

# The Arizona Skeptic

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## Dianetics: From Out of the Blue?

By Jeff Jacobsen

L. Ron Hubbard, author of the book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* and founder of the Church of Scientology, was a science-fiction writer before penning the book that would launch his fame. *Dianetics* is a self-help book published in 1950 which claimed to include new and unique theories on how the mind works. Hubbard claimed that this work was totally unprecedented; "Man had no inkling whatever of Dianetics. None. This was a bolt from the blue."<sup>1</sup> So there would be no doubt as to the originality of his ideas, Hubbard wrote that "dianetics borrowed nothing but was first discovered and organized; only after the organization was completed and a technique evolved was it compared to existing information."<sup>2</sup> According to Hubbard, some philosophers of the past helped provide the foundation of Dianetics, but the remaining research had been done "what the navigator calls, 'off the chart.'"<sup>3</sup>

*Dianetics* became a New York Times Best seller in 1950, and has since sold many millions of copies.

Was this a totally unique theory of the mind wrought from Hubbard's "many years of exact research and careful testing"<sup>4</sup>, or was it a loose composite of already existing theories mixed with novel, unproven ideas? This paper proposes to show that, despite Hubbard's claims of originality, many of the ideas in *Dianetics* were already existing and even in vogue before *Dianetics* appeared. Either Hubbard really studied other works before he wrote *Dianetics*, or he wasted years of his time re-inventing the wheel.

Although there are no reference notes in *Dianetics* to see what are Hubbard's ideas and what are borrowed, we can quickly eliminate the idea that Dianetics appeared "from the blue" by Hubbard's own statements. In *Dianetics* itself is the statement that "many schools of mental healing from the Aesculapian to the modern hypnotist were studied after the basic philosophy of dianetics had been postulated."<sup>5</sup> Alfred Korzybski, Emil Kraepelin, Franz Mesmer, Ivan Pavlov, Herbert Spencer, and others are mentioned as resources in *Dianetics*, so we must assume Hubbard was crediting

these people to some degree. He must certainly have known, then, of at least some of the research from his time which will be mentioned in this article. Hubbard in other settings acknowledged Sigmund Freud (especially through Commander "Snake" Thompson),<sup>6</sup> Count Alfred Korzybski,<sup>7</sup> and Aleister Crowley<sup>8</sup> as contributors to his ideas on the human mind. In a speech in 1950, Hubbard stated that he had spent much time in the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital medical library in 1945 during a stay for ulcers, where "I was able to get in a year's study."<sup>9</sup>

In fact, most of the theories and ideas in *Dianetics* can be found in scientific literature previous to the first publishing of Hubbard's theories. Parts of *Dianetics*, for example, have striking resemblance to two articles found in Volume 28 (1941) of the *Psychoanalytic Review*.

Dianetics theory posits the existence of engrams. These are memories of events that occur around us when our analytical mind is unconscious, and they are recorded in a separate area of the mind called the reactive mind. A seemingly unique theory in *Dianetics* is that these memories begin being stored "in the cells of the zygote—which is to say, with conception."<sup>10</sup> These engrams can cause problems for the person throughout life unless handled through Dianetics auditing.

Dr. J. Sadger, nine years before the introduction of *Dianetics* in 1950, wrote that several of his patients were not cured of their psychological problems until he had taken them back to their existence as sperm or ovum. He declared that "there exists certainly a memory, although an unconscious one, of embryonic days, which persists throughout life and may continuously determine an action."<sup>11</sup> Sadger spends much time explaining how his patients' memories of the time when they were zygotes or even sperm or ovum had affected their adult behaviors, noting that "an unconscious lasting memory must have remained from these embryonic days."<sup>12</sup> There were "unmistakable dreams" of being a sperm in the father's testicle.

Engrams, those unconscious memories of Dianetics, are said by Hubbard to be stored in the cells of the body and passed on to their clone cells and finally on to the adult being. Hubbard claimed to discover that "patients sometimes have a feeling that they are sperms or ovums...

this is called the sperm dream."<sup>13</sup> It was impossible, he claimed, to deny to a pre-clear that he could remember being a sperm. But Sadger wrote about this first, and Hubbard could well have read this in his "year's study" at Oak Knoll Hospital.

