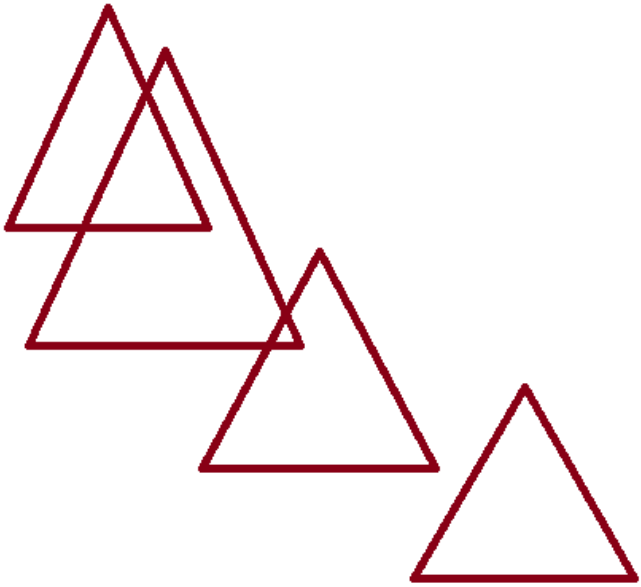


Hubbard's Spaceship

AN ESSAY.

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Introduction

An introductory critical examination of Scientology begins with its historical emergence in the mid-twentieth century, when L. Ron Hubbard transitioned from pulp science fiction and Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health in 1950 to the formal establishment of Scientology as a structured system of spiritual technology and ecclesiastical organization. Rather than treating Scientology merely as an isolated novelty or a simple curiosity of modern religious history, critical theory invites us to read its generalities against the broader socio-historical currents of postwar

modernity, including therapeutic culture, bureaucratic rationalization, technological optimism, and contested claims to scientific authority. From this vantage point, the movement's vocabulary of "engrams," the "reactive mind," "auditing," the "E-meter," and the "thetan" operates not only as doctrinal and procedural content but also as a historically situated discourse that promises mastery over human distress and spiritual limitation. Examining how these generalities function in historical time reveals how modern systems of self-improvement and spiritual ascent negotiate legitimacy between empirical science, therapeutic practice, and religious institution.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's analytical framework allows us to examine how Scientology's generalities

participate in modern formations of power-knowledge, confession, and subjectivation. Foucault showed that modern power rarely operates solely through crude external prohibition; instead, it works productively by categorizing human states, establishing regimes of truth, and inviting individuals to examine, articulate, and govern their own interiority. In Scientology, the diagnostic mapping of the mind into analytical and reactive components, paired with structured auditing sessions and electropsychometric measurement via the E-meter, can be read through a Foucauldian lens as a specialized technology of the self and a rigorous apparatus of surveillance and self-examination. Where traditional confession or clinical psychoanalysis structures truth around guilt, desire, or unconscious

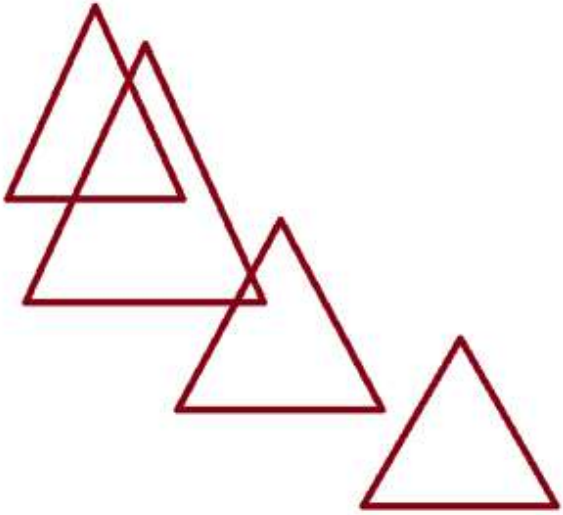
conflict, auditing organizes speech and bodily indicators around a codified progression toward spiritual release and higher states of awareness. Foucault's genealogical sensibility further encourages historians to ask what institutional rules, administrative hierarchies, and disciplinary norms stabilize this knowledge so that practitioners recognize its authority as objective, technical, and liberating.

Bringing George Ryley Scott into the conversation adds a distinct mid-twentieth-century historical register concerned with taboo, bodily discipline, ritual, and cultural conventions. As a prolific British writer active from the late 1920s onward, Scott produced wide-ranging historical studies on topics such as prostitution, corporal and capital punishment, torture, and sex and

marriage customs, often challenging Victorian and mid-century moral pieties through comparative historical survey. While Scott did not write a dedicated treatise on Scientology, his broader historiographical impulse—tracing how societies regulate bodies, stigmatize deviance, codify punishment, and weave esoteric or ritualistic meanings into everyday life—offers a provocative counterpoint when reading modern movements that claim radical break from conventional psychology and established religion. Placed alongside critical theory and Foucault, Scott's work reminds us that modern claims to rational enlightenment frequently coexist with intense preoccupation with bodily control, moral boundaries, esoteric lore, and institutional authority.

