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THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
OF NORWAY

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
Institute of History and Religious Studies

Independent Scientology

How Ron's Org and Dror Center schismed out of the Church of Scientology

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Kjersti Hellesøy

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Abstract

This thesis is about Ron's Org and Dror Center, two independent Scientology groups. They schismed away from the Church of Scientology at different times and under different circumstances. Ron's Org is the older of the two, and are spread over large parts of the world, with their main activity focused on Europe. I have visited the headquarter in Switzerland and some of the many Ron's Orgs in Moscow, Russia. Dror Center has only been independent for a little over three years. They are located in Haifa, Israel, and I went to visit them and attend courses and auditing with them for two weeks. I will look at the underlying factors contributing to schisms, asking the questions: Which factors within the organizational structure of CoS makes the organization more likely to produce schisms? Why become independent? What kind of resources are necessary to establish a successful schismatic group? What kind of strategies do Ron's Org and Dror Center use to survive as independent Scientology groups? I will frame my analysis within theories on charisma, religious authority and schism.

Thanks/takk:

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1 Introduction

This thesis is about Ron's Org and Dror Center, two independent Scientology groups. They schismed away from the Church of Scientology (henceforth CoS) at different times and under different circumstances. Ron's Org is the older of the two, and are spread over large parts of the world, with their main activity focused on Europe. I have visited the headquarter in Switzerland in October 2013, and in December 2013 visited some of the many Ron's Orgs in Moscow, Russia. Dror Center has only been independent for a little over three years. They are located in Haifa, Israel, and I went to visit them and attend courses and auditing with them for two weeks in January/February 2014. During my visits to these groups, I got to know a little bit about who they are and how they live their lives. This thesis is my attempt to show my readers where these groups came from and why they decided to become independent. I will also look at the underlying factors contributing to schisms. Bits and parts of this project have been published before in shorter articles (Hellesøy 2013; Hellesøy 2014; Hellesøy 2015).

1.1 Methods, sources and ethical considerations

Method is what connects the abstract to the specific; method connects the theory with the empirical data (Cavallin 2006:14). The conversation between the abstract and the specific, mediated through the methods we as scholars chose, can be both deductive and inductive. We can decide to go from the general to the specific, or to study the specifics to find a general assertion. In my work, I have done a little bit of both. While an inductive approach has been useful when I am out in the field meeting people, I have found that it is better to have a more deductive approach when it comes to the investigation of written sources and other documentary material. The amount of documents are so vast, that it is decisive that you know to a certain degree what you are looking for. If not, you will get lost.

The purpose of a method is to help the researcher get answers to the questions she asks. In this case, the main research question I ended up with was: "What does it take to become an independent Scientology group?" I am also interested in the history of the two schism processes Ron's Org and Dror Center have gone through, how the groups are organized today, and how they legitimate their religious claims. The research question indicate that I have to look for historical accounts about what happened. Ron's Org went through their schism almost thirty years before Dror Center, so the available sources differ. When it comes to the question about the schisms themselves, I will have to rely on written accounts and stories from people

who experienced them, but whose memory can be altered over time. The schism Dror Center went through happened only three years ago, so the events are still fresh in the memories of the people who witnessed and experienced it.

1.1.1 Sources and material

To get answers to my research questions, I am reliant on sources. I have collected data from published texts, sites on the internet, pamphlets, magazines, youtube-videos, audio-files, e-mails, stories people have told me, and the experiences I have had during my visits to Switzerland, Russia and Israel. Grønmo (2004) distinguishes between three sources of information that are most common within the social sciences, namely documents, respondents and actors. *Actors* can be observed as they express their opinions, act and interact (Grønmo 2004:120). When I visited independent Scientologists in Russia and Israel, I observed and tried to soak as much information as possible about who they are and what their lives are like. My observations happened over some time (four days in Russia, two weeks in Israel), and I was in large parts a participatory observer. I lived with members of the groups, I was invited to dinners and social events, I went to auditing, I did courses, I talked to people during the lunch breaks, I spent time with them, in short: I participated. The data I collected have to a variably degree been recorded as field notes. Most important, though, is the silent knowledge I have acquired. I would not say I have a profound knowledge of who they are, but I have an understanding of the groups, the people who populate them, how these people interact, and how they look at the world around them.

When someone is asked about the conditions a study wants to illuminate, questions about what has been said or done earlier, or what usually is said and done, he or she is a *respondent* (Grønmo 2004:120). Due to shortcomings in the planning ahead of the visits, I had not developed a completed interview guide, or a document for people to sign so I could be sure I had their informed consent to use the information they gave me. I have solved this by referring to accounts people have told me in more general terms, like “many members said...”, “most of the people I spoke to meant..”, and so on. I have left out more specific and personal stories in order to make it difficult to identify anyone I have talked to. In some cases, I have asked for their consent in retrospect. I have done so in the cases where leaders in the groups have told me more “official” versions of their group's history, statistics, routines, etc.

Documents are documentary material that we can analyze to find relevant information about the subject we want to study (Grønmo 2004:120). Documents can entail both opinions and facts in the form of text, numbers, sound and pictures (Grønmo 2004:121). When the content of documents are systematically researched, it is called a content analysis (Grønmo 2004:121). I have found the documents I analyze in a number of places: the internet, Scientologists I have met, my supervisor and other scholars, and people who just knew I was interested, and gave me advice where to look. When it comes to the early history of Ron's Org, I have listened to the lectures Captain Bill gave; I have read different pamphlets and magazines Ron's Org distributed to their followers in the 1980s; and I have had to rely on earlier written accounts about how the schism from the CoS came about, from books and in some cases blog posts and news articles. In the case of Dror Center, I have had more direct access to the people who actually experienced the schism. Since the events are relatively fresh, I do not have to worry so much about the time factor, and the accounts are much more coherent.

1.1.2 Source criticism

When sources are analyzed to illuminate a subject, the sources need to be examined in light of their availability, their relevance, their authenticity and their credibility. First of all, sources which would be interesting to look at, could not be available (Grønmo 2004: 122), as was the case with Ron's Org where I have had problems finding anyone who has been part of the movement from the beginning, and in some cases have experienced that people are not willing to tell me everything they know about the historical events. On the other side, the Independent Scientology milieu I have encountered has been very open, and are much more willing than the CoS to share their doctrines and otherwise “secret” material.

Second, the sources available are not necessarily relevant for the research (Grønmo 2004:122). When I have encountered Scientologists, many of them are keen on explaining to me what their religion is all about. This is of course something I am very interested in, not to mention the possible differences from the “mainstream Scientology” I base most of my knowledge on. On the other side, it is important not to drown in the flow of information. For this research project, I am interested in the historical facts about the schismatic processes and the accounts about these events. The other information I receive I make use of in the sense that I can broaden my understanding of the groups I am studying;

Third, sources have to be evaluated in light of their authenticity (Grønmo 2004:122-123). Regarding the sources I am using, I consider all of these sources to be *authentic*, in the sense that they are documents that people use and base their knowledge on. I will rather think of it as a question of *reliability*, in the sense that I cannot be sure whether what is written is described in a truthful way. Nevertheless, for my purpose, questions like that is not necessarily relevant. What is relevant for me is how the independent Scientology movement uses the different sources. Therefore, the important thing for me is whether the people who regard themselves as independent Scientologists consider a document as authentic and reliable. This has been an advantage in my work, primarily because to authenticate all the material I have used would be a master thesis in itself. The question of authenticity is something these groups are deeply involved in themselves. For my purposes the question of how these groups deal with these questions are more interesting than the authentication itself.

Last in the list of critical considerations Grønmo points to is the question of credibility (Grønmo 2004:123). When it comes to historical events there are always varying ways to perceive and interpret what is happening. Anyone who wants to write about Scientology faces the problem that the material they can get their hands on are bias in one direction or the other. When a story is told either as an attack or in defence of CoS or the independent Scientology groups, it is important to have this in mind. The “Zegel Tapes”/“Zegel Briefings”, which I use as one of my historical sources, exemplifies this problem: The Zegel tapes consist of four briefings given by Jon Zegel between 1983 and 1987. These tapes, and transcripts of the tapes, have been passed on in independent Scientology circles and are now available online. The interesting feature to these tapes is how Briefing 1, 2, and 3 are very negative against the CoS, and positive towards the independent Scientology scene. In Briefing 4, however, the tone has changed radically: it starts out as the other tapes, only now with some critical remarks towards people like David Mayo, to whom Zegel in the earlier briefings gives his wholeheartedly support. In Briefing 4, Zegel explains that he needs a manuscript for what he is saying in this tape, because he wants to be sure he gets everything right. He is thus reading the whole Briefing 4 from a prewritten script, unlike the other three briefings. Throughout the whole tape, he denounces everything he has claimed in the earlier tapes, asking his listeners to disregard the briefings 1-3. The fourth Zegel tape ends with a tirade against the people attacking the CoS, people who practice Scientology outside of the CoS, the Advanced Ability

Center he in earlier tapes has defended, and most shocking, he commits outright character assassination on himself. What happened to Jon Zegel between the release of Briefing 3 and Briefing 4? Moreover, which version of Jon Zegel should we choose to believe? In my view, the Briefing 4 is so harsh and “over the top”, that I lean towards believing that Zegel had been under a lot of pressure from the CoS, and in the end caved in¹. I have chosen to regard the first three tapes, and not the fourth, as “credible sources”. Considerations like these are something a scholar using documents always have to make, and they may not always turn out to be right.

An analysis on the discourses surrounding CoS and the independent scene would be very interesting and fruitful in itself. In the following, though, I will have to relate to the different and varying accounts, but it will not be addressed directly.

1.1.3 Reflexivity and ethical considerations

“You are yourself the filter to which your material have been presented, passed through and shaped in²” writes Bjørn Ola Tafjord about reflexivity (2006:245). It is impossible to go into a field without prejudices and assumptions about what you are going to find, and the person who writes about it will necessarily shape the outcome of one’s inquiries. First, no human being can free themselves from their own history and horizon of experiences. My personal life story is something I brought with me into the field. In addition to this I had read everything I could find about the groups, looked them up on youtube, I had spent several months reading and writing about Scientology, and thus I had created an image of who they were before I met them. When I finally met the groups, we influenced each other, as everybody does when they meet and interact.

The findings from studies in the humanities can never be unaffected by the humans who participate. There are endless factors contributing, from the fact that I am a woman; I am (was) in my twenties; I am from Norway; in other words, factors I cannot control, to factors like how I behave: my sense of humor; “personal chemistry”; my beliefs; language skills;

¹ The Zegel Tape No. 4 was made as part of a settlement agreement Zegel made with the CoS. Zegel also speaks about settlement negotiations with the CoS in the tape. The editor of the transcript on the webpage freezezone.org comments on the top of the page that “Jon (Zegel) was unwilling to discuss the terms of the settlement with me recently, but he said I should put this note at the beginning of the transcript.” (Zegel 1987).

² My translation.

manners; and the list goes on. The “human factor” in the humanities is a challenge, and it is important to be aware of who you are and how you contribute to the field and the people you are studying.

Through my fieldworks, I have tried to be as honest as possible; both to myself and to the people I have interacted with, about who I am and where I come from. In many cases, I think it has been an advantage to be a (relatively) young woman: I naturally fit into the role as the one who needs to be taught something, in a teacher-student like relationship. In a situation where I have many questions, this role plays its purpose. When the focus is shifted from my role as a young female student to me as a scholar of religion, I have felt the need to be more careful about what I am saying. The people I have met are specialists on their religion, but to them I am the specialist on religion per se. I have found myself in many awkward situations where I do not know how to respond to questions about what religion is, what do Muslims feel about this and that, and the inevitable: do you think Scientology is a religion? First, questions as this is difficult to answer, so on a personal level I get nervous about sounding stupid and ignorant. However, if I put my personal feelings aside, my main concern has been to articulate my answers without hurting anyone, or showing disrespect for their beliefs: many people I have met have told me that Scientology is not a religion it is science. How do I respond to that without undermining their experiences?

Another important factor in the fieldworks I have done is the ability to speak and understand Russian. My Russian is on a level where I can have conversations and understand most of what people are saying to me, but as far as it is possible, I have tried to keep the conversations in English, to be sure I understand everything. Regardless, my ability to speak Russian, my knowledge about the country, and my familiarity with spending time there, helped me in my fieldworks, both in Moscow and in Israel. When I visited Haifa, I was very pleased to find out that half of the population there are Russian-speaking immigrants! It is not so much the actual conversations in Russian as much as it is the appreciation that I know something about the Russian-speaking world and that I have an interest in their language and culture. It is also convenient, because people understood that they can talk Russian to me, and I think that made it easier for people to approach me.

1.2 Theories on schism and charisma

The thesis is written within the tradition of sociology of religion, with theoretical approaches concerning schisms; legitimation strategies; and religious authority and charisma. In “A theory of propensity to schism” (1979), Roy Wallis outlines a model in which he classifies various movements according to the degree to which access to claims of legitimate authority is available to potential schismatics. I will use this theory to examine whether or not CoS is an organization which is prone to produce schismatics. The analysis will thus be focused on the structural conditions that facilitate or hamper schisms and can be found in chapter 3.

Murphy Pizza (2009) and James R. Lewis (2013), each in their own way, suggested that schisms is something that can benefit the larger milieu the schism happens within. Lewis has elaborated on Campell’s notion of the cultic milieu (2002 [1972]), and developed a list of possible characteristics of movement milieus. Pizza has in her discussion on the Pagan milieu in Minnesota introduced “schism as midwife”, e.g. that a schism in a group can prove to be vitalizing for the larger milieu. These two theories will be used when I examine the Scientology movement milieu in chapter three.

Rodney Stark argues that schismatics need to show potential adherents continuity with one's predecessors to be successful (Stark 1987: 13-15). Olav Hammer elaborate on that statement by making the claim that the success of a schismatic group is dependent on a fine balance between continuity with – and clear boundaries from – their predecessors (Hammer 2009: 197). Hammer argues that “[...] there are at least three elements essential to ensuring the viability of one’s own movement: striking a balance between the familiar and the novel; keeping tight control over both ideology and resources; and branding one’s movement by means of a distinct material culture” (2009:215). These theories will be used when I look at the strategies Ron’s Org and Dror Center deploy to be successful. The analysis in chapter 5 will be focused on which CoS traits and traditions they keep, and where they try to distance themselves from CoS.

Mikael Rothstein (2014) has analyzed how buildings and architecture is used to “keep Hubbard alive”. I will use this analysis in chapter 6 and look at how Ron’s Org and Dror Center brand their movements by means of a distinct material culture, just by *not* having grand buildings and glossy facades.

The term *charisma* is according to Max Weber something which relates to certain qualities followers or adherents regard as something extraordinary which only the charismatic person has access to. Charisma is thus something that relates to perceived qualities in a person (Weber 1947:358-359). Routinization of such perceived charisma is decisive for a movement's survival after the original founder's death. Dorthé Refslund Christensen has in her doctoral thesis from 1997 analyzed how the CoS has worked to keep Hubbard alive through the ongoing emphasis on his life and writings. How the Ron's Org and Dror Center make use of Hubbard's persona will be dealt with towards the end of chapter 7.

1.3 Earlier research

Up until recently scholarly work on Scientology were scarce. Roy Wallis' *The Road to Total Freedom* (1977) and Harriet Whitehead's *Renunciation and Reformulation: A Study of Conversion in an American Sect* (1987) are two of the earliest studies of Scientology, and where for a long time the only monographs in English about Scientology (Lewis 2009:4). Even though they both are a bit dated, I use both of these books in my chapter about Scientology history, beliefs and practices, because of their thoroughness and detailed descriptions. In later years the scholarly interest in Scientology has increased, resulting in several monographs on the topic: *Scientology* (2009) edited by James R. Lewis; and Hugh B. Urban's *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (2011) being two of the most prominent ones, alongside Gordon Melton's small but informative *The Church of Scientology* from 2000. Because of the difficulties scholars have to get to talk to members of the CoS, exposé books like Janet Reitman's *Inside Scientology: The Story of America's most Secretive Religion* (2011) and inside accounts from former members like Mark Rathbun's *Memoirs of a Scientology Warrior* (2013) and Jon Atack's *A Piece of Blue Sky: Hubbard, Dianetics and Scientology* (first published in 1990, rewritten and published again in 2013) are important contributions to the study of Scientology. It is important to note that the latter three books mentioned does have a certain lopsidedness, and are not academic works. A number of journalists have also contributed to illuminate the field, among them Tony Ortega, John Sweeny and Louis Theroux, to mention a few.

Even though the production of academic monographs has been slight, the production of scholarly articles about Scientology has been steady. Lewis (2009) and Urban (2011) both

suggests that the scarce scholarly work on Scientology outside of the “esoteric realm of scholarly journals” (Lewis 2009:4), is a result of the measures the CoS has had a tendency to launch against perceived enemies. “A long list of scholars, journalists, former members, and even ordinary college students have reported being harassed and threatened for writing critically about Scientology”, Urban reports (2011:2). It can seem as if the CoS has changed its strategy in this respect, and the recent growth of scholarly work on the topic reflects this.

The schismatic history of Scientology has not yet received a lot of attention within the academic field. Wallis (1977) and Whitehead (1987) address the issue of defections, just as many other subsequent studies do. Attention is most of the time focused on the CoS, possibly also on people who have left the CoS and quit their Scientology practice altogether. People who do not only disaffiliate from the CoS, but also pioneer new groups are seldom discussed. James Lewis has addressed the independent Scientology scene, most notably in “Up Stat, Down Stat.” (2012); “Free Zone Scientology and Other Movement Milieus” (2013); and “The Dwindling Spiral” (2014). He has also encouraged his student to explore this field: In “Scientology Schisms and the Mission Holders’ Conference of 1982” (Hellesøy 2014), I examined how the dramatic events in CoS history over the course of the 1980s gave the opportunity for schismatic leaders to break away from CoS and start something of their own. This thesis is an elaboration of the theme presented in that article. My fellow MA graduate, Viktor Engelhardt, is currently developing his MA project around the early history of Ron’s Org.

