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Making Scientology Real: *Interpretive Drift* and *transmedial* world-making

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To all the kind-hearted people who helped me to get here.

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Chapter I: Starting to believe in Scientology

The Church of Scientology (CoS), founded in 1953 by L. Ron Hubbard, the self-proclaimed discoverer of the religion of Scientology, claims to be a fast-growing religious movement (Church of Scientology, “The Growth of Scientology”). The claims about the growth of Scientology through CoS have been supported, albeit only to an extent, by various scholars of religion (Lewis 2009, 138) (Frisk 2017, 167-8). This signalled growth of Scientology coincides with the observation that CoS has developed a media apparatus that not only consists of literary publications to reach a wide public. The apparatus also utilizes various new media strategies (Westbrook 2018b, 381-2). What do these various media communications tell people about Scientology?

The mixed media ‘message’ that reaches the wider public explains to them that Scientology teaches that humans are spiritual beings, because they have a soul, called a Thetan, which reincarnates and is hampered by man’s nature (Hubbard 1956, 66-9). The goal of Scientology is to help people achieve the highest levels of spiritual awareness and reach their highest potential as an individual, through the therapy-like procedure of Auditing, that aims to help a person overcome their irrational behaviour (Lewis 2012, 136). These promises are juxtaposed in the public debate by various controversies. What do the ‘allegations’ pertain to?

The Church faces accusations of functioning as a business, but also of Hubbard adopting the status of religion merely out of practical reasons to evade taxation and examination of its pseudoscientific practices (Lewis 2015, 227). The organisational structure of the church is experienced by some practitioners as suppressive and destructive (Rubin 2011, 209). Former church members list the organisational structure of the church as a primary reason for leaving the religious institute, to continue the practice of Scientology in self-formed groups called the ‘The Free Zone’ (Rubin 2011, 219). L. Ron Hubbard may have died in 1986, but his successor David Miscavige, as the leader of CoS, continues to rely on L. Ron Hubbard’s status in the religion as the source of Scientology knowledge (Wagner 2020, 25). Despite the controversy surrounding Hubbard and the church he founded, his teachings are still considered by many people around the globe to be persuasive. This makes one wonder: what does Hubbard mean to Scientologists themselves and how do his teachings convince people to become Scientologists?

As the result of Hubbard writing all the books that are used in Scientology, is the founder of CoS credited in Scientology as the source from which all the knowledge stems. He acts as a legitimizer for knowledge published by CoS (Christensen 2005, 230-2). L. Ron Hubbard's name has become a textual signifier that gives significance to a text. This is due to Hubbard's hagiography, that is constructed around the theories he 'discovered' (Christensen 2005, 230-2). This constitutes into Scientology having no central narrative; instead, it is built on a series of concepts and theories across an enormous amount of materials, that are given significance by Hubbard's name.

Hubbard as a textual marker is a part of the religious experience of Scientologists, since the presence of his name on a text indicates its significance to them. This does not mean that Scientology encourages people to worship L. Ron Hubbard, but rather, that he is celebrated for the enormous amount of knowledge he 'discovered' (Christensen 2005, 249). As the result of the vastness of the knowledge, that is spread out across numerous books, have Hubbard and CoS created a series of steps. These need to be completed in an orderly manner, to be able to achieve spiritual salvation as a Scientologist. These steps are known as The Bridge to Total Freedom (The Bridge) (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 189-191). The Bridge plays an important role in the religious experience of Scientology, as it determines the degree of knowledge a Scientologist has about Scientology.

The Bridge is described as contributing to Scientology as a soteriological religion. It owes this to the systematization, that also enforces secrecy about each step (Christensen 2009a, 107). The Bridge is the way Scientologists and new converts, known as preclears, are supposed to gain possession of the knowledge. Each step on The Bridge is followed by a Scientologist in a preordained way, by using the ascribed texts or procedures in Auditing for that step (Christensen 2009a, 108). The Bridge contains two tracks: one dedicated to training the practice of Dianetics and Auditing. The other track is the route of undergoing Dianetics and Auditing itself. Scientologists are not required to progress on both sides of The Bridge, but they are advised to do so by CoS. The levels of Scientology, called 'Operating Thetan' (OT), span from the beginner levels to OT-I and up until OT-VIII (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). Every preclear begins at the lowest steps on the bridge. A preclear progresses by undergoing Auditing sessions, doing courses and by studying the materials (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). The first major milestone for a

preclear is becoming 'Clear' and reaching OT-I. This seemingly complex way of reaching salvation, by walking The Bridge, results in an underlying question: what makes Scientology so appealing that people start walking the bridge?

Various scholars of religion researching Scientology used various approaches to analyse the way the religion is structured and how it could be appealing. It has been analysed how Scientology works as a therapeutic method; how it relates to counterintuitive elements that were introduced over time and how the vast amount of literature written by L. Ron Hubbard contributes to each other (Christensen 2016, 156). The experience of Auditing has also been a topic of research (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 183-206). The core revelation of Scientology, that is revealed at OT-III, has also been uncovered and has been analysed in comparison to the science-fiction genre of the Space Opera (Raine 2015, 66-88). Recent research has focussed on the Free Zone. This problematized the notion of insider or outsider position within Scientology and CoS, by analysing the various groups and their religious experiences of Scientology outside CoS (Gregg and Thomas 2019, 350-70). Fieldwork has also been conducted amongst church members, by a scholar of religion who became initiated in Scientology, to give ethnographic accounts of Scientologists (Westbrook 2018a). These contributions help to understand the structure of Scientology, CoS and what constitutes the religious identity of Scientologists. Despite these contributions, a larger question remains unanswered. How do individuals find it 'plausible' that they can achieve their highest potential as a spiritual being, with the teachings of Hubbard, that are offered by CoS through a vast media system? This thesis aims to answer this question.

1.1: Methodology of research

To answer the question of how Scientology becomes plausible for a preclear, will this thesis use primary sources from Scientology that are available to people below OT-I and secondary sources on Scientology. Furthermore, it analyses these sources with the theory of Tanya Luhmann about the *interpretive drift* and the theory of Henry Jenkins about *transmediality*. The goal is to recreate the way a preclear starts to take notice of the world around them, using the materials made available by CoS in the beginning stages below OT-I. The theories of Jenkins and Luhmann help to understand how a preclear comes to gain an

understanding of Scientology, as both scholars study the way in which worlds are made ‘real’, albeit using different approaches. Let’s unpack this.

Luhrmann, an anthropologist of religion, studied magicians in the United Kingdom during the 1980’s. She raised the question, like this article raises the question of how Scientology becomes plausible, how magical practices become reasonable for someone in ‘today’s world’. Luhrmann argues, based on her fieldwork and the experience of becoming an initiate herself, that ‘practice makes perfect’. In the process of gaining knowledge about magical practices, an individual starts talking and acting like a magician (Luhrmann 1989, 312-18). Luhrmann’s theory of the *interpretive drift* helps to understand a process that steers an individual towards perceiving the validity of the practice of Scientology, as no other research has been conducted about this on Scientology. Two effects can be observed as the result of the *interpretive drift* being a process.

The first effect is the way an individual, who starts engaging with a religious practice like magic, starts talking and behaving like a magician. Luhrmann describes that the *interpretive drift* also changes the way an individual starts communicating about a religious practice to others (1989, 7-8). The second effect relates to viewing the world in a different way. A practitioner learns to read the real world in a way that signals the validity of a practice at certain times. (Luhrmann 1989, 312-3). These signs, like a watch stopping or a battery melting, would have previously seemed like a coincidence, but are now signs of the validity of a practice (Luhrmann 1989, 318). Dirk Johannsen analysed the way signs, like Luhrmann described, are reiterated in narrative traditions about counterintuitive phenomena like ghosts or hidden people in Scandinavian folklore, that results to individuals forming “regimes of attention” to recognize a possible presence of invisible beings (2020, 84-5).

These regimes are formed using a story that contains description of sensory cues. These cues indicate the presence of a counterintuitive being in the narrative, by describing the sounds of the trees swooshing, the lack of bird song, bodily sensations or suddenly waking up during the night. ‘Experiencing’ these same sensations may have seen coincidental before hearing a story. Afterwards, they become signs of the presence of an invisible world that at certain moments becomes ‘real’ (Johannsen 2020, 74-5). Whilst these cues could be given in a story, the term itself relates to learning to perceive a part of the world through a series of specific signs, like Luhrmann tries to understand.

The two effects of talking as a believer of a practice and viewing the world through this practice, coincides mutually and results in the reinforced belief in the validity of a religious practice that is rationalized by an individual. For the purpose of this thesis, is ‘belief’ defined by using religious scholars Markus Altena Davidsen and Bastiaan van Rijn. They argue that belief is the ideas that an individual considers to be ‘plausible’. The concept of belief also includes hope, hunches or expectations that may fall short of plausibility and are subconscious prepositions. Nonetheless they still prompt the practice of religion. The practice of religion not only includes formal ritualistic settings or everyday religious activities. The practice of religion is also about taking notice of signs, hearing them and possibly cultivating the body (Davidsen and van Rijn 2020, 93). I’ve chosen this definition of belief over others, as it is built around the notion of building a ‘regime of attention’ to be able to see the previously held invisible.

Luhrmann’s most recent book *How God Becomes Real* analyses how people can form an intimate relation with counterintuitive beings through the process of *real making*. This is facilitated by the ability to notice sensory or bodily signals, which can be acquired by practice (Luhrmann 2020, 166-68). She developed this term to understand how some Christians become able ‘to hear God’s word’. This thesis primarily uses her earlier theory of *the interpretive drift*, considering the lack of counterintuitive beings to be worshiped in Scientology. The term *real making* will be adopted to signify the invisible becoming real for an individual with this *regime of attention*. The two terms help to understand how a preclear starts believing that the teachings of Scientology are plausible.

The *interpretive drift* emphasises the role of texts that facilitate this process of a practice becoming *real* (Luhrmann 1989, 312). In Scientology is a similar presence of ‘texts’, but they are presented in various forms of media that are easily accessible. As a result of this observation this thesis will use Jenkins’ theory of *transmediality*. Jenkins, a scholar of film and media, wondered how different types of media can be combined to create a unique experience of a ‘world’. The theory he devised is known as *transmediality*. Allow me to explain how it works and why it is relevant for this thesis.

A *transmedial* media system ‘usually’ has a story at its core and “each medium does what it does best-so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. (...) Reading

across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption” (Jenkins 2003). This can result in a world being built using these texts (Jenkins, 2007). *Pokémon* and *Star Wars* are prime examples of this type of media system (Jenkins 2003). Whilst Jenkins argues that *transmedial* systems tell a story spread out across various mediums, that results in a unique way of how the stories unfolds (2007), other scholars, like Jason Mittell and Joleen Blom, have challenged Jenkins’ presumptions of the presence of a narrative core in these systems and how they entice further engagement amongst ‘recipients’ with a media system. Jenkins and these scholars help to understand how the media system that preclears encounter, is organised by using world making strategies and systematically offering materials. This makes it possible to analyse how preclears start to see the world around them in a Scientological way. Having explained the methodology, this thesis can move on to outlining the way the *regime of attention* a preclear gains, is recreated and analysed.