Carl Jung's analytical psychology introduces a third essential dimension by shifting attention from institutional discourse and historical regulation to the symbolic architecture of the psyche. Jung distinguished the conscious ego from the personal and collective unconscious, arguing that modern individuals often experience alienation when rationalism or rigid dogma severs them from symbolic depth, shadow material, and the lifelong process of individuation. Viewed through a Jungian lens, Scientology's emphasis on clearing mental obstructions, reclaiming latent spiritual potential, and ascending a structured bridge of attainment speaks to a deeply human longing for wholeness, transcendence, and integration. At the same time, a Jungian reading might critically ask whether literalizing or technifying

psychological and spiritual states risks bypassing the ambiguities of the unconscious and the shadow rather than integrating them dialectically. When critical theory, Foucault, Scott, and Jung are held together in historical inquiry, Scientology emerges not as a static monolith, but as a complex modern phenomenon situated at the crossroads of post-war therapeutic aspirations, institutional power, cultural taboo, and the enduring search for meaning.



Connection to Mormonism

The comparative study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Church of Scientology offers a compelling case study in the evolution of American new religious movements, revealing how distinct historical epochs produce parallel architectures of spiritual authority, bodily regulation, and psychological transformation. Emerging from the Burned-over District of nineteenth-century New York, Mormonism synthesized Christian restorationism with a radically

materialist cosmology, whereas Scientology, forged in the mid-twentieth-century crucible of Cold War technocracy and pulp science fiction, replaced traditional theology with a therapeutic and cybernetic model of the human mind. Despite the vast theological gulf separating Joseph Smith's prophetic restoration of ancient priesthoods from L. Ron Hubbard's empirical engineering of the reactive mind, both movements operate as totalizing systems that redefine human ontology, police the boundaries of truth, and construct intricate mechanisms for spiritual progression. To interrogate these overlapping trajectories without collapsing their historical specificities, one can deploy a tripartite theoretical lens combining Michel Foucault's analytics of power and surveillance, George Ryley

Scott's historical sociology of religious taboo, torture, and institutional coercion, and Carl Jung's depth psychology of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Through this synthesis, the relationship between Mormonism and Scientology emerges not as a lineage of direct doctrinal borrowing, but as a structural homology in how modern institutions govern the soul, discipline the body, and mythologize the self.

Viewed through the Foucauldian framework of power-knowledge and pastoral surveillance, both Mormonism and Scientology exemplify the transition from sovereign, punitive religious authority to modern disciplinary regimes that internalize obedience within the subject. Foucault argued that power is not merely repressive, but productive, generating new forms of

subjectivity through continuous observation, confession, and the establishment of normative truth claims. In the Latter-day Saint tradition, this disciplinary apparatus is visible in the bureaucratic organization of the ward, the system of lay priesthood governance, and the ritualized practice of worthiness interviews. From adolescence onward, the Mormon subject is invited to verbalize thoughts, behaviours, and desires before a bishop, transforming the private conscience into an object of pastoral administration and determining access to the sacred space of the temple. Scientology radicalizes this confessional technology by fusing it with industrial instrumentation, turning the Foucauldian gaze into a literal, measurable circuit via the Electropsychometric, or E-meter. During the process of

auditing, the preclear is subjected to exhaustive questioning while the auditor monitors micro-fluctuations in electrical resistance, effectively materializing the hidden interiority of the subject into empirical data. Both systems rely on what Foucault termed technologies of the self, yet they also enforce strict regimes of truth through institutional excommunication and disconnection, ensuring that the boundaries of orthodoxy are maintained not solely by external force, but by the subject's own investment in self-purification and spiritual advancement.

This institutional architecture of confession and conformity acquires a darker, visceral dimension when examined alongside the historical inquiries of George Ryley Scott, whose extensive scholarship on the history

of torture, religious persecution, and sexual taboo exposes the coercive undercurrents beneath institutionalized morality. Scott demonstrated across his works that religious and ideological bodies historically consolidate power by pathologizing natural human impulses, weaponizing shame, and devising psychological or physical torments to break the will of the dissident. While nineteenth-century Mormonism faced external mob violence and state-sanctioned persecution that forged a resilient, insular solidarity, its internal history also reflects Scott's observations regarding the sacralization of strict moral codes and the severe social ostracization of apostates. Early controversies surrounding plural marriage, blood atonement rhetoric, and the tight socio-economic

control of frontier communities illustrate how collective survival became inextricably bound to absolute ideological compliance. Scientology, operating within a twentieth-century legal and corporate landscape, sublimated the physical inquisitorial methods chronicled by Scott into sophisticated forms of psychological and administrative coercion. The practices of Fair Game, the punitive labour and confinement conditions of the Rehabilitation Project Force, and the weaponization of confidential auditing files against critics mirror the historical mechanisms Scott identified in ecclesiastical inquisitions, wherein the preservation of institutional infallibility justifies the systematic dismantling of the individual's social and psychological integrity. Furthermore, Scott's analysis of how institutions

regulate sexuality and bodily autonomy resonates in both traditions, from Mormonism's rigorous policing of chastity and temple garments to Scientology's rigid classifications of sexual behavior on the Tone Scale, both of which tether spiritual status to the strict governance of corporeal desire.