Another coincidental discovery of Hubbard and Sadger was that mothers often attempt to abort their child. Sadger states that "so many a fall or other accident of a pregnant woman is nothing else than an attempt at abortion on the part of the unconscious, not to mention those cases where the mother seeks to free herself more or less forcibly from the unwanted child."<sup>14</sup> Hubbard concurs; "Attempted abortion is very common,"<sup>15</sup> and in fact "twenty or thirty abortion attempts are not uncommon in the aberee."<sup>16</sup> Again, not an idea "from the blue."

Life in the womb was not very kind, according to one of Sadger's patients: "Perhaps when father performed coitus with mother in her pregnancy I was much shaken and rocked. Shall that have been one reason that I so easily became dizzy and that all my life I have had an aversion even as a child from swings and carousels?"<sup>17</sup> Hubbard, in a similar vein, insists that the mother "should not have coitus forced upon her. For every coital experience is an engram in the child during pregnancy."<sup>18</sup> "Papa becomes passionate and baby has the sensation of being put into a running washing machine."<sup>19</sup>

There are at least three other similarities like the "sperm dreams", commonality of abortion attempts, and fetus discomfort during parental sex. This seems quite a coincidence, but it is not known whether Hubbard read Sadger's article. Suffice it to say that these are major ideas in Dianetics, but they are not new ideas.

The second article under discussion from *Psychoanalytic Review* deals with the unbearable conditions during birth and the affects of these in later life. Grace W. Pailthorpe, M.D., argued in this 1941 article that patients should be psychoanalyzed more deeply into the period of infancy, or at least to the 'trauma of birth'. Otherwise no lasting therapeutic effect could be expected. Birth has traumatized all of us, she declares, and these unconscious memories drive us in our adulthood. "It is only when deep analysis has finally exposed the unconscious deviations of

our vital force"<sup>20</sup> that we can recover and enjoy life.

In *Dianetics*, the reader is left with the impression that the ideas of birth and pre-birth memories and traumas, multiple abortion attempts, and fetal discomfort in the womb are new discoveries. As can be seen, this is not the case. And there are many other impressions of "new" and "unique" that are incorrect as well.

With Pailthorpe's article, for example, we can also note the dramatic similarities of Dianetics with simple Freudian psychoanalysis. There is in both the return to past times in the patient's life to search for the source of his or her current problems. Once these problematic memories are discovered and treated the problems vanish. In Pailthorpe's article we have a man who was hopelessly traumatized by the events at his birth. He was cruelly kicked out of his "home" in the womb, and his resistance to this was assumed to be the cause of the immediate traumas of the nurse's and mother's attentions (which were "painful to the child's sensitive body"<sup>21</sup>). These traumas caused headaches and social disorders in adult life. Psychoanalysis discovered the causes (birth trauma) and when these were brought to the conscious level with their meaning explained, the headaches and social dysfunctions were alleviated.

Dianetics follows this line of reasoning to a great degree. According to Hubbard, engrams (past traumas) are discovered in the pre-clear's past, and bringing these engrams into consciousness (from the reactive to the analytic mind) alleviates the disorder. Hubbard claims that after auditing people (he had the pre-clear lie on a couch in Freudian imitation), "psychosomatic illness...by dianetic technique...has been eradicated entirely in every case."<sup>22</sup>

A theory in psychoanalysis known as abreaction is so similar to Dianetics (and preceding it by many years) that it must be mentioned in more detail here. A 1949 article by Nathaniel Thornton, D.Sc., gives a brief overview of abreaction and his views on its value. Abreaction began with Freud and was considered early on to be "one of the very cornerstones of analytic therapy."<sup>23</sup> This is a method of freeing a patient "from the deleterious results of certain pathogenic affects by bringing these affects back into the conscious mind and re-experiencing them in all their original force and intensity."<sup>24</sup> A patient of one of Freud's colleagues, under hypnosis and "with a free

expression of emotion”<sup>25</sup> was freed of all her psycho-somatic symptoms using abreactive therapy. Pierre Janet is credited in the article with utilizing abreactive therapy to restore painful memories to consciousness and thus relieving a patient's symptoms. A patient being treated with this method must continually work through such painful memories until the patient “could accept the fact that the original experience no longer loomed up as a threat to him.”<sup>26</sup>

Thornton concludes that abreaction is a useful tool simply because “confession is good for the soul”, and that talking to someone about one's problems is almost always therapeutic.

