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JOHN E. MACK, M.D.
PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR
OF THE BESTSELLING *ABDUCTION*

PASSPORT TO THE COSMOS

HUMAN TRANSFORMATION
AND ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

“John Mack’s research on the challenging phenomenon of alien encounters represents a stunning breakthrough in our understanding of ourselves and our place in the larger cosmos. With a rare combination of empiricism, reason, and empathy, he skillfully guides us to reconsider our attachment to the bankrupt materialist worldview and open our minds to the possibilities of a universe of awesome diversity.”

– Ralph Metzner, Ph.D.,
psychologist and author of
Green Psychology

Harvard professor of psychiatry and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer John E. Mack, M.D. spoke at the Seven Stars book store in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in March 2000. Dr. Mack talked about his new book, Passport to the Cosmos, and shared where this passport has taken him in his understanding of the relationship between alien encounters and human transformation. These remarks are excerpted from his discussion.

I am always asked, “Why did you write this book when you had already written that other book, *Abduction*?” How many times can a Harvard professor lose his respectability or virginity in the intellectual world? You can’t come out twice, so why did you do this book? What’s different?

My reason for writing this book is to try to move the conversation out of the argument of whether UFOs and abductions are real or not. I have to confess to you that I believe that is boring at this point. It is definitely real, and if you want to deconstruct what “real” means we can do that.

Whether it is materially real or not, or comes from some other place and shows up materially—I love those ontologically sophisticated discussions—but this is not the main thing. The main thing, for me, has become “what does this mean for us?” that people of sound mind, hundreds of thousands if not millions of people from all over the world, not just in the Western countries, but on other continents and among indigenous people, are having what seem like authentic, incontrovertible encounters with some sort of beings that apparently enter into our physical world and communicate to us about ourselves, and seem in some way to be connecting with us.

The heart of the writing of this book began when I was invited by Mu Soeng and Catherine Diehl at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies to spend time there alone in a cottage with all my notes and transcripts. I took all my boxes of interview transcripts and sat with them, sorting them day after day, to see what ideas and themes seemed to emerge from that material.

I began to be struck by how powerful was the environmental dimension to this, the overwhelming communication of danger about the planet that was coming from this apparently outside source. Bernardo Peixoto, a shaman born in northern Brazil, one of three members of indigenous cultures whom I discuss in detail in the book, told me that the Ikuyas—his people’s name for beings that seem

similar to the grey beings reported by people in the West—are coming now because “they are conscious that we as human beings on this planet are destroying ourselves, and they love us and wouldn’t see this happening.” They are trying to influence us, he suggested, by bringing knowledge and understanding of our connection to each other and to the Earth and a reminder that “we are just one part of a big, big whole.”

The experiences that are written about in the book make it clear that the encounter phenomenon opens people to an awareness of Self, with a capital S, that goes way beyond any kind of ethno-national identification, to a much larger sense of being a child of the Divine, or a child of Spirit, a child of the Cosmos. And so it is in a sense a passage experience from a nationalistic identity to a collective identity, to a larger global identity.

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.

When you open Self to a connection beyond the material world, beyond the Earth to a larger firmament, this opens people to the sacred. It opens people to a sense of the divine, of being one with all-that-is, what people used to call God. And when that occurs, then everything becomes part of that. Everything becomes part of God, part of the divine. Everything you do, everything you see, every material or non-material object, whatever you encounter becomes a part of that sacred universe.

Many of the things that we do, the mass destructive things we’re doing, particularly the destruction of the Earth itself, become impossible from the place of that kind of consciousness. You’d cringe every time you saw a bulldozer. You would shrink in horror from every polluted stream; it just wouldn’t be OK.

And similarly, in the way peoples treat one another, it makes Erik Erikson’s notion of pseudo-speciation really, really powerful. Pseudo-speciation means the treatment of others, other peoples, other

ethno-national groups as if they were another species, rather than as one human species or family. He was talking about the scope of being human, the need of a shift to a new human identity.

The alien abduction experiences themselves are often initially quite frightening. Yet over time many experiencers form a powerful bond with one or more of these beings. People become deeply connected with these entities. They have palpable experiences that are just as powerful, sometimes more powerful, than relationships here. They view them not just as these cold, calculating, indifferent big-eyed creatures, but bonds develop between experiencers and those strange creatures which often has an intense, transcendent, spiritual, sometimes even erotic, element to it.

When people start to recall an invasive encounter, they begin to shake on the couch. They sweat. They cry. They scream at the beings, “you can’t do this to me, this is terrible.” The transformational, the transcendent, the kindness aspect, the Earth-connected aspect of it, usually comes after passing through a kind of dark night of the soul, an initiation, whatever you wish to call it.

As a clinician, my role is to listen to a person as he or she describes an experience, and simply stay there in an empathic place. I may say I am sorry for the pain, and I will ask “Say more. And then what happened?” But I don’t say, “oh those aliens are terrible, that is too bad they did that to you,” because that would evoke a victim mentality. If you do not argue the good or bad, if you just stay with it, it moves from there.

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.

I think that the most important point here is that something that opens us to a larger sense of self, of identification with others and with a more cosmic level of being, will open us to a sense of the divine and a reverence for life, for nature.

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