Beneath these external structures of surveillance and institutional discipline lies the internal psychic landscape mapped by Carl Jung, whose theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious illuminates why both Mormonism and Scientology exert such profound mythic attraction. Jung posited that when traditional religious symbols lose their vitality in the modern world, the unconscious spontaneously generates new mythological forms to satisfy the

psyche's innate drive toward individuation and wholeness. Mormonism achieved this by relocating sacred history to the American continent and transforming the biblical narrative into an ongoing, participatory drama in which human beings are literal spirit children of heavenly parents, capable of eternal progression and ultimate deification. This cosmology directly activates the archetype of the Hero and the Self, offering a coherent teleology that resolves existential alienation by situating the individual within an infinite, familial cosmos. Scientology, recognizing the mid-century disillusionment with traditional religion and the rising prestige of science, clothed the same archetypal narrative in the language of space opera and psychotherapy. Hubbard's mythos of the immortal

Thetan, trapped for trillions of years in the physical universe of matter, energy, space, and time, functions as a modern Gnostic creation myth. The journey from Preclear to Clear and ultimately to Operating Thetan parallels the Jungian process of individuation, wherein the ego confronts and integrates the Shadow—manifested in Scientology as the reactive mind and its painful engrams—to reclaim its primordial, godlike autonomy. In both traditions, the believer is not a passive recipient of grace, but an active hero engaged in a cosmic struggle to recover a forgotten, divine identity.

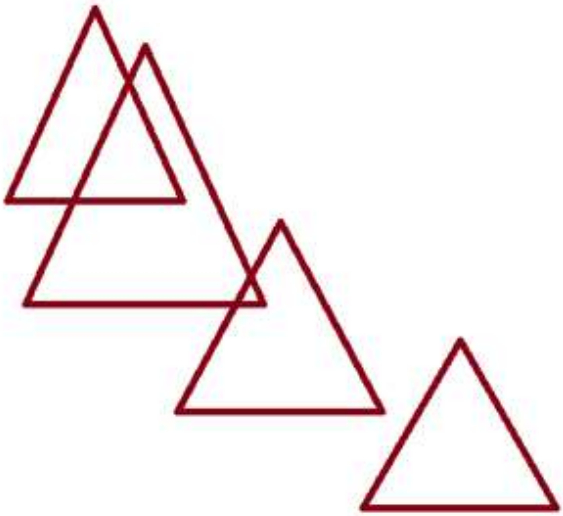
Synthesizing Foucault, Scott, and Jung reveals that the historical trajectory connecting Mormonism and Scientology is fundamentally a story of how American religious innovation adapts ancient spiritual drives to

the technological and bureaucratic conditions of modernity. Historically, Mormonism bridged the gap between the Second Great Awakening and the industrial age, creating a corporate, hierarchical church that preserved nineteenth-century prophetic charisma within a disciplined, modern bureaucracy. Scientology, emerging a century later in the wake of World War II, stripped away the Christian scaffolding entirely, retaining the hierarchical bureaucracy, the esoteric temple rituals, and the promise of human apotheosis while rebranding them as an applied religious philosophy compatible with the atomic age. Through Foucault, we observe how both movements perfected the internalization of authority, shifting from Mormonism's communal pastoralism to Scientology's

cybernetic auditing. Through Scott, we recognize that beneath their utopian promises of human perfection lie age-old patterns of institutional intolerance, psychological coercion, and the punitive enforcement of moral and ideological conformity. Finally, through Jung, we understand that neither system could endure through coercion alone; both survive because they tap into the deepest strata of the human psyche, offering modern subjects a potent, mythologized pathway to transcend mortality and realize the archetype of the divine Self. Ultimately, the relationship between Mormonism and Scientology demonstrates that even as the vocabulary of faith shifts from golden plates and priesthood keys to E-meters and cosmic engrams, the underlying mechanisms of power, taboo, and archetypal

longing remain remarkably constant across the

American religious landscape.



Connection to Freemasonry

The architectural morphology of modern esotericism reveals a persistent reliance on institutional secrecy, hierarchical initiation, and the commodification of transcendent knowledge, a triad most vividly manifested in the historical trajectory linking the Bavarian Illuminati, speculative Freemasonry, and the twentieth-century emergence of the Church of Scientology. To interrogate these overlapping phenomena through an introductory critical lens requires synthesizing the genealogical power dynamics

of Michel Foucault, the sociological historiography of secret societies pioneered by George Ryley Scott, and the analytical psychology of Carl Jung. When examined collectively, these three movements cease to appear as isolated historical anomalies or disparate theological inventions; instead, they emerge as continuous variations of a Western epistemological technology designed to manufacture authority through exclusion, discipline the subject through ritualized surveillance, and monetize the human psyche's perennial search for archetypal integration.

In the historiography of clandestine organizations articulated by George Ryley Scott, the fundamental appeal and operational longevity of any secret society rest upon the deliberate manufacture of artificial

scarcity regarding truth, alongside the exploitation of human vanity through graded hierarchies. Scott's exhaustive analyses of esoteric brotherhoods demonstrate that whether one examines the eighteenth-century rationalist conspiracies of Adam Weishaupt's Illuminati or the symbolic stonemasonry of the Grand Lodge era, the structural mechanism remains remarkably consistent: the neophyte is lured by the promise of an ultimate, hidden gnosis that is perpetually deferred to the next degree of initiation. In Freemasonry, this takes the form of craft degrees culminating in the Royal Arch or the thirty-three degrees of the Scottish Rite, each tier demanding new oaths of silence, financial dues, and demonstrations of fealty. Weishaupt's Illuminati, founded in Bavaria in

1776, consciously parasitized this Masonic infrastructure, utilizing its established lodge network to recruit intellectuals into a stricter, pseudo-Jesuitical pyramid of espionage and philosophical radicalism. Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard in the mid-twentieth century, represents the ultimate bureaucratization and commercialization of this exact Scottian paradigm. By replacing the artisanal aprons and Enlightenment-era deism of Masonry with the vernacular of cybernetics, space opera, and therapeutic self-improvement, Hubbard constructed an ascending staircase—the "Bridge to Total Freedom"—that mirrors the Masonic degree system in both form and function. Just as the Mason must prove his worthiness to advance from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason, the

Scientologist must audit through successive Operating Thetan (OT) levels, each requiring substantial financial expenditure and strict adherence to organizational orthodoxy, thereby validating Scott's thesis that the true secret of every secret society is that there is no ultimate secret, only an endless administrative apparatus sustained by the initiate's desire to belong to an elect vanguard.

