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If one believes comments by Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), the creation of Scientology's forerunner, Dianetics, related directly to his efforts to improve the success of people who explored nature. The "original goal" of Dianetics, he stated in *The Explorers Journal*, "was to provide expedition commanders and doctors with a therapy tool which would increase the efficiency of personnel and reduce incidence of personnel failure" (Hubbard 1950: 52). Hubbard himself had undertaken several questionable marine explorations, but by 1950 he was claiming that the realm of the human mind was the last great frontier "capable of producing some adventures scarcely rivaled by [African explorer David] Livingston[e]" (Hubbard 1950: 1).

The mind, it seems, replaced nature as an exciting realm for Hubbard's exploration. Nevertheless, in Dianetics and Scientology, Hubbard did develop a set of concepts (called "dynamics") that supposedly identified urges or drives of life. In Dianetics, Hubbard identified the fifth of seven dynamics as being concerned with an individual's affinity for life. By 1956 he refined the dynamics to include eight dimensions, with the fifth one involving "the urge toward existence of the animal kingdom," which includes all flora and fauna (Hubbard 1979: 37). The sixth dynamic involved "the urge toward existence of the physical universe," what Hubbard called "matter, energy, space, and time" (Hubbard 1979: 38). Consequently, in the context of these two dynamics, Scientologists are able to place themselves within an environmental framework.

Throughout his corpus, Hubbard frequently discussed what he called the "environment," but he used the term in the broadest possible sense to refer to "all conditions surrounding the organism from the first moment of present-life existence to death, including physical, emotional, spiritual, social, educational, [and] nutritional" (Hubbard 1951: II, 293). Hubbard rarely discussed the natural world in his major ideological works, unless one includes his lectures and writings about possible radiation poisoning from the environment caused by nuclear bombs. This material reflected widespread fear during the 1950s of nuclear war and contamination, and Hubbard claimed that he had developed a program that would reduce the effects of radiation on the body.

In 1959 and 1960, Hubbard carried out a series of "experiments" (although they were never scientifically published), which "proved" that plants felt pain and feared death. He also experimented with the effects of heated soil on plant growth. For years afterward, media accounts about Scientology carried a picture of a pensive Hubbard looking intently at a vine-ripening tomato that he had hooked up with clamps and wires to the galvanometer (called an E-meter) reputedly used by his organization to identify negative incidents in members' current or past lives. These experiments, however, did not become part of Hubbard's lasting contributions to Scientology.

One of the few lasting images of the natural world in his ideology involved volcanoes, which appeared in Hubbard's 1967 cosmological statement about how soul-like entities (called thetans) forgot previous negative experiences from past lives as they were about to enter new ones. According to Hubbard, 76 million years ago an evil warlord named Xenu (or Xemu) rounded up people on the overpopulated planets that he controlled, sent them to a planet called Teegeeach (which was Earth), placed them in (or near) volcanoes, and exploded hydrogen bombs in craters. Their souls (thetans) survived, but out of fear these thetans grouped together as clusters and continue to attach themselves to bodies. Upper-level Scientology courses supposedly allow people to detach these "body clusters" and thetans from themselves, which is supposed to advance their own developmental progress.

As environmental awareness grew in society-at-large, Scientologists received media attention for their clean-up efforts on beaches, along roadsides, and in urban centers - activities that the Church of Scientology International praises on its own website. In 1998, for example, one special Scientology project in Clearwater, Florida, involved relocating a 100-year-old oak tree. Moreover, in September 2001, The Church of Scientology was among approximately 65 "customers" named by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for having made "green power" purchases from renewable energy sources (Los Angeles Department of Water and Power 2001).

While acknowledging that Scientologists share concerns about nature and the natural environment with the wider society, it remains true that the organization attempts to use members' environmental efforts to extend Scientology's "technology" into society. For example, in a secular booklet of moral aphorisms that Hubbard wrote in an attempt to gain recognition of his name, Hubbard instructed his readers to "Safeguard and Improve Your Environment." Yet the unsophisticated level of his thinking about the environment and the natural world resulted in simplistic advice: "There are many things people can do to help take care of the planet. They begin with the idea that one should. They progress by suggesting to others that they should" (Hubbard 1981: 38, 45). Nevertheless, Scientologists hope that non-Scientology organizations will reprint this booklet and distribute it widely, thereby attracting attention to its author (i.e., Hubbard) and stimulating interest in Scientology and his other works. Along these same lines, Scientologists and a Scientology organization had close connections with an environmental group named "Cry Out," and the principal of a Los Angeles-area elementary school canceled the group's planned activities for her students when she realized that its booklet was printed by Hubbard's literary agency, Author Services, Inc., and contained a song that Hubbard wrote.

It seems unlikely that "nature" or "the natural environment" ever will be a significant aspect of Scientology's

ideology. A stated purpose of the organization ostensibly is to remove the impact of negative experiences (called engrams) from people, and in many instances their removal (so the group claims) has medical benefit. Concerns, therefore, about nature are secondary (at best), since they are far outweighed by counseling and health issues.

Stephen A. Kent

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- See also: New Religious Movements; Science Fiction.