

“The General’s Abduction by Aliens from a UFO: Levels of Meaning of Alien Abduction Reports”

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A case study is presented of a patient who claims to have been abducted by aliens from a distant planet. Four related levels of meaning for the patient’s belief that he—and other “contactees”—were deducted is provided. These explanations can be categorized as: historical, moral, metaphorical, and psychological. A rationale is offered for the treatment of patients with alien abduction beliefs.

KEY WORDS: UFO meaning; historical; moral; metaphorical; psychological.

“Through this be madness, yet there is method in’t.”
—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (II: ii).

James J. Crawford, III¹ was a scion of a New Hampshire family. The Crawford boys served in the Army as far back as the French and Indian War. At age seven each was sent to military school. During his junior year of upper class Crawford was accused of ring leading a gang of cadets in the theft of swords, medals, and uniforms held in the school museum that once belonged to illustrious alumni. Despite his plead of innocence and a lack of proof, he was sent home. Bewildered and ashamed by the alleged theft, without interviewing him, his parents shipped him off to an elite prep school in Connecticut. His father, Colonel James J. Crawford, II (retired Army), Chairman of a New England Railroad, severed contact with his son the day that Junior left for prep school. Only his mother, a brother, and a sister kept in touch with him—surreptitiously.

For two years Crawford planned revenge against what he referred to as the “scholastic establishment.” He focused exclusively on his grades, achieved an excellent academic record, and was selected class valedictorian.” He chose as the topic of his speech the federal government’s theft following the Revolutionary War

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¹The patient’s name and some of the description of his background have been changed to disguise his identity and that of his family.

of a large tract of land in New Hampshire that belonged to his family. The evidence he marshalled to support his claim was so carefully and convincingly presented that those in the audience—including his mother—were not certain whether or not Crawford's claim was valid. However, the embarrassment of making family matters public cut the last thread Crawford had with his family. They enrolled him in a southern military college. Upon arrival, after a long car ride from home with his brother, in which no issue of substance was broached, the brother angrily told him, "You are not wanted at home. Find other arrangements for holidays and vacations!"

Upon graduation at the outset of the Korean War, Crawford was commissioned as an officer in the Army Engineer Corp, and sent directly to the war front. His accusation of the federal government's crime against his family again erupted during his station there. His claim, systematic and persistent, earned him an evaluation in an Army medical facility in Japan. The psychiatrist who interviewed him, strongly recommended his discharge from the Army as psychologically unfit.

THE "WHITE HOUSE" UNIT

In the mid-to-late 1960's, I was the psychology consultant to the so-called "White House" unit at Saint Elizabeths Hospital (SEH), a large federal psychiatric hospital in southeast Washington, DC. The unit held patients who were stopped in what police and security officials regarded as bizarre attempts to reach the President or some other important official of the federal or the district governments. In order to advise on the treatment of these patients, I supervised their psychological evaluations administered by the clinical psychology interns assigned to the unit. On occasion I conducted an evaluation myself.

Appropriate immediate treatment for the patients on the unit was necessary—all were highly disturbed, yet the hospital administration was trying to have them returned to their home states. This is to say, most of the patients were from out-of-state. So if the mental health worker from the patient's home state, who was summoned to transport the patient, concluded that the patient was too disturbed to travel, the worker might refuse the transfer—leaving the patient at SEH.

William Crawford, III had been stopped at the gate of the White House by the Executive Branch Security guards. Politely, but firmly and expertly, two officers questioned him in the small sentry house three steps beyond the gate. He insisted that he had to see President Johnson immediately—the Nation was at peril if there was a delay.

"What is the problem?" he was asked.

"I have vital intelligence about national security."

"How did you come by this information?"

"The message—which can only be delivered to President Johnson—was given to me by people from a distant planet, who have chosen me to represent them on their crucial mission to save the Earth."

"How did you get together with people from another planet?"

"I was abducted and brought into their space craft above Washington."