While Scott illuminates the historical continuity of these organizational scaffolding systems, Michel Foucault's analytics of power-knowledge and disciplinary institutions expose how these groups actually govern the bodies and minds of their adherents. Through a Foucauldian prism, the evolution from the Illuminati and Freemasonry to Scientology marks a decisive shift in the

technology of the self, moving from classical sovereign secrecy to modern biopolitical surveillance. In the Masonic lodge and the Illuminati cell, power operated largely through theatrical ritual, symbolic death and rebirth, and the mutual policing of reputation among bourgeois gentlemen; the secret was an external boundary separating the initiated elite from the profane masses. Scientology, however, internalizes this boundary, transforming the Masonic ritual chamber into a panoptic confessional. Foucault famously argued that Western civilization replaced the archaic spectacle of torture with the insidious, internalized discipline of the confession, wherein the subject is compelled to speak the truth of their own desire and trauma to an authoritative interpreter. The Scientology auditing

session, mediated by the Electropsychometer (E-Meter), is the apotheosis of this Foucauldian apparatus. Rather than merely swearing an oath of brotherhood as in Masonry, the Scientologist submits their entire biographical and subconscious history to a recorded, itemized interrogation, creating a permanent dossier—the "preclear folder"—that functions identically to the clinical and penal archives Foucault analyzed in Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality. Here, knowledge is inextricably fused with power: the institution extracts the subject's innermost vulnerabilities under the guise of spiritual liberation ("clearing"), only to retain those exact records as a mechanism of disciplinary leverage and blackmail, ensuring compliance far more effectively than the

symbolic blood oaths of eighteenth-century Bavarian conspirators. Furthermore, Foucault’s concept of "governmentality" clarifies how Scientology’s rigid lexicon—its "Source" texts, ethics conditions, and suppressive person declarations—operates as a discursive regime that regulates what can be thought, spoken, or felt, rendering dissent not merely a breach of Masonic brotherhood, but a literal cognitive impossibility within the group's closed linguistic universe.

To understand why rational individuals willingly submit to the financial extraction detailed by Scott and the panoptic subjugation mapped by Foucault, one must turn to Carl Jung’s depth psychology, which accounts for the numinous, archetypal gravity exerted by these

esoteric systems. Jung observed that as traditional religious symbols eroded under the pressure of Enlightenment rationalism and industrial modernity, the unconscious archetypes of the collective psyche did not vanish; instead, they migrated into secular, pseudo-scientific, and conspiratorial vessels. Freemasonry, the Illuminati, and Scientology all function as modern initiatory containers for the archetype of the Self—the psychic totality that the ego strives to realize through the process of individuation. In Masonic symbolism, the rough ashlar being hewn into a perfect cubic stone is a direct projection of Jungian individuation, an alchemical transformation of the chaotic, instinctual ego into a harmonized, divine vessel. Similarly, Weishaupt's Illuminati, despite its avowedly anti-clerical and

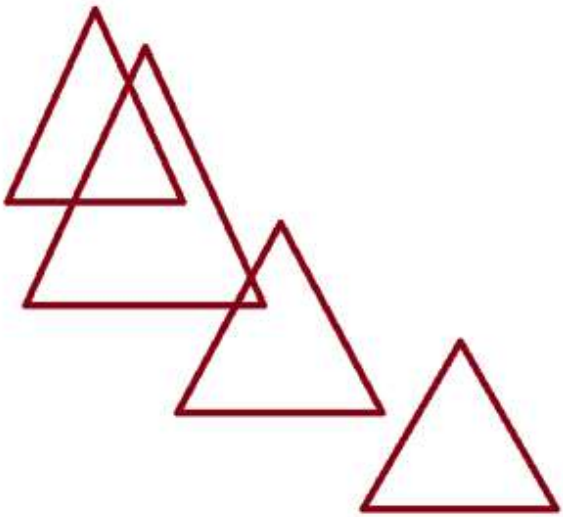
rationalist agenda, could not escape the archetypal pull of the "Illuminated" sage, drawing heavily on Hermetic and Rosicrucian motifs of light conquering darkness to satisfy the unconscious yearning for spiritual rebirth. Scientology merely updates this alchemical projection for the Atomic Age. Hubbard's mythology of the "Thetan"—an immortal, omnipotent spiritual being trapped in the illusions of Matter, Energy, Space, and Time (MEST)—is a textbook Jungian projection of the inflated ego mistaking itself for the transcendent Self. When a Scientologist seeks to attain the state of "Clear" or "Operating Thetan," they are engaging in a technologized, literalized version of the alchemical opus that Jung spent decades analyzing. However, Jung warned of the profound psychological danger of

"psychic inflation," which occurs when an individual or group identifies entirely with an archetype rather than integrating it consciously. By promising literal superhuman powers and absolute control over the material universe, Scientology short-circuits genuine Jungian individuation, trapping the adherent in a state of collective inflation where their shadow—all their doubts, trauma, and moral failings—is projected outward onto external enemies, much like the paranoid conspiratorial worldview that has historically surrounded both the Illuminati and Freemasonry.

