Understanding Eastern Religions and The New Age Movement

Class #11 – L. Ron Hubbard, Dianetics, and Scientology

Cedar Boulevard Neighborhood Church

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L. Ron Hubbard

Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (3/13/1911 – 1/24/1986) was an American pulp fiction author and the founder of Dianetics and the Church of Scientology.

After establishing a career as a science fiction and fantasy story writer, he developed a self-help system called Dianetics, first published in May 1950.

He subsequently developed his ideas into a wide-ranging set of doctrines and rituals as part of a new religious movement that he called Scientology.

His writings became the guiding texts for the Church of Scientology and a number of his organizations that addressed such diverse topics as business administration, literacy and drug rehabilitation.
Dianetics

He first published his ideas on the human mind in the Explorers Club Journal and the May 1950 issue of Astounding Science Fiction magazine.

Two of Hubbard's key supporters at the time were John W. Campbell Jr., the editor of Astounding Science Fiction, and Dr. Joseph A. Winter.

Winter, hoping to have Dianetics accepted in the medical community, submitted papers outlining the principles and methodology of Dianetic therapy to the Journal of the American Medical Association and the American Journal of Psychiatry in 1949, but these were rejected.
Dianetics

Hubbard coined Dianetics from the Greek stems dia, meaning through, and nous, meaning mind.

Dianetics uses a counseling technique known as auditing, developed by Hubbard to enable conscious recall of traumatic events in an individual's past.

It was originally intended to be a new psychotherapy and was not expected to become the foundation for a new religion. Hubbard variously defined Dianetics as a spiritual healing technology and an organized science of thought.

The intent of Dianetics is to free individuals of the influence of engrams by the systematic exposure and removal of engrams, a process called clearing.
Dianetics explores the existence of a mind with three parts: the conscious "analytical mind," the subconscious "reactive mind", and the somatic mind.

The goal of Dianetics is to remove the "reactive mind", which Scientologists believe prevents people from becoming more ethical, more aware, happier and saner.

The Dianetics procedure to achieve this is called "auditing". Auditing is a process whereby a series of questions are asked by the Scientology auditor, in an attempt to rid the auditee of the painful experiences of the past which scientologists believe to be the cause of the "reactive mind".
Dianetics grew out of Hubbard's personal experiences and experiments and has been described as a mix of "Western technology and Oriental philosophy".

Hubbard stated that Dianetics "forms a bridge between" cybernetics and General Semantics, a set of ideas about education originated by Alfred Korzybski that was receiving much attention in the science fiction world in the 1940s.

Hubbard claimed that Dianetics can increase intelligence, eliminate unwanted emotions and alleviate a wide range of illnesses he believed to be psychosomatic.
Dianetics

Among the conditions purportedly treated against are arthritis, allergies, asthma, some coronary difficulties, eye trouble, ulcers, migraine headaches, sex deviations and even death.

Hubbard variously defined Dianetics as "a spiritual healing technology" and "an organized science of thought."

Dianetics predates Hubbard's classification of Scientology as "applied religious philosophy".

Early in 1951, he expanded his writings to include teachings related to the soul, or "thetan".
Dianetics

Dianetics is also practiced by independent groups, collectively called the Free Zone. The Church of Scientology disapproves of Free Zone activities and has prosecuted them in court for misappropriation of Scientology/Dianetics copyrights and trademarks.

Dianetics has achieved no acceptance as a scientific theory and scientists cite Dianetics as an example of a pseudoscience.

Some of the psychometric ideas in Dianetics can be traced to Sigmund Freud, whom Hubbard credited as an inspiration and was said to have used as a source.
Scientology

Scientology is a body of beliefs and related practices created by L. Ron Hubbard in 1952 as a successor to his earlier self-help system, Dianetics.

Hubbard characterized Scientology as a religion, and in 1953 incorporated the Church of Scientology in Camden, New Jersey.

Scientology teaches that people are immortal beings who have forgotten their true nature.

Its method of spiritual rehabilitation is a type of counselling known as auditing, in which practitioners aim to consciously re-experience painful or traumatic events in their past in order to free themselves of their limiting effects.
Scientology

Scientology is a pairing of the Latin word scientia ("knowledge", "skill"), and the Greek lógos ("word").