The guards glanced at each other with a weary look that acknowledged that they heard this story before. With a straight face, one of them reassured Crawford that they understood the importance of his mission. But they were not authorized to listen to more of his story. Since President Johnson was currently out-of-town, he had left in charge a special agent to evaluate matters of national security for him. They would promptly bring Crawford to speak with the agent. Crawford was soon transported to the "White House" unit at SEH and evaluated by the Unit's in-take psychiatrist. In keeping with psychiatric beliefs of the time (Grinspoon & Perky, 1972; Meerloo, 1968; Warren, 1970), that anyone who claims to have been abducted by aliens is psychotic, Crawford was admitted to the unit.

A few days later I began my employment at SEH. I was pleased to be starting my professional career there—a venerable hospital in the history of American psychiatry, in the forefront of psychiatric research and innovative clinical practice. As the largest and most important federal psychiatric hospital in the country, many leading psychiatrists and psychologists have been at SEH on staff or in training. In addition to housing important political forensic patients like Ezra Pound and "Axis Sally," one could see at any one times a number of patients with the same unusual histories and psychopathies that elsewhere a clinician might see only once in a lifetime of practice.

On my first day on the unit, I walked into the patient lounge and observed a close knot of patients surrounding a tall, slim man with blue eyes and a blonde crew cut. He appeared to be about forty. He spoke with animated cadence. In grammatically precise sentences, he was regaling them with his experiences on a alien spaceship. The audience, made up of patients who earlier in the day were walking the halls of the unit conversing with their hallucinated companions, or seated in the lounge rocking back and forth aimlessly, were now alert and quiet—apparently captivated by the way Crawford told his story.

At the point that I reached the circle of patients, Crawford had told the others that the hospital staff did not want him to inform President Johnson that unless the United States stopped the violence in Vietnam, the aliens would destroy major cities in the United States. The hospital superintendent and his clinical director, he indicated, had direct ties to the CEOs of the giant munitions companies that supplied the Army with its weapons. Of course, they didn't want the war stopped! As a professional soldier and a combat officer, he said that he had undisputable evidence of his allegations. He referred to the suppressing attempts by the hospital staff as a *prima facie* example of "psychopolitics": keeping people who hold political opinions contrary to those of the establishment in psychiatric institutions. His audience nodded in agreement: "Right on General!" they shouted at him, "You said a mouthful. You should be leading us in Vietnam, not that moron General Westmoreland!"

I must point out that assuming that his audience agreed with him cannot be simply be dismissed as a product of their collective psychoses. The country was in a social and political turmoil. There was unrest and open rebellion against the government from all segments of American society.

As I listened, I became aware that there was something familiar about Crawford. I had seen him before. But where and when? Then in mid-sentence, he sniffled in an unusual way—sucking his upper lip into his mouth—I recalled my previous meeting with him. I had traveled to Washington three weeks before my starting assignment at SEH to find an apartment and to attend the practical matters involved in moving to a new city. A friend from back home was visiting me. It was a beautiful August day—clear skies and low humidity. The city was replete with marchers protesting the Vietnam War. The newspaper reported that the marchers were going to surround the White House—on the Mall in back and in Lafayette Park in front. We chose to observe from the park. Many of those we saw in the park were strangely garbed. The most unusual of them was a man in a World War II Army officer's dress uniform whose resplendent medals General MacArthur would have been proud to wear. It were as if the bearer had fought in every campaign in every one of America's wars. He was handing out pamphlets and talking to those who reached out for his information. As he spoke he sniffled in an odd way. My friend turned to me, and said that she had a feeling that I would see this man with the grandiose display of medals at SEH someday. I agreed. But I didn't realize how soon that would be. Dressed in his drab hospital clothes, and without an Army cap, I had not initially recognized Crawford.

The next day I found in my mail box on the unit a psychological evaluation request. It was taken for granted that Crawford had not been abducted by aliens. Either he was a paranoid schizophrenic or was suffering from severe anxiety and stress which had impaired his ability to reason. The unit psychiatrist wished me to determine which; he also sought treatment guidelines.