The second chapter introduces the fundamental concepts and ideas of Scientology, that preclears are introduced to and which become part of their regimes of attention below OT-I. Primary and secondary literature will be used to explain these concepts and ideas. The third chapter discusses the various materials of Scientology a preclear is likely to encounter. The fourth chapter analyses how a preclear comes to accept Scientology knowledge as convincing and how their initial acceptance of the validity and credibility of the teachings results in a perpetual cycle of reinforced belief. Luhrmann’s theories and secondary sources, that describe the experience of Auditing, will be used for this analysis. The chapter dissects the building blocks of Scientology *real making*, by distilling the processes of the *interpretive drift* in Scientology. The fifth chapter enacts Jenkins’ enhanced theory of *transmediality*, to understand how the various materials presented to a preclear are perceived as a unified media system and encourage further engagement with Scientology. This results in a process that makes a previously invisible part of the world visible. This is done by training the regime of attention using content offered in this system. The sixth chapter presents the next step of research.

Chapter II: Confronted by Hubbard's ideas and concepts

What are the concepts and ideas that a preclear is confronted with, when they start 'walking' across The Bridge? This chapter introduces the fundamental concepts and beliefs of Scientology, by using L. Ron Hubbard's literature. The primary literature is supplemented with the research conducted by Dorte Refslund Christensen. She is a scholar who researched Hubbard's development of- and representations of Scientology, its related concepts and practices. An article by Gail M. Harley and John Kieffer about the practice of Auditing will also be used to understand how the various concepts, known as 'technology' (Westbrook 2018a, 17), that make up Scientology, are taught and experienced.

Attention will be paid to Auditing. This is a process that is considered in academic literature to be important in the practice of Scientology (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 186). It originates from Hubbard's 1950 *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health (DMSMH)*. It was subsequently developed from a technique to help a human overcome irrationality, to a religious methodology to enhance an individual's spirituality capabilities (Christensen 2016, 156-7). There are two forms of Auditing, one with and one without involvement of an 'E-meter'. So, why do individuals need Auditing in the first place? This is due to the components that make up man.

2.1: The components of man

Scientology teaches that humans have a spirit, called "Thetan", that 'operates' the human body and its 'minds'. The human self is centred around man as a spiritual divine being, by inhabitation of a Thetan (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 185). How is the Thetan defined and how does it work?

The Thetan is "represented as immortal" and reincarnating (Christensen 2016, 186). This revelation did not come about at a cataclysmic moment. It was 'discovered' by L. Ron Hubbard in his quest to find a solution for the suffering of humans (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 185). The Thetan, with its desire to survive, operates a human body using the analytical mind, the reactive mind, and the somatic mind (Hubbard 1956, 58-60). There's a prevalence of L. Ron Hubbard's idea of the universe being ruled by "a duality of survive and succumb" (Christensen 2016, 173) with a physical universe made from Matter, Energy, Space and Time (MEST). There is also a

spiritual universe. This is made up out of Theta that gives energy to life and Thetans. A Thetan can only survive by controlling MEST and vice versa. This concept is known as the Theta-MEST theory (Christensen 2016, 173). The Thetan is technically in charge, but it is bound by limitations of the body. These limitations are caused by the minds. There are three of them. Let me explain how these minds are the root cause of the ‘illnesses’ that befall humans.

The analytical mind is dedicated to rational processes. Hubbard considers this mind to be the perfect computer, consisting out of “standard memory banks”, that contains all perceiving of a lifetime except pain (Hubbard 1950, 50). Feelings of pain are stored in a different part of man: the reactive mind.

This ‘shadow side’ of computational perfection operates on irrational behaviour. The reactive mind does not store memories. It stores engrams in the reactive bank. The engrams are recordings of physical pain or emotions that function as ‘triggers’, or ““restimulators” (sic)” (Hubbard 1950, 77) like sounds, smells or objects that are related to an event that gave feelings of pain. The reactive mind takes over from the analytical mind, when a restimulator is encountered (Hubbard 1950, 67). The reactive mind that stores engrams is a source of man’s suffering.

The vital body functions are operated by the somatic mind. This mind is controlled automatically by the analytical mind. It allows the analytical mind to focus on other matters (Christensen 2016, 164). The somatic mind has a functional application that does not necessitate further explanation.

The components of man are caught in a troublesome marriage, because the engrams, that are stored in the reactive mind, cause one of the primary sources of human suffering: irrationality. Owing to this, Hubbard’s writings feature the theme of “man is miserable and something can be done about it” (Christensen 2016, 156). The solution that Scientology offers, is to combat the influence of engrams by undergoing Auditing. What does Auditing do with these engrams?

2.2: Auditing in principle and practice

Hubbard claims that Auditing can minimise the effect of engrams on human behaviour. The process of Auditing can be understood as a “regimen of communication cycles” (Harley and

Kieffer 2009, 194). The process of Auditing involves two people with distinct roles and an organised procedure. The auditor helps a person who undergoes this type of Auditing and gives “commands” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 195). The receiver of this type of Auditing in this stage, is also called a ‘preclear’ (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 194). The goal is to target the reactive bank of an auditee and destroy an engram that causes an ‘upset’. This ‘clears’ an individual of this prevalent engram (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 196). The goal of clearing an individual of a current upset, is reached by tracking down the source engram in the following way.

An engram forms a “chain” with similar incidents called “secondaries or locks”. These are accumulated over time on a “time track” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 198-9). Auditing starts by identifying the most recent upset. This is called a “lock”. By reliving the incident the sensory imagery, dubbed “perceptics”, will be forgotten until one perceptic remains. This suggests there is an engram further down the time track. By cracking the locks along the chain, the source engram will be found. The goal is to take away the influence an engram has over an individual. This is also done by revisiting the primary incident in a repetitive process, until the preclear becomes ‘bored’ of it. A secondary effect is that the auditee gains new insights about themselves as a spiritual being and about their own story (Christensen 2009a 111-2). A preclear can be guided towards gaining these insights by the auditor itself. In practice, the auditor is usually guided with the help of an E-meter.

2.3: Auditing with an E-meter

The E-meter was introduced in 1952 by Hubbard; to gain influence on the way the process of Auditing was conducted by auditors without his direct supervision. Its purpose is to help auditors perform the process of Auditing in the exact same way as Hubbard did (Christensen 2016, 189). It is viewed as a powerful tool, owing this to its representation being connected to Hubbard himself (Christensen 2005, 230-2). The E-meter detects emotions and complex thoughts. These can be read from needle reactions on the dial. The most desired effect is a ‘floating needle’. It indicates that the auditee is ‘cleared’ of emotional charges and that there are no more engrams to be traced on this part of the time track (Christensen 2016, 190). The machine functions as a ‘second opinion’.

If auditors are trained in Hubbard’s E-meter procedures, they can use the machine to detect specific thoughts occurring at a subconscious level within the preclear, when a command

is given, by checking the needle responses (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 201). A subconscious response will always show up on the E-meter. The auditor will try to raise this response to a conscious level by repeating Auditing commands (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 201). Subconscious reactions are important, because a Thetan reincarnates together with all the accumulated engrams of the previous life (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 188). Whilst these events are not actively remembered, their engrams are stored on a “wholetrack” and can still upset a human (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 201). If the needle does not float by making the preclear conscious of the event, the auditor will dig deeper until the earliest incident is found on the track and “flattened” (Hubbard 1982, 53-54). This means that there is no charge left in the incident. This results in a floating needle and possibly some type of cognition (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 201). However, the E-meter is just a part of the process of Auditing. This is owed to Scientology relying on a series of concepts. These are needed to implement Hubbard’s solution for the shortcomings of men within the setting of Auditing and beyond. The technology functions as a toolbox for Scientologists to view reality.

The tools in this toolbox help Scientologists to recognise the sensory signals they are required to pay attention to when they practice Auditing, either as an auditor or auditee. By encouragement of practice in day-to-day life, these concepts also become recognisable in ordinary settings. One of these tools is the Tone-scale (T-scale). The T-scale can be used to help indicate the emotional state, also known as tone, of any individual (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 199). How does the T-scale work and why is it important for Scientologists?

2.4: The Tone scale

The T-scale is made up of emotional tones from tone 40 all the way down to -40. The higher tone levels are more ideal emotions for a Thetan (Harley and Kieffer, 2009, 194-5). In practice, the tones reaching from 0.5 - 4.0 are predominantly used. Recognizing these tones is important for Scientologists in the context of Auditing, as it signals the success or failure of an Auditing procedure (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 195). These tones also help to predict the behaviour of any individual encountered in daily life (Hubbard 1994, 3), due to the various emotions attached to them.

Tone 0.5 is explained as apathy for life that includes grief. Emotions like fear are a tone 1.0, whilst tone 1.5 is related to expressions of anger. The person who is suspicious of bad events

beholding him is located at tone 2.0. People who are ‘bored’, or generally uninterested in pursuing goals in life, are positioned on tone 2.5. Emotions that are more neutral are tone 3.0. Enthusiasm is located at tone 4.0 (Hubbard 1994, 3-4). Through “Drills”¹, Scientology training (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 195), can a Scientologist learn to recognise where on the T-scale someone is positioned, by learning to recognise eye movement and gazes. These drills are done quite early on the training Bridge of Scientology and consist of assignments that pairs of two need to carry out. One Scientologist acts out a certain tone-level, whilst the other needs to recognise the tone level (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 194-6)

Scientologists are taught by the T-scale that the constant breaking of eye contact suggests a 1.0 tone of fear, whilst the wandering of the eyes suggests tone 2.5 of boredom (Hubbard 1994, 14-5). The implementation of the T-scale can be trained by practicing. Scientologists themselves can establish whether they have ‘mastered’ the technology, by using the T-scale to raise a person’s tone level.

Raising the tone level of an individual is done by a Scientologist in two steps. The first step is to go one tone above the tone level of the person in front of them. The next step is to see if the person copies your tone-level (Hubbard 1994, 25). If the other person adjusts to the same tone, it signals that a Scientologist has accurately determined the persons tone and can raise their tone as well. The T-scale is used in the context of Auditing, to guide a preclear towards a tone that is necessary for the Auditing procedure (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 199).

In the world outside of the Auditing room, can the T-scale be used to unveil the basic character traits of any human a Scientologist encounters (Hubbard 1994, 3-4). The eye movement reveals the base tone of a person. This predicts if someone is going to lie, or is going to be trustworthy (Hubbard 1994, 10-1). Taking notice of the movement of eyes becomes part of the *regime of attention* of preclears. Successfully raising the tone level of another person may even conform or increase the belief in the technology of L. Ron Hubbard. The T-scale changes the way a preclear looks at the world.

¹ Drilling is a term that is commonly used in Scientology to refer to practical training assignments.

The T-scale becomes entwined with communicating to other human beings. The observation of the eyes prior to a communication, indicates to a Scientologist if a communication has the intended outcome on the mood of an individual, by looking at their eyes afterwards (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 194-5). The T-scale verifies the aspects of communication relating to Scientology practices. The way to successfully communicate and reach the point of understanding with fellow Scientologists – or any individual for that matter – is taught to a preclear using the ARC-triangle.