Study materials and auditing courses are made available to members in return for specified donations, ranging up to tens of thousands of dollars.

Scientology is legally recognized as a tax-exempt religion in the United States, Italy, South Africa, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain. The Church of Scientology emphasizes this as proof that it is a bona fide religion.

In other countries, notably Canada, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, Scientology does not have comparable religious status.
Scientology

The Church of Scientology is one of the most controversial new religious movements to have arisen in the 20th century.

It has often been described as a cult that financially defrauds and abuses its members, charging exorbitant fees for its spiritual services.

In response, Scientologists have argued that theirs is a genuine religious movement that has been misrepresented, maligned and persecuted.

The Church of Scientology has consistently used litigation against its critics, and its aggressiveness in pursuing its foes has been condemned as harassment.
Scientology

Further controversy has focused on Scientology's belief that souls ("thetans") reincarnate and have lived on other planets before living on Earth.

Some of the related teachings are not revealed to practitioners until they have paid thousands of dollars to the Church of Scientology.

Another controversial belief held by Scientologists is that the practice of psychiatry is destructive and abusive and must be abolished.

In 2005, the Church of Scientology stated its worldwide membership to be eight million, although that number included people who took only the introductory course and did not continue on.
Beliefs and Practices

Scientology says its beliefs and practices are based on rigorous research, and its doctrines are accorded a significance equivalent to that of scientific laws.

"Scientology works 100 percent of the time when it is properly applied to a person who sincerely desires to improve his life", the Church of Scientology says.

Conversion is held to be of lesser significance than the practical application of Scientologist methods.

Adherents are encouraged to validate the value of the methods they apply through their personal experience. Hubbard said, "...the final test of any knowledge...is, 'did the data and the use of it in life actually improve conditions or didn't it?'"
Body and Spirit

Scientology beliefs revolve around the thetan, the individualized expression of the cosmic source, or life force, named after the Greek letter theta (θ).

The thetan is the true identity of a person – an intrinsically good, omniscient, non-material core capable of unlimited creativity.

In the primordial past, thetans brought the material universe into being largely for their own pleasure.

The universe has no independent reality, but derives its apparent reality from the fact that most thetans agree it exists.
Body and Spirit

Thetans fell from grace when they began to identify with their creation, rather than their original state of spiritual purity.

Eventually they lost their memory of their true nature, along with the associated spiritual and creative powers. As a result, thetans came to think of themselves as nothing but embodied beings.

Thetans are reborn time and time again in new bodies through a process called "assumption" which is analogous to reincarnation.
Body and Spirit

Like Hinduism, Scientology posits a causal relationship between the experiences of earlier incarnations and one's present life.

With each rebirth, the effects of the MEST universe (MEST here stands for matter, energy, space, and time) on the thetan become stronger.

So the goal of Scientology is the help people discover their true nature so they can break from the MEST universe and become true thetans.

This reminds us of Hinduism, Maya, Reincarnation and the goal of breaking the cycle of rebirth.
Emotions and the Mind

Scientology presents two major divisions of the mind. The reactive mind is thought to absorb all pain and emotional trauma, while the analytical mind is a rational mechanism which is responsible for consciousness.

The reactive mind stores mental images which are not readily available to the analytical (conscious) mind; these are referred to as engrams.

Engrams are painful and debilitating; as they accumulate, people move further away from their true identity.

To avoid this fate is Scientology's basic goal.
Emotions and the Mind

Dianetic auditing is one way by which the Scientologist may progress toward the Clear state, winning gradual freedom from the reactive mind's engrams, and acquiring certainty of his or her reality as a thetan.

Scientology uses an emotional classification system called the tone scale.

The tone scale is a tool used in counseling; Scientologists maintain that knowing a person's place on the scale makes it easier to predict his or her actions and assists in bettering her or his condition.
Survival and Ethics

Scientology emphasizes the importance of survival, which it subdivides into eight classifications that are referred to as dynamics.

An individual's desire to survive is considered to be the first dynamic, while the second dynamic relates to procreation and family.

