



Jon Garvey chews the cud

T'aint what you do, it's the way that you do it

One of my partner's patients has been going mad for the last three months. A lady who has always been a little on the manic side, she finally flipped her lid (as we professionals say), and started sending daily envelopes full of invective, profanity and torn up paperback books to the surgery, accusing my partner of being in league alternately with immigrant scum and the National Front. Copies of these communications were sent to Mrs Thatcher and other acquaintances of hers. Attempts to visit her confirmed the deterioration—sometimes she refused to let the doctor in because it wasn't my partner, and sometimes because it was.

An attempt to do a domiciliary visit with the consultant was foiled because she got wind of it and disappeared, leaving a rude letter pinned, like Luther's theses, to her front door.

At this point, it seemed necessary to obtain a Section, but attempts to involve the social services department met with only slow success, until they finally agreed to hold a case conference this week.

However, two days before this was due to happen, my partner received, out of the blue, a series of insistent phone calls from the social services demanding that he come with them that very afternoon to Section her. They were unmoved from this course by my partner pointing out that the case conference so painfully arranged had not met, that the patient was no more or less mad than she had been since February, and so could wait a day or so longer,

and that it is not easy to rearrange afternoon visits, employment medicals and evening surgery at 20 minutes notice. Neither could they be induced to explain what the panic was.

It was not until another partner had agreed to postpone his own visits to try and corner her that afternoon, and the social workers had in this way been placated, that we realised why there had been such a sudden change in the degree of urgency.

My partner had happened to mention in his last communication that the patient's child might be at risk.

Non-accidental injury! Headlines! Scandal! Alarm bells ring in the halls of the social services! The earth moves!

That's what gets results!

Engrams on the NHS

Have you booked your place yet? The British Postgraduate Medical Federation has organised a two-day workshop in Dianetic Therapy in June, so that you may learn to apply L. R. Hubbard's methods in general practice.

L. Ron Hubbard, Ron to his friends and disciples, was of course a science-fiction writer of rather exotic upbringing when he first impressed his literary colleagues with his new therapy, Dianetics, a sort of analytic method based on the use of a lie-detector, the "E-meter", and the concept of engrams, the accumulated hang-ups, bring-downs, and far-outs of one's life, pre- as well as post-natal.

Dianetics itself had a rather exotic upbringing in the ensuing years, culminating in our Ron's promoting it to a religion, and rechristening it "The Church of Scientology". There will be those who would say that one should distinguish the child Scientology, from its respectable parent, a legitimate therapy. There was indeed a split in the organisation, one of several, upon this point. But it is worthy of note that Ron had made some fairly spectacular claims about his methods even in the

early days, for example that a "Clear", that is, a subject who had been cleared of his engrams (as well as several thousand dollars), would be able to grow new teeth and levitate at will. He even produced such a "Clear" at one point, whose claimed abilities at such feats were later modified when his teeth proved to be dentures. It was also in the "Dianetics" period that the pre-natal experience became widened to include the accumulated engrams of the individual's previous incarnations. This was some expansion, as one's existence was held to span the entire age of the universe, since one was supposedly, under the control of a strange intergalactic being, the Thetan. At least, one should have been, except that the Thetan was in such a neurotic state from previous episodes of consumption by Palaeozoic jellyfish, and so on, as to be incapable of controlling anything. The goal of therapy thus became to achieve the "Operating Thetan" level rather than merely to become "Clear". No wonder the teeth wouldn't grow. Treatment thus became longer, and a good deal more expensive, which may explain why Hubbard has been able to spend his latter years cruising the world on his luxury yacht.

People are entitled to believe what they like, of course, although most of us are careful about how much our beliefs are allowed to affect our patients.

But I do wonder why taxpayers' money, allocated under Section 63, should be used to finance the teaching of a system which has been considered so harmful by successive governments, under the guise of Scientology, that its leaders, including L. Ron Hubbard, have been banned from entering the country. ■