“Auditing” in Dianetics is a virtual clone of abreactive therapy. Auditing basically is searching through a person's past until an engram is discovered, then continually reexperiencing the event when the engram (painful memory) was instilled “until the pre-clear is no longer affected” by the memory.<sup>27</sup> Hubbard takes abreaction to an extreme and declares that once a person has removed all his engrams, then Dianetics has done its job and an almost god-like human results. Once again, the similarity of an already existing theory on the mind is presented as a great discovery in *Dianetics*.

Alfred Korzybski, mentioned in passing in *Dianetics*,<sup>28</sup> owes a debt to Hubbard for making his theories well-known, according to some former followers of Dianetics. Bent Corydon, a former Mission holder of Hubbard's Church of Scientology, has made a convincing comparison of Dianetics and Korzybski's writings, demonstrating that there is in essence little difference between many aspects of the two.<sup>29</sup> In support of this comparison, it should be noted that there was a “Korzybski fad”<sup>30</sup> sweeping through the science-fiction community in the 1940's, of which Hubbard was a member, and that Hubbard, as mentioned above, had stated the contribution Korzybski made in his research.

Corydon also mentions the book *The Mneme* published in 1923 by Richard Simon, wherein not only the idea of engrams, but the very word itself is used. The word “engram” is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary as deriving from Simon's book.

*Cybernetics*, published in 1948,<sup>31</sup> compares the human mind to the newly developing technology of computers. Dianetics also tells us to “consider the analytical mind as a computing

machine.”<sup>32</sup> Cybernetics speaks of “affective tone” scales,<sup>33</sup> as does Dianetics in a remarkably similar vein.<sup>34</sup> *Cybernetics* was a very popular work at the time Hubbard was writing *Dianetics*.

We have seen that many of the ideas in *Dianetics* which were claimed to be unique were in fact current in the study of the mind at the time of, or just before, the introduction of Dianetics. It is difficult to see whether Hubbard had studied some of these works during his “many years of exact research,”<sup>35</sup> but as mentioned previously he does acknowledge other researchers. At any rate, no book is written in a vacuum, so we may conclude from the evidence that Hubbard was aware of at least some of this research previous to writing his work. Barring acknowledgment somewhere by Hubbard, or a list of articles and works he had read, we can only guess as to the others.

It seems safe to conclude that the theories presented in *Dianetics* did not arrive “out of the blue” as claimed, but were instead a synthesis of previous, uncredited works. In that case, is there any reason to discount the ideas in *Dianetics*? There certainly is. There are outlandish, unsubstantiated claims made by Hubbard, including the possibility that cancer may be cured by Dianetic processing,<sup>36</sup> that colds and accidents can be eradicated,<sup>37</sup> IQ improved,<sup>38</sup> life extended,<sup>39</sup> and total recall enjoyed.<sup>40</sup> None of this is proven in any way other than constant mention of previous research. The problem with this research is that there is no tangible evidence of its existence. Hubbard in a lecture stated that “my records are in little notebooks, scribbles, in pencil most of them. Names and addresses are lost... there was a chaotic picture....”<sup>41</sup> A certain Ms. Benton asked Hubbard for his notes to validate his research, but when she saw them, “she finally threw up her hands in horror and started in on the project [validation of research] clean.”<sup>42</sup> He was putting this into the hands of valid researchers “whose word can't be disputed” so Dianetics could be legitimized by the scientific professions.

Unfortunately, none of Hubbard's claimed research, nor those of his valid researchers can be found today, if they ever really existed. And if the methods and statistical results of the supposed research are not available, they cannot be checked and duplicated as the scientific method calls for. Anyone can make as many

outlandish claims as he wants, but the research must be accessible and reproducible to support those claims if he brandishes scientific validity.

*Dianetics* is designed as a how-to manual for psychoanalysis. Anyone who reads the book should be able to perform Dianetics auditing and help his fellow man become "clear". "Dianetics is not being released to a profession... it is insufficiently complicated to warrant years of study in some university."<sup>43</sup> It is better to audit someone, said Hubbard, regardless of how well, than to not audit at all.