1.4 Research question and how the thesis is built up

When asked about what I wanted to make of my thesis, my answer was for a very long time that I wanted to tell the stories of the people I have met in different independent Scientology organizations. My answer came out of a wish to show my readers the struggles and dedication behind each of these organizations, and my ambition to tell the story of how small groups like these fight their way up and out to the people around them. As my thesis developed, I understood that in an academic perspective, this was not necessarily the most interesting path to walk down. I still believe it is important to show the lives and reality of people in minority religions, but I will focus my analysis more on the processes that lies behind a schism. In this thesis my main issue is thus to find out how the process of a schism can turn out. I have

articulated the issue in the overarching question: What does it take to become an independent Scientology group?

As mentioned in the introduction of *Sacred Schisms* (Lewis and Lewis 2009:3) the word “schism” refer to a process. To highlight that I have divided my analysis into several supplementary questions: Which factors within the organizational structure of CoS makes the organization more likely to produce schisms? Why become independent? What kind of resources are necessary to establish a successful schismatic group? What kind of strategies do Ron’s Org and Dror Center use to survive as independent Scientology groups?

To answer these questions I will start out with a chapter about Scientology, to give the readers a backdrop to where the schismatics groups I have followed come from. In this chapter, I will focus on the history of the Church of Scientology, the founder L. Ron Hubbard, the beliefs and practices of Scientology and the organizational structure of the Church of Scientology. Next is a chapter where I look at the organizational structure of CoS, and how these structures makes the CoS prone to schisms. I will use Wallis’ theory on uniquely legitimate movements, and I will look at how the availability of the means of legitimation is distributed within the organization.

In the next chapter I will try to answer the question “why become independent?”. The chapter will address some key events in CoS history which can help explain why some would want to leave the church. The Mission Holder’s Conference of 1982 is one of the key events in independent Scientology history, and will be thoroughly addressed. I will also discuss how the events in the 1980s contributed to strengthen the Scientology movement milieu outside of the realm of the CoS. I will introduce the term “Scientology movement milieu”, modeled after Lewis’ theory (2013). I will argue that this movement milieu is a steady platform for new independent groups to establish themselves on. I will make use of Pizza’s analysis of the Pagan milieu in Minnesota (2009) to show how a movement milieu can benefit from a schism, even if it may weaken the organization that experiences it.

After I have established a theoretical framework concerning the organizational structure of the Cos and the wider Scientology movement milieu, I will present the two independent

Scientology groups I have visited. I will introduce the different groups and briefly describe my visits to them, their history, practices, and current situation.

Next, I address the questions: What kind of resources are necessary to establish a successful schismatic group? What kind of strategies do Ron's Org and Dror Center use to survive as independent Scientology groups? If a schismatic leader want people to follow her, she needs to present her potential followers with a reasonable cause for leaving, and she has to present an alternative that is attractive for her followers. To begin this chapter I will examine the resources Ron's Org and Dror Center has available to them, in terms of finances, religious material, potential adherents, religious competence, places to be etc. I will then look at how Dror Center and Ron's Org has gone about convincing potential followers that their practice is in continuity with the *religion* of Scientology, and at the same time how they highlight that their organization is something completely different from the *Church* of Scientology. Olav Hammer's theory on how to keep the balance between the familiar and the novel will be used. I will also look at Hammer's claim that for a schismatic group to be successful, it needs to keep tight control over both ideology and resources, and brand one's movement by means of a distinct material culture.

In chapter 6, I look at one of the strategies Ron's Org and Dror Center deploy successfully, namely the use of Hubbard scripture. To hold an independent group afloat it needs to continuously legitimate their religious claims in order to keep their followers and attract new ones. I will start out by looking at Christensens analysis of how the CoS use Hubbard and his texts, and how Hubbard's charisma is routinized within the organization. Then I will present two examples of how Ron's Org and Dror Center, respectively, use Hubbard and his text to legitimate *their* claim to religious authority.

To conclude my thesis, I will sum up my findings and point to theoretical implications these findings may have. I will also point to some topics for further research.

2 Scientology

“Scientology does not teach you. It only reminds you. For the Information was yours in the first place.” Hubbard 1956

The Church of Scientology (CoS) is a very young religion, but throughout its short history it has been subjected to a lot of attention, due to aspects of the Church such as their reciprocal love affair with Hollywood celebrities, harsh measures taken against their critics, their spectacular mythology, controversial social betterment programs, eccentric founder, and their billion year contracts. In this chapter, I will provide a quick overview over CoS’ history, beliefs, practices, organizational structure and some of the controversies surrounding the organization. To begin this story, I will introduce Scientology’s founder, the eccentric science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. This chapter will provide the reader an understanding of the original group from which independent Scientology groups emerged, and to which they, in many respects, stand in opposition.

2.1 L. Ron Hubbard

Lafayette Ron Hubbard was the founder of Scientology. He was reportedly born in Tilden, Nebraska in 1911, as the only child of US navy officer Harry Ross Hubbard and Ledora May Waterbury Hubbard (Melton 2000:2). It is difficult to write a history of L. Ron Hubbard on which both followers and critics can agree, as his life is described in contradictory ways, depending on whom you ask.

In the hagiographic narrative of the life of Hubbard presented by the CoS, he can best be described as an adventurer. As a boy, he is portrayed as having been initiated into the Blackfoot tribe at the age of six, and as being the youngest Eagle Scout ever in the US. He is said to have learned about the mysteries of life from spiritual teachers in the Far East. He also had an early interest in Freud’s psychoanalysis, introduced to him by a friend of his father. Hubbard went to George Washington University for two years. According to the hagiographic version of Hubbard’s life, he was an engineer and astrophysicist, and held a PhD. Critical investigation shows that he never finished any of his degrees, and that his PhD came from a diploma mill University (Urban 2011:32). Towards the end of the Second World War, Hubbard was injured and spend some time in a hospital. In his own account he suffered from

blindness and was declared dead twice. He allegedly cured himself using techniques he had developed from psychoanalysis (Urban 2011:31).

During his early adulthood, Hubbard claimed to have experienced so many things that «...he would have to have been at least 483 years old...», in the words of a former member of Hubbard's staff, Cyril Vosper (Urban 2011:33). As Urban explains it:

“[...] if we accept the Hubbard story not as an accurate historical document but as an intentionally constructed “hagiographic mythology,” it then begins to resemble the familiar contours of the “hero’s journey” so frequently encountered in other mythological traditions: the young boy departs from his mundane life, travels widely to encounter strange new worlds and confront danger, then returns home with profound wisdom and a new hope for humankind. In this sense, Hubbard’s narrative is not so different from that of other new religious leaders, such as Madame Blavatsky’s story of journeying to mystic Tibet or Joseph Smith’s story of digging up golden plates in the wilderness. Perhaps the only truly unique feature of Hubbard’s biography is that *he was himself a prolific author of science fiction and fantasy tales and thus had an unusually creative hand in the elaboration of his own narrative.* Indeed, he effectively fashioned the story of a hero - even a superhero.” (Urban 2011:32-33)

As with many other founders of religions, Hubbard is believed to have traveled the world, encountered strange traditions, been confronted with danger, and then returned with a deeper understanding of the reality of life, and with new hope for humankind. Beginning in the early 1930s, Hubbard was a relatively prolific author of pulp fiction under a variety of pseudonyms. Some of his stories are still considered as classics of this genre, such as *Fear* and *Final Blackout*. He became one of the most productive writers for the influential science fiction magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*, where he would later publish the article that really sparked off the new science he had developed - Dianetics (Melton 2000:9). How Hubbard’s hagiography is used by both CoS and independent Scientology groups will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

2.2 Dianetics

Hubbard’s report of his discovery of a new science, Dianetics, was first published in May 1950, in an issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. Later that same year, an expanded version of the article was printed in book form under the title *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. This new science was said to be as important as “the discovery of fire and superior to the wheel and arch” (Urban 2011:43). The book held first place in the *New York Times* best-

seller list for 28 weeks (Urban 2011: 52). Dianetics resembles Freudian psychoanalysis, but according to Hubbard, his newfound science had improved upon what psychoanalysts had tried to do, and with Dianetics humankind had received a science which would get rid of all psychological and psychosomatic ills. In Dianetics, the idea is that all such disorders stem from past traumatic events hidden in the unconscious. As the theoretical basis of Dianetics, Hubbard introduced the notions of the “Analytical Mind” and the “Reactive Mind”. The Analytical Mind is the rational, fully conscious state of mind that operates according to the data it receives (Whitehead 1987:59). The Analytical Mind is thus dependent on the data it receives. Any aberration in the Analytical Mind stems from pain, in one way or another. Through evolution, the Reactive Mind has evolved to protect the Analytical Mind from damage. The Analytical Mind will try to avoid pain, as pain is a threat to survival (the basic principle of existence, as Hubbard saw it). Thus, when a person experiences pain, the Analytical Mind switches off, and the Reactive Mind takes over (Wallis 1977:25).

This Reactive Mind creates “engrams”, that is, memories of traumatic events, containing the whole event in detail – the smell, words, pain, objects et cetera. So if one of these elements of the traumatic event is relived, other elements of the experience can also return, because everything is tied together in the engram. Thus, for example, if someone was drinking coffee when hit in the head, the smell of coffee can cause a headache. The Analytical Mind will try to make these impulses rational, but will not operate properly, because the data it receives is wrong (Wallis 1977:25-26).

The Dianetic solution to this is to “clear” the Reactive Mind of such engrams, so that the Analytical Mind can operate to its fullest potential without the input of “false” data. To do this the “pre-clear” (or PC) has to undergo “auditing” where he or she, guided by an “auditor”, goes back to traumatic events, repeatedly re-describing them until the events are “discharged” of the negative feelings associated with them. To become clear one must go back to the initial traumatic event, some of which occurred before birth. When the state of clear is achieved, the Clear will be freed from any psychosomatic illness, improve his or her memory, and be more resistant to regular illnesses (Whitehead 1987:62).

The popularity of Hubbard’s book on Dianetics resulted in thousands of Dianetic clubs being formed all over the US and also in Great Britain. The appeal to many was that it was so

accessible that you could do this "poor man's psychotherapy" in your own living room. But this "do it yourself"-attitude was also what made it impossible for Hubbard to control the new movement after it had been launched (Urban 2011:53-54).

2.3 Scientology

The shift from a science-based movement to a religion came gradually, and was probably an effect of factors from both outside and inside Hubbard's new movement. He lost the control over the name "Dianetics", which was sold due to economic problems (he later bought the rights to the name back). Another factor was the interest the Food and Drug Administration (the FDA) and the American Medical Association showed in him. These critics from the outside and also people from inside the Dianetics-movement were, among other things, troubled by the fact that most auditors had no medical training. Lastly, Hubbard himself became more and more interested in spiritual inquiries, such as out-of-body experiences and reincarnation (Urban 2011:59).

One of the things Hubbard discovered was that the essence of the human being was a spiritual being. This spiritual being is in itself good and fully conscious, what Hubbard called a "thetan". From this deeper understanding of the human essence, he saw survival as the fundamental urge for all thetans. This discovery led him to expand the four dynamics of Dianetics into eight: from the basic urge to survive as a physical being, to the urge to survive as "the Supreme Being," or "Infinity" (Melton 2000:31). Hubbard further believed that the thetan inhabited our human bodies, and thus, when undergoing auditing, people could remember past lives, and have engrams from past lives cleared (Melton 2000:32).

The shift towards a religion meant that auditors were now ordained as ministers, and that they could practice Scientology without interference from the FDA. After the establishment of the Church of Scientology, they asserted the right to tax exemption granted all religions in the US, something critics of Scientology have claimed was Hubbard's only reason to describe Scientology as a religion (See Reitman 2011:42-48 and Urban 2011:57-60). The question of Scientology's status as a religion has defined the organization throughout its history, and continues to be a controversial issue for governments all over the world (Melton 2000:53).

2.4 Beliefs

What the average practitioner of Scientology actually believes is difficult to say, as with most religious people in the world. With this in mind, we can take a look at what Scientologists themselves *say* they believe.

The teachings of Scientology are characterized by Hubbard's continuous exploration of the human mind and the thetan. Through auditing and by studying his fellow Scientologists, he discovered new truths about his religion, human behavior and the cosmos at large as he went along. Because of this ever-in-progress approach, the teachings of Hubbard can be very confusing to an outsider (and probably to some insiders as well).

To make it simple, one can say that first and foremost the goal for CoS is to clear the planet. Scientologists believe that if their technology is spread and implemented in the world, all wars, poverty and human suffering will come to an end. One central doctrine in Scientology is the distinction between the MEST universe and the «theta» universe. MEST stands for Matter, Energy, Space and Time and is the world we live in, while the theta universe is the realm of spirit. The thetans created MEST, but later forgot about it and are now trapped in it. Through Scientology the thetans we all are can be freed from the MEST. What Hubbard called «the history of Man» constitutes his theory about the «Time Track» of humankind. He considered all humans to be thetans, and thetans to be immortal. They had thus lived in the universe for billions of years (Whitehead 1987:168-172).

When a person begins her training in Scientology, the first goal is to become “clear”. When you have attained this level, you are rid of the influences the “reactive bank” gives you, thus ridding yourself of the factors that cause you to behave irrationally. The next step is to become an Operating Thetan (OT), which involves emancipating one’s consciousness from the laws of MEST:

“According to informants’ accounts [...], an important aspect of learning how to operate as a thetan is the cultivation of special “OT” powers such as telepathy, telekinesis, out-of-body travel, and subtle influence over the minds of others.” (Whitehead 1987:132)

At the third level of Operating Thetan (OT III), Scientologists are introduced to the secret teachings of the church, which are considered to be so powerful that they can lead to death or

serious damage for the person learning about them if she is not prepared. Therefore Scientologists have to be invited to undertake OT III processing, and they sign a contract of secrecy. The mythological story has nevertheless been leaked on the internet, and has even entered the pop cultural scene, as it was the subject of a South Park episode³. The story has also been dealt with in academic publications, such as in Mikael Rothstein's analysis of the myth in the book *Scientology* (Rothstein 2009). The story is about a Galactic Confederacy consisting of seventy-six planets that existed seventy-five million years ago. This confederacy was ruled by the dictator Xenu who killed billions of people by placing hydrogen bombs in volcanoes on earth, as a way of coping with the problem of overpopulation in the federation. The thetans survived, and over time they adhered to what we today know as the modern human race. These thetans are called "body thetans" and, cluster themselves on humans and cause us pain. As with engrams, these body thetans have to be cleared off of us, through advanced auditing (Urban 2011:102-105).

This somewhat simplistic version of Scientology beliefs could be called the mythology of Scientology, but it is important to remember that Hubbard emphasized that this story was merely speculative, not an established fact (Whitehead 1987:170).

2.5 Practices

When someone is introduced to Scientology, they start their journey up what Scientologists call "The Bridge To Total Freedom", or just "The Bridge". As in Dianetics, the first step is to become clear, which is a process that focuses on an individual's optimized potential in his or her lifetime. The next levels focus on becoming an "Operating Thetan" with limitless powers. The way up the bridge is twofold, with auditing on the one hand, and "training", so one can become an auditor oneself, on the other hand (Lewis 2009:5).

Auditing is a key practice in Scientology. In an auditing session the person being audited is holding metal cans in each hand, connected to a device called the E-meter. The E-meter measures the electric charge from the skin, and can be compared to a simple lie detector. The auditor helps the person regress to past times, or past life experiences, and runs through one's experiences until the person is cleared from all emotional charge (engrams) connected to each

³ The South Park episode "Trapped in the closet" can be found here: <http://www.southparkstudios.no/full-episodes/s09e12-trapped-in-the-closet>

traumatic memory. There are variations of how auditing is done, depending on what the goal of the auditing session is (Whitehead 1987:158-167).

Training Routines (TRs) constitute the other half of the Bridge, and prepare one to become an auditor. These TRs are drills meant to develop the auditor's ability to engage the pre-clear in the highly focused form of communication needed to climb the levels of the Bridge. TRs can be exercises in which the pre-clear has to look into another person's eyes for an extended period of time, or in which the other tries to put the pre-clear off by saying upsetting and provoking things to her. If the pre-clear fails, the other person shouts "flunk!", and they start the drill over again (Whitehead 1987:135-142).

What we think of as classical religious sermons are not essential to the regular practitioner of Scientology. Their main activities are auditing and TRs. However, the church does offer ceremonies, such as weekly services that resembles those of a protestant Christian church, and rites of passage, like weddings and funerals. There are no rooms dedicated specifically to these purposes, but rooms can be made into sanctuaries whenever needed (Bromley and Cowan 2008:38-9).

2.6 Organizational structure

The whole outline of the Church of Scientology can be understood resulting from Hubbard's wish to have more control than he had with the Dianetics movement. Thus he created an elaborate bureaucratic organization, with a hierarchy granting him full control over the church. Like a McDonald's restaurant, each local church is a franchise of Scientology, and, unlike the earlier Dianetics movement, there is a strong inner disciplinary structure. If a church deviates from the standard technology provided by the CoS, their license can be repealed (Melton 2000:40). This is highly efficient way of preventing "heretics" from watering down the principles of Scientology, and delivering a coherent religion to customers, no matter where in the world you are. The bureaucratization of the organization makes few people irreplaceable, and the hierarchy is centralized and clear (Wallis 1977:155).