Behavioral scientists then held skeptical attitudes toward UFO stories for obvious reasons: the accounts were so outside of reality as we believe it to be, that they assumed that these stories, like that of the visitations of guests from the heavens in past centuries, were the products of some sort of odd delusional system. None of us then had any idea about the very large number of people who believed that they have been victims of alien abductions.

We are now better informed. We have access to studies that indicate that most of the people who have reported encounters with aliens—who have been psychologically tested—have been found to possess no marked psychological disturbance—apart from the possible mistaken belief that such visitations actually happened to them (Blocher, Clamar, and Hopkins, 1985; Mack, 1994; Spanos, et al., 1991).

Nevertheless, I'm suspicious of the studies that report that UFO contactees for the most part have no marked tendency toward psychological abnormality.

John Mack (1994), for example, reports that he has done the most extensive psychological and psychiatric examination of UFO contactees of any investigator. Let's look at the assessment of one of these contactees. Peter Faust tells Mack that his abductions by aliens starting at the "age of nineteen or twenty in which sperm samples were taken" (p. 295) were intensely traumatic. Despite this harrowing experience—in which "I felt out of control, inferior, powerless, and enraged. I'm paralyzed. I want to kill it, and I can't do anything. (I have) no will for they shut me down" (p. 296)—both Mack and the Harvard University psychologist who examined Faust for many hours found him to be "highly functional, alert, focused, intelligent, well-spoken and without any visible anxiety (or) organic neurological dysfunctioning" (Mack, 1994, p. 314). How could this be! Can anyone remain an ordinary person—his personality substantially unchanged—after actually having had such unusual and traumatic experiences?

ALIEN ABDUCTION REPORTS

The term "flying saucer" was first coined on June 24, 1947. An American businessman was flying alone on a routine flight in his own private airplane when he sighted what he reported was a chain of nine saucer-like things at least five miles long, flat like a pie-pan and reflecting the sun like a mirror (Vallee, 1991). His story was widely publicized, the assumption was made that the objects were spaceships from another planet. More reports quickly followed. Since the end of the second World War accounts of UFOs have dramatically proliferated (Sheaffer, 1986)—some as fascinating as they were difficult to believe. Starting with the Betty and Barney Hill story in 1961 (Fuller, 1966), they have reported abductions. These stories have become more detailed and complex over the years. In the 1950's "contactees" (as those abducted are called) had friendly chats with "cozy" aliens, but later it turned to grief and doom about the Earth and/or Hybrid program.

The subjective status of these findings may be noted by the fact that some investigators consistently claim that their subjects have had an overall positive experience from their abductions (Mack, 1994; Sprinkle, 1976), whereas others find the subjects to have had overall negative experiences (Hopkins, 1982; Jacobs, 1992).

Over the last few decades thousands of reports have saturated the media of people who have reported that they were abducted by aliens. The Roper Study conducted in 1991—presenting the combined data from three national surveys of about 6,000 adult respondents—"suggests that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of American men, women and children may have experienced UFO abductions, or abductions related phenomena" (Bigelow, 1992).

There are supposedly some physical evidence of the landings of spacecraft from alien planets that cannot be readily explained, such as burn marks on the soil where these craft were reported to have landed, crop circles, crashed saucers,

animal mutilations, photos of UFOs, federal government secrecy about Area 51 in the New Mexico desert, and so forth. Moreover, there are a number of reports of those who have claimed independently of each other to have seen the corpses or photos of the bodies of the aliens who crashed in Roswell, New Mexico at the end of World War II. The case for believers is perhaps best summarized by what John Mack calls the “five dimensions” of the abduction experience—evidence which he contends is not easily explained away:

1. The high degree of consistency in a recurrent feeling of being watched, followed, and tracked by aliens. Unlike people with delusional systems, those who report this tracking provide a highly descriptive account of their experiences.
2. Some of the reported contactees have unusual red marks, small cuts, and scars appearing on their bodies for no apparent reason.
3. The contactees have no known psychological disturbance or other emotional condition that could readily explain their unusual stories.
4. Children as young as two or three years of age have reported abductions by aliens. Budd Hopkins who has worked with young children for a couple of decades has found that many of his original subjects were born in 1941/2—suggesting that the alleged abduction program was begun then (Randle, 1994).
5. There seems to be close collaboration of description by people who independently witnessed an abduction. In other words, so many of these stories have common elements—as if many different people experienced the same unusual events.