2.5: ARC-triangle

Hubbard developed a methodology that explains the manner in which individuals communicate and how mutual understanding between them is reached (Christensen 2016, 175). The methodology can even facilitate communication itself (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 194). The central concept of this methodology is called the “ARC Triangle” (Hubbard, 1951b, 72). What does this abbreviation stand for? The ARC stands for Affinity, Reality and Communication. Why is it so important to recognise the ARC-triangle in communications?

Hubbard argues that individuals who share a reality, feel positively towards each and therefore communicate with one another. Hubbard explains that “Affinity” refers to feeling sympathy for a fellow human. “Reality” refers to a fundamental agreement of what is agreed to be real. “Communication” is deemed the most important corner of the triangle, as it solves everything. By alternating one the ARC’s, someone impacts all three. (Hubbard 1956, 43), hence the triangle. Allow me to demonstrate example how the triangle works in practice.

Imagine two persons sitting in a room: an elderly man and his son-in-law. They are not very fond of each other. Low Affinity, not a shared Reality, hence no Communication. In my hypothesis, the son-in-law wears a golden necklace. The elderly man tells the son-in-law that he finds the necklace very beautiful. The son-in-law thanks him for the compliment, as he likes the necklace very much too. He remarks that he made it himself. The Affinity between the two persons starts rising, because of the shared Reality that was established by Communication.

The ARC-triangle is an effective tool for Scientologist to use in daily activities, like interacting with a person that you have low affinity for, or do not have a mutual understanding with (Hubbard 1956, 43-4). It is also used in the context of Auditing. It functions as the basis of

the communication cycle regimen, that operates on a mutual understanding as “the magic of communication is about the only thing that makes auditing work” (Hubbard 1976, 63). A mutual understanding ensures clear communication between auditor and auditee. This allows the Auditing session to progress to its end goal of removing an engram (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 193-4). The tracking of an engram is done, using this regimentally structured form of communication, that relies on eyesight and recognizing the abilities to achieve a mutual understanding to facilitate communication. The presence of an engram is located using a concept that helps Scientologists understand where a primary preoccupation of a Thetan lies.

2.6: The Eight Dynamics

Previous sections established that Hubbard emphasizes survival as a role of governance for the universe. This survival does not occur as merely a phenomenon of eat or be eaten. Rather, survival is made up of various dynamics that preoccupy an individual on different levels. (Christensen 2016, 173-4). These levels range from the personal sphere to a spiritual realm.

The Dynamics of survival started out in *DMSMH* out as four: (1) Survival of the individual. (2) Survival via the act of sexual reproduction. (3) Survival for the group to which an individual belongs. (4) Survival of all of humankind (Hubbard 1950, 42-3). This foursome was ‘complemented’ in Hubbard’s 1951 published book *Science of Survival (Survival)*, with the additions of (5) the survival of all of life. (6) Survival through physical material that makes up our universe, MEST (7) Survival of one's spirit. (8) Survival as part of a supreme being, also known as “God dynamic” (Hubbard 1951b, 53-5). These Dynamics help Scientologist in two ways. The Dynamics, in the setting of Auditing, point to where an engram may be located on the time track, as engrams are commonly created in acts of survival. It can also help an individual see on what level of existence their potential is weighed down (Christensen 2016, 160).

All rational activities that are conducted by the analytical mind, are based on the Dynamics (Hubbard 1950, 59). These Dynamics need to be sought after and balanced by an individual to be healthy (Hubbard 1955, 101). Hubbard stresses that if a Preclear is “willing to monitor communications on all the Dynamics. And when he is willing to do this, and get origins, answers, and acknowledgements along all the Dynamics, we find that we have a very serene person who can do the most remarkable things” (Hubbard 1955, 102). Preclears are encouraged within scientology to think about their aspirations in life across these Dynamics, to communicate

about them and act upon them. As the result of framing Dynamics in relation to communications about ambitions or struggles in life, these communications become words carrying important meanings for a Scientologists that refer to Hubbard's view of the universe.

The Eight Dynamics are present within the context of Auditing as a practical tool to help understand what preoccupies and drives a person. It functions outside this setting as an underlying mechanism that helps Scientologists understand aspirations, longings and goals that they -and everyone else for that matter- have. The achievement of the goals is within reach, if an individual is cleared of his irrationalities that hamper functioning as a spiritual being, by reddening the mind of the power these engrams have over them (Hubbard 1955, 143-4). The mentioning of goals and aspirations in this context, makes a preclear aware of the technology available to them through Scientology. It fosters the belief in the promises of Scientology, by being able to recognize the Dynamics that underline Hubbard's view on the laws of life.

2.7: A synopsis

This chapter introduced the concepts and ideas that a preclear is confronted with. These concepts relate to the ideas about the components of man. Scientology teaches that man is made up of a body, three minds and a Thetan. As the result of these components, Auditing is needed to reach a higher level of spiritual awareness.

The concepts of the Eight Dynamics, The ARC- triangle and the T-scale help preclears to become aware of the world containing cues about Scientology teachings. The technology can be enacted in daily settings or in the sacred setting of Auditing. The technology allows Auditing to be done through an exact procedure. Outside the setting of Auditing, these concepts function as a toolbox to view reality in a Scientological way. Let's bridge the gap between the concepts and ideas I have introduced you to and the way preclears are confronted with them as CoS sees fit.

Chapter III: Encounter Scientology like a preclear

This chapter introduces the literature and media materials that introduce preclears to the concepts and ideas of Scientology, that chapter two explained. Scientologists acquire their beliefs about the vast canon of Scientology across a tiered esoteric system of knowledge (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). To understand how Scientological practices and concepts of belief become real for a preclear, it must first be established what of the available materials, referred to as ‘texts,’ are most likely interacted with by preclears.

I argue that preclears are like to encounter a text about Scientology when: (1) the text explains fundamental concepts of Scientology, (2) are publicly available below OT-I and (3) deemed to be ‘fundamental’ by CoS. Using these criteria, the materials that a preclear most likely encounters consists of three categories: (1) literature written by Hubbard, (2) websites hosted by CoS (3) video materials produced by CoS. The availability of materials for a preclear is largely determined by The Bridge, as it ‘reveals’ what is publicly available and being used by Scientologists below OT-I.

3.1: The Bridge unabridged

The path to acquiring the various insights about the practice of Scientology and its truths is as follows. The training Bridge begins at “an initial five levels of training, identified as “Not Classed,” from the “Method One Word Co-Audit Course” to the “Professional Metering Course.” It then advances on to Class 0, I, II, III, IV, and so on to the highest shown, the Class XII Auditor.” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). The Auditing Bridge features a similar structure with a set of entry level Auditing sessions. These “begin with the “Purification Rundown,” followed by the optional “TRs and Objectives” and “Drug Rundown”; next are “Happiness Rundown,” “ARC Straightwire,” and on to Grades 0, I, II, III, IV, “New Era Dianetics,” “Expanded Dianetics,” “Clear Certainty Rundown” and finally to “Clear.” Beyond clear lies a range of states in which one operates its Thetan (OT). These range from OT I up to XV, but only I - VIII are released (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). The Bridge specifies the route across towards clear and OT-I through the various steps.

The details of the steps on both sides of The Bridge remain a secret. This is the result of Scientology training taking place in courses that are only available at the various CoS locations.

The course packets contain texts, audio recordings and other items needed for completion of the course. Some items must be purchased. All course packets are kept in the classroom (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 192). However, The Bridge does not specify the way a starting preclear should first familiarize themselves with Scientology. It is known that preclears familiarize themselves with the primary concepts using literature, but how does this occur?

Harley and Keiffer argue that Scientologists tend to be introduced to Scientology, by physical contact between a member of the public and a Scientologist. The aim is to give the potential preclear a “win” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). The “win” is a term that Donald Westbrook, a scholar of religion who conducted extensive fieldwork amongst Scientologists, explains as Scientology terminology that describes a benefit received by an individual while receiving Auditing and or training (2018a, 75). This results in ‘wins’ ‘helping’ a person become interested in Scientology and learning about the practice by buying books or an introductory course (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190). From here on in, a person starts learning about the Scientology concepts, by acquiring more knowledge and experiences about the practice through literature and the courses.

3.2: Literature

L Ron Hubbard’s literary canon is enormous. His writings range from his books on Scientology to ventures into science-fiction. These works include spy stories, but also fantastical tales about individuals developing superpowers and have a general theme of mind over matter. Yet, these stories are not directly tied to religious experience of Scientology (Possamai and Possamai-Inesedy 2012, 587), because for scientologists, the books written by Hubbard about Scientology are more important for their religious experience. Despite this, the science-fiction works are held in high regard by Scientologists, and the books are promoted by the church for ‘lucrative efforts’ (Possamai and Possamai-Inesedy 2012, 586-96). As a result of the science-fiction works not being considered important for the religious experience of Scientology, this thesis focusses on the books written by L. Ron Hubbard about Scientology, as they are important for preclears. Four works by L. Ron Hubbard confront preclears with Scientology teachings².

² These works have been distilled from Christensen’s 2009 article about the various books L. Ron Hubbard has written about Scientology. The other literature used below OT-I are: *Advanced Procedures and Axioms* published in 1951, *The Dynamics of Life* from 1951, *Scientology*:

The first book by Hubbard that is important for preclears, is the in 1950 published *Dianetics: Modern Science of Mental Health*. It is named “Book One” by Scientologists, due to containing all the primary concepts of Dianetics in its original form. These concepts are important for preclears (Christensen 2009b, 418). *Science of Survival* owes its importance for preclears to containing a highly detailed version of the T-scale and presenting the Theta-Mest for the first time in a book publication. It is also studied on the bridge on Grade-0 (Christensen 2009b, 419). Therefore, this is the second book that is likely to be read by a preclear. The third book that most likely confronts a preclear with Scientology teachings, is the 1951 published *Handbook for Preclears*, because it provides tools and exercises for preclears about some of the technology including the T-scale and ARC-triangle (Christensen 2009b 419). *Scientology: Fundamentals of Thought* from 1956 is the last book that is most likely to be used by preclears, as the result of containing a clear overview of the fundamental concepts and ideas of Scientology. It is deemed by Scientologists as a crucial book (Christensen 2009b, 420). Literature does play an important role in Scientology. Yet, some scholars argue that it is not the only material that (possible) preclears encounter.

3.3: Other materials and media

Westbrook argues that the media strategy of CoS has become more diversified in delivery channels used over the last decade. It starts aiming at reaching the non-religious millennials, called “nones” (Westbrook 2018b, 380). Therefore, Westbrook predicts that CoS will “discover a way to make Dianetics and Scientology more relevant for a 21st-century audience” (2018b, 380-1). He makes this argument based on the strategy of CoS to reach the wider public with Super Bowl ads and the Scientology Network. This is the CoS operated online television network (Westbrook 2018b, 382). These media efforts seem to usher in a higher transparency and cross-cultural understanding for the public at large (Westbrook 2018, 387). This suggests that CoS in

Scientology 8–8008 from 1952, *Scientology 8–80* published in 1952, : *Scientology 8–8008* from 1952, *Scientology 8–80* published in 1952, *Scientology: A History of Man* that was released in 1952, *The Creation of Human Ability* that was also published in 1952, *Dianetics 55! A Guide to Effective Communication* published in 1955 *Notes on the Lectures* that was first printed in 1955, *Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science* from, *Have You Lived before This Life* first published in in 1960, 1955 *Scientology Introduction to Scientology Ethics* from 1968 and *The Basic Dianetics Picture Book* that came out in 1971. These books have not been chosen as they exemplify and build out previously introduced concepts in ways that are relevant at the higher OT-levels.

the current day and age, may have developed a larger pool of media content that introduces and teaches (possible) preclears about Scientology.