The remaining dynamics encompass wider fields of action, involving groups, mankind, all life, the physical universe, the spirit, and the Supreme Being.

The optimum solution to any problem is held to be the one that brings the greatest benefit to the greatest number of dynamics.
Survival and Ethics

Scientology teaches that spiritual progress requires and enables the attainment of high ethical standards.

In Scientology, rationality is stressed over morality.

Actions are considered ethical if they promote survival across all eight dynamics, thus benefiting the greatest number of people or things possible while harming the fewest.

Thus ethics is not based on an objective standard but a relative pragmatic scale.

In many ways this is not unlike the secular humanism of Richard Dawkins and Aldous Huxley.
Social and Antisocial Personalities

While Scientology states that many social problems are the unintentional results of people's imperfections, it asserts that there are also truly malevolent individuals.

Hubbard believed that approximately 80 percent of all people are what he called social personalities – people who welcome and contribute to the welfare of others.

The remaining 20 percent of the population, Hubbard thought, were suppressive persons.

According to Hubbard, only about 2.5 percent of this 20 percent are hopelessly antisocial personalities.
These antisocial personalities make up the small proportion of truly dangerous individuals in humanity: "the Adolf Hitlers and the Genghis Khans, the unrepentant murderers and the drug lords."

Scientologists believe that any contact with suppressive or antisocial individuals has an adverse effect on one's spiritual condition, necessitating disconnection.

In Scientology, defectors who turn into critics of the movement are declared suppressive persons, and the Church of Scientology has a reputation for moving aggressively against such detractors.
Social and Antisocial Personalities

A Scientology who is actively in communication with a suppressive person and as a result shows signs of antisocial behavior is referred to as a Potential Trouble Source.

This reminds us of how Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults deal with those who leave the movement.

Scientology has two weapons that it uses to deal with dissenters. One is to file a lawsuit and the other is to threaten to reveal their personal secrets.

As part of the “Auditing” process, video is shot of the sessions and can be very embarrassing if revealed to the public.
Auditing

Scientology asserts that people have hidden abilities which have not yet been fully realized.

It is believed that increased spiritual awareness and physical benefits are accomplished through counseling sessions referred to as auditing.

Through auditing, it is said that people can solve their problems and free themselves of engrams.

This restores them to their natural condition as thetans and enables them to be at cause in their daily lives, responding rationally and creatively to life events rather than reacting to them under the direction of stored engrams.
Accordingly, those who study Scientology materials and receive auditing sessions advance from a status of Preclear to Clear and Operating Thetan.

Scientology's utopian aim is to "clear the planet", a world in which everyone has cleared themselves of their engrams.

Auditing is a one-on-one session with a Scientology counselor or auditor.

It bears a superficial similarity to confession or pastoral counseling, but the auditor records and stores all information received and does not dispense forgiveness or advice the way a pastor or priest might do.
Auditing

Instead, the auditor's task is to help a person discover and understand engrams, and their limiting effects, for him- or herself.

Most auditing requires an E-meter, a device that measures minute changes in electrical resistance through the body as a person holds electrodes (metal "cans"), and a current is passed through them.

Scientology asserts that watching for changes in the E-meter's display helps locate engrams.

Once an area of concern has been identified, the auditor asks the individual specific questions about it, in order to help him or her eliminate the engram.
Auditing

The E-meter to confirm that the engram's "charge" has been dissipated and the engram has in fact been cleared.

As the individual progresses, the focus of auditing moves from simple engrams to engrams of increasing complexity.

At the more advanced OT auditing levels, Scientologists perform solo auditing sessions, acting as their own auditors.
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The Bridge to Total Freedom

Spiritual development within Scientology is accomplished by studying Scientology materials.

Scientology materials (called Technology or Tech in Scientology jargon) are structured in sequential levels (or gradients), so that easier steps are taken first and greater complexities are handled at the appropriate time.

This process is sometimes referred to as moving along the Bridge to Total Freedom, or simply the Bridge. It has two sides: training and processing.