Ultimately, synthesizing the sociological skepticism of George Ryley Scott, the post-structuralist power critique of Michel Foucault, and the archetypal depth psychology of Carl Jung reveals that Scientology is

neither a bizarre modern aberration nor a direct organizational descendant of the Illuminati or Freemasonry, though Hubbard demonstrably borrowed structural tropes from Western esotericism. Rather, all three movements represent distinct historical iterations of the same socio-psychological machine. Scott demonstrates how they monetize and stratify human curiosity through artificial hierarchies; Foucault exposes how they weaponize truth, language, and confession to manufacture docile, self-policing subjects; and Jung explains the deep, archetypal hunger for transcendence that compels human beings to step onto the Masonic checkered floor, enter the Illuminati cell, or grasp the tin cans of the E-Meter in the first place. Across three centuries, the vocabulary has shifted from the

geometric mysticism of the Enlightenment to the pseudo-scientific cybernetics of the Cold War, yet the underlying architecture of esoteric power remains stubbornly intact.



Core Beliefs

To examine the metaphysical architecture of Scientology through an academic lens requires navigating a complex intersection of mid-twentieth-century esotericism, technological gnosticism, and institutional self-fashioning. Founded by L. Ron Hubbard in the early 1950s following the publication of Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, the movement transitions rapidly from a therapeutic methodology into an expansive cosmological framework. In this framework, the human subject is not merely a biological organism bound by material causality, but an immortal, non-material spiritual entity known as the thetan. This

premise establishes a radical dualism that fractures the individual into an eternal animating consciousness and a fallible, traumatized vessel—a division that invites interrogation through the critical genealogies of Michel Foucault, the historical anthropology of taboo and ritual pioneered by George Ryley Scott, and the depth psychology of Carl Jung. When synthesized, these theoretical vectors illuminate how Scientology constructs a metaphysical universe characterized by cosmic amnesia, somatic imprisonment, and the bureaucratic technologization of spiritual liberation, transforming existential alienation into a quantifiable, auditable path toward ontological sovereignty.

At the foundation of Scientology's cosmology lies the assertion that the thetan is an individualized spark of

pure creative energy, uncreated and eternal, which originally possessed boundless capacities to postulate reality into existence. According to Hubbard's metaphysical narrative, these primordial entities became bored with their omnipotence and entered into self-imposed games of limitation, gradually entangling themselves within the physical universe—termed MEST, an acronym denoting Matter, Energy, Space, and Time. Through countless trillions of years and successive incarnations across extraterrestrial civilizations, the thetan accumulated layers of spiritual trauma and perceptual distortion, eventually forgetting its divine origin and identifying entirely with the fragile physical body and the reactive mind. In a Jungian register, this cosmological fall mirrors the archetypal motif of the

descent into matter and the subsequent fragmentation of the psyche. The thetan represents a hyper-individualized conceptualization of the Jungian Self, yet unlike Jung's formulation—which demands the integration of the unconscious shadow and the reconciliation of psychic opposites—Scientology's soteriology demands the total excision of the unconscious apparatus. What Hubbard terms the "reactive mind," a repository of painful cellular recordings called engrams that operate below the threshold of rational awareness, functions as an institutionalized equivalent to the Jungian shadow and personal unconscious. However, whereas analytical psychology views the unconscious as a compensatory and generative matrix necessary for individuation,

Hubbard's metaphysics pathologizes the unconscious entirely, framing it as an alien, parasitic mechanism that subverts the thetan's native rationality and traps it in compulsive, stimulus-response behavior.

This rigorous pathologization of the interior life immediately summons the analytical framework of Michel Foucault, particularly his investigations into power-knowledge, disciplinary apparatuses, and the technologies of the self. Scientology's central liturgical practice, auditing, operates as a quintessential Foucauldian technology of power masquerading as an instrument of absolute liberation. Through the deployment of the Electropsychometer, or E-meter—a modified Wheatstone bridge that measures minute fluctuations in galvanic skin response—the metaphysical

abstractions of engrams, past-life trauma, and spiritual aberration are rendered legible, quantifiable, and subject to empirical surveillance. In Foucault's terms, the E-meter establishes a micro-physics of power within the pastoral relationship between the auditor and the preclear. The apparatus compels the subject to excavate the deepest recesses of their biographical and trans-biographical memory, translating unspoken psychic distress into measurable needle movements on a dial. This process exemplifies what Foucault identified as the secularization and scientization of the Christian confession: the production of truth through the systematic interrogation of the interior self. By asserting that the thetan can only achieve the state of Clear—and subsequently ascend the ontological hierarchy of

Operating Thetan (OT) levels—through the precise, standardized administration of auditing protocols, the institution binds metaphysical salvation to administrative compliance. The discourse of absolute spiritual freedom thus operates simultaneously as a disciplinary regime, wherein the subject internalizes the panoptic gaze of the E-meter and polices their own cognitive and emotional states against the rigid taxonomy of Hubbard's "Bridge to Total Freedom."