As a result of the large quantity of available materials, the exact point of entry and order in which materials are encountered is difficult to determine. Due to this hiatus have I consulted CoS Amsterdam. A spokesperson of CoS kindly explained to me that the path on The Bridge is still predetermined. It did vary amongst individuals how they started out with Scientology. Some scientologists learned about Scientology by visiting the church. There were also people who came to the church, after watching Scientology Network shows and even people who read a substantial amount of Hubbard's books. Whilst the introduction to Scientology varies across the board, all the preclears began with the Bridge after finishing the beginner courses or having read books by L. Ron Hubbard.³

The order of consumption of the materials related to Scientology varies across the board in the beginning phases. Based on the academic literature and information relayed by CoS, it seems apparent that people start with Scientology and walk The Bridge after having their first few wins. The argument could be made, like Harley and Keiffer do, that preclears start learning about Scientological concepts through literature, after visiting the church. Opposite of this stands Westbrook's observation that Scientology has developed a media system that reaches wider audiences. This means that preclears can start learning about technology like ARC, T-scale and the Eight Fundamentals online and then visit a church to start crossing the bridge or experience a win.

Owing to the importance of the experience of the win, will the following order of interaction with the materials be used in this thesis. Scientologists vary in the way they get to the church. After the initial experience of an Auditing session, they start acquiring knowledge about how the practice of Auditing works to understand what happened and why they had this win. This is done by using materials made available by CoS through web publications. Following this, preclears start reading the literature itself. In the case of this analysis, it will mean that preclears encounter Scientological concepts at first through the websites and video material. After this,

³ The church was visited in March and the enquiry about the matter was continued via email between April 28th and the third of May with an official spokesperson of CoS.

they are learned by reading the literature and taking courses at a church. Let's surf across the online landscape of CoS to find the relevant websites and videos for preclears.

A preclear encounters many websites dedicated to Scientology. There are websites about The Church of Scientology named 'Scientology' and websites dedicated to local churches, like one for the Church of Scientology Amsterdam, or for the Church of Scientology Los Angeles. Preclears may visit websites occupied with publishing the latest news related to Scientology, like Scientology Newsroom, or a website aiming to deliver "Investigative Reporting in the Public Interest" (Freedom)⁴. There is also a website named Ironhubbard.org that is dedicated to the founder of Scientology. It contains materials related to Hubbard's hagiography. The last website that is to be mentioned is the Scientology television station: Scientology Network. From these websites, two websites are most likely to be visited by preclears⁵.

The first website is Scientology. This website is most likely the first website to be visited by preclears, because it is the first website operated by CoS to show up in a search result about Scientology in various search engines⁶. This website is likely to be visited by preclears, because it is publicly available and it functions as the primary website of CoS. It also contains relevant information about the four concepts of Scientology. Therefore, it is an important website for preclears to interact with.

⁴ The independent scholar of media Davide Banis wrote in 2017 an article for the Institute of Network Cultures, an academic research group focussed on media storytelling, that analyses the way American right-wing figures use *transmedial* storytelling in the form of journalism to create a world that Banis calls a "fictiocracy" that emphasises a state of conflict as a world building strategy. In the way Scientology combines journalism and storytelling through platforms like *Freedommag* a similar pattern can be observed whereby a state of constant conflict is present in the publications that are part of a transmedial storytelling system.
<https://networkcultures.org/longform/2018/02/22/fictiocracy-media-and-politics-in-the-age-of-storytelling/>

⁵ The other mentioned websites that have been excluded. The main reason is that these websites are what Christensen has deemed too 'specific' to analyse Scientology's religious experience (2009b, 411-2). I therefore argue that these websites are not necessary to analyse for a reconstruction of the regime of attention of a preclear.

⁶ The searches have been conducted in Mozilla Firefox set on private mode to prevent cookies or previous search requests from influencing the results. Google, Bing and DuckDuckGo have been consulted on the 23rd of April 2025 with Scientology.org showing up as the first website run by CoS.

The second website that a preclear is going to visit is the Scientology Network, because this website is one of the first websites, that upon accessing the CoS website, is linked towards. David Miscavige said, in the launch special of the TV-network, that this television network helps to reach towards the wider public and simply “show” them what Scientology is like (Miscavige 2018, 4:00). As a result of these statements, is the website of the Scientology Network considered to be vital for a preclear.

These websites contain various types of material ranging from written content to videos and movie style productions. Video content is heavily pushed by CoS on their websites. What kind of videos are preclears likely to watch?

CoS has video content available on their website that varies from video materials showcasing events, explaining aspects of Scientology, the fundamental concepts, to the various facilities CoS has at their disposal. Scientology Network has a wider selection of programs about Scientology, Dianetics, the daily lives of Scientologists, ‘journalistic’ exposés relating to society at large and even short films based on some of the books written by L. Ron Hubbard. Someone starting with Scientology, will want to watch videos that communicate the distilled concepts and are promoted by CoS as useful to watch.

Therefore, four video explainers⁷ found on the CoS website are likely to be watched by a preclears. These are: (1) an explainer of The Eight Dynamics “The Dynamics of Existence” (Scientology). (2) “The Components of Understanding” (Scientology) and explains the ARC-Triangle. (3) “The Emotional Tone scale” (Scientology). This video introduces the concept of the T-scale. (4) A video explainer that discusses the process of Dianetics and Scientology Auditing “What is Auditing?” (Scientology). The videos vary in length and are between three to eight minutes long. They feature actors playing out various scenes that demonstrate the concepts on sets. Animations and transitions are also used to explain the concepts.

⁷ The Scientology Network features the program *Principles of Scientology* that is dedicated to explaining the primary concepts of Scientology. It clocks in at 30 minutes. There are also clipped videos available of this episode that each explain a concept and are 3 minutes at best. They are reduced versions of those present on the website of CoS. Because of this barebone structure and being distilled versions of videos originally published on Scientology.org have the videos available for streaming via the Scientology Network been excluded from this analysis.

Besides the video explainers, there is also the Scientology Network series *Meet a Scientologist*. It is available for viewing on Scientology.tv. As the result of being one of the primary Scientology Network shows produced- and being promoted by CoS on various websites, is it likely that a preclear will watch this show. The show itself features the lives of successful Scientologists. Whilst the series functions as testimonials at first glance, it also refers to the teachings of Scientology without explicitly naming them. The network series is heavily pushed on the landing page of Scientology.tv. The episode “Atilla Bartha” has been picked, because it is at the time of writing, the most recent episode from the series. It can be supposed that the first episode of the series is to be watched through the streaming service by preclears.

This chapter demonstrated that CoS offers a lot of materials to people who want to become Scientologists. Preclears are most likely to interact with four books, two websites and five videos. Whilst these materials contain primary concepts of Scientology, the question arises which building blocks of *real making* are present within these materials and Scientology at large, that makes a preclear belief in the knowledge of L. Ron Hubbard. The next chapter will answer this by using Luhrmann’s theory of the *interpretive drift*.

Chapter IV: The Bridge to the *interpretive drift*

There are unfortunately no theoretical studies about *real making* in Scientology. Fieldwork to study the process of Scientology becoming believable for preclears, regrettably falls outside the scope of this thesis. Fortunately, Luhrmann studied the process of a practice becoming plausible for a person, albeit in other religious groups. Hence, using her theory to analyse primary sources from Scientology and secondary sources on Scientology, is the best approach for answering the research question. This chapter distils the building blocks in Scientology of the *interpretive drift* that facilitates Scientology *real making*. Time to set the scene by introducing the idea Luhrmann has behind processes of making a religious practice *real*, like magic, and how an individual starts drifting towards an additional interpretation of reality.

4.1: Practice makes perfect

Luhrmann argues that in the case of religious practices ‘*Übung macht den meister*’, whereby “the issue is not that magicians become comfortable practicing an irrational activity, but that when someone becomes a specialist, he finds his practice progressively more persuasive through the very process of interpreting and making sense of his involvement; this changing understanding may become progressively more opaque to outsiders” (Luhrmann 1989, 7-8). By practicing magic and becoming an expert, a magician gains a different way of looking at reality through a magical lens that confirms the validity of magic. Luhrmann conducted fieldwork to study this phenomenon. This resulted in the theory of the *interpretive drift* and *real making*.

Luhrmann became an initiate to be able to study practitioners of magic. This allowed her to form her theory (Luhrmann 1989, 24-5). She had little knowledge about magical practices when she first joined the spiritual milieu. By reading magical novels and trying to understand it like “a magician would”, Luhrmann gained knowledge on the practice (1989, 318). A few months after being initiated, Luhrmann started having experiences; like reading a magical text, that made her imagine the power of magic flowing through her, when a bicycle battery in her vicinity melted. Another one of these events occurred during a jog around the park, after conducting a ritual. Luhrmann started visualizing “white kabbalistic light flowing off Knight’s arm in ritual” (Luhrmann 1989, 318). She felt electric and noticed that her watch had stopped.

She notes that watches are said to stop moving during ritual and she was visualising a ritual. This resulted in Luhrmann concluding that whilst the incidents are non-magical and are coincidental of nature, she would not have noticed them if she was not involved with magic (Luhrmann 1989, 318). During the following year Luhrmann began having more of these experiences and became communicative about magic as if “I were (sic) becoming religious” (Luhrmann 1989, 320). Based on her experiences as a practitioner of magic, but refraining from becoming a magician, she proposed the theory that by becoming involved with a religious practice, a person starts to see parts of reality as such.

4.2: The *interpretive drift*

The *interpretive drift* may sound like a concept that adheres to John Lofland and Rodney Stark’s scrutinized concept of the “total convert” and “verbal convert” (1965, 864). However, the *interpretive drift* does not completely ‘encapsulate’ an individual, as different views are held at different times: “[M]agicians do not live in a world which every ritual affronts commonsense reality, and in which they desperately avoid disconfirmation which constantly undermines their beliefs” (Luhrmann 1989, 322). Magic is a part of their lives (Luhrmann 1989, 322). The *interpretive drift* shapes the way an individual perceives certain parts of reality, but it does not create a reality.

Luhrmann played with the idea that there is the possibility of all people possessing a spiritual capacity to some degree, that can be compared to the capabilities to swim or draw, but only few individuals exercise and train (1989, 320). In her later works about how gods are made *real*, she proposed that some individuals are better at making the previously invisible seen for themselves. As a result of these capabilities, Luhrmann argues that they are more likely to cultivate a process of *real making* (2020, 78). So, how does a person drift towards an expended view upon reality?

Luhrmann identifies three interlocked processes, that together “propel change from one manner of understanding to another” (1989, 312). These are *interpretation*, *experience* and *rationalization* (Luhrmann 1989, 312-313). The three support and rely on each other. I will explain the *interpretation*, *experience* and *rationalization* using materials encountered by preclears and supplementing them with secondary sources. This will help to answer the question

of how a preclear drifts towards a Scientological view upon the world around them. How does a preclear start viewing the world around them in this new way?