At the basic "grass root level" of Scientology we find counseling groups and missions, and local field auditors, which introduce newcomers into the religion and offer basic auditing. There are also Class Five Orgs which are organized directly under the CoS, not as franchises.

They offer the same training as missions and field officers, namely Dianetic counseling up to the level of clear, and basic training. When someone reaches the level of clear, one has to go to an Advanced Org to get it confirmed. The churches also ordain ministers and run local social service and community action programs. Ministers can go to Saint Hill Organizations for longer periods of time to get advanced training. At Present, there are Saint Hill Orgs in Los Angeles, Sydney and East Grinstead. If someone wishes to go from clear to the levels of Operating Thetan (OT), they can go to an Advanced Organization, where they provide courses from OT I to OT V. Advanced Organizations are currently to be found in Los Angeles, Sydney, East Grinstead, and also in Copenhagen (Melton 2000:39-40).

The Flag Service Organization in Clearwater, Florida, is the world's largest Scientology center. There Scientologists can be trained and audited to reach the OT VI and OT VII levels, in addition to special auditing for specific concerns. The highest level of Scientology, OT VIII, is offered by the Foundation Church of Scientology, also called the Flag Ship Service Organization. The training is undertaken aboard a boat called the *Freewinds*, a luxurious cruise ship with a recreational environment (Melton 2000:41).

The Sea Organization, popularly called the Sea Org, is the monastic wing of Scientology. The Sea Org is comprised of the most devoted Scientologists, something made clear as they sign a billion year contract to serve the church. Sea Org is in charge of the upper levels of OT training (Melton 2000:43).

On the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is the Religious Technology Center. The Center is in charge of the orthodoxy of Hubbard's technology and teaching, and gives out licenses to missions, churches, organizations and corporations that wish to use the church's trademarks. The center formally owns all of the Dianetics and Scientology trademarks. The Church of Spiritual Technology is in charge of the heritage of Hubbard, mainly his written material, which is copied and stored and preserved for posterity (Melton 2000:41-42).

The Church of Scientology has fostered a wide variety of organizations for social betterment. These organizations are in varying degree directly associated with the Church of Scientology. The most famous programs are probably Narconon and Criminon, which apply Hubbard's techniques and philosophy to rehabilitate drug addicts and criminals. Hubbard also developed

a program about how to learn and study, and this “Applied Scholastics” has spread to different parts of the world, both in public schools, and in special Applied Scholastics licensed schools. “The Way to Happiness” is a pamphlet promoted as “a common sense guide to better living”, and The Way to Happiness Foundation International is a non-profit organization in charge of distributing this pamphlet all over the world (Melton 2000:47-48).

From the very beginning, Scientology has been a bitter critic of psychiatry. One of CoS’s largest social reform programs is the “Citizens Commission on Human Rights”. Since 1969, they have campaigned against psychiatric treatments such as electroshock and lobotomies, lobbied against the use of mood-altering drugs like Ritalin and Prozac, and exposed psychiatrists caught in inappropriate relationships with patients (Melton:48-51). Hubbard’s thoughts on management, business and organization are managed by the World Institute of Scientology Enterprises (WISE). WISE has training programs for professionals and business people, with emphasis on the importance of establishing and maintaining a high-level ethical environment within the business world (Melton 51-52).

Celebrities have helped Scientology become one of the world’s most famous new religions. As early as 1955, Hubbard announced something he called “Project Celebrity” in which he encouraged ambitious Scientologists to go after celebrities, as he saw them as the elite who would lead the way for the masses. Celebrities are recruited through the Celebrity Centers, the biggest one strategically placed in Hollywood, California. These centers give celebrities the opportunity to explore the way up the Bridge in a luxurious environment, fit for their needs (Melton 2000:42-43).

2.7 The “religion angle”

The CoS's attempt to gain the status of a religion has been controversial from the very beginning of Scientology’s history. Some critics claim that the CoS’s main goal is to make money, and point to the extensive pressure members feel to donate money and buy literature and coursework to climb up the Bridge. Other critical voices stem from the anti-cult movement, which considers CoS a cult, and all cults in general as dangerous. Criticism of CoS practices have also come from the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, claiming that the techniques can lead people into psychoses. Yet

another group of critics are people indirectly associated with the church in some way, either people whose family or friends are Scientologists, or ex-members.

The quest for recognition as a religion began in the early 1950s. In 1956, the first churches were granted tax-exempt status, and Hubbard urged all local Scientology organizations to register as churches before the tax year ended. Hubbard himself called this shift the “religion angle”, and in policy letters he emphasized that this would be a “purely bureaucratic and financial” move (Urban 2011:160). By the end of the 1950s, however, tax exempt status was withdrawn from most of the congregations except the Church of Scientology in California. All assets were thus moved to this church to avoid taxation, but then this church also lost its tax exempt status in 1967. The main reason given for the withdrawal of tax exempt status was that whether or not Scientology was regarded a religion, its corporate structure primarily benefited Hubbard and his family (Urban 2011:161-2).

During the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the Church of Scientology cultivated its religious image. The Scientology cross was given a more prominent position, and the “clergy” of Scientology, the auditors, dressed in clerical collars. Pamphlets and books were published in which Scientology was described as a world religion with ancient roots, exhibiting all the common traits of a religion. Hubbard's earlier critical remarks about religion were censored in Scientology literature. This “religionization” of the CoS was upsetting to many members who feared that this ‘angle’ would drive people away (Urban 2011:162-4). The “religion angle” also led to a number of defections and schisming of independent groups.

In 1993, after countless legal trials and an ongoing debacle about the religious status of the Church of Scientology, they were granted tax exempt as a religious organization. Not only has this been highly profitable for the Church, but this victory has also been used in CoS's fight for recognition across the world. The US State Department issued a report in 1993 on human rights which criticized governments across the world for not granting Scientologists their right to religious freedom (Urban 2011:173-175).

3 The Church of Scientology as a uniquely legitimate movement

“WHAT I SAY IN THESE PAGES HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUE, IT HOLDS TRUE TODAY, IT WILL STILL HOLD TRUE IN THE YEAR 2000 AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD TRUE FROM THERE ON OUT.” Hubbard 1980

In the early 1980s, CoS was experiencing a turbulent time. The church was in the middle of what was going to be a sixteen year-long war of litigation, in which money, accusations of abuse and corruption, and the church’s legitimacy as a religion were at stake. It was precisely during this same period that Hubbard had gone into hiding, never to be publicly seen again until his death in 1986. The only contact between Hubbard and the church at large was to be through policy letters from Hubbard, mediated via a handful of core members that included David Miscavige, the current leader of CoS. The non-public nature of how this correspondence was mediated later became a focus of dispute in different “conspiracy theories” (an expression I am here using descriptively) articulated by schismatics. Specifically, certain former members of CoS speculated (and still speculate!) that Hubbard was misinformed and/or that policy letters supposedly written by Hubbard were modified or forged. Whether or not these communications were tampered with, Miscavige was able to parlay his role as the founder’s privileged courier into the position of the CoS’s new leader following Hubbard’s demise.

The differing accounts of the events described in this chapter are not necessarily historically accurate. Fortunately, the precise accuracy of these stories is not necessary for the present analysis. In processes like schisms, what matters is how events are interpreted. Power and legitimacy refer, to a large degree, to matters as they are perceived, and to arrangements that the various social actors involved agree upon. This way of viewing the situation allows us to sidestep the problem of the reliability of our sources, which all tend to be biased in one way or another.

In this chapter I will discuss how CoS can be described as a uniquely legitimate movement, and how this and other underlying organizational structures within CoS may facilitate schisms. Toward the end of the chapter I will focus my analysis on what happens when a charismatic leader dies. The “social death” of Hubbard opened up the situation for new

interpretations and new opportunities for leading figures. This, in combination with other factors that contributed to destabilization within the organization and defections from the CoS, facilitated a foundation on which new and independent Scientology organizations could emerge and build.

3.1 Why Schisms?

A central question in research on schisms has been *why* particular schisms occur. To explain schisms, researchers have analyzed the *motivations* of schismatics. They have also sought to uncover the *social divisions* that might underlay a specific schism (Wallis 1979; Lewis and Lewis 2009). Wallis suggests, referring to Joseph Nyomarkay's (1967) work on factionalism in the Nazi Party, that research should be directed to the structural conditions that either facilitate or inhibit schisms. In his chapter on "A theory of propensity to schism," Wallis elaborates Nyomarkay's theory and argues that, for a schism to occur, the schismatic leader needs to secure a legitimate claim to allegiance. Thus, for a schism to take place, the faction leader must be able to access means of legitimacy. The propensity to schism is directly related to the perceived availability of sources of legitimacy within a movement (Wallis 1979).

Since the 1950s, people have defected from both the Dianetics movement and the CoS, as would be expected in all religions and organizations. The reasons for defections vary, from mundane things to more serious matters as well as deliberate reasons. In the early phase of the Scientology movement, the "religion angle" was controversial, to name just one example (see Whitehead 1987:73-75; Urban 2011:67-68; *ibid*:164). In the turbulent 1980s, CoS experienced a colossal loss of high ranking staff members. The factors which led to that will be addressed in a later chapter on the Mission Holders' Conference of 1982. In later years, the internet has made it easier for people to share their experiences with the CoS. The popular media has also shown a growing interest in the topic over the last few years. Stories about physical and mental abuse; harassment of critics; the constant hustle for financial contributions to new book releases and buildings; and the controversial leadership style of David Miscavige are the main grievances defectors have put forward.

3.2 CoS - a uniquely legitimate movement?

Wallis (1979) makes a distinction between uniquely legitimate movements and pluralistically legitimate movements. In the former, the principle of legitimacy is monistic; i.e. they have a

totalitarian worldview and consider their doctrine to be uniquely legitimate. Pluralistically legitimate movements tend to base their legitimacy on more than one source and are more open to different worldviews. They may consider their own path to salvation to be the best, but do not completely reject the validity of alternative paths (Wallis 1979:181-182). Wallis aligns this distinction with earlier works, where a distinction is made between *inclusive* and *exclusive* movements (Zald and Ash, 1966), as well as Nyomarkay's distinction between *totalitarian* and *non-totalitarian* movements: "In a non-totalitarian group the principle of legitimacy is pluralistic – i.e. based on segmental participation – and factions can exist without destroying the group. In a totalitarian movement the principle of legitimacy is monistic – i.e. based on an almost total identification – and factions can exist only if they do not attack the principle of legitimacy" (Nyomarkay, 1967:150⁴). Thus pluralistically legitimate movements are to a higher degree able to tolerate different factions within their own group than uniquely legitimate movements (Wallis 1979:183). These distinctions might have slightly different connotations, but for my purpose these differences are insignificant, and will be used as synonyms.

If you search for the words "Scientology" and "totalitarian" in google, you will get over 72 000 hits. The claim that CoS is totalitarian, or uniquely legitimate, is, in other words, not at all new. Many of the claims come from critics of the CoS, and have to be handled with caution, as is the case with all biased sources. There have also been some scholarly studies done on CoS as a totalitarian organization (see Cohen and Ben-Yehuda 1987; Kent⁵ 1999), in which the Scientology ethics regime and sanctions against critics are raised as the main points. Despite the fact that this has been dealt with in the scholarship, I have yet to find an in-depth, systematic analysis of Scientology as a totalitarian organization. I hope to fill this gap in the scholarly work on Scientology by presenting an analysis in which I use Wallis' theory to show how CoS is a textbook example of a uniquely legitimate movement. The ethics system of CoS; how Hubbard made himself sole creator and "Source" through the Keeping Scientology Working Series 1 Policy Letter; and the wide range of mechanisms Hubbard had developed over time within the CoS to protect his organization against critics are some of the

⁴ Quote and reference taken from Wallis' (1979:181).

⁵ Stephen A. Kent is a harsh critic of several new religious movements, and is also critical to how NRMs are treated within the academia. For a glimpse into some of the controversy: <http://skent.ualberta.ca/current/massimo/> . Kent has written extensively about Scientology: <http://skent.ualberta.ca/contributions/scientology/>

traits within the organization of CoS which underpin the claim that it is a uniquely legitimate movement.

3.2.1 Keeping Scientology Working

Keeping Scientology Working Series 1 (KSWS1) is one of the first things you encounter if you start taking courses in the CoS. This Policy Letter (PL) was originally published on the 7th of February 1965, and was re-issued in 1970 and again in 1980. PLs are documents Hubbard wrote and which were distributed to the organization. This specific PL was, as Reitman puts it: “[...] his Sermon on the Mount, something Scientologists consider a sacred document, which in future years would serve as both an instruction manual and a rallying call to legions of idealistic believers.” (2011:62). The KSWS1-PL includes a “special message”, in caps lock, where the importance of this PL is underlined: “WHAT I SAY IN THESE PAGES HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUE. IT HOLDS TRUE TODAY. IT WILL STILL HOLD TRUE IN THE YEAR 2000 AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD TRUE FROM THERE ON OUT.” (KSWS1:1)⁶. Hubbard asserts that the correct application of the technology consists of the following:

One: Having the correct technology.

Two: Knowing the technology.

Three: Knowing it is correct.

Four: Teaching correctly the correct technology.

Five: Applying the technology.

Six: Seeing that the technology is correctly applied.

Seven: Hammering out of existence incorrect technology.

Eight: Knocking out incorrect applications.

Nine: Closing the door on any possibility of incorrect technology.

Ten: Closing the door on incorrect application.

(KSWS1:2-3)

⁶ The full caps-lock quote is actually much longer. It goes over 13 lines and repeats how the following policy letter is true and important for all Scientologists (KSWS1:1).

Hubbard highlights points seven, eight, nine and ten as the organization's weakest points. He uses the bulk of the rest of the PL to underline how *he* was the one who discovered the technology, not a group of people. Thus, the technology will have no benefit from being altered or developed by any group of people. He also refers to the reactive mind ("the bank") to argue that "by actual record", the chance of someone altering this into bad technology is between twenty to 100 000 percent (sic!) (KSWS1:3). If the people constituting CoS do not comply with point seven, eight, nine and ten, the bank-dominated mob will take over and introduce technology which will not work in favor of people.

The consequences if the Scientology technology is applied incorrectly can, according to Hubbard, be devastating. He explains how this can do harm in sessions, and how an auditor's mistakes have to be corrected by the case supervisor (C/S). If the technology is not working, it is solely because it has been applied incorrectly. And the responsibility lies with the auditor and C/S, not the student. As a worst case scenario, Hubbard tells a story of how a student was not "straightened out" properly, and therefore "his wife died of cancer resulting from physical abuse" (KSWS1:6).

KSWS1 is the document in which Hubbard established himself as "Source", the only person to have created Scientology technology. It also established the directive that deviations from the established technology have to be rooted out, and it is something for which every person in every position within the organization is responsible. This substantiates my claim that CoS is indeed a uniquely legitimate organization. The only source of correct technology is Hubbard himself⁷. Other approaches or dissent among practitioners are dangerous and have to be eliminated. As mentioned above, Wallis' theory on a group's propensity to schism argues that pluralistically legitimate movements are, to a higher degree, able to tolerate different factions within their own group than uniquely legitimate movements (Wallis 1979:183). In uniquely legitimate movements, dissent can only be tolerated if dissenters do not attack the principle of legitimacy. If someone within the organization was to question Hubbard's role as

⁷ Hubbard does recognize that there was an element of team-effort in these sentences: "True, if the group had not supported me in many ways, I could not have discovered it either." (KSWS1:3) and "The contributions that were worthwhile in this period of forming the technology were help in the form of friendship, of defense, of organization, of dissemination, of application, of advices on results and of finance. These were great contributions and were, and are, appreciated. Many thousands contributed in this way and made us what we are. Discovery contribution was not however part of the broad picture." (KSWS1:3-4).

the sole creator and “Source”, it would be difficult for the organization to tolerate, because it would question their whole foundation.

3.2.2 Scientology ethics

When Hubbard first developed Dianetics, he initially believed that his new science would be embraced by organizations such as the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association. The attacks leveled against him from the medical-psychological establishment came as a surprise, and prompted him to become rather paranoid, believing that all of his critics were “bought and paid for” by his enemies. To counter these attacks on himself and his movement, he developed harsh procedures for fighting critics and perceived enemies within the ranks (Melton 2000:34-36).

The Scientology ethics system is based on Hubbard’s thinking regarding survival as the basic urge for all human beings. The ethics system is thus concerned with actions which either harm or foster survival. “Years ago I discovered and proved that Man is basically good. This means that the basic personality and the basic intentions of the individual, toward himself and others, are good.” (Hubbard 2007 [1968]:20). “Out-ethics” is thus not anything people do deliberately, but something we do because we are, on some level, out of communication with the eight dynamics which constitute human survival. Hubbard describes the eight dynamics as concentric circles, where the innermost circle is the “Self Dynamic” – which concerns survival on the individual level (food, clothes, our individuality), then goes on to the second dynamic – the “Sex Dynamic” (the family unit, children, sexual relations), to the “Group Dynamic” (the town, your community, the school), “Mankind Dynamic” (all of humankind), “Life Form Dynamic” (the planet we live on, the animals and plants), “Universe Dynamic” (the MEST-world, Matter, Energy, Space and Time), “Spiritual Dynamic” (anything spiritual) and lastly, the dynamic called “Infinity” or the “God Dynamic” (the urge toward existence as infinity) (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 12-14). In Scientology circles, people will refer to these numerically as part of their insider lingo.

Ethics are thus all the actions a person takes on to gain optimum survival, both for himself and others on all dynamics. The Scientology justice system will only be implemented “[w]hen an individual fails to apply ethics to himself and fails to follow the morals of the group [...]” (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 25). A big problem, according to Hubbard, is that most people do not

have the Scientology “Ethics Tech”, and can therefore not implement it in their life within their dynamics. “A person is not going to come alive, this society is not going to survive, unless Ethics Tech is gotten hold of and applied.” (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 22). The only thing that can save this world from “out-ethics” is the Scientology Ethics Tech.