To understand the historical lineage of such rigid ritual purity and the social mechanics of institutional secrecy, one must turn to the cultural historiography of George Ryley Scott, whose extensive analyses of human taboos, secret societies, and the institutionalization of esoteric knowledge reveal the deep anthropological continuities

underlying modern religious movements. Scott consistently demonstrated how nascent spiritual and fraternal organizations consolidate authority by transforming universal human anxieties—such as the fear of death, bodily decay, and social ostracization—into intricate systems of graded initiation, linguistic exclusivity, and ritual purification. Scientology's metaphysical stratification, which restricts access to its highest cosmological revelations until the initiate has undergone years of financial expenditure and psychic conditioning, directly replicates the structural dynamics Scott observed in historical mystery cults and esoteric brotherhoods. In Scott's historical analysis, the preservation of arcana—such as Hubbard's confidential Operating Thetan narratives detailing primordial

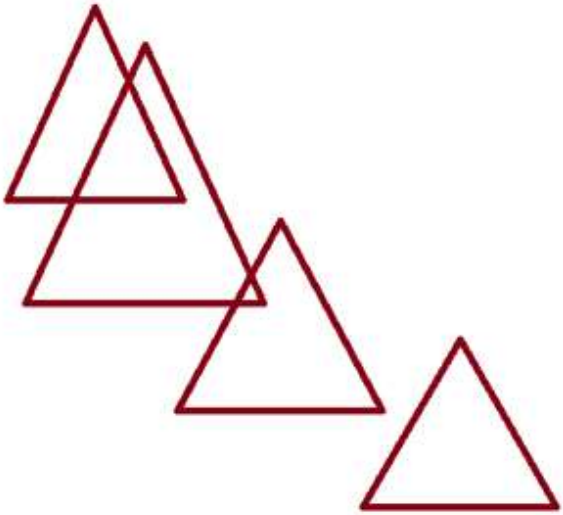
galactic catastrophes and the implantation of parasitic spiritual entities—serves less to protect the uninitiated from metaphysical harm than to establish an unassailable hierarchy of epistemic authority. Furthermore, Scott's examination of how institutional taboos regulate the body and speech illuminates Scientology's complex relationship with language and ethical discipline. The creation of an insular, technical lexicon—encompassing terms such as overts, withholds, enturbulation, and suppressive persons—functions as a linguistic enclosure that insulates the practitioner from external critique while framing dissenting perspectives as symptoms of spiritual pathology. Just as Scott traced how traditional societies deployed the concept of ritual pollution to enforce social cohesion and punish

transgression, Scientology utilizes its metaphysical ethics system to classify external criticism or internal deviation as manifestations of the reactive mind, thereby neutralizing ideological resistance through diagnostic categorization.

The convergence of these three theoretical perspectives—Jungian depth psychology, Foucauldian biopolitics, and Scott's historiography of esoteric institutions—exposes the profound paradox at the heart of Scientology's metaphysics. On one level, the movement offers a radically empowering gnostic mythos that elevates the individual from a transient biological accident to an immortal architect of universes, promising mastery over matter, energy, space, and time. Yet the very mechanism through which

this ontological sovereignty is pursued requires the subject to submit to an exhaustive regime of behavioural standardization, linguistic conformity, and technological surveillance. From a Jungian standpoint, the quest to eradicate the reactive mind and achieve the state of Clear represents an extreme manifestation of inflation—an attempt by the conscious ego to sever itself entirely from the messy, uncontrollable depths of the collective unconscious rather than engaging in the humble work of psychic integration. Simultaneously, through a Foucauldian lens, this pursuit of disembodied purity demonstrates how modern therapeutic and spiritual discourses colonize the interiority of the subject, transforming the quest for self-actualization into an endless cycle of self-surveillance and

institutional dependency. Finally, situated within George Ryley Scott's broader history of human belief systems, Scientology emerges not as a radical rupture from the past, but as a twentieth-century technological mutation of ancient esoteric patterns—a synthesis of gnostic dualism, initiatory secrecy, and bureaucratic rationalism that reflects the enduring human desire to systematize the ineffable and conquer mortality through ritual precision.



Core Practices

The emergence of the Church of Scientology in the mid-twentieth century presents a uniquely modern synthesis of therapeutic self-actualization, bureaucratic administration, and esoteric ritualism. Founded by L. Ron Hubbard initially as Dianetics in 1950 and subsequently formalized as a religious institution in 1953, Scientology operates at the intersection of technological rationalism and soteriological mysticism. To interrogate the core ritualistic practices of this movement—most notably the electropsychometric

confessional known as auditing, the rigid pedagogical progression of the Training Routines, and the hierarchical ascent along the Bridge to Total Freedom—requires a multidimensional theoretical apparatus. By weaving together Michel Foucault's genealogy of disciplinary power and technologies of the self, George Ryley Scott's comparative historical methodology regarding institutional secrecy, initiation, and corporeal-psychological control, and Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology of archetypes and the individuation process, one can decode the precise mechanisms through which Scientology constructs subjectivity. Rather than viewing these practices merely as eccentric contemporary anomalies, this synthesis reveals them to be deeply rooted in historical traditions of esoteric initiation,

modern panoptic surveillance, and the perennial human confrontation with the collective unconscious.