Randi (1982), in strong opposition to Mack’s point of view, points out that “despite 10,000s of reported UFO sightings . . . nary a nut or bolt (of one of these craft)” have been found by anyone. This is explained by believers in UFOs variously as the aliens are too careful and sophisticated to leave evidence, the federal government has sufficient evidence to confirm the reality of aliens visiting the Earth but has withheld the information, or that they don’t come from another planet but rather are from another state of consciousness of which we are not familiar. In other words, they operate in a reality which has physical laws and properties different from those based upon Newtonian/Cartesian notions of the Universe. Mack (1994) suggests that alien abductions offer a new way of understanding reality and our own connection to the universe.

One of the more telling criticisms of Mack’s claims and those of other UFO believers is lodged by J. Allen Hynek (1972), who points out a suspicious feature of the contactees reports is that until the late 1950’s when it was still believed that the planets in our solar system were likely to support intelligent life, most of the reported visitors came from Mars, Jupiter, and Venus. But once scientists

had the means for space probes—and later built satellites—this idea was shown to be unlikely. Correspondingly, visitors began to hail from planets outside our solar system. Moreover, the reported advanced technologies of these aliens are so superior to our own to strongly suggest that these civilizations would have perfected space travel as far back as the dawn of humankind. Yet historical records indicate few UFO reports and even those are quite ambiguous. On the other hand, there are multitudes of reports of sights and experiences of God, the devil, and other supernatural spirits that no longer appear to be around. Why? A plausible explanation is that reports of supernatural events correspond to prevailing cultural myths. In other words, the words and concepts for God and the devil were in the public domain from earliest time; obviously, those for interstellar travel were not. The ability of ordinary people to describe unusual events depends upon the availability of linguistic concepts to articulate these events. People in personal crisis use those existent concepts to metaphorically express their crisis.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE GENERAL AND ITS AFTERMATH

Crawford was meticulous in manner and dress—even in hospital issued clothes. At first he remained mute, turning his head away from me during our initial interview. I needed to establish a basis for rapport. I told him:

“I’ve seen you before. It was in Lafayette Park on a Sunday, apparently before your strange experience.”

“I am relieved by what you are saying: seeing me outside the hospital and prior to the time I was abducted. It proves that I am credible and sane. I am also gratified that you believe in UFOs.”

“I need to correct you. I’m agnostic about most things that I don’t myself directly experience.” Crawford looked downcast as I spoke—as if he had lost his last ally and his remaining hope. His despairing countenance suggested that he felt doomed to being regarded as mad. I commented on his look. He replied:

“How can you help me if you don’t believe what I said actually happened? For if it didn’t, then I am mad and belong in a lunatic asylum.”

To indicate that I was not closed to his story, I said:

“I too have had an unusual and disturbing experience when I was twelve—an event witnessed alongside of me by a classmate, who later denied that he had seen what I had.”

Recognizing that I had his close attention, I continued:

“I was attending a summer camp in rural Western New Jersey. One starless night, I was standing inside my group’s unlit cabin, staring out a window into the still, pitch-black sky, another camper, somewhat older than I, was also looking out the window. Suddenly, an eerie blue-white light blazed across the sky, pulsating

and cascading like a luminescent waterfall. I shot a glance at the other guy, who looked back at me, and although neither of us said a word, our eyes acknowledged that we were sharing something uncanny. A few days later, on an overnight hike with our group, I started to talk about what I had seen and turned to my co-observer for confirmation. A look of fear distorted his features. ‘I don’t know what you are talking about,’ he responded” (Goldberg, 1997).

Crawford told me about his upbringing (the information found at the beginning of this paper). He spoke with irony, biting wit, and sharp allusion. Yet, he acted as if what he was saying was simple, plain, and direct—for example, he seemed surprised that I needed to question him from time to time as to what he meant and I asked for examples.