4.3: *Interpretation*

Preclears, like beginning magicians, learn to *interpret* reality through a lens that is the result of becoming accustomed to certain assumptions about the fabric of our world gained through ‘socialisation’ (Luhmann 1989, 313). Books are important for socialising starting magicians, as learning about magic is mainly done by reading books (Luhmann 1989, 313). Filtering through the available books is, however, very difficult for a starting magician (Luhmann 1989, 146). This is the result of the practice being loosely organised (Luhmann 1989, 19-28). Preclears are offered a similar framework of socialisation, but in a more organised way, because the written materials are easily accessible. These are structured by The Bridge. The books also instruct preclears how to read them and challenges preclears to try the technology for themselves. Let me explain how this is encouraged by the various Scientology materials, The Bridge and drilling within Scientology training.

Preclears are told by the Bridge to begin with Scientology, by studying *Dianetics* before taking their first step on the bridge (Hubbard, 2019). The way a preclear should interact with the texts written by L. Ron Hubbard and to acquire understanding of them, is also preordained. A preclear does not start reading the materials hoping to understand them. The books like *DMSMH* come with the advice to read carefully and define every word that is not understood (Hubbard 1950, 4). The way of studying is also taught on the training bridge in the ““Student Hat” course” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 193). The knowledge about Scientology is clearly systematised and organised across a series of texts. Take the T-scale for example.

In the video explainer “The Emotional Tone Scale”, the T-scale is introduced as a methodology to understand why people act in certain ways. The video contains multiple scenarios featuring two actors playing two employees. One acts out of happiness and the other out of lying and deceiving. The video explains the general theory of the T-scale. It does not tell a preclear how it works. As a result of this structurally created gap of knowledge, is a preclear enticed to continue learning about the T-scale by studying.

Studying is done by reading the literature. *Handbook* challenges preclears to enact some of the concepts upon themselves through a series of exercises, called “acts”, ranging from one to fifteen (Hubbard 1951a, 19). Due to the reason of acts two and three encouraging preclears to utilize the ARC-triangle and T-scale in various aspects of their live, will these be further analysed. I will begin with analysing act two. This act uses the ARC-triangle, to demonstrate to preclears how communication can be affected by tones.

The assignment is simple: write the names of persons down who in the present time enforce empathy upon you, enforce agreement upon you, who demand that you communicate with them, who refuse your affection, someone who won't let you communicate with them and someone who refuses to let you agree with them. The next step is to give these persons a tone-level (Hubbard 1951a, 22-4). After doing this, Hubbard asks you to repeat the exercise. Except this time, you are required to list people who did these things in the past (Hubbard, 1951a, 24-5).

Act three expands upon the previous act, by enacting the T-scale. Hubbard asks you to list your most common felt emotions, your feelings about survival, how right you are about what you do, what responsibilities you are willing to shoulder, how you feel about possessions, if you feel anybody, if you think most about the past or present or future, how motion has an effect on you, how you handle the truth, whether you trust or distrust, if you know or if you are doubtful, if you want to cause things or rather be an effect and what your primary state of beingness (chronic tone level) is. After listing this, it is asked to go back over the list and see where they match up with the names listed (Hubbard 1951a, 25-7).

Hubbard then explains that the lower described tones are not you, but that they are the tones of the people you have listed. It is the task of Scientology to “get all of you as high as possible on the chart and leave the parts of “you” which rightly belonged to others behind us”. (Hubbard 1951a, 27). He aims at the concept of Auditing and its ability to raise your tone level by nullifying an engram: “The auditor simply tries to raise his pre-clear up the scale as far as possible in the time allowed” (Hubbard 1951a, 19). As a result, these exercises make a preclear aware that the concepts that make up Auditing do not only exist in the formal setting of Auditing. They make up the world around preclears⁸. Drilling has a similar effect on preclears, whereby the

⁸ The online course on the T-scale also challenges preclears to try it out. The course offers a final ‘test’ that can be completed during a conversation that a preclear has with another person. For a

repetitive nature of these exercises, eventually makes students able to implement certain parts of a technology, like the Tone-scale, in the setting of Auditing by starting to recognise the various tones based on eyesight (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 195-6). Outside these formal and ritualistic settings, the learned knowledge is reflected through the lens of interpretation on the world around preclears (Luhmann 1989, 312-3). It can be demonstrated that the Eight Dynamics function similar in facilitating an *interpretation* of reality, like the other concepts.

The Eight Dynamics may seem at first glance philosophical. Yet, Hubbard makes the Dynamics and their manifestations concrete, by giving examples that can be found in day-to-day life. Hubbard argues that an example of usage of these dynamics, is that one “discovers that a baby at birth does not perceive beyond the First Dynamic, but as the child grows and interests extend it can be seen to embrace other Dynamics” (Hubbard 1956, 39). Individuals, including preclears, supposedly grow up through embracement of the other dynamics. The concepts become part of the way a preclear looks at the world by building a *regime of attention*.

Luhmann places a great emphasis on *interpretation* through the creation of a framework, in which later encountered knowledge takes a place (1989, 313). This results in a novel way of the *interpretation* of reality; that is acquired because of reading about Hubbard’s technology, practicing it or being ‘drilled’. What happens when a person recognises the technology, by *interpreting* the normal world around them by using these concepts? They start having experiences.

4.4: *Experience*

Experiences that are part of the *interpretative drift* come in four forms: (1) new feelings and responses, (2) the power of imagination to give an experiential significance to words that do not necessarily carry such a meaning, (3) the ability to make oneself during ritual practice perceive the other worldly as real and (4) symbolism that fuels the magicians imagination, surround the practice with mystery and provide a mythology when it is absent. *Experiences* give

preclear to see where on the scale the other person is positioned, they are to talk in a way that relates to tone 4.0 (happiness). The preclear is then instructed to work down to lower tones. The tone of a person is located on the level where this person starts responding to the communication of the preclear trying out the T-scale. (“A Tone Scale Test”, Scientology.org).

magic its dramatic and exciting appeal (Luhman 1989, 313). Scientology offers two kinds of these experiences.

The first kind of experience is the *interpretation* of ordinary situations, like those discussed above. This is the second type of experience that Luhrmann talks about. It gives an experiential significance to previous ordinarily *experienced* sensory signals, by using the *regime of attention* that facilitates the process of *interpretation*. The second kind is the ‘special’ *experience* of Auditing. Luhrmann researches the way the other worldly is being visualised in these ritualistic settings, that results in an emotionally invoked *experience*, that results in an increased belief (Luhrmann 1989, 314). In Scientology, Auditing functions as an *experience*, albeit not by visualising the other world, because it invokes new feelings and response for a preclear about their own story and by taking away emotional responses to trauma. Harley and Kieffer give rich and detailed descriptions of the Auditing processes, because they undertook it. So, how did they *experience* the practice?

The ‘author’⁹ mentions that the first step of this process is, to “have the E-meter tailored for my specific electrical charge” by the auditor (Harley and Kieffer, 2009 188). After this, with procedural precision, engrams were located. After finding an engram, “I repeated the incident over and over”, the auditor “responded with a corresponding series of positive, short acknowledgments, such as “good,” “that’s fine,” or “got it.” When I became bored with the repetition and sighed, the Auditing process for that series of incidents had reached an end point, as I had apparently released the emotional charge connected with it” (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 188). This type of experience invokes what Luhrmann describes as, the “power of the imagination” and experiencing new emotions (Luhrmann 1989, 313).

The ritual of Auditing offers a way of experiencing new emotions. These are related to events placed in the past and that a person has (most likely) actively experienced. It should be mentioned that these *experiences* in the form of Auditing, are only offered through the church to a preclear. This is because it involves texts and the E-meter that are property of the church. It is trademarked by CoS using L. Ron Hubbard’s name and initials (Rothstein 2007, 24). An element

⁹ Author is placed between single quotation marks, because it isn’t made clear in the article who of the authors had themselves audited. The author of this part refers to themselves as “this writer” and uses the first person (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 187).

of making the ‘technologies’ involved credible, is present by tuning the E-meter to the specific charge of an auditee. This makes the *experience* offered by CoS more believable, in the same way that Luhrmann says practicing magic in ritual is “making that other world realistic” (Luhrmann 1989, 313), that is a part of ‘special’ *experiences* that facilitates an *interpretive drift* and can become highly eventful.

This happens when the auditor finds engrams from previously lived lives in the auditee. The author gives a detailed description of the event and subsequent aftereffects of finding this type of engram:

[D]uring these sessions I became emotionally charged about scenes that I saw very clearly in my mind at that time. These images were challenging and somewhat painful to talk about; in fact, as I slowly related the incidents, a few tears streamed down my cheeks. As in my previous auditing sessions, these incidents were run out to an end point. To this day, I still recall those scenes as graphically as I did during my auditing experience, except that there is no emotional response: They are just pictures—intriguing pictures (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 188).

From this description can three observations be made that are relevant, because they describe new emotional experiences, and invoke the power of the imagination. (1) The images of these, by the auditor deemed, previous life experiences, seen at that moment in the Auditing session, can still be recalled to this very day. (2) Besides still having the ability to recall the images, it is also mentioned that during Auditing these images were highly emotionally charged and made the author cry. (3) When the author now recollects the images, they have no emotional impact.

Using these observations, it can be argued that these *experiences* make Scientology “dramatic, appealing, appealing” by invoking new emotional responses and feelings (Luhrmann 1989 313). Christensen also notes that Auditing offers a way for the individual to “experiment with different representations” about themselves and draw from a reservoir of self-narrativity (2009a, 111). The images left an active impact on the author in such a way that they still wonder how the *experience* should be explained at the time of writing the article (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 188). This suggests that *experiences* offered by Scientology and CoS ‘demand’ *rationalization*. How do Scientologists *rationalize* Scientology and the *experiences*?

4.5: *Rationalization*

Rationalization is about explaining to yourself how the religion is valid, and *experiences* work (Luhrmann 1989, 314). A magician makes sense of an *experience*, by searching for evidence that a powerful ritual has worked. This gives the magician confidence that the ritual works and encourages further involvement in the practice of magic. It gives the ability to defend themselves against critics (Luhrmann 1989, 313-4). The *rationalization* works in syntax with *interpretation* and *experience* and shifts in tandem (Luhrmann 1989, 315). Validating the practice and validating the knowledge of a practice, encourages the continuation of the activities (Luhrmann 1989, 315). Scientologists also *rationalize* the practice in various forms by using Hubbard's status and name.

The knowledge of Scientology is given credibility by the presence of Hubbard within the religion. Christensen argues that Hubbard functions as a textual signifier, who is given significance through his hagiography, that is constructed around the theories that he 'discovered' (Christensen 2005, 230-2). These hagiographies emphasise the incredibility of him as a person and how important his writings are (Christensen 2005, 230-2). Texts are *rationalized* in their canonical status as valid by the presence of Hubbard's name. The beliefs, principles and theories present within these texts are also *rationalized*.