To understand the foundational ritual of Scientology, known as auditing, one must first situate it within the Foucauldian framework of the confession and the technology of the self. In his seminal analysis of power and knowledge, Foucault demonstrates how the Western ritual of confession migrated from the monastic cell and the Tridentine confessional booth into the secularized, clinical domains of psychiatry, pedagogy, and criminology. Auditing represents an extreme, hyper-rationalized culmination of this trajectory. Seated across from an auditor, the practitioner—referred to as the "preclear"—grasps two cylindrical tin cans wired to an Electropsychometric, or

E-meter, a modified Wheatstone bridge that measures minute fluctuations in galvanic skin response. Within this dyadic configuration, the E-meter functions as a micro-panoptic apparatus, an infallible technological arbiter that bypasses conscious evasion and extracts truth directly from the somatic responses of the subject. As Foucault argues in his examination of disciplinary mechanisms, power is not merely repressive; it is fundamentally productive, fabricating the very interiority it claims to uncover. Through the repetitive questioning of the auditor, who commands the preclear to locate and recount traumatic incidents known as "engrams" across both the current lifetime and trillions of years of past existences, the subject is compelled to verbalize, categorize, and objectify their entire psychic

history. This exhaustive externalization of memory transforms the practitioner into a legible, quantifiable archive. Every hesitation, emotional discharge, or physiological tremor registered by the swinging needle of the E-meter is meticulously inscribed into folders that follow the individual throughout their institutional life, thereby cementing an asymmetric relation of power-knowledge in which the organization possesses total epistemic authority over the subject's innermost self.

This institutional archiving of the psyche finds a profound historical parallel in the comparative sociological and historical investigations of George Ryley Scott, whose extensive chronicles of secret societies, flagellation, torture, and religious initiation illuminate the structural continuity between ancient mystery cults

and modern authoritarian sects. Viewed through Scott's historical lens, Scientology's administrative apparatus and ritual progression replicate the classic morphology of esoteric secret societies, which consolidate authority by fragmenting knowledge into strictly gated tiers. Scott repeatedly emphasizes that throughout human history, from the Eleusinian Mysteries and Pythagorean brotherhoods to medieval monastic orders and Masonic lodges, institutional longevity depends upon the rigorous policing of boundaries between the profane uninitiated and the enlightened adept. In Scientology, this ancient stratagem is modernized through the commercialized, bureaucratic structure of the "Bridge to Total Freedom," a codified chart of escalating spiritual states culminating in the status of "Operating Thetan"

(OT). Access to the upper echelons of this hierarchy, particularly the esoteric cosmogony contained within the OT III materials, is restricted not merely by financial expenditure, but by strict ritual purity and ideological conformity. Scott's historical analyses of institutional coercion further clarify the function of Scientology's internal justice and purification rituals, such as the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF) and the Purification Rundown. Historically, religious and secret institutions have utilized physical deprivation, repetitive labor, and somatic purgation—whether through ascetic fasting, flagellation, or sweat lodges—to break down the individual ego and enforce absolute collective solidarity. The Purification Rundown, which mandates hours of daily sauna exposure, vigorous aerobic exercise, and

massive doses of niacin to supposedly flush stored radiation and drug toxins from adipose tissue, operates precisely as a modern, pseudo-medicalized ordeal of ritual cleansing. Similarly, the punitive regimen of the RPF, involving manual labour, restricted communication, and intense confessional interrogation, mirrors the historical monastic and sectarian deployment of mortification as a means of ideological recalibration and institutional self-preservation.

Beneath this outer scaffolding of Foucauldian surveillance and Scottian institutional control lies a profound psychological drama that resonates directly with Carl Jung's analytical psychology. While Hubbard explicitly rejected psychoanalysis and psychiatry as oppressive pseudo-sciences, the underlying architecture

of Scientology's ritual life inadvertently recapitulates the Jungian process of individuation, albeit in a mechanized, literalized, and ultimately truncated form. In Jungian theory, psychological maturation requires the ego to confront and integrate the repressed contents of the personal unconscious—the Shadow—before engaging with the universal, primordial images of the collective unconscious. Scientology's concept of the "reactive mind," a repository of painful, irrational, and unconscious recordings that subvert the analytical mind, bears an unmistakable structural resemblance to the Jungian Shadow. During auditing, when the preclear is instructed to repeatedly re-experience an engram until its emotional charge dissipates, the practitioner is engaging in a ritualized confrontation with their

personal Shadow. However, whereas Jungian analysis seeks a dialectical integration of the Shadow into conscious awareness, fostering humility and psychic wholeness, Scientology's ritual objective is total eradication—the attainment of the state of "Clear," wherein the reactive mind is supposedly deleted in its entirety. From a Jungian perspective, this aspiration toward absolute psychic sterilization represents a dangerous inflation of the ego, an attempt to amputate a fundamental component of the human psyche rather than assimilate it. Furthermore, when the practitioner advances beyond the personal reactive mind into the Operating Thetan levels, they encounter entities known as "body thetans"—disembodied spiritual parasites clinging to the human form as a result of a catastrophic

galactic trauma occurring seventy-five million years ago. In Jungian terms, these autonomous complexes, which the practitioner must telepathically audit and exorcise, are classic projections of splinter psyches and archetypal contents arising from the collective unconscious. Because Scientology interprets these psychic phenomena in stark, literalist, and space-opera terms rather than symbolically, the practitioner remains trapped in an endless, obsessive ritual of exorcising projected fragments of their own unconscious, mistaking archetypal symbols for literal extra-terrestrial history.