Even though Hubbard states that “Man is basically good”, there are individuals referred to as Suppressive Persons (SP) and Potential Trouble Sources (PTS). SP is another name for “Anti-Social Personality”, and the PTS is someone who has a SP in her vicinity (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 171). Instructions on how to handle PTSs are an important part of the Ethics Technology. You can either “handle” the PTS, meaning that the situation with another person (an SP) is smoothed out by applying the communication tech (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 206). The other solution is to “disconnect”, meaning that an individual makes the decision that she is not going to be connected to the other person.

The practice of declaring people as SPs is something which has contributed to the CoS controversy. In the vast literature that has been generated by Scientology critics, there are many stories about how this negatively affects people’s lives, how it separates longtime friends, business partners and even family members. When someone disconnects from a person, a disconnection-letter is sent out⁸.

“To fail or refuse to disconnect from a Suppressive Person not only denies the PTS case gain, it is also *supportive* of the Suppressive - in itself a Suppressive Act. And it must be so labeled.” (Hubbard 2007 [1968]: 209). People who choose not to disconnect from an SP, are themselves regarded as SP. In reality, you do not have a choice if you want to remain in “good standing” with the CoS.

The severe consequences Scientologists face if they are declared suppressive are important for understanding the reluctance of Scientologists to oppose church leadership. Mechanisms such as the SP policy allow little room for dissent in the movement, as opposition and criticism can easily be interpreted as suppressive behaviors. The self-censorship to which high-ranking CoS members adhere is strong evidence for my claim of CoS being a uniquely legitimate

⁸ The declare letter Dani and Tami Lemberger received can be found here: <http://images2.villagevoice.com/imager/u/original/6669873/daniletter.jpg>

movement in Wallis's sense. There is little room for differences of opinion within the church. Declaring people and organizations suppressive had become a well-established practice within CoS by the 1980s.

Security Checking, or sec checking, is also an important part of the CoS ethics system. If someone is suspected of being a suppressive force within the organization, he or she can be summoned to be sec checked. Hubbard issued a bulletin on "Security Checks" in 1960, and the questions asked have changed somewhat over time. Sec checks can be done on overts⁹ (destructive acts) in present time, but also on the "whole time track"; in other words, going back thousands of years and lifetimes. Questions people are asked under such sec checks are, for example: Are you guilty of anything? Have you ever had any unkind thoughts about L. Ron Hubbard or Scientology? Do you feel Communism has some good points? And when the whole time track is addressed, questions can be: Have you ever enslaved a population? Did you come to Earth for evil purposes? Have you ever zapped anyone? According to how the e-meter reacts to what is said, necessary measures are taken (Urban 2011: 107-108).

3.3 When a charismatic leader dies

The reason Hubbard secluded himself from the public eye in the late 1970s was in large part because it was important for both himself and the CoS that he not be put on trial in one or more of the many legal cases against the CoS. If Hubbard would be put on the stand, he would have to testify under oath about him not being involved with the CoS affairs; if not, he could end up in prison, just like his wife, Mary Sue Hubbard¹⁰. Either way, it would not reflect well on the CoS and Hubbard. The official claim was that Hubbard had nothing to do with the running of the organization, but whether this is true or not is difficult to say with certainty. Several sources claim that Hubbard was, in fact, still running the organization (see Rathbun 2013:162).

The events in conjunction to Hubbard's seclusion and death are highly disputed. What most sources seem to agree on is that Hubbard was indeed planning for what should happen to the

⁹ "An *overt*, as seen, is a transgression against the moral code of a group and could additionally be described as an aggressive or destructive *act* by the individual against some part of life." (http://www.scientologyhandbook.org/integrity/sh9_4.htm)

¹⁰ In October 1977, Mary Sue Hubbard and 10 other members of the Guardians Office were convicted of conspiracy (Urban 2011:219).

CoS after his death. He made arrangements for how the organization should be run, until he again could take control. He was to “leave his body” and then come back when the new person he would embody in a future lifetime had come of age (Zegel 1983). According to the Zegel tapes, Hubbard sent out letters to his children in 1980, in which he indicated that he did not expect to live longer than five more years. He also sent out letters to select people in the Commodore’s Messenger Org about this (Zegel 1983). Among the legal and practical preparations was the creation of the Religious Technology Center (RTC) which oversees the use of the trademarks of Scientology.

3.3.1 Hubbard’s “Social Death”

Gordon Melton asserts in the introduction of the book *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, that early definitions of the term “cult” has resulted in a common assumption that new religions are vulnerable to disruption when their founder dies. This is not necessarily the case (Melton 1991:1). The contributions made in *When Prophets Die* (Miller 1991) shows that even though the death of a founder or charismatic leader can be troublesome for an organization, most new religious movements survive and live on after this event. As I will discuss more in detail in chapter 7, a smooth transition after a charismatic leader dies requires that his or her charisma is institutionalized. According to Wallis, an organization is more prone to schism if the leader dies before an organization has developed a strong organizational structure. If the organization is institutionalized, the propensity to schism is lower, but the organization can still be vulnerable to schism when the founder dies (Wallis 1979).

In the early 1980s, Hubbard was not dead, but he might as well have been as far as the day-to-day affairs of CoS were concerned. The organization had already gone through the phase of instability many new religious movements experience at the beginning of their history, when the hierarchical Church of Scientology emerged out of the decentralized Dianetics movement. The organization should thus have been more robust as far as schisms are concerned when their charismatic leader experienced what could be termed a “social death.” I am borrowing the term “social death” from Susan J. Palmer and Michael Abranavel’s analysis of schisms from the Church Universal and Triumphant where they discuss how Elizabeth Clare Prophet’s “retreat into Alzheimer’s” disease was “experienced” by her followers as a ‘social death’”

(Palmer and Abranavel 2009:193). Prophet's non-communication due to illness helped create the conditions for subsequent schisms.

3.4 Means of legitimation available to one, a few, or many?

Wallis bases his analysis of an organization's propensity to schism on Nyomarkay's original discussion of the Nazi party and the Marxist movement (Nyomarkay 1967). Both are uniquely legitimate movements¹¹, but only the Marxist movement experienced schisms while the Nazi party did not. This means that the distinction between uniquely legitimate and pluralistically legitimate organizations may not be sufficient if we want to know why some organizations are more prone to schism than others. Wallis thus provides yet another factor to take into consideration, namely whether the *means of legitimation* in a movement is singular or plural, and whether the access to these means of legitimation are available to one, a few, or many (Wallis 1979:183). Wallis concludes that because the means of legitimacy was ultimately available only to one person within the Nazi party, no one could break out and claim independent authority. They would simply have no means available to them to convince other party members that their path was the legitimate one. In the Marxist movement, particularly following the death of Marx, the means to declare legitimacy was available to anyone who decided to claim that their interpretation was the legitimate one. In Wallis's words,

To reiterate the major theoretical claim, successful schism depends upon the ability of a factional leader to secure legitimation for separation. The propensity to schism of a movement will tend, therefore, to vary directly with the availability of means of legitimation. Nyomarkay distinguishes between monistic and pluralistic movements in this respect and subdivides monistic movements into the charismatic and the ideological, arguing that schism will be more characteristic of the latter. However, we would argue that movements in which there is one and only one source of legitimation concentrated in one and only one individual or focus is a limiting case. In this extreme case, legitimation is available only to, or through the charismatic leader. In the case of Marxist movements, while they may be construed as monistically legitimate in the sense of having only one focus of legitimacy in the ideology, *access* to it as a means of legitimation is widely dispersed. The belief-system specifies no uniquely privileged

¹¹ Note!: Nyomarkay uses the terms monistic and pluralistic movements (1967).

interpreter of the doctrine and hence the claim to be offering the correct interpretation is widely available to well-versed initiates (Wallis 1979:183-184).

The same was the case with CoS when Hubbard “died.” Far from being controlled by Hubbard, the means of legitimacy were suddenly available to more people. The poor management skills of the current leadership made it tempting and in some cases necessary for certain top-ranking Scientologists to leave the CoS. The newly gained access to the means of legitimacy enabled a number of them to form independent organizations that could claim authority as legitimate Scientology groups.

As long as Hubbard was alive and present, access to legitimacy was available only through him. If someone stepped out of line, Hubbard could issue a policy letter or otherwise remove the person. Because of his status as “the Source,” it would have been difficult for anyone who wanted to be part of Scientology to oppose Hubbard himself without dismissing the religion as well. However, after Hubbard went into hiding, this opened up the possibility of different interpretations, both for what was happening with Hubbard and with the CoS organization. After the Mission Holders’ Conference, devoted Scientologists could interpret what had happened as something Hubbard would never have approved, and thus a sign that he was being kept in the dark about what was really happening. In this way, schismatic leaders could legitimate their leaving the Church as being true to the real Scientology. Furthermore, they had Hubbard’s authority in the form of his scriptures to back them up. Since he was not around to tell them otherwise, they could still lean on Hubbard as their source of legitimacy.

3.5 What does all of this tell us?

According to Wallis, a schism “involves the breaking away from a group or social movement of an individual who is able to secure the support of some part of that movement’s following” (Wallis 1979:181). In my opinion, this is what took place in the turbulent 1980s. Many of the defectors after the Mission Holders’ Conference of 1982 (which I will deal with in more detail in the next chapter) continued to consider themselves Scientologists and started up independent groups, some of which developed into sophisticated organizations and networks. If the means of legitimating new, independent movements had not been available, perhaps the only real alternative for the defectors would have been to stay within the CoS or to leave Scientology all together. Wallis’s theoretical approach is fruitful in the case of the schism

discussed here, because it helps to explain how it was possible for so many people to defect from the Scientology *organization* without having to break from the *religion* of Scientology.

By the early 1980s, Scientology had become a uniquely legitimate organization, in which the sole source of legitimation was Hubbard's writings and talks. In the Dianetics movement, Hubbard had claimed legitimate authority on the basis of his status as inventor and scientist. Because these roles were not exclusive to Hubbard, it was difficult for him to claim unique authority. In Walls's terms, legitimate authority within the Dianetics movement was pluralistic. As a consequence, Hubbard's early efforts to suppress challenges to his authority often failed, which, according to some analysts is part of why he formed the highly-centralized Church of Scientology as a successor organization to the decentralized Dianetics movement (see Whitehead 1987:68-77).

Though he never claimed to be some sort of messiah, Hubbard's authority nevertheless evolved to become absolute within the movement. However, in the absence of his physical presence, Hubbard's writings and recorded talks increasingly came to embody his authority – to such an extent that, after his death, Hubbard's writings were declared scripture and deviation from his technical guidelines came to be viewed as a religious crime. It was this transfer of charismatic authority from Hubbard's person to his productions, in combination with his reclusiveness toward the end of his life, which laid the foundation for subsequent schisms. The routinization and textualization of Hubbard will be dealt with in chapter 6.

4 The Mission Holders' Conference of 1982 and the Scientology movement milieu

“Schisms are as inevitable as new branches on a living tree; only when the tree is dead it stops producing branches. As long as the branch can grow, it grows.” Lena Venkova, Ron's Org Moscow.

For many independent Scientologists, the Mission Holders' Conference of 1982 stands as a turning point in CoS history. There were many incidents leading up to this event, but the Mission Holders' Conference is seen as the prime example of everything that is wrong with the CoS today. The conference is shrouded in a web of conspiracy theories, and the perception of what is true and what is false is, to put it mildly, highly divergent. The way in which these events are interpreted is important for how independent groups build their self-understanding. I will look at the context the Mission Holders' Conference was held in, how the conference was conducted, and what it led to as regards the independent Scientology scene. The discussion will present the movement milieu of Scientology and how this diverse milieu helps new independent groups establish themselves. I will also look at how a schism may be destructive of an organization, but also revitalizing to the larger movement milieu.

Murphy Pizza has analyzed the Pagan community in the Twin Cities in Minnesota, also called “Paganistan”, in the chapter “Schism as midwife: how conflict aided the birth of a contemporary Pagan community” in Lewis and Lewis' *Sacred Schisms* (2009). As with many other new religious movements, the modern Pagan movement had a period characterized by schisms and splits in their formative period. They have struggled with the balancing act between being a real alternative to the mainstream community, and at the same time not being so alien that the community rejects them (Pizza 2009: 249-250). Instead of seeing the tendency to splinter as something negative, the Pagan community now leans towards looking at schisms less as a problem, and more as a natural part of the fundamental Pagan values of diversity and innovation (Pizza 2009: 248). Pizza argues that the schism Paganistanis experienced when the Wiccan Church of Minnesota emerged out of the Minnesota Church of the Wicca in 1988, turned out, in the end, making the Pagan community larger and more

diverse, and thus attracting a larger following: “The death of a small group, in short, can result in the growth of a wider and more successful community of alliances” (Pizza 2009:249).

4.1 The immediate context

In March 1966, the Guardian’s Office (GO) was formed under the direction of Mary Sue Hubbard, Hubbard’s wife, and second in command in the CoS hierarchy. The GO was established to handle attacks on the CoS, and became a sort of CIA within the church. The GO undertook intelligence operations against perceived enemies of the CoS, both in the media and the government (Urban 2011:110). By the end of the 1970s, it was revealed that the GO had infiltrated numerous government organizations, all the way up to the Justice Department, in one of their larger operations, operation “Snow White”. This operation led to the imprisonment of eleven GO officials, among them Mary Sue Hubbard. Hubbard was named as an unindicted coconspirator, and went into hiding (Urban 2011:168).

When Hubbard secluded himself from the organization, his only link to the world was David Miscavige and a few other members of a select cadre. Raised in Scientology from a young age, Miscavige hardly had a life outside the movement. He joined the Sea Org at the age of sixteen, and within a year was working directly under Hubbard in the Commodore’s Messengers organization (an organization that assisted Hubbard with his everyday tasks). By the time of the Mission Holders’ Conference, Miscavige was in charge of the Watch Dog Committee and the All Clear Unit, internal agencies that, among other things, oversaw the Church’s ongoing litigation. Miscavige became both feared and admired within the Scientology hierarchy because of his almost exclusive role relaying communications to and from Hubbard. Many high-ranking Scientologists were declared suppressive by Miscavige, for reasons that were often unclear. A recurrent trait was that they were often critical of Miscavige’s position in the church and the new policies introduced through him. One of the people declared suppressive by Miscavige was David Mayo, the person said to be the best-trained Scientologist with respect to auditing technology in the Church besides Hubbard. Mayo was also Hubbard’s personal auditor (Zegel 1983).

Controversies surrounding CoS activities such as “Snow White”, and the declaring of people like David Mayo, made some Scientologists wonder what was happening, and whether

Hubbard knew what was going on. The numerous legal battles CoS was involved in and purges of high-ranking Scientologists were a topic at a Mission Holders' Conference in late 1981, the year before the infamous Mission Holders' Conference in San Francisco (Rathbun 2013:194-195). They also discussed the need for a reformation within CoS. The leadership's need to suppress these complaints may explain why the San Francisco conference turned out to be so devastating.

4.2 The Mission Holder network

At the grassroots level, Scientology is comprised of missions and field auditors that are largely responsible for introducing newcomers to the religion and providing basic auditing. When recruits are ready to start climbing up the Bridge to Total Freedom (Scientology lingo for salvation/enlightenment) beyond Dianetics auditing, they are encouraged to go to the nearest Church of Scientology Advanced Org (short for 'Organization') where they can get auditing and training to reach higher levels on the Bridge. Before the changes that were introduced after 1982, the missions were largely autonomous and also very profitable for the mission holders who owned and ran these centers. The missions constituted a decentralized system. Because of their relatively loose affiliation with the rest of CoS, they sometimes developed their practices in directions that the central leadership (including Hubbard) did not approve of.

Field auditors are individuals who deliver auditing where there are no missions or larger churches. Today they are organized in IHELP (International Hubbard Ecclesiastical League of Pastors). The harsh treatment the mission holders experienced during the Mission Holders' Conference of 1982 was also meted out to the field auditors during a field auditor conference later in 1982; their obligations to the CoS were also tightened (Zegel 1983). I will not deal specifically with the field auditors conference, but it is worth mentioning.

4.3 The Mission Holders' Conference of 1982

The events at the Mission Holders Conference in San Francisco seem to be well documented; CoS even issued a transcript of the whole event. However, the audio tape of the event and transcripts based directly on the tape are hard to obtain. Nevertheless, one can find transcripts on the Internet. According to critics of CoS, the official transcript has been censored. Defectors have published alternate accounts of what happened during the conference. My

primary sources are a copy of *The Sea Org Moves In!* found online, in which the official CoS transcript is presented, and Marty Rathbun's account in his book, *A Scientology Warrior* (2013). I have collected additional information from documents distributed in Scientology circles in the 1980s: *The Dane Tops Letter* (1982), Eric Townsend's *The Sad Tale of Scientology* (1985), and *Zegel Tape No. 1* (1983), *Zegel Tape No. 2* (January 1984) and *Zegel Tape No. 3* (July 1984).

According to the official CoS transcript, designated *SO ED 2104 INT, The flow up the Bridge, the US Mission Holders Conference, San Francisco 1982*, the purpose of the conference was for the Sea Organization (Sea Org or SO) to brief the US Mission Holders on the role of the Mission Network, with an emphasize on the legal and ecclesiastical boundaries within which the missions should operate (transcript 1982). Rathbun, on the other hand, indicates that the conference was Miscavige's attempt to threaten the mission holders into obedience (Rathbun 2013:194-195).