But this seems a bit reckless. Auditing can produce "tears and wailings,"<sup>44</sup> and "a patient...that...bounces about, all unconscious of the action."<sup>45</sup> Regardless of the auditor's abilities, and regardless of how traumatic a session becomes for the pre-clear, "If an auditor...can sit and whistle while Rome burns before him and be prepared to grin about it, then he will do an optimum job."<sup>46</sup> This sounds more like quackery than therapy.

Children often have engrams that are restimulated by their parents. Hubbard states that it may be necessary to remove the children from their parents if this is the case, until the engrams are processed.<sup>47</sup> Here again we have Hubbard making an outlandish proposal of splitting families in order to produce healthier people.

The cells of the zygote, according to Dianetics theory, record sounds during a period of pain (Hubbard often uses a husband beating his pregnant wife as an example), such as "Take that! Take it, I tell you. You've got to take it!"<sup>48</sup> From this engram we are to believe that the child grows up to be a thief. Cellular recordings of sounds by the cells can even be in another language unknown to the adult or child and still cause similar problems. All of this, again, has no evidence accompanying it, and without such evidence it may as well be classified as mere science-fiction.

We have in *Dianetics* a work by a science-fiction writer who claims to have created a totally new and foolproof handbook of the mind with no documentation to prove his claimed research. This book has been actively sold by Hubbard's Church of Scientology for many years, and yet it is simply a synthesis of already published ideas with bizarre, unsubstantiated claims thrown in. The theories in this book, other than those found in previous works by others, have never been scientifically validated,

and in fact, one attempt came up dry.<sup>49</sup> There is little scholastic or societal benefit to be derived from this work. S.I. Hayakawa put it well in his review of *Dianetics*: "The appalling thing revealed by dianetics about our culture is that it takes a 452-page book full of balderdash to get some people to sit down and seriously listen to each other!"<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>quoted in *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman?*, by Bent Corydon and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1987) p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>L. Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Los Angeles: American Saint Hill Organization, 1950), 12th printing, paperback, August 1975, p. 340. (Henceforth *Dianetics*.)

<sup>3</sup>ibid. p.400.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. p. ix.

<sup>5</sup>ibid. p.122.

<sup>6</sup>Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah* (N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1987), pp.230-231.

<sup>7</sup>L. Ron Hubbard, cassette tape, "Introduction to Dianetics," Dianetics Lecture Series 1. 1950. Bridge Publications, Inc.

<sup>8</sup>Stewart Lamont, Religion, Inc.: The Church of Scientology (London: Harrap, 1986) p.21.

<sup>9</sup>"The History of Dianetics and Scientology" cassette tape.

<sup>10</sup>*Dianetics*, p.130.

<sup>11</sup>Dr. J. Sadger, "Preliminary Study of the Psychic Life of the Fetus and the Primary Germ." *Psychoanalytic Review* July 1941 28:3. p.333

<sup>12</sup>ibid. pp.343-4.

<sup>13</sup>*Dianetics*, p.294.

<sup>14</sup>Sadger, p.336.

<sup>15</sup>*Dianetics*, p. 156.

<sup>16</sup>*Dianetics*, p.158.

<sup>17</sup>Sadger, p.352.

<sup>18</sup>*Dianetics*, p.158.

<sup>19</sup>*Dianetics*, p.130.

<sup>20</sup>Grace W. Pailthorpe, M.D., "Deflection of Energy, as a Result of Birth Trauma, and It's Bearing Upon Character Formation."

*Psychoanalytic Review* July 1941 28:3 pp. 305-326, p.326.

<sup>21</sup>ibid. p.307.

<sup>22</sup>*Dianetics*, p.91.

<sup>23</sup>Nathaniel Thornton, D.Sc., "What is the Therapeutic Value of Abreaction?" *Psychoanalytic Review* 1949 36:411-415. p.411.

<sup>24</sup>ibid.

<sup>25</sup>ibid. p.412.

<sup>26</sup>ibid. p.413.

<sup>27</sup>*Dianetics*, p.206.

<sup>28</sup>*Dianetics*, p.62.

<sup>29</sup>Corydon and Hubbard, Jr., pp. 266-269.

