

The Introductory Lecture

by Dennis Wheeler

(Editor's note: One of the first steps in the Church of Scientology's "Communications Course" is an introductory lecture. In Santa Rosa, it's offered every Monday and Wednesday evening at the Scientology headquarters at 721 Mendocino Avenue. Following is a description of the event.)

On this particular evening, virtually no one showed up for Scientology's free lecture. So I was an audience of one, listening attentively to a young woman named Joanna, but feeling a little self-conscious.

I sat on a stiff-backed chair in one of the back offices of the Scientology mission. Joanna lectured informally, drawing various charts on a small blackboard and laboriously writing out certain words in big block letters. It reminded me of long hours in the fifth grade. The language was almost childishly simple, sprinkled with anecdotes delivered in the ad-lib style that so many lecturers effect — but these were the very same anecdotes I'd already read in 30-year-old Scientology literature.

Dianetics, Joanna explained, is a "sub-study" of Scientology. It was invented by a man named L. Ron Hubbard, who, it seems, was wounded in World War II but miraculously cured himself through his own research in self-help. He was so successful at this, in fact, that soon others were clamoring for his secret, and in 1950 he assembled it all into a best-selling book called *Dianetics, the Modern Science of Mental Health*.

Joanna continued, explaining that Hubbard had discovered that the human mind is made up of one part called the "analyzer" which processes all the data fed into it, another part which stores "standard memories," and a third part called the "reactive" mind. It's the latter part, Joanna explained, that stores up memories which are so painful that they're shunted into the mind *before* they're properly analyzed. But parts of this negativity still manage to filter into our everyday lives, bringing sorrow and grief.

Enter Dianetics and Scientology. A properly trained person, called an "auditor," can simply ask the right questions and get a person to recall those painful experiences from the reactive mind, run them through the analyzer, and store them in the "standard memory" where they belonged in the first place. With enough auditing, the reactive mind becomes totally empty, and the person is called a "Clear." These "Clears," Joanna said merrily, lead much richer, fuller lives — and incidentally have fewer car accidents

and often find their intelligence increased.

The lecture ended with a brief description of some of the Scientology classes on the road to becoming a "Clear." The one best suited for me, and for most other "preclears," said Joanna, was the Communications Course.

I expressed a vague interest, but inwardly I felt cheated. It wasn't that Joanna had actually deceived me, but she'd certainly *withheld* a great deal of information about Scientology which I'd already picked up in only a short time studying the subject on my own. She hadn't told me that the painful memories in the reactive mind are called *engrams*. She hadn't told me that the auditor uses a lie detector device called an "E-meter" on the person being audited. And when I questioned her about an incredibly complicated chart on the wall which explained the various levels through which a Scientologist can pass, she blithely skipped over the explanation, apparently believing the concept of "Operating Thetans" was either beyond my understanding or so bizarre it would turn me irrevocably away from Scientology.

And, of course, she'd made absolutely no mention of the tremendous battles raging all around the Church of Scientology — the frantic parents who claim their children have been "brainwashed" into a deadly cult, the jailing of top Scientology leaders, the colorful cosmos of Scientology with its galactic empires and gods trillions of years old.

All this had been omitted.

Instead, I was routed to Diana, who would sign me up for the class. Diana seemed a little more brisk and efficient than Joanna. She asked no questions about my personality or background, but wanted to know only when I could begin the course and when I could pay. When pressed, she said I could set my own dates for the class, and that it would cost \$44.54 (\$35 for the course itself, \$9 for a book by L. Ron Hubbard, and 54 cents in sales tax).

Within moments, as if responding to an odd, *sudden* sense of urgency, I found myself saying that yes, I'd be there the following Monday at 7 p.m., and yes, I would pay the full amount.

A dam broke, and Diana softened up a little. "You're going to have the most *fun* of your life, hon'!" she assured me, and led me to the front door.

"Well," I said to Joanna on my way out, "I'm going to start the course on Monday."

"All right! That's wonderful!"

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