The background for the Sea Org's need to clarify the legal and ecclesiastical boundaries for the mission holders was a re-organization of CoS. The mother church was now CoS International, with the Commodore's Messenger Organization International (CMO International) and the Watch Dog Committee at the top of the pyramid. The Religious Technology Center (RTC) was founded on 1 January 1982. RTC was set up to control and oversee the use of the trademarks, symbols and texts of Scientology and Dianetics. RTC is a non-profit organization and is the link between the Church of Spiritual Technology (CST), which owns the trademarks of Dianetics and Scientology, and the grass root levels of CoS. The new corporate structure of CoS thus made the mission holders dependent on the RTC to be able to use the trademarks of Scientology and Dianetics. If trademarks are used in ways the RTC does not approve, missions face steep fines or can completely lose the right to use the trademarks. The Finance Police unit was also established in January 1982 to control the missions' finances (Zegel, January 1984; Rathbun 2013:195).

The conference was led by David Miscavige. According to critics, no one was allowed to leave during the entire seven hours the meeting took place. SO officers took notes if they saw any signs of dissent. A mission holder who refused to move from the back to the front row was excommunicated (declared) on the spot. Additional excommunications of mission holders

were conducted by Miscavige over the course of the conference (Rathbun 2013:195). During the conference mission holders were briefed on the new corporate structure of CoS and the legal implications of this reorganization. Furthermore, SO officials threatened mission holders with the consequences of deviating from Scientology technology (in Scientology lingo, ‘technology’ means both doctrine and practice). The mission holders were also told that they could face legal charges and jail if any misconduct was uncovered. At the same time, demands on the mission holders were raised – in terms of recruiting more new adherents; control they were required to cede to the CoS; and in terms of the percentage of income they would be required to pass on up to the CoS. At one point the mission holders were instructed to confess their sins and to write knowledge reports (something Scientologists are required to do if they find out someone else is doing something wrong) on their colleagues (Rathbun 2013:197; transcript 1982). In the years that followed, the great majority of mission holders disaffiliated, severely weakening CoS’s previously large network of grassroots recruiters. This network was never fully reestablished (Rathbun 2013:195).

4.4 The movement-milieu of Scientology

In his article, *Free Zone Scientology and Other Movement Milieus*, James Lewis elaborated on Campbell’s concept of “the cultic milieu” (Campbell 2002 [1972]; Lewis 2013). Lewis seeks to generalize Campbell’s “cultic milieu” into a model of “movement milieu”, “using *movement* as a generic term to indicate an identifiable subculture” (Lewis 2013:258). A movement milieu revolves around what Lewis calls the *primary body*, in my case (as well as in Lewis’s case, as he also uses Scientology as his principal case study) the CoS. This is one of the traits that distinguishes movement-milieus from the cultic milieu, where there is no primary body. In his article, Lewis utilizes the name “Free Zone Scientology” for the movement-milieu discussed here. It could also be called “Independent Scientology”, because that name, in my opinion, better describes what it is. Also, as Lewis points out, the term “Free Zone” is controversial in some parts of this movement-milieu, because the term is closely related to Hubbard’s “space opera” teachings and also to the Ron’s Org network. However, if we apply the movement-milieu term as Lewis is presenting it, the best name would simply be the “Scientology movement-milieu”. This term opens up the field for a wider discussion, and it is helpful in understanding the large, diverse movement-milieu within which independent Scientology groups emerge.

4.4.1 What constitutes the Scientology Movement Milieu?

The Scientology movement-milieu of today is comprised of different groups and individuals which feel and act to a lesser or greater degree within the Scientology world view. Their "primary", in Lewis's words, is the CoS. People who are connected to the CoS as paying members and active practitioners are "located" closest to this primary. For most of these people, the CoS *is* Scientology, and thus the only part of the Scientology movement-milieu they relate to. Then there are the people who have a looser affiliation with the CoS – they may have taken a course at some point; they have purchased Scientology literature; they were active in the past, but are now, for different reasons, not practicing Scientology anymore; some of these people may intend to go back to CoS at some point, but are currently in a situation where it is not convenient or possible. Around the primary of CoS are also those who are connected to a CoS organization, like Narconon, WISE, Criminon, or who send their children to a school that makes use of Hubbard's "applied scholastics". Some of these people may not reflect much on the fact that this is based on the Scientology doctrine and connected to the CoS, but relate to what the specific organization has to offer them. All people who at some level are connected to the CoS are part of the larger Scientology movement-milieu.

As mentioned earlier, the Dianetics movement and the CoS have experienced defections from the very beginning. When Hubbard made the move from the loosely-affiliated Dianetics movement to the CoS, many of the trained auditors continued their practice outside the CoS. The California Association of Dianetics Auditors (C.A.D.A.) was founded in December 1950, and underlines their independence from CoS on their web page¹². Other early breakaway groups have distanced themselves even more from Dianetics, Hubbard and Scientology, and formed groups with names such as "Synergetics" and "Idenics", and "The Avatar course"

Another part of the Scientology movement-milieu is the independent scene. Organized independent Scientology groups are, in Lewis' words, "secondaries", revolving to some degree around the primary, at the same time as they have individuals and groups also revolving around them. Ron's org and Dror Center are such secondaries. Mayo's Advanced Ability Center was another. There are also a variety of independent field auditors who offer

¹² <http://ca-da.org/index.htm>

their services to the public without being connected to any organization¹³. Many of the people connected to these groups and individuals are Scientologists who either have been out of the CoS for some years, or who wish to use independent services instead of CoS services. Some people are still connected with the CoS and do their praxis in organizations such as Ron's Org and Dror Center in secret. Some people may have never been involved with the CoS, but started their Scientology career in an independent group. For them, the independent group they adhere to is their primary. All of these independent groups, individuals and networks are part of what constitutes the Scientology movement-milieu.

In the outskirts of the Scientology movement-milieu we find the people protesting CoS and/or the Scientology religion itself. There are a number of exposé books and articles written by and about members who have defected, and many blogs and webpages where former members write about their experiences within the CoS. Mike Rinder and Marty Rathbun's blogs¹⁴ are examples of blogs which are read by disaffected Scientologists. People use these sites for information about the CoS and the controversies surrounding the church, but also to connect with other disaffiliated members. The reason I want to include these peripheral activities in the Scientology movement-milieu is that much of what is written negatively about the CoS caters to a public familiar with the Scientology lingo and worldview.

There is also the question of whether I myself, and other scholars and journalists writing about Scientology should also be included in the Scientology movement-milieu. One could make a distinction between literature which directly addresses people already familiar with Scientology, and documents written for a wider audience. At the same time, this distinction overlooks some important sources which people within the Scientology movement-milieu also make use of. For example, I have the impression that independent Scientologists who still believe in the doctrine also make use of sources that not only criticizes CoS, but who also dismiss the Scientology worldview, and who never have been associated with the Scientology world, while they themselves argue against the CoS. This opens up a wider discussion of how a researcher can potentially influence the field they are working in, but for now I will not go

¹³ <http://internationalfreezone.net/certified-auditors.shtml> is an example of a site where you find independent field auditors. The webpage www.freeandable.com is referred to on many independent Scientology blogs, but the site is currently not available.

¹⁴ Mike Rinder's blog: <http://www.mikerindersblog.org/>
Marty Rathbun's blog: <https://markrathbun.wordpress.com/>

into that discussion. Nevertheless, a quick search in different forums online makes it clear that scholarly work on Scientology is hotly debated in circles *negative* to the CoS and Scientology religion. I also have the impression that at least in the independent part of the Scientology movement milieu, research on Scientology is followed with interest.

There are some documents which are mentioned and pointed to over and over again in Scientology circles. These documents are also part of the Scientology movement-milieu. First of all there are the books and writings of Hubbard, and CoS books, pamphlets and web pages. Second there is the vast quantity of book manuscripts, letters, magazines, audio tapes, films and pictures that have circulated through different independent Scientology networks for years, and which are now, for the most part, available on the Internet. Examples of such documents are the Zegel tapes, the Dane Tops Letter, the book “A piece of blue sky”, Debbie Cook’s New Year’s email, etc.

The line between the Scientology movement-milieu and the “rest of the world” is difficult to draw. In opening up the term to include people still within the CoS, the term is made larger. The Scientology movement-milieu better describes the reality in which new independent Scientology groups find their place and their followers. The fringes of the movement-milieu are blurry and difficult to describe and determine. Yet, I think the term Scientology movement-milieu describes, at least to a certain degree, who and what it constitutes. Where it ends I will leave open for now, as it is not essential for this assignment.

4.5 Schism as midwife

The Pagan milieu in Minnesota and the Scientology movement-milieu are two very different phenomena, and the Pagan milieu described in Pizza’s article is probably closer to Campell’s “Cultic milieu” than a movement-milieu like the Scientology movement-milieu. However, in the way the Pagan milieu in Minnesota created a fertile ground for new groups resonates with the situation in the Scientology movement-milieu. As we will see when I analyze the resources and strategies Ron’s Org and Dror Center make use of, they secured a ground to build something on in the Scientology movement-milieu. Max Hauri talked to me about how they met disaffected CoS members on “every street corner” when he and Erica Hauri left the CoS. Dani and Tami Lemberger went to visit new indie-friends in the US just before they sent out their official statement about leaving the church. These organizations did not evolve out of

the thin air; they had a potential following, and other people in similar situations who could offer support.

The Mission Holders Conference of 1982 in conjunction with Hubbard's seclusion from the church spurred larger numbers of defectors than ever before. According to Zegel (1983), as many as 25 of the 98 US missions "either defected [...] or were bankrupt and closed their doors." (Zegel 1983). Field officers, SO top executives and an unknown number of regular members also left the CoS. These events in the early 1980s contributed to the establishment of a large independent scene which today constitutes a considerable part of the wider movement milieu of Scientology.

My claim is that the Mission Holders' Conference of 1982 and subsequent defections really laid the ground for the now thriving independent scene within the Scientology movement milieu. In later years the internet has broadened this movement-milieu even more, and made it easier for defectors and independents to share information fast and to large groups of people. As Lewis suggests in his article (Lewis 2013:269), the schisms in the Scientology movement may have weakened the CoS, but the movement milieu as such is strengthened. When people are allowed to move in different directions, they do so, and this leads to a variety of groups and alternative lines of thinking which would find no place to develop had they stayed within the CoS. In Russia, there is a group which offers Scientology auditing over Skype. One of the Ron's Orgs I visited in Moscow has developed an e-meter app - the Theta Meter¹⁵. Ron's Org's own Captain Bill Roberts developed a bridge containing 48 OT-levels, instead of CoS's eight. In Haifa, the Dror Center offer False Purpose Rundown to their clients. In the CoS this rundown is used by the Rehabilitation Project Force, and is regarded as some kind of punishment. And the list goes on. The vital and innovative Scientology movement milieu makes Scientology (in its varying forms) attractive to more people, and therefore has the potential to grow further.

¹⁵You can purchase your Theta Meter here: <http://theta-meter.com/articles/159424>

5 Scientology Schisms: Ron's Org and Dror Center

“A few weeks of reading and connecting to Indies and the theta they spread, through the net alone, and my world begins to change. 17 years that church invests millions in glittering events, magnificent buildings, endless wars, and cannot handle one soul it hurt rudely.” Hemi Benvenisti, Dror Center¹⁶.

Ron's Org was established in the aftermath of the purges in the 1980s. Dror Center, on the other hand, broke away from CoS much later, in 2012. In the following, I will examine the process by which both broke away from CoS and at the same time built something new. Both groups operate within what I have described as the Scientology movement milieu¹⁷. I will argue that the diverse Scientology movement milieu helped them as new groups. Other factors are the training and qualifications key figures within these new organizations have held, and resources in terms of capital, places to be, human resources and so on. These factors will be addressed in the next chapter. In this chapter I will share the experiences I had when I visited Ron's Org and Dror Center, and describe their history, practices, and current situation.

5.1 Ron's Org

In September 2013, I went to Ron's Org's headquarters in Grenchen, Switzerland, where I met with Max Hauri, who together with his wife Erica Hauri are the leading figures in Ron's Org. I stayed in Bern, and took the train in to Grenchen on two occasions. I was with them for between three or four hours each time. I met with the staff, and I also had the chance to talk to some of the people who were there to take classes. They were from all over Europe, and when I was there, there was even someone who had traveled all the way from Argentina. The overall impression was that everyone there was very busy. Max Hauri was, in that respect, no exception, but he took time to talk to me. I had come in contact with him through my supervisor, James Lewis, and I think that helped me. For Ron's Org, it is essential to propagate information about who they are. And because of the often conflicting accounts about them both from CoS and the larger world around them, they are keen on having a scholarly view of their activity, probably because academia is viewed as something which present facts in a sober and impartial way. As a scholar of religion, I would never argue that

¹⁶ <http://scnil.org/english/2012/11/17/hemi-benvenisti-returns/>

¹⁷ See chapter 4 for a more detailed description of the Scientology movement milieu.

what I do is necessarily unbiased in any way, but I understand their perspective. At least I have tried to approach them in as open-minded a way as possible.

In Grenchen, Ron's Org have their headquarters, in the sense that this is their biggest org, and their leading figures, Max and Erica Hauri, reside there. The office building is brand new, and contains a study hall, a library of Scientology books, offices for their different staffers, rooms for auditing, and a recreational area where people can have their coffee and a meal. On the floors above the org itself, there are two flats where Max and Erica Hauri live, as well as a floor where their son lives with his family. The office is located in the middle of Grenchen, not far from the train station.

This was my first meeting with "real" Scientologists, so I will admit I was a bit nervous. But my first impression was that of a very friendly atmosphere, with people who were glad to be there and happy to do their training. I felt like I was going into someplace I did not belong, but people were eager to tell me about all the great things Scientology had done for them, and, as I mentioned, the atmosphere was very friendly. Max Hauri took me to his office or a vacant room when we talked, so as not to disturb anyone. He talked to me at great length about the history of Ron's Org, his own history and how he got involved in Scientology. Most of the time I played the role of a young student who came to learn from someone who knew much more than me. I think this was fruitful for the situation I was in: I *did not* know very much, and the more info I got, the better. The downside was that we were talking about a lot of things which may not have been very relevant for this assignment, but it helped me get a better overall view of the Ron's Org history and their outlook on the Scientology doctrines.

Later that same year, in December 2013, I went to Moscow to visit different Ron's Orgs there. My main contact was Lena Venkova, one of the people who has been active since Ron's Org came to Russia in 1996/97. We emailed a lot. The original idea was that I was going to join them at one of their Ron's Org convention, this time held in Egypt. For many reasons this plan fell through, so instead of two weeks of sun at the beach in Hurgada, Egypt, I got to spend four freezing days in Moscow, Russia. When I arrived in Moscow I was picked up by Lena at the Metro station, and we went home to her place where I was to live for the next several days. Lena speaks very good English, which was a huge advantage. Even though I understand Russian, it was very helpful to have her to translate when I did not understand, or

explain more in detail what others said to me. This made her a very important person during my fieldwork, and she therefore also had a lot of influence over where I would go, who I would meet and what I would get out of the information. Most of all, Lena was very helpful and I think I would not have gotten much out of my stay had she not helped me and invited me in.

In Lena's home, I got to know her husband, her mother and her daughter; all of them were preoccupied with Scientology one way or the other. I had my own room, where I had a chance to relax and pull back if I felt that was necessary. My visit to Moscow was very exhausting, probably because I had to concentrate on understanding when people talked to me in Russian, and also because I was trying to obtain as much information as I could.

In Moscow it almost felt like there was a Ron's Org on every corner. That is, of course, not the case. However, when an Org becomes big enough (or too big if you like), they often split up to make two smaller orgs that are easier to handle.

5.1.1 Captain Bill Roberts and the emergence of Ron's Org

The following section is based on the Ron's Org's website, Allan Wright's account of what happened in his Ron's Org convention lecture in 2003, and conversations with Max Hauri¹⁸. As mentioned above: After CoS's turbulent years in the early 1980s, a large number of high ranking Scientologists left the church. William Branton Robertson, fondly referred to as Captain Bill or by the abbreviation CBR, was born in 1936 in Georgia in the United States. According to the Ron's Org account of Robertson, he was one of Hubbard's closest co-workers. Among other things, he was awarded the order of "Kha-Khan¹⁹", which in Hubbard's world means you have next to impunity when it comes to the Scientology ethics regime (Hubbard 2007 [1968]:239).

In 1980, Robertson was called to visit Hubbard in California, where he lived in seclusion from the world and from the organization. He was told that Hubbard was very ill, but Hubbard said

¹⁸ Ron's Org's website (<http://www.ronsorg.ch> ; <http://www.ronsorg.com/english/mythaboutcbr.html>), Allan Wright's account of what happened in his Ron's Org convention lecture in 2003 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeU796zj0oU>).

¹⁹ "That's what producing, high statistic staff members are – Kha-Khans. They can "get away with murder" without a blink from Ethics." (Hubbard 2007 [1968]:239)

that he told people he was ill so that he would be left alone. Hubbard informed Robertson that he had lost control over the church, and that part of the problem was the organization of CoS. Because the organization was built like a pyramid, the distance between the top and the grassroots was so great that they could not have proper communication. Hubbard told Robertson that if he did not get a message from him every six months in form of a face to face conversation, a phone call, or a hand-signed letter, he should leave the organization. If Robertson did not hear anything from Hubbard, it would mean that he had lost all control over the church, and Robertson should start up a “Free Zone” outside of the church. Robertson heard back from Hubbard on one or two occasions after this meeting, but then the contacts stopped. Because he was reluctant to leave the church he felt so attached to, he tried to find Hubbard to meet with him. As coincidence would have it, he ran into him at the Advanced Org center in LA. When Robertson tried to talk to him, Hubbard just turned his back to him, as if to say: “This does NOT count as me communicating with you!” It was early 1981, and Robertson understood that it was time to leave CoS²⁰.