Nevertheless, after a few moments pause he went step-by-step through his abduction experience. He had sleep problems for many years. He was restless, tossing and turning in bed in his hotel in Washington. Finally, he fell into a deep and strange slumber:

“It is as if I was in two places at the same time: lying still on the bed and hovering in the room above myself.”

“Has this ever happened to you before?”

“Yes, a number of times, but never the same as what happened that night.”

“Which was?”

“As I was floating above myself, I saw two shadowy figures that give off a silvery light—without themselves being illuminated. They seem to have entered the room by passing through the window—although I knew I closed it to turn on the air conditioner earlier in the evening. They passed below me apparently without taking note of me. They drew my prone body on the bed to them as if by magnetic pull. Then all three passed through the window without opening or breaking it. I found myself following them without effort or conscious intent through the window into the open night sky.” Crawford stopped, looked straight at me as to assess whether I believed him, then he took a deep breath, and continued:

“As I approaches them I saw a thin, almost invisible rope or line extending toward them. I intuitively knew that the the extension was from a flying craft above them. In an instant I found myself in the craft, observing my prone self brought to an upright, still position—as if I was in a trance. Other figures entered the now well-lit chamber. I focused on the leader, a tall slender being—with spare but pleasant features. He spoke to me—the “me” that had been in a trance had disappeared—in a voice I heard from within my head. He inquired about my biographical and psychological histories. I found I could not lie, or even hold back information. ‘Perfect,’ the leader responded, ‘we have a special mission for you. We want you to represent us to your American government.’ I wondered why they had chosen me. To my unspoken question the leader replied, ‘we recognize that you are an exceedingly lonely man, who is misunderstood by his people—especially those who should be closest to you. We believe that you can identify with us: The

loneliness we feel away from our homes; feared and misunderstood by earthlings.' 'But how will I know what to tell the American government?' I asked. 'We will give you a special ability.' " Crawford completed his statement with his head in his hands.

"What was this special ability?"

"It is called 'remote vision'", he told me raising his head, "it is too complex to describe in detail, but in general it is the ability to transcend time and space; and in so doing, communicate with earth people, aliens, or anything that exists in another temporality. I now have this ability. Sometimes I see things that are not there."

"How do you know that?"

"Because other people don't seem to see what I see. To equip me with this power they told me that they had to do medical procedures on me. I saw myself lying on a cot in the aliens' surgery. There were other people there on tables as well. Technicians were working on them with large crude instruments. I heard screams and pleads for mercy from those lying on the tables as the technicians took scopes of their skin, incurring small painful hemorrhages."

Wait a minute! I said to myself as I listened to Crawford's description of the instruments and procedures in the aliens' surgery: Is this a medical laboratory designed by a race of being who are so technologically advanced that they defy all known laws of astrophysics, or clandestine anatomists of the early 19th century, or even is this a visit to the laboratory of Dr. Frankenstein? There is something all wrong here! Crawford is describing a medical regime that is actually far inferior to contemporary medicine. Why in the world would a species of beings that supposedly can travel across galaxies in seconds use so painful and primitive medical techniques! Are they a sadistic race of beings, or is Crawford's appalling description due to his lack of a medical knowledge to couch his creative delusion?

"Do you believe that the events as you have described to me actually happened to you?" Crawford looked away and said,

"Telling the truth is really a very difficult thing for me to do unless I'm compelled."

To my best knowledge then and now, no abduction has taken place in public view or in a large group of people. Most seem to occur at night in the dark—suggesting that in some important way they are sleep-related.

I understand the case differently today than at the time. The now vast literature of investigations of people who have claimed alien abductions strongly suggests that many of the reported abduction experiences are the product of a sleep disorder (Baker, 1992; Hufford, 1982). I recognize now that Crawford's sleep problem may have been a disorder known as "sleep paralysis." Then it was a little known medical condition with which I was not familiar.