Training means education in the principles and practices of auditing.
The Bridge to Total Freedom

- Processing is personal development through participation in auditing sessions.
- The Church of Scientology believes in the principle of reciprocity, involving give-and-take in every human transaction.
- Accordingly, members are required to make donations for study courses and auditing as they move up the Bridge, the amounts increasing as higher levels are reached.
- Participation in higher-level courses on the Bridge may cost several thousand dollars, and Scientologists usually move up the Bridge at a rate governed by their income.
Space Opera and Confidential Materials

The Church of Scientology holds that at the higher levels of initiation (OT levels), mystical teachings are imparted that may be harmful to unprepared readers.

These teachings are kept secret from members who have not reached these levels. The Church states that the secrecy is warranted to keep its materials' use in context, and to protect its members from being exposed to materials they are not yet prepared for.

These are the OT levels, the levels above Clear, whose contents are guarded within Scientology. The OT level teachings include accounts of various cosmic catastrophes that befell the thetans.
Space Opera

Hubbard described these early events collectively as space opera.

In the OT levels, Hubbard explains how to reverse the effects of past-life trauma patterns that supposedly extend millions of years into the past.

Among these advanced teachings is the story of Xenu (sometimes Xemu), introduced as the tyrant ruler of the "Galactic Confederacy."

According to this story, 75 million years ago Xenu brought billions of people to Earth in spacecraft resembling Douglas DC-8 airliners, stacked them around volcanoes and detonated hydrogen bombs in the volcanoes.
Space Opera

The thetans then clustered together, stuck to the bodies of the living, and continue to do this today. Scientologists at advanced levels place considerable emphasis on isolating body thetans and neutralizing their ill effects.

The material contained in the OT levels has been characterized as bad science fiction by critics, while others claim it bears structural similarities to gnostic thought and ancient Hindu myths of creation and cosmic struggle.

Excerpts and descriptions of OT materials were published online by a former member in 1995 and then circulated in mainstream media.
This occurred after the teachings were submitted as evidence in court cases involving Scientology, thus becoming a matter of public record.

There are eight publicly known OT levels, OT I to VIII.

The highest level, OT VIII, is disclosed only at sea, on the Scientology cruise ship Freewinds.

It has been rumored that additional OT levels, said to be based on material written by Hubbard long ago, will be released at some appropriate point in the future.
Space Opera

A large Church of Spiritual Technology symbol carved into the ground at Scientology's Trementina Base is visible from the air.

Washington Post reporter Richard Leiby wrote, "Former Scientologists familiar with Hubbard’s teachings on reincarnation say the symbol marks a 'return point' so loyal staff members know where they can find the founder’s works when they travel here in the future from other places in the universe."
Controversies

The controversies involving the Church and its critics, some of them ongoing, include:

- Scientology's disconnection policy, in which members are encouraged to cut off all contact with friends or family members who are "antagonistic" to Scientology.

Controversies

Criminal activities committed on behalf of the Church or directed by Church officials (Operation Snow White, Operation Freakout).

Conflicting statements about L. Ron Hubbard's life, including Hubbard discussing his intent to start a religion for profit and of his service in the military.

Scientology's harassment and litigious actions against its critics encouraged by its Fair Game policy.

Attempts to legally force search engines such as Google and Yahoo! to omit any webpages critical of Scientology from their search engines (and in Google's case, AdSense), or at least the first few search pages.
Controversies

Allegations by former high-ranking Scientologists that David Miscavige beats and demoralizes staff and that physical violence by superiors towards staff is a common occurrence in the church.

In October 2009, a French court found the Church of Scientology guilty of organized fraud. Four officers of the organization were fined and given suspended prison sentences of up to 2 years.

Prosecutors had hoped to achieve a ban of Scientology in France, but due to a temporary change in French law, which "made it impossible to dissolve a legal entity on the grounds of fraud", no ban was pronounced.
In November 2009, Australian Senator Nick Xenophon used a speech in Federal Parliament to allege that the Church of Scientology is a criminal organization. Based on letters from former followers of the religion, he said that there were "allegations of forced imprisonment, coerced abortions, and embezzlement of church funds, of physical violence and intimidation, blackmail and the widespread and deliberate abuse of information obtained by the organization"

Due to these allegations, a considerable amount of investigation has been aimed at the Church, by groups ranging from the media to governmental agencies.