<sup>30</sup>Albert I. Berger, "Towards a Science of the Nuclear Mind: Science-fiction Origins of Dianetics", *Science Fiction Studies*, 1989, vol. 16:123-141. p.135.

<sup>31</sup>Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics; or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1948).

<sup>32</sup>*Dianetics*, p.43.

<sup>33</sup>Wiener, p.150.

<sup>34</sup>*Dianetics*, p.323ff.

<sup>35</sup>*Dianetics*, p.ix.

<sup>36</sup>*Dianetics*, p.93.

<sup>37</sup>*Dianetics*, p.92.

<sup>38</sup>*Dianetics*, pp. 90, 193.

<sup>39</sup>*Dianetics*, p.170.

<sup>40</sup>*Dianetics*, p.417.

<sup>41</sup>L. Ron Hubbard, cassette tape, "What Dianetics Can Do," Dianetics Lecture Series 2. 1950. Bridge Publications, Inc.

<sup>42</sup>ibid.

<sup>43</sup>*Dianetics*, p.168.

<sup>44</sup>*Dianetics*, p.253.

<sup>45</sup>*Dianetics*, p.278.

<sup>46</sup>*Dianetics*, p.179.

<sup>47</sup>*Dianetics*, pp.154, 155.

<sup>48</sup>*Dianetics*, p.212.

<sup>49</sup>Jack Fox, Alvin E. Davis, and B. Lebovits, "An Experimental Investigation of Hubbard's Engram Hypothesis (Dianetics)," *Psychological Newsletter* 1959, 10, 131-134.

<sup>50</sup>S.I. Hayakawa, "From Science-fiction to Fiction-science", *Etc.: A Review of General Semantics*, 1951 Vol. 8 (4) 280-293. p. 293.

## Book Review

*Bryant's Law and Other BroadSides* by John Bryant

1989, The Socratic Press, P.O. Box 66683, St. Petersburg Beach, FL 33736-6683

Reviewed By Jim Lippard

I obtained a copy of this book from its author (who publishes a number of books through his Socratic Press) because of one article contained within it, titled "A Skeptical View of *The Skeptical Inquirer*." I am always looking for constructive criticism of skeptical viewpoints, but I am afraid I did not find it in Mr. Bryant's book.

Bryant bills himself as "an internationally-recognized philosopher and logician." In fact, he has only a B.A. in mathematics and is unknown in academic philosophical circles. He has published a number of papers in philosophical journals, but despite his claim to have published "the seminal work in relative modal logic," I have never seen a single citation of his work. Bryant defends his anonymity with the following explanation: "Do you know why well-known people get so much publicity? Because they're well-known. And do you know why they're so well-known? Because they get so much publicity. ... it remains the case that Mr. Bryant and his work are still not well-known as compared with the best-known authors. And what's the reason? Simple: Because he's not well-known." I think I can come up with a better explanation.

Bryant's critique of *The Skeptical Inquirer*, which appears in his book in a section titled "Some Moons for the Sons of Science," is that it is "biased." He brings up two cases in which he claims that CSICOP is guilty "if not of academic malfeasance—then at least of ... gross and shameful ignorance." Regular readers of this publication know that I have not hesitated to criticize skeptics (and material in *SI*) for various failings (see Lippard 1990), but I am afraid Bryant's cases hardly qualify. His first case is *SI* promotional material from 1986 in which mention is made of people who make investment decisions on the basis of astrology, with the obvious implication that this is unwise. Bryant takes issue with this, claiming that the Rocky Mountain Futures Forecast and ASTRO services, both of which use astrology, have been quite successful in the financial arena. Unfortunately, he fails to give sufficient data to support this claim (only that the former averaged 26% net profit over a three year period and that

the latter both earned him some money and was ranked the number one stock market timing service for "a number of months" by *Timer Digest*. (In another piece in Bryant's book, he argues that the gambler's fallacy is no fallacy—that is, Bryant claims that multiple throws of dice, for example, are not really independent of each other and the probability of a particular face coming up changes over time. I suggest that this critic of *SI* might benefit from reading an *SI* article on random walks as a source of illusory correlations (Rotton 1985), as well as a book on the foundations of probability and induction (e.g., Pollock 1990).)

