerfully than almost anything else I am aware of. One man had an experience ten years earlier that he could remember without hypnosis. Throughout that time and prior to any investigation with me, he claimed that the experience had opened him up. As he put

it, "Once I was open I couldn't stand what we were doing on the Earth. Just that opening of me changed my whole perspective on our place in the universe."

Considering this, it occurs to me that the global crisis, the destruction of the environment, is the context in which they are occurring. I trust I do not have to spell out those dimensions to you. That crisis is at root a product of the dominant paradigm of the Western mind, particularly its inherent dualism and materialism. Together, these philosophical assumptions represent a kind of species-arrogance. They imply that we are the only intelligence, the only ones with the brains evolved enough to produce consciousness. This implies also that we are alone on this planet with our intelligence, building it up single-"mindedly," but separated in a meaningless and otherwise nonconscious universe.

Now, the alien phenomenon strikes at almost every aspect of that fundamental, dominant paradigm of Western psychology and science. Just one example: The UFOs themselves make a mockery of the technology we are so proud of. They go on and off the radar screen. They appear. They disappear. Nothing military has any relevance to them, although they appear to some military quarters to be a threat to us. Perhaps you have heard the joke that Allen Hyneck, a United States Air Force officer and former debunker, who switched over to becoming a believer, used to tell. He quotes an Air Force colonel who said, "Why don't we shoot one of them down and see if they're friendly?"

So we see the Trickster at work here: They exist; they do not exist. UFOs appear in our physical reality, then disappear from our physical reality. They tell us that whatever illusions we had that we were in control of the world, of nature, of ourselves, are shattered. We are utterly *not* in control. They come; they take us when they will; they take us onto their ships; they do what they want with us. All we can do is surrender and try to stay open to it.

### **Collapsing the Walls Between Physical and Spiritual**

Abductees also experience the collapse of space-time. These are generally not philosophically sophisticated people. Yet space and time to them just seem to fold in and disappear. So it shatters the notion of a space-time universe as being the only dimension that is possible. Our Western dualism is also overcome by the bonding that takes place. The connecting that occurs with the aliens tells us that we are somehow connected beyond the universe as we know it.

If this were not enough, the abduction phenomenon commits another cardinal sin to the Western mind. If you think about the cognitive demography, as it was spelled out to a group of us recently by the Dalai Lama in India, there are three dimensions of being that are known to Eastern traditions. One is the physical, the manifesting bodies that we know. Then there is the spirit world—with angels, Shiva, the gods and goddesses, and so on. Finally, there is the level without form. Each tradition has words for that level—the Holy Spirit in Christianity, the *anima mundi*, or the Great Spirit of Native Americans. In the West we have departments of religion, anthropology, and philosophy to study the second and third domains. But the only one that is considered

real is the first dimension—the physical, bodied domain; whereas in other cultures those other domains are real. Of course we generally allow that those domains sort of exist in people's minds. But the absolute cardinal sin to the Western mind—and the thing that will drive my colleagues crazy and probably end up getting me killed—is that there can be traffic across those barriers, is that the third world can enter the physical world. Yet that is precisely what this phenomenon indicates to us. In other words it breaks down that barrier which ought to belong and stay in the third world, yet it shows up in the physical world.

### **A Cosmic Intervention**

The way I understand this—and I am stretching a bit to say this—is that the higher intelligence, or whatever is at work here as a "cosmic corrective," can only talk to us in the language we know. By this I mean that many of the abductees I am working with have come to understand that there is an imbalance in us requiring a cosmic adjustment, an intervention from outside ourselves. Yet the only language we understand, particularly in Western culture, is the language of the physical, that of the embodied creature. So if any intelligence wants to reach us, it must come to us in the physical form. And that is why the aliens enter our world in the familiar high-tech way they do.

I want to conclude with two quotes. One is from Rainer Maria Rilke. It is from a letter, quoted in a foreword to Peter Matthieson's book, *The Snow Leopard*. Rilke, you may remember, was on a personal odyssey of her own, as was Peter Matthieson. She wrote,

That is at bottom the only courage that is demanded of us. To have courage for the most strange, the most singular, and the most inexplicable that we may encounter. That mankind has in this sense been cowardly has done life endless harm. The experiences that are called visions, the whole so-called spirit world, death, and all those things that are so closely akin to us have, by daily parrying, been so crowded out of life that the senses by which we could have grasped them have atrophied. To say nothing of God.

The last quote is from an abductee. She is a young mother. She has been abducted with her son and, perhaps, her husband. She has been told by the aliens that there is a place from which they come where time does not exist. For her, this domain has become altogether real. "Truth is truth," she said. "It will still be there when science is ready to see it or equipped to validate it."