Robertson tried to recruit mission holders in the US to join him in the Free Zone. This was during the mission holder purges, and resentment towards the CoS leadership was growing. Still, the mission holders wished to handle the problems from the inside. He then went to Spain to visit John Caban, a fellow defector. In Europe he also came in contact with Scientologists who had left the organization, and they began to gather together. This was the beginnings of what became Ron’s Org.

Today, Max and Erica Hauri are running Ron’s Org from Grenchen, Switzerland, which functions as the Ron’s Org headquarters. The Hauris became involved in Ron’s Org toward the end of the 1980s, after leaving the staff of CoS in Bern. Max described that period of time as exciting; they met disaffected CoS-members on every corner, and Captain Bill was a unifying leader who made them believe anything was possible so that they felt optimistic about ‘clearing the planet’. Robertson died of cancer in 1991, which without doubt left a hole in the organization. The years to follow were harsh ones for the group. They went underground because of harassment from CoS. The church claimed that Max owed them almost 80 000 franc, and they faced constant threats from CoS lawyers because of copyright

²⁰ According to Jon Atack in *A Piece of Blue Sky*, Robertson was declared a suppressive person by CoS sometime in 1982 (Atack 2013: 349).

violations. They were on constant lookout for CoS spies; meetings were held in secret, with meeting locations unknown up until an hour before an event. Their paranoia was devastating for the group. In 1997, they were contacted by a group of former CoS members in Russia. With lower pressure from CoS, and the subsequent expansion to the East, their future looked brighter. Ron's Org has expanded to other parts of the world as well, and they now have orgs as far away as Alaska and Argentina. In Europe, they have established orgs in Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland and Portugal. People also travel to Ron's Org in Grenchen to get auditing and training there.

5.1.2 How Ron's Org came to Moscow²¹

Scientology did not arrive in Russia until after the iron curtain fell, when the Soviet Union dissolved and the Russian Federation was established in 1991. Vlad was introduced to Scientology through his employer, who sent him to a WISE-college, where he was trained in Hubbard's philosophy on how to run a business. He found it interesting, read Hubbard's *Dianetics* (1950), and ended up taking 25 hours of auditing in a Moscow org. This was in 1995, and he stayed in the church for about one and a half years. Now Vlad runs a Ron's Org in Moscow, with about seven staff and 100 publics. When I visited the org he told me how Ron's Org came to Russia:

A man named Oleg Matveev, who worked as a translator within the CoS, left staff, and took several translations and Hubbard books with him. He and a group of people he knew started up the "Theta Club" and handed out translations of these books. CoS did not like their activity and tried to shut them down. At one point an OSA²² staff member was talking to Matveev, trying to convince him that what he did was wrong. The OSA official told him about an alternative bridge, and how terrible it was. No one had had any idea that there was such thing as an alternative bridge before the representative from CoS told them about it. Matveev went online and found the Free Zone Association webpage²³. He wrote an e-mail and got a reply the same day. They stayed in touch and, in January 1997, Bernd Lübeck and Otfried Krumpholz from Ron's Org in Germany came to visit.

²¹ Based on conversations with Lena Venkova and Vladislav Kaydakov from Ron's Org Moscow (2013).

²² CoS's Office of Special Affairs, established after the Guardians Office was dissolved in 1983 (Urban 2011:112).

²³ freezone.org

After a successful meeting with Lübeck and Krumpholz, the group decided to start with the *Hubbard Qualified Scientologist Course*. Matveev translated the course, and in June 1997 they were ready to begin. They rented a few rooms in a school and gathered people together there. Two Scientology-trained supervisors who had disaffiliated from CoS (one of them was Lena Venkova) helped with the supervising. Max Hauri and Otfried Krumpholz came for a visit in August the same year. They supervised the auditing and training, and gave advice on how to do it correctly. As Vlad and Lena explained, the CoS in Russia did not train their supervisors properly, and they therefore made some mistakes, which Hauri and Krumpholz corrected. When Hauri and Krumpholz were not in Moscow, they helped via the internet: essays were translated and sent to them, and the newly-started group could ask questions if something was not clear.

In Moscow alone, there are now seven Ron's Orgs. Twice a year they gather with all the other Ron's Orgs in Russia for 'training camps,' where they do courses and receive auditing. Max and Erica Hauri attend these training camps, which last for two weeks. Ron's Org in Europe also has camps like these, only a bit shorter. Between the camps, people can receive auditing and training at their local org.

5.2 Dror Center

The Dror Center in Haifa, Israel, is an independent Scientology group consisting of 8 full-time staff and over 50 'publics.' It started out as a CoS field group in 1992, founded by Dani and Tami Lemberger. It later became a mission, organized like most other missions within the CoS: the Lembergers owned the mission under a franchise license, and paid 10% of their income to the church.

I visited Dror Center in February 2014. I was there for two weeks and got to know staffers and members, and did some auditing and training. When I was in Haifa, I lived in the home of Dima, a staffer at Dror Center. He drove me to and from the center, and I was for a long time reliant on him because I did not understand the bus system. When I finally did, I had the possibility of traveling around as I wanted. Most of my time, however, I spent at the Dror Center, located not far from the city center of Haifa. Since I was there for two weeks, I also took time to travel around a bit. I also went to Tel Aviv, where I met with a young independent Scientology auditor who was earlier affiliated with the Dror Center, but who now

has started up his own practice in Tel Aviv.

In Israel, I had more problems with the language than in Russia, where I can at least read the letters and move around with more ease. Luckily, most of the people I talked to either knew English or Russian. My auditor, Aviv, spoke English very well, and they had Scientology literature in English. Thus, I did all my training and auditing in English.

Since I had more time when I was in Haifa than when I was in Moscow, I had more time for informal conversations with both staff and customers at Dror Center. A regular day would go something along these lines: I got up, made sure I got enough protein (very important for my auditing sessions) and went to Dror Center with Dima around 10 (sleeping in is considered something positive here - I love it!). Then I would hang out around the center, either doing coursework, drinking coffee, eating protein, talking to people, or doing auditing. Then I would either go explore the city, or go home with Dima in the afternoon, make dinner and go to bed early.

5.2.1 Courses and auditing

In Haifa, I got the chance to do auditing and take the course “Overcoming the Ups and Downs in Life”. The course consists first and foremost of a lot of reading, and it is important that you look up every word you do not understand. When you are certain you have understood what it says, you cross items off of a list. For each step you take in the course, you have to do different assignments. It could be to make a tableau out of crayons, toy figures, erasers and other things available to visualize different concepts, such as “a destructive action”; or write shorter or longer essays on specific topics. All assignments are checked by the course supervisor, and the list is not checked off if he or she suspects you did not fully understand the concept or the assignment. The course I took was basically about recognizing Suppressive Persons (SP) or Potential Trouble Sources (PTS) in your vicinity. It was also a guide as to how to act in situations where you or others around you are suppressed by others, as well as advice on how to interact with other people to achieve good communication.

My auditing was done by Aviv Bershinsky, a sweet and friendly guy, who also took his time to talk to me about his time in the CoS and how he saw the events that had gone down in Dror Center the last couple of years. I was a bit hesitant to be audited: I was afraid I would have to

expose my innermost secrets and vulnerabilities, and I had paranoid thoughts about how this could be used against me. Still, I was determined to go all out, and do the auditing as if I fully believed in the therapeutic effect Scientologists claim it has. However, since I am not a believing Scientologist, I was afraid that Aviv would detect my skepticism. A paradox, maybe, that all the time I did not believe he could read much of substance out of the e-meter I was connected to through the cans I was holding in my hands. Furthermore, Aviv was and still is fully aware that I am not a Scientologist, but a scientist.

To be audited by Aviv turned out to be sheer joy. When the performance anxiety cooled down, I allowed myself to associate freely on the topics Aviv proffered. I was surprised to discover that the way the questions are asked makes you see connections you have not seen before. After my sessions, I felt the relief I have heard Scientologists talk about, and I found myself feeling truly and honestly good about myself when Aviv told me: “Your needle is floating!” I did go all out. In retrospect I remember how I also had thoughts about how I did not really see how any of my problems were really resolved, but in the end I think it boils down to how liberating it is to have someone listen to your experiences, with the ‘presence’ Scientologists are trained in. To experience auditing first hand has not had a direct impact on this assignment, but it made me more aware of the appeal it has for people. I can also relate to how it must be to be deprived of the opportunity to practice your faith, and how this encourages CoS-defectors to create their own space where they can receive the counseling they feel they need.

During my time in Haifa, I got the chance to meet many people with very different life stories. It was striking how many people who told me about how their private finances ended up with a broken back after years of spending money on Scientology books, donations and the fundraisings arranged to fund the building of the Ideal Org in Tel-Aviv. Other people told me stories of how their “case had been stalled” for several years, and how they had come back “on track” again with the help from the Dror Center. For many, the stagnation in their way up the Scientology Bridge had caused them to be depressed and unable to live their life as they wished.

5.2.2 Dror Center's history²⁴

The Lembergers began their Scientology career in 1980 in San Francisco, where they had traveled after getting married the year before. Dani had for a long time been into self-improvement and spiritual seeking. He tried psychoanalysis, yoga, meditation and read literature on Zen without finding exactly what he was looking for. In Scientology, he had “major wins” right away, and had out-of-body experiences through Scientology auditing. Tami and Dani trained for a year and a half in San Francisco to be auditors, and decided to dedicate their lives to clearing the planet.

However well they did in Scientology, Dani had a nagging question: What happens to Scientology when Hubbard dies? In 1980, while still in San Francisco, he sent Hubbard a letter stating his concerns, but all he got back was a generic answer with a stamp of Hubbard's signature. Dani says, “It was a year and a half of great experiences, full of people having fun. Tons of laughs. Fun drills. And you saw yourself by the hour having wins and gains. And all along I questioned and argued because I'm a skeptic by nature” (Ortega 2012).

In 1981 Dani and Tami returned to Israel and continued their Scientology coursework at the org in Tel Aviv. In 1988, Dani attested to ‘clear’, and could start the OT-levels. During the first trip he made to Flag in 1989, Dani saw the huge gulf between top executives and ordinary ‘publics’. He did not think it reflected well on management, and was outspoken about his worries.

Tami's father owned a nail and wire factory in Haifa and was also a devoted Scientologist. The Lembergers opened Dror Center in some adjacent property of the factory in 1992. Dani translated Hubbard's book *Learning How to Learn* into Hebrew in 1993. Even though he had violated the copyright, his action won the acclaim of David Miscavige. Dani also helped crush an investigation of CoS conducted by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, in Israel in 1993. Dani continued to be worried about the organization: “It was too top heavy, with no middle management. It was destroying the orgs because the executive directors can't do anything” (Ortega 2012). He began writing letters to Miscavige about his concerns. As the years went by, he complained more and more to his auditors at Flag and other officials, and was sent

²⁴ The following section is based on an articles from Haaretz (2013), Village Voice (2012), and personal communication with Dani and Tami Lemberger, Aviv Bershady and others associated with the Dror Center (2014).

through hundreds of hours of sec checking²⁵. But Dani “still thought Miscavige was a lunatic” (Ortega 2012).

In January 2005, Dani's case supervisors gave up and took him off OT VII. But even though his individual case was stalled, the mission and the Lemberger's business went well. Tami had been awarded ‘best auditor of the year’ in both 2000 and 2002, the center had a steady flow of customers with money coming in, and they sent their ‘pre-clears’ on to the org in Tel Aviv and the Advanced Organizations in Saint Hill, England, Copenhagen and Flag.

On New Year's Eve 2011, Debbie Cook, a former executive in the CoS, the captain of Flag service Org, sent out an email to a wide range of Scientologists in which she listed the various ways in which the church was going in the wrong direction. The letter was written in the form any well-trained Scientologist might write, with references to Hubbard for every accusation levelled. Her main points were about membership prices; fundraising for new Scientology buildings; ‘out tech,’ that is, incorrect use of Scientology technology (term for both doctrine and practice inside CoS); and last, but not least: the command structure, in which she put forward a harsh critique of the current leadership and questioned the disappearance of several high ranking Scientology officials, among them the CoS President, Heber Jensch (Cook 2011). On January 2nd 2012, Aviv Bershady, my auditor, brought Dani a copy of Debbie Cook's e-mail. Aviv was shocked to find the same accusations against David Miscavige and the leadership in CoS as Dani had put forward so many times before.

Dani's response was to forward the letter to church officials so they could comment on it. The reaction he received in turn was that they ‘put him in ethics’, which is a process imposed on people whose ‘ethics’ are questioned. CoS officials also gave him a copy of the Scientology magazine *Freedom*, where former church staff and officials who had left the church were slandered. It was from a copy of *Freedom* magazine that Dani found out that Marty Rathbun, a famous Scientology defector, had a blog. Dani then started searching the Internet for information about independent Scientology.

Aviv and the others working in Dror also did their own investigations, after which all of

²⁵ ‘Sec checking’ or ‘security checking’ involves an auditor or ‘Ethics officer’ asking the pre-clear a large number of very specific questions which probe his or her exact thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Raine 2009: 73).

Dror's staff members decided to leave the CoS. In the beginning of July 2012, they issued their independence letter, which was sent to hundreds of Scientology friends and contacts all over the world. The Dror "independence Letter" was posted on Marty Rathbun's blog and other blogs and reached thousands of Scientologists. The break with CoS did not go down without trouble. As Aviv told me, it was emotionally very difficult to experience that public (that is, paying customers) in the org and people he considered very close friends cutting all ties with them. The economic situation also worsened, as the number of public went from about 50 to 30. Today, the Dror Center is thriving again, with about 50-60 public and 7 staff members. They deliver services all the way 'up the bridge.'

6 Resources and strategies

“There is something wrong with the copyright story...” Max Hauri, Ron’s Org Grenchen

So far I have discussed how CoS can be characterized as a uniquely legitimate movement, and how the social death of Hubbard made the means of legitimation available to more people, and thus made it possible for people to leave the CoS without leaving their faith; I have described how events in the early 1980s laid the foundation for a viable Scientology movement milieu outside of the CoS; and I have written about the history of Ron’s Org and Dror Center, and how their schisms came about. In this chapter, I will examine the resources Ron’s Org and Dror Center have available to them, and some of the strategies they deploy to survive as independent Scientology groups.

After I have discussed the resources available for Ron’s Org and Dror Center, I will make use of Hammer’s case study of the schismatic theosophical movement, found in Lewis and Lewis’ (2009) *Sacred Schisms*. Hammer states: “[...] there are at least three elements essential to ensuring the viability of one’s own movement: striking a balance between the familiar and the novel; keeping tight control over both ideology and resources; and branding one’s movement by means of a distinct material culture” (Hammer 2009: 215). I will begin by describing how Ron’s Org and Dror Center keep control over ideology and resources through their participation in umbrella organizations. Then I will look at how they brand their movements by means of a distinct material culture, pointing out how they, in many respects, do this in opposition to how the CoS does it. Here I will make use of Michael Rothstein’s analysis of the “architecturization” of Hubbard in the CoS (Rothstein 2014) foreshadowing the theme in my next chapter: How Ron’s Org and Dror Center make use of Hubbard scripture, and how, by using Hubbard’s texts in new ways, they strike a balance between the familiar and the novel.

6.1 Building blocks: the resources Ron’s Org and Dror Center have available to them

To create something new you need building blocks with which you can build a steady foundation, and you need a solid base to build it on. As discussed in chapter 3b, there exist a

large and diverse Scientology movement milieu which experienced explosive growth after the Mission Holders' Conference in 1982 and the turbulence following Hubbard's social death, but also as a result of the internet and the possibility of sharing information with like-minded people. The Scientology movement milieu consists of large numbers of potential followers for Ron's Org and Dror Center. In chapter 3, I discussed how the social death of Hubbard made the means of religious legitimacy available for more people. Because of this shift, both Ron's Org and Dror Center can make the claim that they represent a truer Scientology, and thus attract followers who believe that their practice is more genuine, and closer to how Hubbard envisioned Scientology. The base on which Ron's Org and Dror Center have built their organizations is thus large enough for them to attract a following. They can also claim to offer a more "real" Scientology praxis, because the means of legitimation are available to them. Ron's Org and Dror Center can draw on resources from the Scientology movement milieu in terms of how they can easily communicate what it is they have to offer, because they can take for granted that the public they address their services to is already familiar with the Scientology technology and basic worldview. In their "about us"-section on their webpages, both groups use a language which appeal to Scientologists, using words like *ARC*, *Operating Thetan*, *The Bridge*, and referring to Hubbard policy letters²⁶. If they did not have a large number of independents or marginal CoS members in the Scientology movement milieu to appeal to, they would have to change the way they brand themselves to attract followers. For both groups, it has also been an advantage that there are other people in similar situations to themselves. To name one example, the moral support from other defectors Dani and Tami Lemberger could lean on when they went to visit Scientology friends in the US, only to discover that they had been declared SPs, must have been reassuring in a stressful and difficult situation. Their foundation in the Scientology movement milieu beyond the CoS is large enough to gain a foothold, and gives them a crowd from which to collect followers.

The building blocks of Ron's Org and Dror Center are the skills, training, competence, finances, or simply the *resources* the organizations have available to them. To be able to gather these resources, it is important to have a place to be. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, CoS constantly threatened Ron's Org, and they to be very secretive about where they met. They were suspicious of new people, and when they planned a meeting, people would not know the location for up to an hour before they would meet. To find safe places was tough.