Survival begins with the following acknowledgement: "To fifty thousand years of thinking men Without whose work Dianetics could have never been formulated The credit is theirs not mine LRH (sic)" (Hubbard 1951b, 1). These statements are reflected by Scientologists, as the theories and concepts in the books written by L. Ron Hubbard are *rationalized* along the lines of scientific proceduralism, that made Hubbard 'discover' the 'technology'. Westbrook witnessed this during his fieldwork, as Scientologists across all OT-levels referred to the esoteric wisdom of Hubbard as "technology", to rationalize Scientology to themselves and defend themselves against critics of the practice (Westbrook 2018b, 17). The technology is not merely believed, but considered to be real and plausible, due to the ability of Scientology to demonstrate its qualities of the "The Tech" in daily life and the settings of Auditing (Westbrook 2018b, 17-8). The *experiences* a preclear has are *rationalized*, by viewing the wisdom offered by L. Ron Hubbard as 'technology' and by viewing Hubbard as a 'discoverer' that employed scientific proceduralism.

4.6: The *interpretive drift* in action

The *interpretive drift* creates a regime of attention that allows a preclear to *interpret* the previously deemed ordinary as an experiential *experience*. This drift becomes apparent, upon watching an episode of *Meet a Scientologist*. Here it becomes witnessed that an individual has taken notice of the concepts of Scientology. Each episode of *Meet a Scientologist* follows a similar structure. It starts with introducing a successful individual who contributes to society with a venture. In this case it is Atilla Bartha. He is a Hungarian producer of cosmetics and hygiene products. The episode explains the life story of the scientologist and the steps they took in gaining success in life, including the setbacks or disasters that were overcome like economic turmoil. They say that their success in the public sphere, also extended to the private one by having a large family or getting married. Time to zoom in and play ‘a game’ of recognizing Scientology concepts.

The episode begins with Bartha proclaiming that he “always wanted to create something that would be helpful for everyone” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 00:38). The notion of ‘create’ is tied in with the Theta-MEST theory, because a Thetan can only survive by controlling MEST and vice versa. This results in a preclear enacting the *Dynamics* and remembering that the sixth Dynamic is survival through the physical material (MEST), that makes up the physical universe (Hubbard 1956, 38). The concepts of ‘create’ and ‘survive’, become a recurring theme throughout the episode.

Bartha mentions that when he was working as medical staff on the ambulances in Budapest, that he was paid very little and “lived on canned liver paste, cheap rolls and could only afford a bottle of coke once a week” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 04:50). As a Thetan he is at this point preoccupied with survival as an individual. This pertains to the first Dynamic of survival (Hubbard 1956, 37). The episode quickly changes gears when the main character, by starting out as a salesman of detergent products, gets the opportunity to buy a company. During a meeting with a Hungarian domestic detergent company, whose products Bartha sells, it becomes apparent that this producer is about to go bankrupt.

Bartha reflected upon this on the way back from the meeting. He mentions that many Hungarian companies folded at this time, when suddenly “it clicked that somehow I needed to keep Hungarian companies alive” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 07:50). Once again, a preclear can

recognise a Dynamic. This time it is survival as a group to which one belongs (Hubbard 1956, 37), because Bartha has this desire to keep Hungarian companies alive. As a result, he buys the company that is about to go bankrupt.

After initial success by reorganising the company, Bartha meets Judith. He explains that, “as time went by, I noticed that I really liked working together with Judith” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 14:07). This relates to the principles of ARC-triangle as Affinity is one of the three corners (Hubbard, 1956, 41-3). After some years he asked her to marry him, “and of course she said yes” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 14:55). A preclear can make the connection to the T-scale, because it predicts the behaviour of a person based on the eye movements. Hence, Bartha could predict that she would say yes to his proposal before she even said yes, as her eyes in Hubbard’s theory would suggest her emotional state in his presence to him. The episode returns to Eight Dynamics by mentioning that he is also a proud father. Someone versed in the Dynamics, would immediately recognise it as the second Dynamic: survival “via the sex act, the creation of and the rearing of children” (Hubbard 1950, 44). Besides the Eight Dynamics of Survival and the ARC-Triangle, a preclear can also recognise some concepts that are related to Auditing.

The first instance of this occurs, when Bartha talks about how he bought an old brand that was on the verge of disappearing. He bought the brand, because it reminded him of his childhood. He modernised it. but kept “the familiar smell that everyone knows and loves” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 15:25). For a preclear, this relates to the state of clear. It explains how someone in this state is fully aware of what's going on around him and how it is impacting them as person. Smells play a general role in this, as *DMSMH* would explain that a clear is smelling things the way they are intended, whilst a person who is not clear can smell the same scent and act in an irrational manner (Hubbard 1950, 28). Judith seems to hint at this suggestion, as she flips the cap of the soap in question and says to the camera: “if you could smell it, you would realize this is your childhood” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 15:41). The second connection to Auditing appears at the very end of the episode. So, for now I will mention the prevalence of the Theta-MEST theory, that once again returns in the last few minutes of the episode. However, this time it is combined with the T-scale.

Judith explains that Bartha cares for others and how they feel. He wants to create a good atmosphere in the company. A good atmosphere in the company suggests the possibility of

higher productivity because the T-scale explains that lower tones, 2.0 or below, results in negative productivity, as individuals on these tones seek to destroy things (Hubbard, 1951b, 27). A preclear would recognise these terminologies because, they have read about the scale and why higher tones are necessary for survival and creation.

In the final accord of the episode Bartha attributes his successes, which he describes as “wins”, to L. Ron Hubbard and his technology (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 24:06). A preclear would instantly recognise this term, as a “win” is connected to the end-goal of Auditing. Scientology, according to Bartha, helps him to achieve “100% success in everything I do. And it doesn’t stop with me. It extends out to my family, my team and my environment” (*Meet a Scientologist* 2024, 24:20). With the mention of the environment, it can be understood by a preclear that this is about the survival of all life: the fifth Dynamic of survival (Hubbard 1956, 37). This section is a result of recognising the concepts of Scientology.

Recognising the concepts, as demonstrated above, is not for mere sports. It is an effect of the *interpretation* mechanism that steers the *interpretive drift*. By reading about Scientology, preclears start seeing patterns in events that become progressively more ‘resonant’ (Luhmann 1989, 313) by acquiring more knowledge about it. What previously would have seemed like a coincidence, is now a consequence of the involvement with a practice and the possible validity of it (Luhmann 1989, 129). It explains how watching a testimonial video about Scientology becomes an *experience*; by being able to recognise goals and achievements as the Eight Dynamics, anticipation of human behaviour as results of mastering the T-scale and having clear communication as the result of understanding the ARC-triangle.

4.7: Relaying the *interpretive drift*

This section used Luhmann to uncover a set of building blocks that are present within Scientology. These facilitate the process of Scientology *real making*. Scientology offers a systematized way of acquiring a framework of interpretation, that allows a person to *interpret* the previously invisible by recognizing the concepts of Scientology in daily live. This gives an experiential *experience* to previously ordinary daily occurrences. Auditing offered by CoS gives the ‘special’ *experience* by invoking new feelings and experiences in a preclear about their past. These combined *experiences* trigger a process of *rationalization* in a preclear. This fosters belief and results in continued religious involvement with the practice.

Luhmann mainly occupies herself with how a practice, consisting of these elements, becomes *real* and facilitates a process of drifting towards a new perspective on reality by acquiring a *regime of attention*. With Scientology it can be observed that texts, just like with the practice of magic, make the enactment of values, concepts and ideas in day-to-day life credible. The theory of the *interpretive drift* helps to understand what makes Scientology 'plausible'. The next step is to understand how CoS lowers the barriers for preclears to gain the necessary *regime of attention* for the *interpretive drift*. This is done by the way CoS uses media.

Chapter V: The *transmedial* world-making of Scientology

Preclears are confronted with fundamental concepts of Scientology through various materials and the ritual of Auditing. This enacts the interlocking three processes of the *interpretive drift*, that in turn fosters belief in the plausibility of the practice. How does a preclear, encountering a text from this media system of CoS, come to understand that this text is part of a larger constellation of texts about Scientology and connect the various concepts present within these texts to their day-to-day lives? This chapter explains the way the texts published by CoS are connected. This connection facilitates the training of the *interpretation* process of the *interpretive drift*. The result is Scientology *real making*.

To be able to understand how the texts found in Scientology, can be connected to form a *regime of attention* to facilitate the *interpretive drift*, Jenkin's theory of *transmediality* will be used as the starting point to explain how interconnected texts create a view upon a world. Jenkins' theories will be deepened by using religious scholar Sarah Iles Johnston. She argues that Greek mythology functions in a way that is *transmedial*. Jenkins original theory will be substantiated with the media scholars Jason Mittell and Joleen Blom. These two scholars argue that *transmediality* does not exclusively spread a central story across various types of media. It can also invite an audience to 'drill deeper' into of the texts. Let's untangle the idea of *transmedia*.

5.1: Henry Jenkins folding an origami unicorn

Jenkins' concept of an individual enacting aspects of a story being told in their live has been a vocal point for his theorization. In the book *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* he argued that instead of viewing a consumer as a mindless absorber of media texts, they are instead their own agents, that enact aspects of a story through *fan culture*. This is facilitated by the way the texts are organised in a media system (Jenkins 1992, 284). Jenkins took this idea of an organised series of texts, that engage consumers on a deeper level, to argue that due to their connections across various mediums, they "sustain a depth of experience that motivates more consumption" (2003). He dubbed the phenomenon "Transmedia Storytelling" and gave *Pokémon* and *Star Wars* as primary examples of this type of media system (Jenkins 2003). As the result of these connections, a world can be perceived through engagement

with these systems (Jenkins 2007, Jenkins 2011). In the case of Scientology, it will help to analyse the various materials through this theoretical framework, as it helps to understand how the various texts are connected. Let's take this core idea of a series of texts that are connected across various mediums, which encourages 'interaction', but also 'builds' worlds and expand upon this, so the media system of CoS can be analysed. This must be done, because Jenkins defined *transmediality* in a limited way.

5.2: *Transmediality* according to Jenkins

Jenkins defines *transmediality* as follows: "Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes it (sic) own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story" (Jenkins 2007). A *transmedial* system is in simple terms a story that is cut up into multiple parts and told through various forms of 'texts' broadcast on radio and television, published in books, sold as merchandise and digitized on the internet.

These various forms of media, also function as different access points into the media system and cater to different audiences (Jenkins 2011). Each medium makes its own 'unique' contribution that adds to this larger narrative. These stories may first be told with an original film standing on its own. Sequel films contribute to the continuation of the story from the original film. The story of specific characters in these films, can be fleshed out in a literary work or comic. A television show can function as a prequel, by telling the story of what happened before the films. Websites can contain specific information about characters.

A story can be unrolled using all these "texts", that each use a specific medium which is optimised to tell a certain aspect of this story (Jenkins 2011). Using a sophisticated strategy to deliver a unified narrative is not the only aspect of *transmediality*, because it also encourages recipients of this narrative to 'interact' with it. This results in audiences enacting aspects of the media system in their daily lives, by dressing up as characters from a fictional story (cosplaying), or trying to puzzle together the information presented by a *transmedial* system (Jenkins 2011). A *transmedial* experience does not only facilitate consumption, but it also facilitates interaction with the interconnected texts. Jenkins only uses media systems that tell a fiction story as

examples. It must be noted that fictional systems are not the only types of *transmedial* systems out there.

