COMMENTARY

Common Sense Scientology

John H. Wolfe
San Diego, California

Although Scientology has been widely discredited in both professional and public media, there are some parts of it that may be both sensible and useful. Scientology can be characterized as an applied philosophy directed toward methods of self-realization. Although Scientology shares many of the goals and methods of humanistic psychology, it differs in important respects, and may offer some unique contributions. This paper shows how a simple philosophical principle, called the *cycle of action*, leads to the essential ingredient of Scientology practice, called the *auditing communication cycle*. The auditing communication cycle is the building block for the larger cycles of action, called the *process cycle* and the *grades cycle*. This paper advances the thesis that the auditing communication cycle has measurable physiological consequences, and that it can be applied without the intellectual baggage of Scientology metaphysics. The paper concludes that further research is both desirable and necessary to validate some of the hypotheses suggested by Scientology.

Keywords: auditing, communication cycle, cycle of action, E-meter, Scientology

Scientology is an applied philosophy developed by the American writer L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986). Its name is derived from the Latin *scio*, meaning "I know," and the Greek *–ology*, "study of," and it means literally the study of knowing, or knowing how to know. Its primary assumption is that increased awareness is the only factor which offers hope for resolving human difficulties (in contrast to drowning your sorrows in drink, or dulling your emotions with tranquilizers). It can be used as a method of psychotherapy or counseling, but it is primarily a method of expanding consciousness for most people.

Scientology has been variously called a science, a pseudoscience, a philosophy, and a religion. Of these, the term philosophy seems least controversial. Philosophy is not science, but philosophy can help to guide research and suggest hypotheses for confirmation or rejection by scientific research. It is not the end of knowledge, but only the beginning of it. In this paper, I shall present a very small part of the philosophy of Scientology and its applications.

From Erich Fromm's (1950) critical review of Hubbard's (1950) popular book to the present day, the unfavorable media coverage of Scientology has intensified in both quality and quantity in recent years. Journalists, no matter how unbiased and honest they may be, tend to stress the bizarre, scandalous, fantastic, weird, and controversial aspects of any story they write, and they found Scientology to be a rich source of all of these elements.

Nevertheless, there is another aspect of Scientology that has gone unreported—the down-to-earth, common-sense, and practical methods that it contains for helping a person attain greater self-realization. Thus, the material to be presented in this paper cannot be found in such popular books as Wright (2013), or scholarly works, such as Lewis (2009).

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to extract, from the body of Scientology, some of those aspects that do not strain credulity or common sense and that could be potentially useful to psychologists either in their research or in their practices, independently of the rest of Scientology. The focus of the paper will be narrow, and deliberately will ignore a number of important, but controversial issues. The purpose is not to evaluate the whole subject of Scientology, or even to convey an understanding of its basic principles. Our objective can be compared with that of a modern medical researcher seeking to extract the active ingredients from the herbal remedies and potions of a witch doctor. The researcher is not concerned with the superstitions or rituals surrounding the application of the herbal remedies, nor the history or variety of types of witchcraft. The witch doctor might be a thoroughly evil person, using knowledge to poison enemies and dominate others. All these issues are irrelevant to the objective of getting a sample of the herbal remedy into the laboratory for analysis.

Focus

The primary difference between Scientology and other forms of psychotherapy or counseling is its *systematic thoroughness*. This paper will be narrowly focused on this important aspect of Scientology and its ramifications, while ignoring most of the rest of the subject.

Scientology counseling does not jump around from one subject to another in a session. The Scientology counselor takes up one subject at a time and handles it thoroughly before going on to another aspect of the case. As discussed later in the paper, Scientology has specific standards for judging when a handling is complete.

What's wrong with skipping over many topics? Each time a counselor or client brings up a topic that has "charge," that is, pain or painful emotion associated with it, the charge becomes restimulated and occupies some part of a person's attention for a period of minutes, hours or days. When the counselor skips over many topics, the person can become overwhelmed by too much charge. The person's willingness to confront and view the source of difficulties is diminished.

Why handle one item at a time thoroughly? When one thoroughly views a particular source of pain or painful emotion, the charge dissipates and no longer affects one adversely. One gains greater confidence in one's ability to view and handle one's own mind, and gains greater self-insight as a result.

Although this principle may seem elementary, it will be necessary to develop some theory and give many examples before you will see how to apply it.

By *thoroughness* is meant *completing each cycle of action,* the topic of the next section.