²⁶ See <http://scnil.org/english/about-us/> and <http://ronsorg.ch/en/about-us/>

Max Hauri told me that the Ron's Org almost broke their back because of their fear of what the CoS could do, and they had to practice Scientology underground. And off course, hiding all the time, does not make you very visible to people who could have been interested in joining. This changed when they stopped being afraid of what the CoS could do to them, in terms of legal actions because of copyright infringements. Max told me in one of our conversations, that

“[i]n the 1980s/1990s we were terrified, but in 2000 I started to realize that there is something wrong with the copyright story. No one had ever been punished for copyright infringement. I wanted to find out what sentences had been given. I found out it had always been settlements. It's just threats. Strong threats.” (pers. comm. October 2013).

When they could have their praxis more in the open, it also helped recruit more members, and their organization grew. Now they have built their own house in Grenchen, Switzerland, and can do as they please. In Moscow, Ron's Org has also had some problems finding places to be. When they had their first meeting with their new friends from Ron's Org in Europe, they rented some rooms in a school. At some point the police came, because someone had notified the police there was a bomb in the building. Everybody had to evacuate, but no bomb was found. There is also an issue with Russian law, which makes it more reasonable for the different Orgs to have their offices in private apartments. For Dror Center, this issue was not a problem, as they already had a property where they had their established mission.

Obtaining Scientology books and materials can also be a challenge for independent Scientology groups. Before the internet became common to all, independents had more problems accessing the sacred (and even secret) Scientology material. Ron's Org and Dror Center are in large parts comprised of former CoS members, and certain individuals have probably had access to materials and have managed to bring it with them when they disaffected from the church. The tight control the CoS holds over their sacred material, is however almost impervious. Robin Scott was vigorously chased by the CoS after he removed documents from the Advanced Organization in Denmark in 1983. By Scott's own account, the CoS filed six lawsuits against him (http://www.freezone.org/reports/e_scott.htm²⁷).

²⁷ Accessed 16.11.2015

Now, most of what is needed to practice Scientology auditing and training is found online. Max Hauri directed me to a webpage²⁸ where one can obtain Scientology books, courses and audiotapes (pers.comm. October 2013). As I understood Max, and how it is depicted in the webpage, they take precautions not to be accused of copyright infringement. He told me that it was registered in the Netherlands because they had more liberal laws on the subject. There are no names or organizations mentioned anywhere on the webpage. The foundation Stichting True Source Scientology (STSS) runs the webpage. They do have a tab called “Free Zone”, with references to the wider Free Zone milieu and the works of Robertson, naming the Ron’s Org Network as one of the largest Free Zone groups. The contact information contains no names, but an address to the foundation. When you enter the library, you need to confirm that you intend to use the materials “for religious purposes *only*.” They have a tab labeled ‘Legal’, with articles like “Copyright versus Religious Freedom” and “Who owns Scientology?”. The message they communicate is that religious freedom trumps copyright laws, and that they question the copyrights claimed by the CoS. The material thus seem to be available, also to people outside of the CoS.

In both Ron’s Org and Dror Center there are highly trained Scientologists; for the most part educated within the CoS system. These people are the organizations’ most valuable assets. The religious competence the CoS has to offer, has been vital for these groups to be able to start something of their own. Without trained auditors and case supervisors, they would not have much to offer to their potential followers. Before she left the CoS, Tami Lemberger was awarded Top Auditor by the CoS – twice! To be able to brand themselves as highly trained Scientologists is decisive for their survival.

The Scientology movement milieu provides Ron’s Org and Dror Center with “technical support”, should there be something in the Scientology training they are not familiar with or trained in. Dror Center has had different visitors, and they have visited independent Scientologists in other parts of the world, to learn and develop their practice²⁹. On Dani and Tami Lemberger’s “Grand Tour of the Indies” in 2013, Dani was trained in the “Personal Integrity Program” and Tami was trained on the delivery of the old/original OT levels from

²⁸ <http://www.stss.nl/>

²⁹ <http://scnil.org/english/2013/08/21/grand-tour-of-the-indies-2013/>

6.2 Strategies Ron's Org and Dror Center make use of

A schismatic group will need to brand themselves both as adherents of the tradition they have left as well as different from their mother organization to attract a following. Rodney Stark argues that schismatics need to show potential adherents continuity with one's predecessors to be successful (Stark 1987: 13-15). On the other hand, it is crucial for a schismatic group to show potential followers that they are different from their parent organization; if not, there is little use for a split. The success of a schismatic group is thus dependent on maintaining a fine balance between continuity with – and clear boundaries from – their predecessors (Hammer 2009: 197). Ron's Org and Dror Center make use of many of the same strategies in their consolidating processes, even though their history and context differ in many respects.

As mentioned above, Hammer asserts that striking a balance between the familiar and the novel; keeping tight control over both ideology and resources; and branding one's movement by means of a distinct material culture are elements which are decisive for ensuring the viability of new organizations within an established movement milieu. Ron's Org and Dror Center have an array of strategies they deploy to further their organization in both opposition and continuity with the CoS: In Ron's Org it is important to keep the different groups (orgs) small and not too tightly tied together, as opposed to CoS where the organizational structure is very strict and hierarchical; in both groups there is a strong ethos about how relaxed and stress free the atmosphere in their organizations is, and how friendly everyone is, as opposed to how they say it is in the CoS; in Ron's Org they have conventions and training camps where people gather to learn and practice Scientology, which is very different from how they do it within the CoS; and last, but not least, they emphasize how expensive CoS is compared to the prices they offer.

6.2.1 *Keeping tight control over both ideology and resources*

When it comes to the tight control over ideology and resources Hammer finds within the Theosophical milieu, I have not found much of that in the groups I visited. On the contrary, they make a point of asserting that everybody is entitled to their own opinions, and that diversity is something good. Nevertheless, both Ron's Org and Dror Center are connected to umbrella organizations that have statues and clear goals. Ron's Orgs are organized within the

Ron's Org Committee (ROC)³⁰, which according to their statutes has the goal to "assist the expansion of Scientology and the clearing of the planet." (ROC webpage). The purposes of the ROC are listed as:

- a) Making sure that Standard Tech as per LRH and CBR is available for everybody and will continue to be available in the future and is applied throughout the world
 - b) Representing the RO network to the outside
 - c) Setting the standards of what a RO is so that the name „Ron's Org“ becomes recognized as a symbol of Standard Tech as per LRH and CBR
 - d) Checking the prerequisites and authorizing delivery units to bear the name „Ron's Org“
 - e) Revoking the status of a RO where a delivery unit doesn't meet the prerequisites any longer
 - f) Establishing a „Qualification Board“ that will be a body that has the most senior qualification function for ROs WW
 - g) Supporting ROs in delivery and dissemination
 - h) Giving the ROs a forum to exchange info and comm.
- (...) The association does not pursue commercial purposes and does not strive for profit. It is not identical with the Church of Scientology or any of its branch organisations, neither does it cooperate with this and explicitly delimitates itself from them." (ROC webpage).

As one can read from these purposes, the availability of "Standard Tech" is important, and they relate to "Standard Tech as per LRH³¹ and CBR³²". The ROC also has the option to revoke the status of a Ron's Org, if the org does not meet the ROC standards. Ron's Org relates to their own "Standard Tech", based on the works of both Hubbard and Roberts. To be allowed to be called a Ron's Org, the org has to fit into the following definition:

- "As „Ron's Org“ is the abbreviation of „Ron's Organization and Network for Standard Technology“, the following prerequisites are given for any delivery unit to become and remain a Ron's Org:
- a) A Ron's Org needs a fully trained C/S according to the level it is delivering.
 - b) The C/S, when not properly trained by Academy training and up to SSC/S ULR courses, is taking senior C/Sing and correction from a RO C/S and pursues his training with his senior C/S or by taking part in training camps . A senior C/S must have been standardly trained in the Ron's Org.
 - c) Regarding Auditing, C/Sing and Training in the Div 4 course room, a Ron's org delivers Standard Tech, using exclusively original materials of LRH and, where it applies, CBR. A RO runs a standard course

³⁰ <http://www.ronsorg.com/>

³¹ L. Ron Hubbard

³² Captain Bill Roberts

room according to study tech.

d) A Ron's Org is in cooperation with the RO-network in technical matters.

1) treating other ROs and RO Field Auditors with respect

2) exchanging results and experience as needed

3) consulting his/her senior C/S or other competent RO terminals when technical questions arise

4) supporting other ROs regarding translations and translated materials as well as original materials

e) The C/S of an org (meaning the highest posted Tech Terminal within the org) and CO have to become ROC members.

f) The status of a Ron's Org must have been approved by ROC WW or a local ROC that was empowered by the ROC WW, and that status may not have been revoked by the same authority.

g) If the org applying for the title "Ron's Org" has not been fulfilling all prerequisites for at least one year, it temporarily gets the title of "forming RO". After one year of operation it can apply for the title of "RO"." (ROC webpage).

All the staff working at the Dror Center are also members of the Association of Free Scientologists Israel (AFSI)³³. Just like ROC, AFSI have some sort of statutes, but they are clearly not as organized as ROC, and do not mention any organizational structure or rules on how to elect a board and so on. AFSI refers to Hubbard's Keep Scientology Working Policy Letter, and states that: "[...] the only way to apply Scientology standardly and without interruption is outside the Church of Scientology." (AFSI/Dror Center webpage). Clearly, they differ from ROC in the sense that they adhere only to *Hubbard's Standard Tech*, opposed to Hubbard *and Roberts'* version of "Standard Tech". As their goals, AFSI lists:

“1. To enhance the Israeli society, its morals and integrity by the application of the philosophy developed by Ron Hubbard.

2. The imparting of Hubbard's study technology to promote education and scholarship within the Israeli society.

3. To enable people to achieve prosperity, happiness and success in their lives through the application of Hubbard's technology.

4. Training of auditors and experts in the application of Scientology in order to accomplish wide promotion of this vital knowledge.

5. Conduct lectures, seminars, workshops and courses in order to promote the knowledge of Scientology and the philosophy of Ron Hubbard.

6. Protect AFSI members when attacked in the courts or the media or in any other fashion.

7. To bring experts and know-how to Israel to support the full application of Scientology by auditors and centers locally.

³³ <http://scnil.org/english/about-us/>

8. To advertise and promote Scientology and its application and to support groups that apply Ron Hubbard's technology.

9. To foster ties and cooperation with similar groups world-wide so as to exchange ideas and help in training. To work with these groups to create a global force practicing Scientology freely." (AFSI/Dror Center webpage).

Both Ron's Org and Dror Center clearly try to establish a brand that is recognizable for the public they address. Therefore it is important that they keep control (if not necessarily strict) over their ideology. ROC has formulated how this is important as they build up the Ron's Org name as kind of a trademark in their list of purposes: "c) Setting the standards of what a RO is so that the name „Ron's Org“ becomes recognized as a symbol of Standard Tech as per LRH and CBR." (ROC webpage). Looking at the statutes and goals, it can seem like the ROC is more sophisticated and developed than AFSI. This is natural because ROC has had more time to consolidate a clear structure and elaborate goals and definitions than their younger counterpart AFSI³⁴.

6.2.2 Branding one's movement by means of a distinct material culture

Ron's Org and Dror Center also brand their organizations by means of a distinct material culture, in many respects by *not* focusing on a material culture: In CoS orgs they usually keep an office ready for Hubbard, should he ever stop by. In Ron's Org and Dror Center they do not have an office waiting for Hubbard ("Where should we put it? We need all the space we can get!³⁵"); they do not have a lot of pictures and statues of Hubbard; and they downplay the grandeur the CoS is so known for. In 'Emblematic Architecture and the Routinization of Charisma in Scientology', Mikael Rothstein explores the significance buildings play within the CoS and how this corresponds to the cult surrounding Hubbard's persona. Rothstein argues that the CoS's grandiose buildings are "a three dimensional routinization of Hubbard's charisma" (Rothstein 2014: 55). Rothstein also argues that the authority of Hubbard manifests itself in the opulent buildings the CoS owns. Rothstein's theory is that

"[...] Hubbard's charisma is routinized into the organisation Scientology, and that the imminent presence of the beloved leader, is symbolically expressed in the physical structures of the organisation; its buildings. Hubbard is not reincarnated, but architecturized, and thereby also topographized, as

³⁴ It is not clear to me when exactly AFSI was established.

³⁵ The answer I got when I asked Lena Venkova about this (pers. comm. December 2013).

sacred place and space are defined according to his whereabouts, and as specific locations are linked with what is emically seen as his bequest to humanity.” (Rothstein 2014:20)

In Ron’s Org and Dror Center they go very far in denouncing CoS’ lavish style and the drive to collect more and more money, only to build newer and bigger buildings. In CoS, in reverse, the routinizing of Hubbard’s authority is done by turning buildings into manifestations of him. Rothstein argues that the routinizing of Hubbard into Scientology architecture serves to maintain the prevailing power structure within the organization:

“Hubbard is omnipresent, and, in the shape of his organisation, also believed to be ultimately omnipotent, while the day to day administration – although executed in his name – is in the hands of a largely anonymous, or symbolically identified, command. Systematically maintaining Hubbard as the object of devotion, and as the de facto leader, Scientology’s headship is in no need for further legitimation, which means that no challenge to the prevailing power is exerted from the inside.” (Rothstein 2014:21)

Rothstein’s conclusion is that the routinization of Hubbard’s charisma is imbedded in the organization of CoS. Hubbard’s omnipresence is symbolically expressed in the buildings housing the organization. Foreshadowing the notion of ‘charismatic textualization’ discussed in my next chapter, Rothstein describes Hubbard as *architecturized* and *topographized*: Hubbard is forever present through the buildings built in his honor, and, through this, the established power structure within the organization is maintained (Rothstein 2014).

Rothstein’s analysis serves the larger point: CoS’ routinizing of Hubbard’s authority into buildings and physical symbols have proved to be very effective. Still, there are nuances to this, Ron’s Org and Dror Center being obvious examples. I would argue that Ron’s Org and Dror Center re-textualize Hubbard through his scripture, and by that they establish their own way of routinizing Hubbard’s authority into their respective organizations. Ron’s Org and Dror Center thus escape the connection Rothstein claims the CoS assert between Hubbard and the organization of CoS. They simply leap over the whole idea that the religion of Scientology is impossible to practice without the CoS. And they go back to Hubbard’s texts to do so.

7 Balancing the novel and familiar

«[...] schism involves the breaking away from a group or social movement of an individual who is able to secure the support of some part of that movement's following. In order to win that support, the schismatic leader must be able to secure a legitimate claim to their allegiance.» Wallis 1979:180.

L. Ron Hubbard has a unique position in Scientology, and the assertion that Scientology and CoS is one and the same is very strong, both within and outside of the CoS. Ron's Org and Dror Center cater primarily to an audience of Scientologists, and must therefore present convincing arguments for how they can do Scientology outside of the CoS. In Hammer's words, they need to strike a balance between the familiar and the novel (Hammer 2009:215).

One strategy both Ron's Org and Dror Center make use of, is to convince potential followers that they use Hubbard's texts and technology in compliance with how Hubbard envisioned it, while the CoS uses Hubbard's texts and technology in a deviant fashion. To exemplify this, I have examined Ron's Org's work to detect alterations in Scientology texts, and Dror Center's "An Open Letter to all Scientologists" from when they defected from the CoS in 2012. To begin with, I will look at how Hubbard's hagiography is used within the CoS to legitimate their religious claims, and underline central religious doctrines.

7.1 Routinization of Hubbard's charisma within the CoS

In her doctoral thesis, summarized in a chapter in *Controversial New Religions* (2005), Dorthe Refslund Christensen has analyzed the CoS's official hagiography of Hubbard. She has limited her analysis to the book *What is Scientology?* (1997), and has looked at how it depicts Hubbard's early life up until he left college in 1932.

Christensen frames her discussion with concepts such as charisma, routinization of charisma and legitimation. Within the CoS, Hubbard is the ultimate religious source and the one source that legitimizes the claims of the church. She states that through this book the CoS wants to communicate that Hubbard lived an unusual life from his early childhood; that he worked for humankind his whole life; and that Dianetics and Scientology is based on the wisdom and knowledge of one man who dedicated his life to sharing this with mankind. Furthermore,

nothing of this is seen as coincidental. E.g. he did not become interested in Shakespeare at an early age because his mother was a teacher. Rather, she was his mother because he needed someone who could feed his potential, so he could eventually develop Scientology. The events in his life are like a line of arguments which support central aspects of Scientology ideas and self-identity.

Hubbard has been dead since 1986, but remains the religious leader of CoS, and in many ways also the organizational head of the church. In Christensen's view, it appears CoS has escaped the crisis religions often experienced when the religious leader and/or founder dies. The reason for this, Christensen contends, is how Hubbard and Scientology are so closely connected, as well as the organization's hard work to maintain Hubbard as the ultimate legitimizing resource of the religious and therapeutic claims of the CoS. She analyzes the different initiatives taken to both construct and maintain Hubbard as such a legitimizing resource (Christensen 2005:227-228).

As mentioned above, Christensen uses Weber's term *charisma* as a theoretical framework. According to Weber, the term charisma is

“a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. In primitive circumstances this peculiar kind of deference is paid to prophets, to people with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, to leaders in the hunt, and heroes in war. It is very often thought of as resting on magical powers. How the quality in question would be ultimately judged from any ethical, aesthetic, or other such point of view is naturally entirely indifferent for purposes of definition. What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his ‘followers’ or ‘disciples.’” (Weber 1947:358-359).

Charisma is thus a set of social relations: as Christensen explains, it represents access to the supernatural and/or superhuman qualities claimed by, or ascribed to a person; and the acceptance of these claims by a group of followers. If this charisma is not routinized and institutionalized, the charismatic's ideas and authority dies with him or her. In order to transform personal charisma into organizational stability and practicality, personal charisma needs to be transferred to the organization. A successful transition requires that the

charismatic's teachings and practices are considered effective and relevant by his or her followers (Christensen 2005:229-230). In CoS, Christensen argues, this necessary routinization of Hubbard's charisma is done through personification, mythologization and textualization.