Transmediality is not only fictional of nature. Jenkins argues that real world phenomena like organisations or people can be transmedial: “I’ve argued that Obama is as much a transmedia character as Obi Wan is” (Jenkins 2011). Thanks to Jenkins observation, could Hubbard be positioned as a *transmedial* character by considering his function as a re-emerging textual signifier within CoS and Scientology texts. Transmediality can also be found across history (Jenkins 2011). Whilst Jenkins does not elaborate on this, Sarah Illes Johnston, a scholar of mythology and religion, argues that Greek mythology has an intertextual and interconnected nature, that used multiple channels of delivery to create a unified experience of the other worldly.

Johnston defines Greek mythology as a “mythic network” (2018, 131). It is explained that “[T]here is no such thing as a Greek mythic character who stands completely on his own; he or she is always related to characters from other myths” (Johnston 2018, 131). Narrators of these myths used intricate media techniques and methods of delivery. This results in a system of characters. These characters are introduced in a hyper serialized way across numerous instalments, that draw upon the characters and events that came before (Johnston 2018, 143). This mythic network was brought to life using objects like statues or temples. This resulted in some Greeks believing that Gods and heroes of the stories did not only exists, but were also present amongst them (Johnston 2018, 146). The stories about gods and heroes are made credible using a serialized and interconnected way of storytelling. The existence of these counterintuitive agents is made believable using objects. A larger story comes to life.

Jenkins and Johnston mainly analysed narratively structured systems. As the result of Jenkins’ definition of *transmediality*, could it be argued that *transmediality* is a theory that covers media systems that use various types of media to spread out a single large story across various instalments. Jenkins’ definition is too limited, as Scientology does not contain a core narrative. This will be resolved by introducing two other scholars of media that have argued against Jenkins’ assumptions about a core narrative and the spread of various elements across multiple instalments.

Mittell and Blom challenge some of Jenkins’ assumptions about the necessity of a core story in a *transmedial* media system and the idea of spreadibility. These challenges are necessary

to address, as it helps to understand the way in which CoS employs a *transmedial* strategy to make Scientology *real* by ‘making’ the world of Scientology. This will be unravelled by using examples found in Scientology and the materials. The first aspect of Jenkins definition of *transmediality* that will be widened, is the idea of a spreading. This will be done by using the term “drillability”, coined by Mittell (2009). This will be unpacked.

5.3: Defying Jenkins by broadening the scope

Transmedial systems do not only communicate a story in a spread-out manner that entices people to continue engaging with a media system. They can also entice viewers to probe deeper beneath the surface, to discover deeper meanings of the texts (Mittell 2009). Mittell argues that drillability is the opposing vector of spreadability in a *transmedial* system. Drillable *transmediality* “typically engage far fewer people, but occupy more of their time and energies in a vertical descent into a text’s complexities” (Mittell 2009). How is the structure of Scientology teachings made *drillable* for a preclear?

Preclears first encounter the website of CoS. This in turn links to the video explainers. These video explainers explain Scientology technology in basic terms. These concepts are further uncovered in the literature that a preclear can purchase, or a course that can be taken. The media system invites preclears “to dig deeper, probing beneath the surface to understand the complexity” (Mittell 2009). It functions as a systematized way for a preclear to *drill* deeper into Scientology technology and teachings as it “aggregates engagement by directing it inward” (Mittell 2009). The structure of The Bridge supports the *drillability* aspect even further, by offering the knowledge of Scientology in the tiered OT system. Hang on, *transmedial* systems supposedly have a narrative core, unlike Scientology.

Transmedial systems do not actually need to communicate a central story. Blom argues in her analysis of Japanese media systems, that when an interactive medium, like a video game, is at the centre of a media system, the narrative core of a story is less important (2020, 215). This results in a media system with the characters as the connecting elements between various texts (Blom 2020, 205-7). Scientology does not feature characters like those found in Japanese transmedial systems. The religion does contain the distilled primary concepts (Auditing, ARC-triangle, T-scale and Eight Dynamics), that are also re-occurring in the texts published by CoS.

As a result, *transmedial* systems can also relay values, principles and ideas that consumers of these systems can act out in their everyday lives using different connectors.

This seems to be the case with the media system of Scientology curated by CoS. It uses the primary concepts for what I call ‘conceptual connectivity’, by which I mean that the concepts of Scientology, act like the characters in Blom’s analysis, to form the connections between the various texts instead of a story or characters. It does leave the question of how a preclears starts recognizing these primary concepts of Scientology in their daily lives, as the result of interacting with the media system of CoS, unanswered.

To be able to answer this question, I first need to dissect the various specific elements of this media system to be able to demonstrate why it is *transmedial* in nature. This in turn, allows to understand how preclears train themselves to enact the concepts presented in the texts, as part of the *interpretation* process of the *interpretive* drift, using this type of media system. It explains how the world of Scientology built by L. Ron Hubbard and CoS becomes *real*.

I will use a series of building blocks, to demonstrate how *transmediality* facilitates the process of Scientology *real making*. The building blocks are the previously introduced terms of *drillability* and *conceptual connectivity*, but also Jenkins concepts of “multimodality”, “extension” and “additive comprehension”¹⁰ (Jenkins 2011). Allow me to unpack this terminology, using examples found in Scientology and the central notion of ‘man is miserable and something can be done about it’. It makes sense to start with the channels CoS uses to deliver Scientology teachings to preclears, because various forms of media being combined is the core principle of *transmediality*. The terms of multimodality and drillability help to understand how the delivery channels relate to each other as they explain the usage of multiple media by CoS and the type of engagement it generates amongst preclears.

¹⁰ Jenkins mentions more building blocks of *Transmediality* that are related to narrative aspects of this type of media system. He also remarks that there is not a standard “transmedia formula (...) Transmedia refers to a set of choices made about the best approach to tell a particular story to a particular audience in a particular context depending on the particular resources available to particular producers” (Jenkins 2011). Therefore, I have excluded these building blocks from my analysis.

5.4: multimodality and drillability

Multimodality is a term that is typically used to describe some kind of intertwinement of various mediums by a producer of media. Jenkins views this term in a more strategic way, arguing that each medium has its different characteristics that brings with it certain capabilities to relate information. Each medium has its own affordances as “the game facilitates different ways of interacting with the content than a book or a feature film” (Jenkins 2011). A story told across different types of media adopts various modalities (Jenkins 2011). CoS also uses various forms of media to deliver the story of Scientology.

A potential preclear can encounter CoS for the first time through Scientology websites, digital media, television ads, printed works like literature and other promotional materials. These various forms of media function as different points of entry for various audiences (Jenkins 2007), and have the characteristic of being *drillable* (Mittell 2009). For instance, a preclear can look up the website of CoS. The website offers information about Scientology through the format of the video explainers. However, these video explainers only explain the benefits of a concept like the ARC-triangle. Learning how to use the ARC-Triangle is taught in the literature, steps on The Bridge and in the courses offered by CoS (Harley and Kieffer 2009, 190-2). It is the *drillable* aspect of Scientology, that is enhanced in a multimodal delivery strategy. These combinations build out the technology of L. Ron Hubbard, by going back and forth across the instalments and various types of media. This touches upon the next layer of the analysis: what do these connections between the various texts consist of?

5.5: Conceptual connectivity

Jenkins uses the term of “radical intertextuality”, to describe the movements of various elements that make up a story, like characters, within one medium¹¹ (Jenkins 2011). I will use the term *conceptual connectivity* to describe the movements of elements within Scientology literature, as it does not contain a central story with characters. The point being made here is that

¹¹ Jenkins calls this “radical intertextuality” because elaborate story worlds are created throughout the various instalments of story that is spread out across the publications within one medium (2011). The various elements rely on each other to craft these elaborate links. Johnston describes this phenomenon in her analysis of the mythic network as “hyper serialization” (2020, 134).

the books of Scientology do not stand alone. By using the concepts to become interconnected, they build out the technology of Scientology. This invites preclears to *drill* deeper to gain a further understanding of the primary concepts. Let's take the Eight Fundamentals as an example to make this point clear.

Recall from the previous chapters how at first there were only Four Dynamics in *DMSMH* (Hubbard 1950, 44). Hubbard wrote *Survival* a year later, as the next instalment for the Scientology canon. The book introduced four more Dynamics that resulted in the Eight Dynamics (Hubbard 1951b, 53-55). These additional Dynamics were developed by Hubbard, because of the introduction of humans having a soul in the Theta-MEST theory (Christensen 2016, 174). The development of the Eight Fundamentals in an unrolling fashion, does not stand on its own. It can similarly be observed with the ARC-triangle. The concept consists in *DMSMH* as merely the aspect of communication, to relate to others about a shared reality and is 'just' a part of the process of Auditing (Hubbard 1950, 27). In *Survival*, the idea of communicating about a shared reality, becomes a concept on its own and is formed into a triangle: "[A]ny of these dynamics can be broken down into the three component parts of affinity, communication and reality" (Hubbard 1951b, 53). The concepts do not stand alone. They are bound together as a way of strengthening each other through conceptual connectivity.

The specific workings of the ARC-triangle are explained in relation to the T-scale: "As people descend the tone scale they become more and more difficult to communicate with" (Hubbard 1956, 41-3). This form of *conceptual connectivity* is still confined to one medium. A media system can be considered *transmedial*, when it extends this process of elaborate interwovenness using different forms of media (Jenkins 2011). These different forms of media can either function as *an extension* of previously introduced elements of a story, or build out a tangible perception of a world as an additive comprehension. I will first explain the role of the *extension* in the CoS media system.

5.6: Adaptation or Extension

Making a story in one medium and then retelling it in another medium is what Jenkins calls, adaptation. It is not *transmediality* (Jenkins 2011). The Scientology Network features a one-and-half-hour retelling of the book *Fundamentals* using the format of film. It is called: "Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought". This is an adaptation. An adaptation can be

considered an “extension”, if it further envisions an aspect of this story that was already present¹² in an original instalment.

An example of an extension, in the case of the media system of CoS, can be found in the video explainers. The ARC-triangle originates from written texts and forms the basis for the video explainer “The Components of Understanding”. The literature like *Survival* explains the triangle in a highly descriptive and detailed manner: “certain is that by communication by the group of sense perceptions which make up communication, we know reality. Our affinity with that reality, our admission that we are a part of that reality and our acceptance of our participation in it is necessary to our communication with it” (Hubbard 1951b, 72). The theoretical dense explanation is made more easily understandable, by following it up with a practical example: “If communication exists, some agreement can be reached. And as soon as an agreement is reached between two people (...) there is some affinity (Hubbard 1951, 72). The video takes the practical examples given by Hubbard about how the concept works in practice, and extends upon it with a narrative arc that feature multiple characters and situations.

The narrative arc in the video features a dad and his rebellious, all black dressed, teenage daughter going through puberty. By using the theories offered by the teachings of Scientology, they can meet common ground by finding a shared reality: the mutual appreciation for a band called *The Doors* (“The Components of Understanding”). These videos offer a narrative arc, that is linear of nature and heading towards improvement over time.