### **Questions and Answers**

*Audience Member:* Do they say anything more about where they are from?

*John Mack:* The problem here is there is a fine tune that seems to be going on between the consciousness of the abductees and what the aliens communicate. Sometimes they sound like a Zen koan. Of course, this is reported by abduction researchers as nonsense, as if to say, it is not for you to know. But it is said more poetically than that. So people will try to find out what planet they are from, what star,

and so on. All of this is very interesting, but it is not very fruitful. It is like we need to open up to some other dimension. Jacques Vallee (1990) talks about a multi-dimensional universe or a multi-reality or other dimensions entering into our dimension. We do not yet have too many geographers of a multi-dimensional universe so it is hard to find a language to talk about that sort of thing. Maybe there are some scientists who are experts in the multi-verse, like Fred Alan Wolf (e.g., 1987) and others, but for most of us that question is difficult to tackle.

*AM:* Has the government tried to stop you from doing this work?

*JM:* I am not very knowledgeable about this area of government awareness or involvement with UFOs. It is a whole complicated area involving documents. However, the general sense I get of the government's position is that they take the position I might take if it were my job to provide for the national security. They basically have this material, but they say there is nothing to it. It does not exist. And they cover up. That is my sense of what the government's attitude is. But they have not approached me personally.

There was a movie put out about this, called "Intruders." The main character, a psychiatrist, had seen about three abduction cases and given one talk. High-level government people confronted him—Hollywood-style. I was a consultant for that show, but that part I did not want in it. The government heavies come and try to corrupt the psychiatrist, as much as acknowledging they are hiding the truth from the public and trying to get him to play along with the cover-up. The psychiatrist, of course, is high-minded and will not be corrupted. In the real world, however, none of us—Bud Hopkins, Dave Jacobs, or myself—have been approached by the government. I do not think they would know what to do with us if they did.

*AM:* Could you say more about the meaning of the apparent harshness of the experience and why this is happening now?

*JM:* People have come to the transpersonal movement because there was no place they could come to talk of their mystical experiences and their power. I mentioned other dimensions and universes. Terence McKenna (1991) has written on parallel universes. He has also been an advocate of the fact that the Western mind is so encrusted, so cut off from the divinity, that it takes a really heavy dose of something to get us opened in our hearts and in our souls, and that the psychedelics are one really powerful hit that can bust through the encasement of the Western mind. I see this abduction phenomenon as another one. It kind of hits us where we live, in the physical domain. So it is also a very powerful kind of opening process, not just for abductees but for all of us, through the extraordinary meaning of the phenomenon.

*AM:* Have you talked with David Bohm about this, and is there a branch of physics that deals with the multi-verse?

*JM:* I think there is increasing interest in it in physics. I think that the new physics is certainly very compatible to the possibilities on which the abduction experience open

us; it is very open to it, in fact. As for a science of the multi-verse as such, I do not know.

*AM:* How do the abductees' eventual feelings toward their abductors relate to the Stockholm syndrome—where terrorists abduct someone and the captives end up feeling a positive relationship with their captors after a while?

*JM:* That has actually been the prevailing interpretation, in UFO abduction research, about the bonding phenomenon. And I think there may be some of that going on but that the bonding that occurs is much more profound than that. In the case of terrorists, I believe there is something they are up to, they have a self-interest. Maybe aliens do too; I am not saying they do not. But it really seems to be part of a much more profound cosmic process, a connecting between two species. There is a feeling of deception or trickiness involved, but I am not as taken with the Stockholm syndrome interpretation for it. There is some of that there, but overall I feel what is going on is much more meaningful than that.

*AM:* During abductions, is it simply a subjective sense of time being gone, or do family members notice that they are gone?

*JM:* Both. There are situations where someone is undergoing an abduction experience, and to others it seems they are still physically present. It seems to be more like an out-of-body experience, and the experiencer feels like his or her body has gone from them. Then there are many other cases—I have a number of them, and other researchers do too—where the person's body is actually out of the apartment and may be gone for several hours.

Travis Walton was gone for several days in 1975, and then he was found wandering in the woods. So it is not known how long he had been placed back. But the usual experience involves being gone between one and three hours. One of my first cases, a young woman, was abducted with a friend from a rumpus room in her friend's house. They were returned about five or six o'clock in the morning. But when they had not come home and were not found by either of the two fathers until six o'clock in the morning, the fathers were understandably very upset. They said, "Where have you been during the night?"