Cycle of Action

The usual definition of a "cycle" is a period of time or complete set of events that repeat. However, we will use it to mean something different: a span of time with a beginning and an end, not necessarily repeating.

A "cycle of action" is defined as:

START—CONTINUE—COMPLETE (Hubbard, 1991e)

> A cycle of action is the sequence that an action goes through, wherein the action is started, is continued for as long as is required and then is completed as planned. To produce products one has to also have completed cycles of action. A completed cycle of action normally results in a product. (Hubbard, 1991h)

Cycles of action are often composed of smaller cycles. For example, a large project may require many tasks to be performed, and these, in turn, may have subtasks with their own cycles of action.

It has been said that the key to success is finishing what you start. Nevertheless, many people have trouble completing their cycles of action. They start one thing, get distracted, and leave it to go on to something else. Their homes and workplaces are strewn with half-done and undone projects. The result is that they have so many things on their minds that they cannot concentrate on any one of them.

Some people have trouble with the START part of the cycle of action. If the task is unpleasant, they procrastinate and never start it. They may have wonderful goals that they dream about but never start a cycle of action to achieve.

At the other end of the spectrum, very successful people often demonstrate incredible tenacity and persistence in overcoming obstacles toward completion of their goals. The key to success in life and productivity in work is starting, continuing, and completing cycles of action.

The Communication Cycle

Communication is a cycle of action which starts from a source point, continues across a distance, and ends at a receipt point. This could be diagrammed as

SOURCE POINT → RECEIPT POINT
CAUSE————→DISTANCE————→EFFECT

The source point has an intention to create some effect at the receipt point. The effect that is intended is that the receipt point should duplicate the idea or image that emanated from the source point. For example, when you talk to someone, you have a particular idea that you want to convey. You want the other person to have the "same" idea that you had. That idea could be a thought expressible in words or a mental image of some scene, or a map, or diagram. You might want to supplement your verbal communication by holding up a picture or diagram for the other person to view, or by sending a digital photograph.

Communication involves sending an *impulse*, such as a sound wave or electronic signal from the source point; or sending a *particle*, such as a letter, or scent particles, as in animal communication. For our purposes, it is not necessary to go into all the complexities of how information is encoded into impulses from the source point, or how it is decoded into thoughts at the receipt point, except to note that both the source point and the receipt point must use the same encoding and decoding methods. For example, if the source and the receipt point speak different languages, communication fails. It is even true that a single word that the receiver doesn't understand or understands differently can confuse the whole idea that the source tried to convey.

Attention has a great deal to do with communication. The receipt point has to have attention on the source point and be ready to receive the communication. The attention coming from the source point could be either broad, as in talking to a group of people, or

narrowly directed to one person. There must be an intention on both parties to duplicate the idea sent from the source point.

All this is summarized in Axiom 28 of Scientology:

> Communication is the consideration and action of impelling an impulse or particle from a source point across a distance to a receipt point with the intention of bringing into being at the receipt point a duplication and understanding of that which emanated from the source point. (Hubbard, 1991g)

There are various ways of improving communication by improving the component parts of the communication cycle.

The Auditing Communication Cycle

A Scientology counselor is called an *auditor*, a word derived from the Latin verb "audire," meaning to hear. Thus an auditor is one who listens to you and hears you. The auditor's client is called a *preclear*, defined as one who is discovering things about one's self and who is becoming clearer, that is, more able to understand one's self and others, have greater clarity of thought, and behave more rationally.

The *auditing communication cycle* is defined as a cycle of action that consists of the auditor asking a question the preclear can understand, getting the preclear to answer it and the auditor acknowledging that answer (Hubbard, 1991e). The acknowledgment ends the cycle of action and frees the preclear's attention.

An auditing question is sometimes better phrased as a command. For example, instead of asking "How could you help another person?" one could say "Tell me how you could help another person." The term "auditing question" is often used to refer to either a question or a command.

The importance of the auditing communication cycle cannot be overstated. It is the fundamental factor that makes auditing work. Its discovery and distillation into a simplified formula represents a major breakthrough.

It may be helpful to consider what auditing is not. First, it is not a Zen *koan*, such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" because such a question is hard to understand and answer. It is certainly not psychoanalytic free-association, where there are no clear questions, the patient is free to wander through the patient's mind from one subject to another, and the therapist does not acknowledge anything.