"**Sleep paralysis** refers to an episode of total body paralysis that occurs just prior to sleep onset or upon awakening. The paralysis is accompanied by the

sensation of a weight pressing on the chest and frequently is accompanied by vivid and frightening hallucinations of a person, animal, or monster. The contents of the hallucinations appear to vary as a function of the sleeper's beliefs and expectations, and in individuals who believe in extraterrestrial visitation the hallucinations may take the form of space aliens" (Spanos, et al., 1993). Once thought to be very rare, sleep paralysis is turning out to be increasingly common—affecting nearly half of all people at least once. Today many medical investigators believe that sleep paralysis may explain many of the claims of alien abductions (Kristof, 1999). Keeping in mind that most of the abduction stories occur at night, I said to the General:

"When you go to bed tonight, right before you fall asleep, tell yourself that you have a key that can open the door to the truth. Use your remote vision, if you need to, in order to help you tell the truth."

I interviewed Crawford the next day and asked if he remembered last night's dreams.

"Yes, of course! The truth is this: On a Friday next year the General will be missing; in his place there will be a burning Washington."

Based on his psychological testing evaluation and an observation of his behavior on the unit, I diagnosed Crawford as suffering from a schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type. His disturbance was characterized by grandiosity and premonition, ideas of reference, weird and peculiar thoughts, accompanied by some cognitive confusion and emotional lability. His report of an alien abduction was attributed to a systematic delusion.

Treatment considerations are always perplexing for patients like the General. What should the psychologist's recommendation be for a patient who exhibits a severe delusion: To dissuade him from continuing to believe in his delusion by showing him the erroneous nature of his belief? Or to help him see the function his belief serves in how he feels about himself and about his relationship to other people? I recommended that the focus of his treatment be on the latter.

On a Friday the next year, as I was leaving SEH for the weekend, I saw dark black smoke billowing up from the center of the city. I asked the security officer at the hospital gate about the smoke.

"Haven't you heard? Martin Luther King has been assassinated in Memphis. They are looting and rioting in the Adams-Morgan area (in Washington, DC)."

Using the telephone in guard's station, I called Crawford's unit. The General was missing since the night before. During the remainder of my assignment at SEH, he was not found.

LEVELS OF MEANING OF ALIEN ABDUCTIONS

The bulk of the research on UFOs and alien abductions have attempted to either confirm or disprove their veracity (Spanos, et al., 1993). At the present time we have insufficient proof to do either. On the other hand, we are in a propitious

position to study the psychology of people who report these incredible psychic events. We are best served by trying to understand the different levels of meaning the experiences serve those who report unusual experiences. Everyday events usually slip by us without our conscious awareness. Extreme events, in contrast, because they are “larger” than everyday happenings, force us to stop and concern ourselves with what is happening to us and its meaning. In fact, the most important finding of the Roper Poll on UFO experience is that there is a very large number of people in America who have had experiences they don't understand. We can begin to understand these experiences by examining the nature of recalled events.

None of us ever recounts literal truth in our narratives because our mind and our memory don't hold fixed perceptions (as would a static photograph). What we remember is a product of our “conspiracy” with events. By this I mean: Each of our stories was initially prepared by our telling ourselves what was happening to us as it transpired—as if we were speaking to an audience not present. This is why our memories have the features of a story: a beginning, a middle, an end, and a stated or implied moral. In other words, like all good stories, our memories are conceptualized in such a way as to dramatically present our welter of diverse sensory experience in a coherent way to an audience. To understand the intent of a memory we need to know: Who the audience was in the mind of the experiencer? How he felt about his audience? and What he wanted from them? For example, a person who experiences himself as alienated from his audience is more likely to regard those he encounters in his experiences as more alien to him than will a person who believes he is living a meaningful life. And he will have greater need for security and satisfaction from those he encounters as well as his audience than will those who experience themselves living fully and well. In short, the experience of having been abducted by aliens speaks to those who have had a great deal of difficulty in feeling themselves fully human and significant. In the following I examine this contention from four related levels of meaning:

Historical

There is a great deal of similarity between the reports of those who have been abducted by extraterrestrials and the ancient legends of the devil, angels, succubuses, incubuses, and other alien beings who have had sexual encounters at night with unwilling humans. In short, the alien abduction story is a recurring theme in human history. It reflects the anxiety that has racked humankind from its earliest moments of reflected thought in regard to the recognition that we are finite and limited—our fate ultimately is beyond our control. Those who report alien abductions are likely to experience this threat even more keenly than do other people.