Only later did the women recover their abduction experience, so at the time they simply were not there and they could not explain where they had been. There were even search parties sent for them.

What characterizes the abduction experience is that it is physically real and it enters the physical world, but it is also transpersonal and subjective. It crosses that barrier between the hard-edged physical world and the spirit/transpersonal world.

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### Biographical Note

JOHN E. MACK, M.D., is a former chief of psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard University since 1972, and a holotropic breathwork facilitator. He received a Pulitzer Prize for *The Prince of Our Disorder*, a psychobiography of T. E. Lawrence. He is the author of the recently published book, *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*, based upon the research he has described in this article. Since the book's release, John Mack has been the focus of intense media interest and scrutiny and has been featured on segments of a number of TV "magazines." He is founding director of the Center for Psychological Studies in the Nuclear Age and is currently involved in a study of globally responsible decision-making among corporate executives.

# Editorial

Welcome to the "primal renaissance." The articles in this first issue were chosen specifically to indicate the new direction that some of us see the IPA, the primal movement, and the world in general has taken. For if this is not a time of "multiple realities and primal visions," what is it?

The International Primal Association has always been an association of multiple perspectives and widely divergent approaches, centered solely on the members' valuing of catharsis and deep feeling. But it seems even more so today, with its inclusion of past-lives, holotropic, and shamanic perspectives and approaches—to name just a few. Multiple realities and primal visions, for sure.

The primal movement has come into its young adulthood as well. With Stettbacher and Alice Miller emphasizing self-priming; deMause proclaiming the fetal origins of history; Wasdell describing the conception and early fetal roots of societies and social movements; the Frank Lake/ first-trimester group in England; the Hendricks' emphasis on couples' relationships; Emerson's emphasis on treating infants and children; Rowan's explorations of subpersonalities; Liedloff's proposing childrearing learned from "primitive" cultures; Grof's integration of the perinatal and cathartic with the transpersonal; Farrant's sperm-and-egg mix with spirituality; Findeisen's Star program and birth regressions; Janov's inclusion of the psychotechnical into the process; Belden Johnson's integration of primal with Nature and ecology in a form of shamanism; the entire pre- and perinatal psychology movement, especially as represented by our "sister" organization, the Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH); and, finally, the inclusion of catharsis in past-lives work of the likes of Dan Miller, Roger Woolger, and Morris Netherton . . . and there are other facets as well.

On the global level, there has never been such a time of multiple realities. All cultures coming together, linking and cross-fertilizing through the medium of high technology and mass telecommunications, America's "melting pot" descriptor is becoming applicable to the entire world. Admittedly, there are highly visible, blatant examples of isolated, intransigent elements resisting this coming together of understanding with all their might—as evidenced by ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and the new Germany; and by the rise of "hate groups" just about everywhere. But they are fighting a rearguard battle. Their recent visibility may be due to the increasing desperation of their acts in attempting to stave off what they unconsciously know to be an inevitable coming together of understanding of the multiple cultures of the world. This coming together of multiple perspectives, "multiple realities," is all the more phenomenal in its being enriched, in a position of honor, and for the first time ever, by the wisdom of indigenous and



native cultures, which the rest of the world is coming to for help in trying to learn how to live with Nature, and not destroy Her, and us along with.

In keeping with these radical and profound changes, we wanted our first issue of *Primal Renaissance* to break cleanly from the past and to clear away a much broader, much more varied territory in which to grow. For at this juncture, twenty-five years after the publishing of *The Primal Scream*, it has become clear that primal psychology lies at a center, bordered on all sides by major new changes and cutting-edge findings in a number of fields and sciences. In this issue, you will see primal psychology's overlap with the new physics (Miller), transpersonal psychology and Eastern mysticism (Borden), biology (Sheldrake), anthropology (Adzema and Radford), shamanism (Johnson), and even UFOlogy and metaphysics (Mack).

The time is ripe, we feel, to begin building the bridges to the many bordering domains of knowledge so that the resulting cross-fertilization can serve to enrich us, in the same way that we hope to, at the least, stimulate or provoke them.

To that end, John Mack—a holotropic breathwork facilitator—challenges the very foundations of our culture's materialistic paradigm in his presentation of his findings in working with UFO abductees. Some of us in Primal or pre- and perinatal psychology feel that there are some perinatal explanations, aspects, or overtones to these abductees' experiences. No doubt some of these will be brought out in the continuing dialogue we expect to be provoked by his article and to be published in this journal (under the Primal Voices and other categories). But Mack is no stranger to the perinatal, to say the least, and his perspective as well as the evidence he describes, based on his indepth research, deserves to be thoroughly heard out, at least initially, unchallenged by pretentious explanations—of primal, perinatal, or any sort—made by those who have not been where he has been.