In one scene in the movie *The Master* (Sellar, Lupi, Anderson, & Ellison, 2012), Phillip Seymour Hoffman badgers his client by repeating the same question over and over, without giving him a chance to answer. That certainly bears no resemblance to auditing.

Auditing is not educational examination or police interrogation, which are often followed by punishment, rather than acknowledgment. It is not prayer, meditation, or confession. It is clearly not hypnosis, where the hypnotist gives a stream of suggestions which the subject passively listens to.

In its general philosophy and approach, auditing is closest to the nondirective therapy of Carl Rogers (1961), who stressed the importance of having the client find the client's own answers, while the counselor refrains from interpretation, but listens with empathic understanding. Auditing differs from Roger's approach by having the auditor direct the preclear's attention using auditing questions, and by breaking up the session into discrete cycles of action.

Since at least the time of Socrates, educators have led their students to discover answers for themselves by asking them questions. The Socratic method uses a sequence

of questions to lead the student, step by step, to a conclusion the teacher wants to impart. But auditing does not consist of leading questions, nor does it try to impart a particular conclusion.

The most essential part of the auditing communication cycle is that of the preclear exploring the mind, spotting the answer to the auditor's question, and voicing it to the auditor. It is vital that preclears find their own answers. Thus, the auditor refrains from asking leading questions, and understands and acknowledges any answer the preclear gives (as long as it is an answer to the question) with friendly compassionate acceptance, no matter how outrageous, horrifying, or "incorrect" the answer may be. The auditor does not evaluate for the preclear or tell or show what the auditor thinks of the answer. The auditor simply acknowledges, and does nothing else but acknowledge.

An acknowledgment tells the preclear that what the preclear has said is fully understood, and that the preclear has completed the job of answering the question. Acknowledgments must be appropriate to the answer. For example, if the answer describes a tragic event, the acknowledgment should express some empathy. Acknowledgment is so important that it can be therapeutic all by itself. Some people have never been acknowledged in their lives. Their very existence may have been ignored. People who talk to themselves have to imagine that someone is listening to them. They desperately need many acknowledgments.

It is important that every part of the auditing communication cycle be present at all times. For example, did the preclear really answer the question, or did the preclear talk about something else? Ask a politician a question, and you are seldom likely to hear a straight answer. When a preclear, who is not trying to be evasive, does not answer the question asked, it is often because the preclear never understood the question in the first place, or because the preclear did not fully hear the question. This condition is remedied by ensuring that the question is understood before it is asked, and by ensuring that the auditor has the preclear's attention, and by asking the question so that the preclear hears it clearly.

The auditor must not interrupt or distract the preclear while the preclear is attempting to answer the question. Sometimes preclears will take 10 min or more to look into their minds before coming up with a satisfactory answer. During this time, the auditor must wait patiently and attentively, without fidgeting, checking phone messages, or trying to fill what seems to be an awkward silence.

Communication lag is defined as the length of time intervening between the asking of the question and the reply to that specific question. It is an important index of a person's state of case at a particular moment. A preclear's communication lag may be quite long at first, and then gradually decrease as the preclear continues.

Often preclears will originate something that is not an answer to the question but which represents something they want the auditor to know. Originations can range from a long-forgotten incident to the fact that they are uncomfortable with the temperature of the room. In these cases, the auditor must understand the preclear's origination, handle it appropriately, acknowledge the preclear, and redirect the preclear's attention back to the auditing question so that the auditing cycle of communication is completed. Preclear originations are a good sign, and are not to be discouraged.

Part of the goal of auditing is to increase the preclear's ability to cause things, so that the preclear can be in control of the preclear's life and mind. When the preclear answers an auditing question, or when originating something, the preclear is at the *cause* point of the communication cycle. When the auditor asks a question, the auditor encourages the

preclear to answer, and the auditor's acknowledgment reinforces the preclear for examining the preclear's own mind and answering the question.

The Process Cycle

A *process* is a set of questions asked by an auditor to help a preclear find out things about that preclear or life. An example (Hubbard, 1991b) of a process would be:

> "What would you like to confront?"
> "What would you rather not confront?"

The appropriate meaning of the word "confront" has to be cleared with the preclear (using a dictionary) before the process is run. Here the word is defined as "to be there comfortably and perceive." It is *not* used in its sense of "to face with hostility."