The narrative arc in the video functions as an *extension* of the examples about primary concepts, given by L. Ron Hubbard in the literature of Scientology. The extension in Scientology adds something to the original concept, like an explanatory story-arc in the videos. These flesh out the described concepts and examples from the written texts on which the videos are based. The narrative arc that is added in the video, functions as an extension of the practical examples

¹² I want to make clear that the term extension only applies to taking an aspect present in an ‘original’ publication in one medium and expanding on this aspect in a another medium. The infamous Xenu narrative (Raine, 2015) would not be an extension, but a form of “radical intertextuality” (Jenkins 2011) as it builds a narrative canon of Scientology by adding a space opera. Jenkins uses the example of the Harry Potter films that take the described interior of Hogwarts and expand upon this by making elaborate sets that can be shown to an audience using the medium specific qualities of film (Jenkins 2011).

given by Hubbard in the books of Scientology. Furthermore, the videos entice viewers about free courses that focus specifically on an aspect that Scientology technology aims to improve (Scientology.org, “Courses”). It was previously mentioned that it is not uncommon for varying access points into *transmedial* systems to cater to different types of audiences (Jenkins 2007). The array of access points becomes even more prevalent in the Scientology Network.

The Scientology Network has a variety of shows, but it also functions as a gateway to the other websites of Scientology. It is the culmination of this transmedial media system, whereby it fuses the different types of media content available. It creates what Jenkins would call the “unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins 2011) in a very structured way. For instance: a preclear can read the latest news about Scientology, or learn about the principles of Scientology by watching various video series. These function as different access points for entering Scientology that are systematised and *drillable*. Scientology offers preclears the materials needed for the practice of Scientology, that is easier accessible than in the case of magical practices. This is the result of magicians having to source the texts themselves (Luhmann 1989, 149) and having to choose the person to help them *experience* rituals (Luhmann 1989, 19-29), whilst CoS offers a preordained way of reading the materials by using The Bridge. This also influences the structure of its media system. The *conceptual connectivity* that binds together this *transmedial* media system of CoS, is given further depth by using additive comprehension as a tool of world-making.

5.7: Additive comprehension

The *additive comprehension* refers to how texts create a deeper understanding of the larger story at play by offering a backstory, maps of the world, the perspective of different characters on a story, or deepen the engagement of the audience with the story. These processes result in a world being built (Jenkins 2011). A good example of an additive comprehension is *Meet a Scientologist*. This type of video content communicates, at first glance, the story of successful Scientologists around the globe. It functions as a text that shows that CoS is more than just a religious institute. It is a world made up of various successful individuals who all believe in Scientology. It gives a new perspective upon Scientology through the eyes of someone ‘experiencing’ the religion.

This may seem like the primary function within the media system created by CoS. However, the previous chapter demonstrated that by reading the literature of Hubbard and watching the video explainers produced by CoS, an episode of *Meet a Scientologist*, like “Meet Atila Bartha”, becomes an experiential *experience* for a preclear by recognising the various concepts of Scientology. The *interpretation* of additive comprehensions makes the world of Scientology become *real* for a preclear. The *transmedial* system of CoS allows preclears to exercise the *interpretive drift* in a systematic way, by offering its three components on the publicly accessible Scientology Network.

5.8: Making the world of Scientology

For a person to understand that the additive comprehension is more than a ‘mere face-giving’ to Scientologists, there needs to be a Scientological *regime of attention* for *interpretation* present. Whilst additive comprehensions are usually types of content in a *transmedial* system to build a world, it is used in the *transmedial* system of CoS to make the world of Scientology *real*, by facilitating the training of a lens upon reality. The ability for *interpretation* is acquired through the consumption of the various forms of media, like the websites, video explainers and literature. These texts utilize the name of L. Ron Hubbard to *rationalize* their importance and validity.

Acquiring the knowledge of the concepts of Scientology, by drilling *deeper* into various texts of Scientology, results in a *regime of attention*. A preclear can train themselves to recognise the concepts of Scientology in the world around them, by doing the exercises found in literature, the online courses or watching additive comprehensions. Jenkins argues that *transmediality* mainly communicates elements that make up a story world or narrative (Jenkins 2009 and Jenkins 2011). CoS uses *transmediality* to entice a preclear to *drill* deeper into to how Scientology works, how it can be *rationalized*. CoS also offers content that utilizes world building, that results in preclears believing that Scientology makes up the world around them by facilitating training of their *regime of attention*. This results in an experiential *experience* of the everyday, that encourages further engagement with the practice of Scientology and *rationalizes* the *experience* of Auditing. This *transmedial* strategy facilitates the *interpretive drift* in a systematized and readily accessible way.

The *interpretation* processes are private and individual according to Luhmann. She also argues that certain individuals are better at equipping themselves with these types of lenses that results in a spiritual *interpretation* of reality. Scientology has systematized the *interpretive drift* in such a way, that it considerably lowers the bar of gaining a spiritual view upon reality. Especially, when it is compared to a fringe practice like magic by 'steering' preclears using world building strategies.

Chapter VI: Crossing The Bridge

The previous chapters have assimilated the argument that Scientology has systematized the processes of the *interpretive drift*, using a *transmedial* media system, that results in Scientology becoming *real*, as preclears consider Scientology plausible. Getting started with ‘fringe religious practices’ is difficult. Luhrmann experienced that within the field of magical practices there are many gateways to choose from. There is no systematization present. Scientology did systematise these mechanisms of the *interpretive drift* by building a *transmedial* system, systematizing all knowledge along The Bridge and by offering Auditing. Could it be the case that magical practices and Scientology constitute the extreme ends of a spectrum of the *interpretive drift* in terms of systematization and the presence of counterintuitive beings?

6.1 To reiterate

The acquisition of the lens for *interpretation*, has been systematized by CoS into an interconnected textual system that facilitates the training of *interpretation* and offers *rationalizations* about *experiences*. Preclears can gain and train their *interpretive* lenses, using a *transmedial* system that has enacted world building strategies. However, instead of building a world outside of our own, it affords the sustainment of an interpretive lens, that is formed by becoming acquainted with L. Ron Hubbard’s technology. It results in preclears finding Scientology plausible. This argument is based on the analysis of primary empirical materials that would be accessible to preclears below OT-I.

By analysing the materials using the theories of Jenkins and Luhrmann, it became understood that these materials are connected to each other as a *transmedial* phenomenon and can facilitate this process of the *interpretive drift* for a preclear. Westbrook suggests that a way forward, would be to analyse the media systems CoS uses to communicate its teachings (2019, 7). As a result of the analysis of this media system, it became apparent that the structure of the CoS media system not only facilitates outreach. The system makes it possible for preclears to find Scientology to be plausible, by offering them a Scientological lens upon reality.

The perpetuity of the *interpretive drift* was experienced firsthand by consuming the materials published by CoS. The drift became noticeable in the way I started speaking about Scientology. I explained to friends and family that L. Ron Hubbard’s writings are known as

‘knowledge’, that these writings understood as ‘discoveries’ and that Hubbard’s theories and concepts are called ‘technology’ by Scientologists. I started to speak in a language that corresponds to those experiencing the *interpretive drift* (Luhrmann 1989, 312). I have become more aware of the way people conduct themselves and how their eyes move about. I even started to use the ARC-triangle, when I encountered social situations where mutual understanding was lacking. On another occasion, during a dinner party, some friends wanted to watch a few episodes of *Meet a Scientologist* with me. I would instantly recognize the concepts of Scientology. They did not. As the consequence of conducting research and reconstructing the *regime of attention* a preclear builds, by reading and watching texts like a preclear would, I started to *experience* the concepts that make up Scientology in my own daily life.

This is, however, not a deep enough inquiry into the matter. The research was done behind the comfort of a desk. Westbrook notes that some of the esoteric knowledge studied and the ethical implication of studying this material remains unknown (Westbrook 2019, 6). A recreation of the *regime of attention* that a preclear builds, functions in this sense as a ‘stop-gap measure’, as the knowledge on The Bridge and how preclears use this knowledge to make the concepts become a part of their reality, remains out of reach. Is there a solution to this problem? Yes. It is in the form of fieldwork.

6.2: The Next Move

The research for this thesis was made possible by combining theories from the fields of anthropology, religious studies and film and literary studies. Inspiration was taken from theoretical theorist Richard Swedberg, who argues that a possible explanation of a phenomenon can be given by gathering empirical material and ‘toying’ with theories to build a theory that is tested (Swedberg 2014, 9-11). Michael Stausberg, a theorist specialising in religious theories, argues that: “1. A theory of religion seeks to account for 2. religion 3. by establishing some kind of conceptual order” (Stausberg 2025, 8-14). The next logical step, considering Swedberg, should be to test the founded conceptual order in practice by conducting fieldwork amongst Scientologists, like Westbrook did, but in the style of Luhrmann.

Westbrook did become an initiate, yet he focused on an ethnographic study about Scientology. Is the practice of Scientology through CoS still necessary to be studied? There is also the Free Zone. Some scholars have argued for this reason that the field of research,

regarding Scientology, could also focus on the more freely practiced forms of Scientology outside of CoS in the Free Zone, like Aled Thomas does (Thomas, Gregg, Cusack and Robertson, 2018). This may be a fruitful avenue of approach, but there are problems about understanding the way Scientology becomes *real* for a person, by using the Free Zone as an object of study.

I do not argue that studying the Free Zone and other forms of less institutionalized variants of Scientology is unnecessary. However, to be able to understand how someone becomes a Scientologist, the field must turn back to the Church. This argument is the result of Stephen Gregg and Aled Thomas concluding that during their research about Free Zone groups, they did not find Scientologists as informants for their study that became Scientologists outside of CoS (2019, 358). Further research on this topic should involve initiation into Scientology and reaching OT-I through CoS. The first aim would be to create a detailed account of the process of making Scientology *real*. The second aim would be to conduct interviews with preclears and observe them, to be able to understand how they start drifting towards a Scientological *interpretation* of the world around us.

This proposal of research does not stand alone. Carole Cusack argues that a possible way forward is uncovering “[T]he daily lives of ordinary Scientologists: people talking about their own experiences, not from a point of view of hierarchy or power, but from the point of view of lived religion or vernacular religion. The kind of approaches that are now very popular” (Robertson, Cusack, Gregg, and Thomas, 2018). My proposal lines up regarding uncovering the life Scientologists live. It also ties in with the suggestions offered by Westbrook who argues for more research into the canon of Scientology (2019, 6) and further analysis of the media used by CoS (2019, 7).

By having identified two opposite forms of the *interpretive drift*, it can be understood how initiates of other religious traditions engage with the process of making the previously invisible seen for themselves. More studies on the matter may help to understand how other nontheistic religions can become plausible for an individual, or how other cultures have a less defined boundary between the notions of ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ due to these variations.

Rather than just analysing Scientology, Free Zone groups and other aspects of the religion as a field researching Scientology, I argue that the way Scientology becomes *real* must also to be

understood by analysing the elements that facilitate the *interpretive drift* of preclears in practice.

This means the mediatized side, the 'special' but also the experiential *experienced* elements.

Who dares to cross The Bridge?

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