His second case is that the same piece of promotional material denies the reality of psi. This, maintains Bryant, is unreasonable "not merely because so many of the scientific establishment (including several universities and government agencies) *do* support psi research, but also because one of the Fellows of CSICOP is Paul Edwards, editor of *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, an eight-volume work found in almost every college library which just so happens to contain a very long beautifully-researched and strongly-convincing article which *forcefully supports the thesis that psi is real*" (emphasis in original). (This article, by the way, cites only J.B. Rhine's Pearce-Pratt experiments and S.G. Soal's now-discredited experiments with Basil Shackleton as evidence for psi. See Markwick (1985).) Bryant's main argument is that there is a substantial support for the reality of psi within the scientific community, but he gives nothing to support this other than his reference to a single article in a philosophical (not scientific) publication from the late 1960's. According to Bryant, the *SI* promotional piece contains an instance of "if not of gross and shameful ignorance of the published research support psi, then there is *at least* a gross and shameful ignorance of the degree of acceptance which psi has won among establishment science." Why believe Bryant? He doesn't give us anything but his assertion. While I think there is more support in the scientific community for psi than some skeptics care to admit (see, for examples, the critical commentaries following Rao & Palmer's (1987) article arguing for psi), the overwhelming majority is still against it, as parapsychologists frequently bemoan (see the same set of commentaries).

In a postscript following Bryant's short attack, he prints a letter submitted to *SI* which

went unpublished. In this letter, he touts Whitley Strieber's book *Communion* as "a clear effort to investigate alien encounters in a scientific and rational way." Say what? The fact that pro-UFO investigation organizations such as the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) dismiss Strieber is evidence enough that Strieber is beyond the fringe, but I fail to see how anyone can read his work and obtain Bryant's conclusions. (Here I might suggest Bryant read Philip Klass's work on UFO abductions (Klass 1988).)

Bryant's letter goes on to claim that the October 1989 television program "UFO Coverup?" (an atrocious live program hosted by Mike Farrell) was "powerful" and "convincing," and complains that skeptic James Oberg had essentially nothing to say. I think the latter is more due to the format of the program (which gave the skeptics no more than five minutes time) and perhaps to shock on the part of Oberg at the absurdity of what had come before in the program. That Bryant found this program convincing illustrates a complete lack of familiarity with the skeptical literature on UFOs. Combined with his credulous opinion of *Communion*, I am strongly inclined to doubt his ability to critically analyze arguments.

At the conclusion of Bryant's rejected letter, he suggests that *SI*'s audience might benefit from reading a number of "very skeptical views of *SI*"—his own "A Skeptical Look at *The Skeptical Inquirer*," Robert Anton Wilson's book *The New Inquisition*, and chapter five of Michel Gauquelin's *Birthtimes*. I have just described the first of these. The second, Wilson's book, was critically reviewed in a past issue of this publication and found to contain extremely shoddy research and numerous inaccuracies (Lippard 1988). I have not read the third of these, but I suspect it is an account of Gauquelin's involvement in the CSICOP "Mars Effect" controversy (a genuine example of skeptical failure) which I briefly described in my article on misrepresentations by skeptics (Lippard 1990).

In short, Bryant's article has nothing new to add to arguments against the credibility or reliability of CSICOP or *SI*. His book, while sometimes entertaining, is written in the grating pedantic tone of a man who thinks he is God's intellectual gift to the universe but whose elliptical arguments and failure to cite or even demonstrate familiarity with the work of others

in the subjects on which he is writing should set off alarms in the mind of the critical reader.

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## Hypnosis and Free Will

By Jim Lippard

Most hypnosis researchers maintain that hypnotized persons cannot be induced to do anything contrary to their own personal moral code. At least one article in the scientific literature denies this claim (Lloyd W. Rowland, "Will Hypnotized Persons Try To Harm Themselves or Others?", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 34(1939):114-117, described in William Corliss' *The Unfathomed Mind: A Handbook of Unusual Mental Phenomena*, pp. 120-123). These experiments involved subjects sticking their hands into a box containing a rattlesnake (which was actually fake) or throwing acid into the face of an experimenter (who was behind an unseen panel of glass). A possible rejoinder to this experiment is the same as a criticism made of Stanley Milgram's "obedience to authority" experiments, where subjects believed they were assisting in a psychological experiment by giving painful electric shocks to another test subject (actually a simulating assistant of the experimenter). The response is to say that the experimental situation was one in which the

subject had complete trust in the experimenter and put all responsibility into his hands. But is there any reason to believe that this effect is limited to the experimental laboratory?