The questions in this example are given alternately, each with the full auditing communication cycle of auditor question, preclear answer, and auditor acknowledgment of the preclear's answer. Any single process is run (repeated) only as long as it produces change and no longer (See the definition of *flat process*, Hubbard, 1978). The *end phenomena (EP)* of a process can be any of the following:

1. No further change.
2. A sudden insight or realization by the preclear about one's self or life.
3. An ability regained. For example, in the confront process, this might be ability to confront one's boss when asking for a raise, or ability to confront an audience while on stage.

These phenomena are usually accompanied by *very good indicators* and a certain electronic wave pattern called a "floating needle" (if a meter is available).

A *process cycle* consists of several steps:

1. Selecting a process to test out from a list of processes appropriate to the preclear's case.
2. Clearing the meaning of the process questions with the preclear to ensure the preclear understands them.
3. Testing whether the process questions have charge on them by

   (a) Asking the preclear if the preclear is interested in running the process, and/or
   (b) Measuring the amount of response when the process questions are asked or cleared by using an electronic meter.

4. Going back to step 1 to try out another process if the questions are found uncharged.
5. Running the process if it is charged.
6. Ending the process when the *end phenomena* of that process are attained.

Grades of Processes

There are thousands of processes, all directed to different subjects. No one needs every process. Hopefully, everyone has one or more processes that they could run with benefit. Many of the processes have been grouped into several categories, called *grades*, each

addressed to types of difficulties that people commonly have. Each grade represents a cycle of action. Many processes in each grade are run until the ability corresponding to a particular grade is attained (Hubbard, 1991j).

Objective Processes

One might think that Scientology processes require much introspection and talking about one's thoughts and feelings. But excessive introspection is what is wrong with many people—they think too much, and are engrossed in a constant, compulsive tangle of thoughts and feelings that they cannot control. Objective processes are designed to take one's attention off of the mind and onto the present-time physical universe. The purpose is similar to that of many Eastern practices, such as yoga and Zen meditation. Examples of objective process commands might be "Touch that (indicated object)," or "Look around here and find something you could have."

Be Here Now is the title of a book by Richard Alpert (Dass, 1971). The title may be good advice, but easier said than done, and many people spend a lifetime trying to achieve it fully. Scientology objective processes are designed to help to bring people to present time, get them more in communication, increase their ability and willingness to have things in the environment as they are, and increase their control of their attention, their body, and the physical universe.

Improving Memory

The next grade of processes concerns memory. Once a person has regained some ability to focus attention, attention can be directed to remembering pleasant or mildly unpleasant incidents in the past with greater vividness and clarity. The intended result is an improved ability to look into the preclear's own mind and discover things in the past.

Communication Grade

Hardly anyone feels completely free to say anything to anyone. Some people have special difficulty in talking to a policeman, or a boss, or a parent, a beautiful man or woman, or a very important person, to name a few. Other people cannot talk about some subjects as freely as they would like. Now an auditor is someone that you are supposed to be able to talk to about anything, and auditing doesn't work very well if you are holding back all the time. Many preclears know this, and still cannot bring themselves to say certain things. The Communication Grade of processes is designed to free a person to be more able to talk to nearly anyone about anything without experiencing emotional repercussions.

Problems Grade

It is normal to have some problems in life, but many people have continual, persistent, or recurring problems that they cannot seem to solve and which are making their lives miserable. The problems processes look at problems from many different angles, so that at the end, it is hoped that the preclear will gain the ability to spot the source of problems and make them vanish in the preclear's own mind, if not in the real world.

Relief From Harmful Acts and Guilty Secrets

Sometimes, in an attempt to solve a problem, people commit an act that harms another person, and thereafter carry around with them a secret that they dare tell no one. How does

one handle the guilt? Common solutions are (a) to try to forget, (b) to declare that the person deserved what one did to that person, (c) to punish oneself, or (d) to assume another identity, as in religious conversion. All of these solutions have undesirable side effects. This grade of processes is intended to bring about increased responsibility for one's actions along with a relief from guilt.

Upsets and Breaks With the Past

Many people have had breaks with the past, where they disconnect from people or things they have known and start anew. The only trouble with this solution is that there is a whole area of existence that they have failed to handle, and which they will fail to handle again if a similar situation ever arises. The purpose of this grade of processes is that the preclear should gain an understanding of what went wrong in the past, so that the preclear no longer feels upset when thinking about it and thus can benefit from the experience.