Moral

Every story we tell has a stated or implied moral. One of the most interesting questions in regard to the reported alien abductions is whether those who report their unusual experiences believe that the aliens intend to interact with humankind for their own selfish purposes? Or, instead that the aliens wish to sagely guide us away from impeding calamities on our planet? To answer this question we can not easily separate the investigator's moral philosophy from those of his subjects. John Mack (1994), for example, seems to believe that psychotherapy and postmodern science is bereft of meaningful value because they lack the capacity to teach wisdom. Alien abduction, Mack contends, provide us with deep insight about our serious social problems. Mack's subjects, correspondingly, are initially terrified and helpless. In time, however, they become willing participants in the aliens' efforts to stop political and ecological disasters on Earth. The contactees are assigned responsibility by the aliens to provide a warning to the rest of us. They are also employed to create a race of hybrid beings who are spiritually superior to the present human species.

Metaphoric

Metaphors are not simply the tools for more creative and elaborate conceptualization; in fact they are the fundamental ingredients of our awareness of ourselves and the world around us. The alien abduction stories that have a constructive moral intent usually contain a common metaphoric theme: the death of an ordinary, stultifying life; the courageous endurance of an unusual ordeal; followed by the reward of redemption and rebirth. In short, these stories are metaphorical representations of the feelings of desperation, despair, and powerlessness that multitudes of people in America feel about their existence on this planet. Figuratively, they have been raped and manipulated by powerful forces they don't understand. In return for their suffering they expect a better world. These expectations are wish fulfilled during their reported abduction—experienced on a different level of consciousness than ordinary experience. For example, false memories may be false in regard to ordinary experience, but they are valid in terms of their representation of the betrayal, contamination, and loss of hope between the experiencer and a powerful authority figure. Those who report alien abductions are likely to have suffered more mistrust than have other people.

Psychological

There have been a number of studies that reveal that certain people are particularly vulnerable to a variety of extraordinary encounters. Ring (1992) calls them "encounterprone" people. His research indicates that they have a greater incident

of childhood illness, trauma, and abuse than his control subjects. As a result, they have significantly greater tendency to dissociate reality, and by virtue of their dissociated state, to tune into alternate or nonordinary states of consciousness. These findings are supported by Parnell's (1988) psychological examination of people who claimed communication with extraterrestrials. He found that they harbored more unusual thoughts and feelings and showed more of a tendency toward unconventional thinking than did a group of people who reported UFO sightings, but claimed no contact with aliens. In short, no becomes mad except to inure himself against some great suffering (Goldberg, 2000).

But it isn't "illness" versus "health" that needs to be examined here—but the way that people differ among themselves in the way that they relate to conflict and use coping strategies. As I read the accounts in Mack's (1994) book, every one of his reported contactees had undergone a personal crisis or a loss of meaning in his or her life prior to the reported abduction. However, Mack indicates that these conflicts were the result of a series of abductions since childhood. But isn't the reverse more likely? People who experienced troubled lives and/or a lack of purpose for their existence desperately seek a way to explain their troubles and give meaning to their lives.

The limited ways that Crawford had confined his life didn't permit him to find definitive purpose in his life. This deficiency led to feelings of shame, loneliness, and alienated anguish. What he and others like him seek is to be part of a serious enterprise that values their help and services.

The General was also a man who didn't know himself very well. His UFO experience was a desperate effort to encounter his undiscovered self.

Having said all this, one mystery remains: To this day I have not been able to explain how Crawford was able to foretell the future so precisely. The event doesn't fit into the neat and narrow boxes for which modern science has tried to account for human experience.

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