There are a number of reported cases of criminal actions being performed by hypnotized persons. For example, Leo Katz's book *Bad Acts and Guilty Minds* (1987, University of Chicago Press, pp. 128-133) describes legal cases from Germany where unethical hypnotists induced patients to give them large sums of money, commit crimes, and attempt murder and suicide (the latter two failed). One response to this is to claim that the defendants were simply using hypnosis as an excuse to avoid prosecution, that they wouldn't have done what they did if they had not already been predisposed to do so (this response, like the one above to the experiments, is made by Robert A. Baker—see my review of his book *They Call It Hypnosis*, in *The Arizona Skeptic*, July/August 1991).

The latest issue of the *Fortean Times* (#58, July 1991) reports the prosecution of a 57-year-old man, Nelson Nelson, who sexually assaulted at least 113 women, preceded by hypnosis. In Michael Goss' article, "The Eyes Have It," he reports that most of the women assaulted by Nelson over a 25-year period did not report it and were only discovered because Nelson kept a diary of his exploits. The only source cited for this, however, is "daily papers for 2 May 1991." No newspapers, no locations are cited (the author lives in Essex, England). Goss also reports a psychiatrist, Clifford Salter, whose medical license was revoked in 1982 for abusing women under hypnosis. (Again, no sources, and the details are too sketchy to know whether hypnosis really played a significant role at all. After all, Salter was allegedly caught.)

### Next Issue

The November/December issue of *The Arizona Skeptic* will feature an update on the fallout from the article "Some Failures of Organized Skepticism" by Jim Lippard which appeared in the January 1990 issue, reviews of *The Satanic Verses* and William Corliss' *The Unfathomed Mind: A Handbook of Unusual Mental Phenomena*, and letters to the editor.

### Upcoming Meetings

The Phoenix Skeptics will meet at the Jerry's Restaurant on Rural/Scottsdale Road between McKellips and the river bottom, with lunch at 12:30, on October 5 (Don Lacheman of Sun

Magic will give a demonstration), November 2 (Louis Rhodes, director of the Arizona Civil Liberties Union, will speak), December 7 (predictions for 1992 will be made), and January 4 (Rene Pfalzgraf, a Neuro-Linguistic Programmer, will speak). Meetings are on the first Saturday of each month except where it conflicts with a holiday.

### Articles of Note

Peter W. Huber, "Quack Attack," *Reason*, October 1991, pp. 25-31. Describes the "medical fantasy" of clinical ecology and how quack Bertram W. Carnow has earned millions of dollars for plaintiffs in unfounded lawsuits against chemical companies by providing his "expert" testimony. (Article is an excerpt from Huber's book, *Galileo's Revenge: Junk Science in the Courtroom*, 1991, Basic Books.)

Alun Anderson, "Britain's Crop Circles: Reaping by Whirlwind?", *Science* 253(30 August 1991):961-962. An article which takes it for granted that many crop circles aren't hoaxes, focusing on Terence Meaden's plasma/wind vortex theory of crop circles. It concludes with a quote from Meaden: "I hope

we'll get some firm answers soon...I don't want to be one of those scientists who is taken seriously 100 years after dying."

Larry Eichel, "2 British artists say they created 'crop circles'," *The Arizona Daily Star* (Knight-Ridder story), September 10, 1991, pp. 1A-2A. Meaden needn't have worried: artists Doug Bower and David Chorley confessed to creating the crop circle hoaxes since 1978. (Also see William E. Schmidt, "2 'Jovial Con Men' Take Credit (?) for Crop Circles," *The New York Times*, same date, p. B1.)

John Rennie, "Psychic vs. Skeptic," *Scientific American* 265(September 1991):39-40. A report on Uri Geller's lawsuits against James Randi.

Lawrence Wright, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Rolling Stone* #612(September 5, 1991):62-68, 105-106. The second in a series on "True Believers," this is an interview with Anton LaVey of the Church of Satan. Wright uncovers some falsehoods in LaVey's (Howard Stanton Levey) autobiography.

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