Being Right

Survival depends on being right most of the time. This is so important, that many people have difficulty admitting error, and so continue to act irrationally without correcting their behavior. The assertion of rightness creates a "bug" in one's mental machinery that is easy to spot in others, but difficult to see in oneself. At this grade of processes, the auditor asks the preclear to list beliefs that the preclear has used to make the self right and others wrong, enhance self's survival or injure the survival of others, and escape domination and dominate others. The most essential item on each list that the preclear listed is then run by other processes until compulsive rightness is no longer needed. The intended result is enhanced ability and freedom from fixed ideas.

Auditor Training With Training Routines

The Auditing Communication Cycle is so simple, that one would think it would be easy to do. Unfortunately, many people have developed communication habits that are incompatible with consistent good auditing.

Qualified, trained counselors with experience in social services, educational guidance, clinical testing, or personnel employment are accustomed to helping people with advice. After a few minutes attempting to practice auditing, some of them are so bursting with advice that they break the auditing communication cycle with comments and criticisms that interrupt the preclear's examination of the preclear's own experience and considerations.

People who are very good at social communication can be disconcerted by what they imagine to be an awkward silence while the preclear searches for an appropriate answer. Or they may try to comfort the preclear who is viewing a sad incident, or become frightened if the preclear becomes angry, and end the process prematurely.

Others are merely clumsy. They forget the exact words of the process they are running, or they forget to acknowledge. They mumble and they do not wait for an answer.

Therefore, certain training routines (TRs) were developed to help to train auditors (Hubbard, 1991f). A student auditor sits on a chair opposite a coach, who plays the role of a preclear. Each drill takes up a different part of the auditing communication cycle or the process cycle.

TR1 is an exercise in delivering an auditing question or command so that it is clearly heard and "arrives" where the preclear is. The student reads a sentence at random from

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland or *Through the Looking-Glass* (Carroll, 1865/2006) silently, then says it aloud to a coach. If the coach feels that what the coach heard sounds unnatural, as if it was read, or if the coach feels not addressed personally, the coach says "Flunk," and the student repeats the line.

TR2 is an exercise in acknowledgment. The coach reads a line from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking-Glass* to the student auditor, who acknowledges the coach. If the coach does not feel that the student auditor fully understood and acknowledged the coach so as to end the communication cycle, the coach says "Flunk," and repeats the line to the student auditor.

TR3 trains the student auditor to get the auditing question answered, despite distractions. The student runs a dummy process, such as "Do fish swim?" or "Do birds fly?" on the coach. The coach sometimes answers, and the student auditor acknowledges and delivers the same process question again, as if it were a new question. Other times, the coach does not answer, but makes an irrelevant comment about the room or the student auditor or some other subject. The student auditor says, "I'll repeat the auditing question," and does so as many times as necessary, until the coach answers the question.

TR4 trains the student auditor to handle preclear originations, and to distinguish between irrelevant comments on the one hand, and originations about the preclear's case on the other hand. The setup is similar to that of TR3, but the coach also has a printed list of possible "originations." After the student auditor asks the auditing question, the coach selects one of the originations and gives it to the auditor. The student auditor must (a) clarify the origination, so that the student fully understands it, (b) acknowledge the origination, and (c) return the coach's attention to the process by saying "I'll repeat the auditing question," and doing so.

After these four drills were developed, it was found that a vital ingredient of auditing was missing from some auditors: c*onfronting the preclear*. Some student auditors seemed nervous, couldn't look the preclear in the eye, fidgeted during the session, and couldn't keep their attention on what they were doing. TR0 was developed to cure these difficulties before the student attempts TRs 1 through 4.

In *TR0* the student auditor sits opposite a coach. The student doesn't have to say or do anything. The student's job is just to *be* there while looking at the coach, and the coach is looking back. The student should be comfortable and relaxed while confronting the coach. The coach flunks the student for fidgeting, excessive blinking, attention wandering, or any other manifestations of nonconfront. When the student can confront for two consecutive uninterrupted hours without a flunk, the drill is passed.

Some auditors can easily confront a preclear as long as nothing is happening. But suppose the preclear becomes emotional, starts crying, or screaming, or pounding the table. What does the auditor do if the preclear makes personal remarks about the auditor, or makes romantic or sexual advances? Auditors need to be trained to handle such things smoothly.