The synthesis of these three theoretical perspectives becomes particularly illuminating when examining Scientology's foundational pedagogical rituals, known as

the Training Routines, or TRs. Prior to engaging in advanced auditing, initiates must spend countless hours performing highly regimented dyadic exercises designed to instill absolute emotional detachment, unblinking eye contact, and vocal command. In the notorious "bullbaiting" routine, one student sits motionless with eyes closed or fixed upon a partner for hours at a time, while the partner hurls relentless personal insults, obscenities, and provocations intended to elicit a physical flinch, laugh, or emotional reaction. Through a Foucauldian lens, the Training Routines exemplify the micro-physics of disciplinary power inscribed directly upon the docile body. Just as Foucault describes the eighteenth-century soldier being trained through infinitesimal adjustments of posture, gaze, and reflex

until obedience becomes automatic, the Scientology initiate is subjected to a somatic drill that severs the natural link between emotional stimulus and physiological expression. By mastering the gaze and suppressing all involuntary micro-expressions, the practitioner internalizes the panoptic gaze, becoming both the rigid overseer and the scrutinized subject. Simultaneously, Scott's historical framework reveals the lineage of these drills within the broader history of ascetic endurance trials and initiatory hazing. Across diverse cultures and historical epochs, secret fraternities and military castes have subjected novices to verbal humiliation, sensory deprivation, and postural rigidity to test fortitude, extinguish civilian identity, and forge an unbreakable bond among survivors of the

ordeal. In the TRs, the deliberate infliction of psychological stress serves to desensitize the initiate to external criticism, effectively insulating them from the social disapprobation of family members and critics outside the organization. Jungian psychology adds a final, crucial dimension to this ritual by highlighting its impact on the Persona—the social mask through which the individual negotiates the external world. While a healthy Persona mediates flexibly between the inner psyche and societal expectations, the Training Routines systematically construct an impenetrable, hyper-rigid Persona characterized by an unnatural, unblinking stare and a mechanistic cadence of speech. By forcing the conscious ego to suppress all spontaneous affective responses, the ritual divorces the Persona from the

living emotional currents of the deeper psyche, producing a psychological dissociation that Scientology celebrates as spiritual mastery.

Moreover, the temporal and spatial organization of Scientology's ritual environment reinforces this triple dynamic of disciplinary surveillance, historical secrecy, and archetypal projection. Scientology facilities, particularly its flagship spiritual headquarters in Clearwater, Florida, and its network of "Ideal Organizations," are meticulously designed to evoke both clinical precision and ecclesiastical grandeur. Within these spaces, time is atomized into purchasable increments—intensives of twelve-and-a-half hours—and progress is charted on massive, publicly displayed progress boards that rank practitioners by their

completion of courses and auditing levels. Foucault identifies such spatial enclosure, hierarchical ranking, and time-tabling as the quintessential instruments of disciplinary institutions, ensuring that every individual is constantly visible, comparable, and subject to normalization. Concurrently, this architectural and administrative enclosure echoes the historical sanctuary of the mystery temple analysed by Scott, wherein the sacred precinct is rigidly demarcated from the corrupt secular world, and the initiates are bound by sacred oaths of non-disclosure, reinforced in the modern era by legally binding non-disclosure agreements and the quasi-judicial policy of "Fair Game" against apostates. Within this hermetically sealed temple-clinic, the practitioner’s entire existential narrative is re-scripted.

The mundane anxieties of modern alienated existence are translated into an epic, cosmic mythology of fallen gods—thetans—who voluntarily surrendered their omnipotence to enter the trap of the physical universe, abbreviated as MEST (Matter, Energy, Space, and Time). For Jung, this Gnostic narrative of the divine spark trapped in material darkness is one of the most potent archetypes of the collective unconscious, recurring across centuries in Valentinian Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Hermetic alchemy. Scientology captures the immense numinous energy of this archetype and channels it directly into its bureaucratic ritual machinery, promising the individual that by strictly adhering to Hubbard's administrative policies

and purchasing successive levels of auditing, they will recover their primordial godlike faculties.

Ultimately, the ritualistic architecture of Scientology endures because it masterfully exploits the vulnerabilities and aspirations of the late-modern subject. In an era characterized by the erosion of traditional religious communities and the rise of therapeutic culture, Scientology offers a totalizing system that merges the authoritative certainty of modern technology with the ancient allure of esoteric initiation. Through Foucault, we perceive how the E-meter, the preclear folders, and the Training Routines operate as sophisticated technologies of power that fabricate a compliant, self-policing subjectivity under the guise of absolute spiritual liberation. Through

George Ryley Scott, we recognize that these seemingly novel practices are deeply indebted to age-old historical strategies of institutional secrecy, graded initiation, and somatic-psychological discipline designed to centralize authority and enforce group cohesion. Finally, through Carl Jung, we uncover the profound psychic resonance that animates these rituals from within, as the practitioner confronts the personal Shadow and projects the numinous archetypes of the collective unconscious onto a literalized cosmic mythology. When synthesized, these three perspectives demonstrate that Scientology's core rituals are neither mere theatrical absurdities nor pure spiritual revelations; rather, they constitute a formidable, self-reinforcing apparatus of modern power-knowledge that captures the archetypal

longings of the human psyche and binds them to an uncompromising institutional hierarchy.