In this issue, you might say, *Primal Renaissance* is staking out its territory. This new journal of the International Primal Association will not just be a journal of primal therapy, or of primal integration, or of primal process education; it will be that but much more. In choosing the term *primal psychology* we hope to have created the larger canopy, under which the intercourse of allied discoveries can occur and create the wholistic and multi-faceted progeny that can help take us through the current global crisis into the Twenty-First Century flowering and blossoming that I describe in the Prologue to follow.

The other emphasis of this first issue, "primal visions," has to do with the growing awareness of the aliveness of Nature. As Sheldrake, in this issue's article, puts it:

This hypothesis [morphic resonance] is part of a wider change in paradigm that is going on, which I summarized in my most recent book, *The Rebirth of Nature*, the idea of Nature as alive. This idea is not only that of the Earth being alive, as Gaia, but of the entire cosmos as alive, akin to a developing organism. Through science

the mechanistic theory of Nature is being transcended. Science is returning us, I believe, to a new sense of the life of Nature. (p. 76)

Sheldrake's hypothesis, furthermore, in positing memory as inherent in Nature—as opposed to stored in any "physical" thing such as a brain—supports our experiences of cellular consciousness in sperm, egg, zygote, and blastocyst regressions, as described in this issue's article by Larimore and Farrant.

However, I wish to add one more observation regarding our "multiple realities" theme. There was sharp disagreement, among our editorial board, on some of the articles herein, with half of the reviewers expressing strong support and half strong opposition. This tells me that the ideas in those articles are highly controversial and provocative.

In America in the last few decades, the label "controversial" has come to mean that particular thing does not get published or disseminated. It is well known, for example, that publishers have, for economic reasons they say, become extremely conservative in their decisions about what to publish; they have become increasingly unwilling to take the risks of "controversial" material (as those of us writing in primal and pre- and perinatal psychology know only too well). It was not always that way in publishing of course. But this is what seems to have settled in on our culture; and consequently what the rest of us have come to regard as normal. The mainstream of thinking has become quite narrow; anything outside of it being snickered at, if brought up at all, on newscasts, talk shows, TV "magazines," and documentaries. Two notable cases in point in the last year being the audience's reaction during our own Barbara Findeisen's appearance on "Oprah" and the biased and denigrating way John Mack's findings have been presented on "Dateline" and other shows since the release of his book.

But when you eliminate the controversial and the provocative from any field, or any culture, you eliminate its growing edge. You create stagnation in that field or culture by judging as acceptable only that which resonates with the familiar and the center of the stream. This route is a dead end for any culture or field of endeavor. No matter how long such a thing might continue in existence, its vitality, its lifeblood is gone.

The mainstream perspective also ignores what, from the new physics, we should have long since learned by now about the relativity of truth. Our understanding that the perceiver "creates" the reality perceived, and of the impossibility of Absolute Knowledge or Ultimate Truth—even in the "hard" sciences—has resulted in the postmodern stance that Truth is best served, though ultimately unattainable, by the inclusion of as many of the smaller "truths," as many of the perspectives, and "voices," as possible. We can then know that we have staked out the territory within which the Great Mystery (the Absolute Truth) should somewhere exist—each individual ascertaining it for him- or herself.

This relates to the multiple realities theme, as well as to the inclusion of the Primal Voices section, at the end of the journal, where we invite readers to

participate by including their own truths, their own voices, to the harmony, or cacophony, arising from the articles.

Knowing all this, then, it is with pride (and humility) that we launch this new endeavor, within it helping to set a precedent for what this journal will stand for. Having been the object of such prejudice, dismissal, and disdain, from Janov on down, simply because of the unusual nature of our findings, a primal journal could hardly do less than to strive to correct that by valuing diversity in its pages and requiring open-mindedness of its readers. Yet this is only in keeping with the primal attitude, of course—the attitude that follows the anomalies of our experience into their deepest roots, that searches beneath every rock for the keys to our personal truth which have been hidden from the daylight of acceptability.

In truth, when I am able to bring forward pieces that can trigger such opposite and extreme reactions in people, I feel that I am doing my job. If we piss a few people off, then we surely are inspiring a few others. That is also in keeping with a primal stance. Love these articles or hate them, chances are, either way, you'll remember them. Maybe you'll think about them. That is the best that an editor could wish.

Rohnert Park, California

Michael Adzema  
20 February 1995