TR0 Bullbait is a drill in confronting a preclear who is saying or doing things that would disconcert or upset most people. As in TR0, the student and coach sit facing each other, and the student doesn't have to do or say anything except just be there comfortably. The coach, however, may say or do anything except leave the chair. The student's "buttons" can be found and pushed to elicit a reaction, which is then flunked. The student passes when able to be there comfortably without being thrown off or distracted or reacting in any way to anything the coach says or does and has reached a major stable win.

After these drills were used successfully to train auditors, they began to be used for introductory courses for public to improve communication generally. Then they began to

be used in drug rehabilitation programs with clients who had no idea of their purpose. Many misunderstandings arose, so much so that lawsuits were filed charging harassment for TR0 Bullbait drilling. Others felt that they were being covertly hypnotized during TR0, when, in fact, any auditor who goes into a hypnotic trance while auditing is not confronting the preclear, and this fact should be picked up and flunked by the coach during training.

Properly used, for the purpose they were created, the Training Routines are a valuable tool for ensuring that auditors follow the auditing communication cycle.

The mechanics of auditing, important as they may be, are secondary to the auditor's intention. If the auditor does not have the intention to help the preclear, the auditor is likely to find a way to make auditing ineffective. If the auditor's goal is to empower and free the preclear to draw the preclear's own conclusions, the auditor will eventually find a way to make auditing work, and the details will come naturally.

The E-Meter

Féré (1888) was the first to report that a person's resistance to the passage of a tiny electric current through hand held electrodes would vary according to the subject's emotional state. Later, this phenomenon was termed the *galvanic skin response* (GSR), or *electrodermal response* (EDR). In 1907 Jung and his students published the first uses of this instrument in psychoanalysis (Jung, 1973). An electrical resistance meter was incorporated into police polygraph "lie" detectors in 1921. Other applications have been in media research, such as advertising. Some psychotherapists occasionally have used meters in their work, but most have not.

Although it was used for research, it is somewhat surprising that so little use was made of such an instrument in clinical applications, psychotherapy, and counseling. Perhaps it was because these subjects developed before transistors replaced bulky, clumsy electronic equipment requiring power connections to wall plugs.

The Hubbard Electrometer, or E-Meter was developed as a simple battery-operated meter using a pair of electrodes, one in each hand, so that the current flows throughout a large part of the body, not just in the hands. It detects and measures muscle potentials as well as changes in body resistance (GSR). Because of its portability, safety, and ease of use, it became a valuable instrument for use in auditing. The E-meter is not used for the diagnosis or treatment of any disease or illness.

Psychologists generally believe that there is a 1- to 3-s delay between the onset of an emotionally charged stimulus and the resulting skin resistance response. However, Hubbard reported that all important E-meter responses occur instantly, that is, without any human-noticeable delay (Hubbard, 1991d). This means that either psychologists are wrong about the delay, or that the E-meter instant reactions are not skin resistance changes but something else, perhaps muscle potential reactions.

In terms of the Cycle of Action, at the Start point in the process cycle, the E-meter can be used to select the most appropriate process to run on a preclear. It can be used to assess a repair list to determine what might be wrong, if necessary. At the Continue part of the process cycle, it is quite helpful in monitoring the speed of progress. At the Finish part of the process cycle, it helps to determine how long to run a process, and when it has reached its end phenomena.

In the training of auditors, students are taught to recognize many different types of needle reactions, to disregard artifacts from finger movements, sighs, coughs, laughs, and

other body motions, and to pay special attention to reactions that occur instantly at the end of an auditing question or subject that is mentioned. Auditor E-meter training can take many months before the required level of skill is attained.

Hubbard's contribution to the E-meter was not in its electronics, but in the interpretation of meter reactions. Hubbard identified several new patterns of meter needle action correlated with psychological states. His work is so easy to replicate that several E-meter drills require the student to reproduce these needle patterns on a coach using only words. One of these needle patterns of particular relevance to the subject of this paper is the "dirty needle," which can be defined as "one that jerks, tips, dances, halts, is stuck or has any random action on it with the auditor sitting looking at it doing nothing" (Hubbard, 1978). Hubbard reported that a dirty needle occurs when the preclear's communication has been cut in some way, either by the auditor or by the preclear having unexpressed thoughts. The opposite of a dirty needle is a "clean needle," defined as one that acts when the auditor speaks and does nothing the rest of the time. A dirty needle can be "cleaned," that is, changed into a clean needle, by getting the preclear to voice the incomplete communications or unexpressed thoughts.