The textualization of Hubbard began as early as the beginning of the 1950s, when Hubbard developed Scientology out of the therapeutic practice of Dianetics. The anarchistic nature of Dianetics made it difficult for Hubbard to keep control of his movement and its developments. Christensen points to how the Dianetics technique was branded as something everybody could successfully apply, just by reading the book. However, shortly afterwards, it was claimed that an auditor without the proper training could do irreparable damage to their clients (Christensen 2005:231). Training of auditors became an important activity for the new Scientology movement, and thus began the institutionalization of Hubbard: instead of meeting with Hubbard himself, auditors were trained according to an established routine. Hubbard's signature on the material guaranteed that the material was 'standard'. "Hubbard *is* Standard Tech", Christensen states, "Hubbard, in the form of Standard Tech, is the only way to freedom for man" (Christensen 2005:232). Because of this, it is important for the organization to constantly remind their followers about Hubbard and his efforts to bring forth this technology. If the followers do not accept Hubbard's charismatic claims, the Standard Tech has no legitimacy, and Scientologists could just as well look elsewhere for ultimate salvation. Therefore, Christensen asserts, without Hubbard there would be no reason for people to adhere to Scientology (Christensen 2005:232).

Certain narrative structures seem paradigmatic to the genre of hagiographies, Christensen informs us: "Hagiographies are social and textual constructions produced with the particular aim of informing the recipient about specific paradigmatic events and actions connected to the founder or originator of a religion." (Christensen 2005:233). Christensen cites La Fleur who argues that the difference between a secular biography and a hagiography lies in "the degree to which such a subject will be represented as carrying out a divinely planned mission, being the possessor of a 'call' or visions authenticating such a mission, and having either infallible knowledge or supernatural powers." (LaFleur 1987: 220). Furthermore, a hagiography emphasizes continuity: even very diverse events are tied together in an order where coincidence is eliminated and all events lead up to the fulfillment of some sort of "great plan".

This way the events in a hagiography are made religiously meaningful (Christensen 2005: 233-234). Hubbard's hagiography is closely related to how Scientologists identify themselves and their religion. CoS brand themselves as being an integration of Western science and Eastern philosophy. In Hubbard's hagiography, his penetrating knowledge of both these fields is authenticated, which thus legitimizes Scientology's claim to hold a deep understanding of these two perspectives. Every assertion put forward by Hubbard's hagiographers is made out of the need to interpret random events in his life as meaningful in the context of a Scientology worldview. Coincidence is therefore eliminated and transformed into historical necessity, and Hubbard is depicted as someone who lived his whole life working toward one specific goal, namely to explore the human mind so as to save mankind (Christensen 2005:234).

Throughout her discussion, Christensen shows how Hubbard's childhood and early youth are presented so as to describe someone who is adventurous, curious and eager to learn, and at the same time dissatisfied with the answers he receives from what are the supposedly wisest of men. Hubbard is depicted as someone who masters the science of the West and the philosophy of the East, but who is still not convinced. He is also described as a person who knew from early on that he was going to do big things in his life, or, in Scientology terms: he was cause and not effect, from his early childhood.

The ultimate textualization of Hubbard, Christensen argue, is in the form of the Religious Technology Center (RTC), which was established in 1982 and controls the trademarks of Scientology. The main purpose of RTC is "to keep Scientology working by safeguarding the proper use of the trademarks, protecting the public, and making sure that the powerful technology remains in good hands and is properly used." (Christensen 2005:245). Not only is Hubbard's technology institutionalized through the intricate system of training and courses; but now the words and formulations made by Hubbard are also trademarked and are in that way protected from possible alterations. By doing this, the CoS can guarantee that the technology they deliver is "standard", and that it comes directly from Hubbard. Hubbard is thus "kept alive" and relevant in CoS, as the only provider of the only technology which is seen as successful and workable

Christensen points to another way of "keeping Hubbard alive" in the organization, namely through *mythologization* and *personification*. Christensen identifies this in the organization

Commodore's Messenger Organization (CMO), which was originally made up of children and youths who worked as messengers for Hubbard. Today this organization has the task of keeping Hubbard interesting and attractive in CoS. Among other things, they promote Hubbard through *the Ron Series* and by making sure that Hubbard is talked about positively by individuals throughout the CoS. The promotion of Hubbard can be seen as both a dissemination tool, as Christensen suggests, as well as a form of spiritual inspiration (Christensen 2005:248). Christensen asserts that this focus on Hubbard's life is a strategy for making Hubbard as multifaceted as possible, so he can appeal to the most diverse people (Christensen 2005:248-249).

7.2 Ron's Org and alterations of Hubbard scripture

A shared trait of the Ron's Orgers I have met is their belief that certain of Hubbard's texts has been altered and manipulated. They believe Hubbard died much earlier than officially recognized, and/or that he lost control over the church during the last years he was alive. Max Hauri estimates that Hubbard died in 1982, and says he can prove that Hubbard's main works were written between 1950 and 1975. The texts released after this date have 'minimal output,' Max argues, and were probably not authored by Hubbard. The Ron's Orgers I have spoken to are also certain there have been alterations to books actually written by Hubbard. A part of their mission is thus to determine which texts are the original and legitimate works of Hubbard, and which texts are not.

Max Hauri and others have devoted a lot of effort to tracing these alterations in order to check their authenticity. On the Ron's Org webpage, you can get redirected to a Netherlands-based online library of Scientology books³⁶. The site also has an overview of alterations made in Scientology scripture. This is an ongoing and elaborate task. Older editions of Scientology books can be difficult to trace, as CoS routinely collects and destroys old copies. In the Ron's Org headquarters in Grenchen, there is a large library of different editions of the standard works of Scientology. These need to be read in tandem to discover potential alterations. An example of such alterations is the sentence: "Space, Energy, Objects, Form and Time are the result of considerations made and/or agreed upon or not by the static, and are perceived solely because the static considers that it can perceive them," in which the only change is that the underlined words are deleted. Small changes like this are seen as crucial for how Scientology

³⁶ <http://ronsorg.ch/> and <http://www.stss.nl/>

technology will work.

Being one of the most eager contributors to this task, Max is giving Ron's Org legitimacy as being adherents of the true Scientology, while the CoS represents an altered and false version. Their strategy is thus showing how they go back to the source, practicing Scientology as it was originally intended.

7.3 Dror Center's open letter

In the case of the Dror Center, two letters contributed to drawing the group away from the CoS: one was the New Year's Eve letter from Debbie Cook (2011); the other was Dror's open letter (2012). Both of these letters reflect a tradition deeply rooted in Scientology, namely using Hubbard scripture to legitimate the articulation of grievances.

In her New Year's-email, dated 31 December 2011, Cook begins by emphasizing her commitment to the technology of Scientology and Dianetics, and to the works of Hubbard. She also establishes her role as a high ranking member by stating her positions and merits within the CoS. The rest of the letter is built up by quotes from Hubbard policy letters followed by Cook's discussion of how the specific policy letter is not being followed. Her main grievances are membership rates; fundraising for buildings; 'out tech,' or how dissidents are being handled; and, lastly, a harsh critique of the current leadership of the church. The letter ends with Cook urging her readers to use their skills acquired as Scientologists to do something about the situation.

The open letter from the Dror Center, dated 4 July 2012, is build up in the same manner, emphasizing the skills and devotion of those writing the letter. But the Dror Center goes further in placing the responsibility for the wrongs done in the church on David Miscavige: the whole letter is put forward as an 'Assignment of Treason Condition' on Miscavige, and Hubbard policy letters are used to substantiate their claim. At the beginning of the letter there is another letter, entitled *The History of the Attached Letter*, dated 11 July 2012, a week after the open letter. That letter recounts the story of how Tami and Dani Lemberger were declared Suppressive Persons by the CoS even before they had released the 'Assignment of Treason Condition' letter.

Dror's open letter can be seen as a legitimation strategy for the Dror Center's split from CoS. The letter is written in a language which is clearly directed to Scientologists: the terminology is full of abbreviations only Scientologists will understand, and typical 'Scientologese' terms like 'regging,' 'good standing,' 'upstat,' 'wog,' 'data line,' 'standard tech' et cetera are prevalent throughout the letter. To make themselves an alternative for devoted Scientologists in real terms, Dror has to show the Scientology world that they adhere to the teachings of Hubbard, and that they are well trained in Scientology technology. This way, they show their followers that the Dror Center is in continuity with the tradition of Scientology, and people who identify as Scientologists will recognize their activities as consistent with Scientology.

At the same time, a schismatic group like the Dror Center needs to show the world how they *differ* from their mother organization. In the letter, the distancing from CoS is done in a very systematic fashion: First of all is the attached letter about the circumstances around the 'Assignment of Treason Condition' letter. It tells the story of how Tami and Dani Lemberger, after finishing the letter, went to the US to visit with both independent Scientologists and old friends within the CoS. This was in June, the letter was to be released when the Lembergers returned in early July. After a little over a week in the US, they were handed a letter telling them that they were declared 'Suppressive Persons'³⁷. The pre-history letter shows how the Lembergers had to turn to their new, independent Scientology friends when their old friends in the church were forced to show them their backs. This turn of events is depicted as sad, as they have lost a large number of longtime friends. At the same time, it is portrayed as a necessary turn, enabling them to work with their new indie-friends to make Scientology available to all. To make it clear how they feel about David Miscavige, he is compared to Mubarak and Gaddafi: "The days of monopolies and tyrants are over" (Lemberger 2012).

7.4 Back to the source

The close connection between Hubbard and Scientology is something which is acknowledged by Scientologists both inside and outside of the CoS. For the CoS, it is important to emphasize how it is impossible to practice Scientology outside of the church. Much of their attention is focused on the task of making the connection between Hubbard and the CoS

³⁷ If someone is declared a 'Suppressive Person', or 'SP', other Scientologists need to 'disconnect' from that person. A 'SP' is considered being damaging for the people around her.
<http://www.scientology.org/faq/scientology-attitudes-and-practices/what-is-a-suppressive-person.html>

indisputable, and to make this point clear to everybody within the Scientology movement milieu. There is no way to total freedom outside of the church is the CoS mantra - the CoS is the gatekeeper and guarantist for standard technology. As these two last chapters have shown, the CoS underlines this point through opulent buildings, where Hubbard is depicted as omnipresent and omnipotent, as Rothstein would argue. They also use Hubbard's hagiography to make the connection between the founder and his church irrefutable. This is powerful strategies. However, my analysis has shown how independent Scientology groups evade the coupling between Hubbard and the CoS, by going back to the source, thus bypassing the CoS connection. They even use Hubbard's scripture to *criticize* the CoS, depriving the CoS of any legitimation whatsoever.

8 Concluding remarks

“Now that I’m here, I feel really stupid. I hate fieldwork. I hate speaking Russian. And I hate myself. What in the world is the point? What is it that I want to find out?” Fieldnotes, December 2013

In this project I have looked at the history and schismatic process of two independent Scientology groups: Ron’s Org and Dror Center. I started out with a short history of the religious organization they schismed out of, namely the CoS. I have then described different historical factors which laid the foundation for subsequent schisms: First I made an analysis of the organizational structures within the CoS, concluding that it is a uniquely legitimate movement. According to Wallis’ theory on propensity to schism, this is something that can protect an organization against schisms, because it is difficult for potential defectors to make a legitimate alternative outside of the organization. However, if the *means* of legitimation of religious claims are available to more than one person, a uniquely legitimate movement can produce schisms because there is little room for different opinions. When Hubbard secluded himself from the day-to-day affairs of the CoS, the means of legitimation was no longer only available to Hubbard. More people could argue that they represented the true succession of Hubbard’s intentions, and had thus the opportunity to break away from the CoS and start something of their own. Next, I looked at a key event in the schismatic history of Scientology: The Mission Holders’ Conference of 1982. I have argued that the defections this event, and others, lead to, has created a large Scientology movement milieu also outside of the CoS. The larger Scientology movement milieu has made it possible for new independent groups to form, because they can attract followers from a large number of people already familiar with Scientology. When these historical factors were accounted for, I described my visits to Ron’s Org and Dror Center, and presented a short history of each of the groups. In my last analysis chapter, I focused on Ron’s Org and Dror Center’s resources, and some of the strategies they deploy to survive as relatively small organizations in the relatively large Scientology movement milieu. One of the things I focused on was Ron’s Org and Dror Center’s use of Hubbard scripture to legitimate to the Scientology movement milieu, and other potential followers, that they represent a truer Scientology than that of CoS; a version of Scientology closer to what Hubbard had envisioned. Now it is time to sum up what I have found out, and make some conclusive remarks.

What is it that I want to find out? What is the point?

My rather pessimistic field notes quoted in the beginning of this chapter reflects well on what a project like this is all about: What is it that I want to find out? And what is the point? My research questions have been articulated around the issue of the processes that potentially leads to schism. The questions I wanted answers to were: Which factors within the organizational structure of CoS makes the organization more prone to schisms? Why become independent? What kind of resources are necessary to establish a successful schismatic group? What kind of strategies do Ron's Org and Dror Center use to survive as independent Scientology groups? The overarching question is simply: What does it take to become an independent Scientology group? The questions I have raised have proved to be fruitful, because the answers to them show us that there is not *one* incident, or *one* factor that lies behind a schism. There are several conditions playing together, which may or may not produce a schism. A valid objection is, off course, that I already knew the end result: in the cases I have studied, it *did* produce schisms. If that was not a given already from the start, I might have looked at the conditions differently. In my research, I have actively looked for events and structures that I, and the scholars I base my analysis on, believe can have the potential to lead to schisms.

My analysis have provided a systematical description of CoS as a uniquely legitimate movement, and thus partially answered the question of 'which factors within the organizational structure of CoS makes the organization more prone to schisms?' The way in which the CoS suppress dissent, is one of the factors that come into play. How Hubbard insisted on himself as the one and only Source of the Scientology technology, is another. My analysis has strengthened Wallis' theory on propensity to schism: When the means of legitimation became available to more people, following Hubbard's "social death", the totalitarian structure within the CoS gave people with dissenting opinions an opportunity to leave and secure a following. If the CoS had been more open for differences within the organization, the schismatic leaders may have stayed in the church. Schismatic leaders were given an opportunity, and some of them took it.

This leads me over to the next question I wanted answered: Why would any Scientologist want to break out of the CoS in the first place? This is a valid question, especially given the strong connection between the Scientology technology and the CoS described in chapter 3.

The tight rein the mission holders, field officers, and CoS executives felt they were held in in the 1980s, is without doubt a factor. Chapter 4, about the Mission Holders' Conference, does not paint a pretty picture of the CoS in those days. If I had focused more on the controversies surrounding the CoS, I could probably have presented hundreds of reasons for leaving.

Although I have left many accounts and scandals out of this assignment, I would argue that what I have put forth regarding the situation in the 1980s, makes it understandable that some CoS members chose to leave. Moreover, in many of the cases described in this project, the people who left was kicked out by the CoS.

The next question I asked was: What kind of resources are necessary to establish a successful schismatic group? In chapter 4 about the Mission Holder's Conference, Pizza's discussion on 'schism as midwife' show how the vast amount of people bleeding out of the CoS, created a fertile soil for new ideas and innovative ways of being Scientologist. The Scientology movement milieu expanded, became more diverse, and ceased to be solely focused around the CoS. The people outside of the CoS, but still within the Scientology movement milieu, are the same people who potentially will show up at a Ron's Org, or in the Dror Center. Ron's Org and Dror Center survive because of the relatively large independent scene within the Scientology movement milieu. Other resources schismatic groups need is mundane things like a place to be, and money. To be able to offer the services their followers expect, they need to be trained in the religious technology; they need books, check-sheets, course manuals and so on. The ability to convince potential followers that they deliver 'Standard Tech', and that they have religious credibility is also important.

On that note, we have to go back to Wallis' theory, where he asserts that the "propensity to schism is directly related to the perceived availability of sources of legitimation within a movement." (Wallis 1979:181). The last question was: What kind of strategies do Ron's Org and Dror Center use to survive as independent Scientology groups? With the examples in chapter 7, of how Ron's Org and Dror Center, respectively, make use of Hubbard's text, I have illustrated Wallis' point. To be able to secure a claim to religious legitimation, Ron's Org and Dror Center have to show their adherents that they master the language of Scientology, that they know the Scientology technology, and that they represent a correct interpretation of Hubbard's intentions. Both these groups use their skills and knowledge about

the religious doctrine of Scientology to convince potential followers they are the best Scientology alternative.

Suggestions for further research

As I look back at this project, I see that there are things I wish I had elaborated more on. There are also many nuances I have had to leap over, because of the natural constraint of a thesis like this. Throughout this document, for example, I treat Ron's Org as *one* organization, when it in reality is comprised of many small organizations, with at times also very differing ways of doing things. The Ron's Org Network is an umbrella many independent Scientology groups gather under. Research on the differences between these organizations would be interesting, especially in a Russian context. Lena Venkova talked a lot about how Russians are vaccinated against totalitarian structures because of the experiences under the Soviet Era. I would be very intrigued if someone followed up this connection! Generally, I think studies on how small groups like the Ron's Orgs and Dror Center relate to the world around them and to other independent Scientology groups would be very interesting.

The more I get familiar with the Scientology language and practices, the more I want to find out. I hope that future studies of Scientology will dig even deeper in the vast amount of canonized text this religion is build up around. If you then add all the *non-CoS* material, the quantities are even larger. The material is enormous, and the study of Scientology thus makes the promise of endless research opportunities.

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