E-Meter Drill 20 (Hubbard, 1965) teaches a student auditor what causes a dirty needle and trains a student how to clean a dirty needle. In this drill, the student auditor asks a coach simple questions, such as "What is your height?" or "Do you like music?" The student auditor then dirties the needle by each of the following methods: asking the questions before the coach is ready to receive the questions, asking the questions in such a way that the coach will not receive the questions, asking the questions in such a way that the coach doesn't have a chance to answer any fully, asking questions and then pretending to misunderstand the answer, asking the questions and then querying all of the coach's answers, asking the questions but cutting all of the coach's answers by an acknowledgment, asking the questions but never acknowledging the coach's answer, and asking the questions but answering them all for the coach.

Each time the student auditor has dirtied the coach's needle, the student cleans it by asking "What considerations have you had about this drill?" or similar question designed to get the coach to voice the interrupted communications. While cleaning a needle, the student auditor maintains the full auditing communication cycle. This drill suggests that the auditing communication cycle and violations of it have physiologically measureable consequences. The auditor can use this principle to detect when the auditing communication cycle has dropped out, and remedy it by asking the preclear what the preclear thought of.

The E-meter should be considered as an additional communication channel between the preclear and the auditor, and not as a replacement for verbal communication. The most common error that occurs is that the auditor becomes more interested in the meter than in the preclear, thus damaging the communication between them instead of enhancing it. This error can be avoided by many hours of drill and practice by the auditor, so that reading the meter becomes automatic, requiring little attention.

Unlike biofeedback techniques in psychology, the auditor is forbidden from telling the preclear how the meter reacts during the selection and running of a process To do so would distract the preclear from looking into the preclear's own mind and would encourage meter dependence.

Another pitfall is to believe that an item or memory that reacts on the meter is true. In fact, wrong items and false memories can react on the meter. These reactions usually disappear when the associated correct item or actual incident is found. Overreliance on the

meter may have misled some people into accepting false memories or fantasies as real events, thus leading to the development of some amazing mythologies.

Discussion

This paper has restricted itself to aspects of Scientology that can be organized under the unifying principle of the *cycle of action.* Besides being a common sense idea, the cycle of action has support in scientific psychology, beginning with the work of Zeigarnik (1927), who demonstrated experimentally that memory for incomplete tasks persisted more than for completed tasks. Scientology is consistent with psychology on this subject, but differs uniquely in the thoroughness of its application of this principle, and the ideas presented in this paper suggest further lines of research.

Acknowledgments, in addition to completing the cycles of action of communication, can be understood as acting as positive reinforcements for instrumental (operant) learning. With each auditing cycle, the preclear is rewarded for inspecting the preclear's mind and relaying the information to the auditor. Acknowledgments were reported to be effective reinforcers by Greenspoon (1955), and there is an extensive literature on applications to counseling and behavior therapy.

The *process cycle* of action consists of many auditing communication cycles presenting the same auditing questions. It can be explained psychologically as consisting of two components: positive learning and desensitization. During the process, the auditing questions are answered more quickly and easily, indicating skill acquisition. At the same time, with each auditing cycle, the preclear is asked to overcome a tendency to avoid unpleasant or difficult memories or problems. When sufficient desensitization has occurred, the preclear is able to perceive and think about the subject of the auditing question without restimulation of painful emotion, so that a sudden realization or understanding may occur.

The *grade cycle* contains several completed process cycles. It may be explained as an instance of stimulus generalization. The more specific cognitive behaviors learned in each process become generalized into a broad competence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We conclude with a few specific examples of how the ideas in this paper could be of practical use to psychologists.

A. *Counselors* might improve their results by paying more attention to completing cycles of action in their sessions. They could do this by recording and playing back their sessions while asking the following questions:

1. Did the client evade or digress from answering the questions of the counselor?
2. Did the counselor persist in getting the client to complete answering the questions?
3. Did the counselor acknowledge the client in such a way as to convey understanding?
4. Did the client repeat what was said in an effort to be understood?
5. Did the counselor sometimes fail to acknowledge the client at all?
6. Did the counselor interrupt or prevent the client from examining the client's own experience or saying something?

7. Did the session end while the client was engrossed in a hot subject? (If so, consider changing to flexible scheduling with variable-length sessions.)

B. *Research psychologists* might find that Scientology provides a rich source of hypotheses, just as earlier generations used psychoanalysis for this purpose. For example, what is the effect of the number of incomplete tasks on the performance of new tasks involving short term memory, working memory, or perception? Can the "dirty needle" GSR phenomenon resulting from interrupted communications (Hubbard, 1965) be replicated under controlled laboratory conditions?

Another avenue of research might be to measure the outcomes of a few elementary Scientology processes on volunteers at a free clinic. A few dozen hours (or until complete) on a simple objective process, such as "Trio" (Hubbard, 1991a) or a subjective process such as "Help" (Hubbard, 1991c) could be examined with an appropriate experimental design. Of course, there are practical difficulties that must be overcome to carry out such research, but a well-designed study might prove rewarding.

There are many other sensible and practical aspects of Scientology that could be discussed but the above sections should suffice to make the point: Scientology contains a rich body of practical and down-to-earth techniques intended to improve conditions and help people attain greater awareness and responsibility. Organizational dysfunction and theoretical controversy should not deter one from making good use of tools that agree with one's own common sense.

References

Carroll, L. (2006). *Alice's adventures in wonderland & through the looking-glass*. New York, NY: Random House. (Original works published 1865 & 1871)

Dass, R. (1971). *Be here now*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing.

Féré, M. C. (1888). Note sur des modification de la résistance électrique sous l'influence des excitations sensorielles et des émotions [Note on changing the electrical resistance under the influence of sensory stimuli and emotions]. *Comptes Rendus des Séances de la Société de Biologie (Paris), 40,* 217–219. Retrieved from http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/100644

Fromm, E. (1950, September 3). "Dianetics" - For seekers of prefabricated happiness. *The New York Herald Tribune Book Review,* p. 7.

Greenspoon, J. (1955). The reinforcing effect of two spoken sounds on the frequency of two responses. *The American Journal of Psychology, 68,* 409–416. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1418524

Hubbard, L. R. (1950). *Dianetics: The modern science of mental health*. New York, NY: Hermitage House.

Hubbard, L. R. (1965). EM-20: How to dirty and clean a needle. In M. S. Hubbard (Ed.), *The book of E-meter drills* (pp. 39–41). Bedford, England: The Sidney Press Ltd.

Hubbard, L. R. (1978). *Technical dictionary of dianetics and scientology*. Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991a). PAB 80 Professional auditor's bulletin 17 April 1956, Scientology's most workable process. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, p. 351). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991b). HCO bulletin of 30 November 1959, Allowed processes 1st Melbourne ACC. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 5, pp. 248–249). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991c). HCO bulletin of 5 May 1960, Help. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 5, pp. 376–380). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991d). HCO bulletin of 8 June 1961R, E-meter watching—Are you waiting for the meter to play Dixie? In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 6, pp. 208–210). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991e). HCO bulletin of 7 April 1964, Q and A. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 7, pp. 395–396). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991f). HCO bulletin of 16 August 1971R issue II, Training drills remodernized. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 9, pp. 469–476). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991g). HCO bulletin of 5 April 1973, Axiom 28 amended. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and Scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 10, p. 491). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991h). HCO bulletin of 17 June 1979, Crashing mis-Us: The key to completed cycles of action and products. In *The technical bulletins of dianetics and scientology* (2nd ed., Vol. 11, pp. 457–468). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Hubbard, L. R. (1991j). *Grade processes and prepared lists. The technical bulletines of dianetics and scientology* (Subject volume; 2nd ed., Vol. 4). Los Angeles, CA: Bridge Publications.

Jung, C. G. (1973). Part II: Psychophysical researches. In H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler (Eds.), *Experimental researches. Collected works* (L. Stein, Trans., Complete Digital Edition, Vol. 2). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lewis, J. R. (Ed.). (2009). *Scientology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331493.001.0001

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sellar, J., Lupi, D., Anderson, P. T., & Ellison, M. (Producers), & Anderson, P. T. (Director). (2012). *The master* [Motion Picture]. USA: Annapurna Pictures.

Wright, L. (2013). *Going clear*. New York, NY: Knopf.

Zeigarnik, B. W. (1927). Das Behalten erledigter und unerledigter Handlungen [Retention of completed and uncompleted actions.]. *Psychologische Forschung, 9,* 1–85.

Author Note

John H. Wolfe retired in 1994 from a long career at the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center, where he led a team of psychologists in several projects to develop and validate new computerized aptitude tests. He is best known for his development of the mixture approach to cluster analysis.