CONQUEST OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

A lecture given on
14 August 1951

The Mission of Theta

Unfortunately, the beginning of the recording of this lecture has been lost and we have been unable to locate any transcript for this section. However, notes made during the lecture and preserved in Foundation records indicate that Ron began this lecture by speaking of the conquest of the physical universe by life energy, and of the anatomy of life energy itself. Shortly before the existing recording begins, Ron was apparently speaking of an experiment conducted at a major university in which the life energy of a human being was detected as a sort of magnetic field which radiated from a single point. For a description of the results of this experiment, see Science of Survival, Book One.

They quickly tore up that set of data. They tore up that experiment and performed it again and they found the same answer. So they tore it up and they performed it again and they found the same answer, then they chucked in the sponge and said, "Obviously, it can't be so, therefore we haven't observed it!" But that is poor science, so they wrote it up anyway to explain why they hadn't observed it.

I conducted a few experiments along this line, and I found out that the actual truth of the matter is that around a body of simple cells there is no unit point field; there is nothing but a multipoint field. There is a point for every cell. That's very interesting.

This is easy to test, and there is a lot of experimentation yet to go in this field. But it means simply that there is an overall sort of a life form. You might say that there is a big field. How it is pinned to the organism, why it is there and what it is—these things are for somebody else to answer.

The point is, at the moment of actual organism death—full death—the unit point field disappears and you fall back on the multipoint field. A few minutes later—I think eight minutes later—the red blood cells die; about ten minutes later, another type of blood cell, and so on down to fingernails, which last about a year and a half. Parts of the body die in minutes, and then some more of it dies in an hour, and some more of it dies in a week, and some more of it dies in two months. This is the cellular life, which persists after the organism is "dead." And that is very interesting, isn't it? There are all these varying forms of death.

I am indebted for that data to the medical examiner of the city of New York, who has the very proud reputation of having cut up more corpses than any other man alive.

Now, when it comes to the individuality of an organism, one can postulate some very interesting things. He can postulate several kinds of evolution.

There is one kind of evolution that starts in with the monocell and goes up to the very, very complex organisms. This is one chain of evolution. For every organism which has existed all the way along this track, matter and energy of the physical universe have evolved. They have changed; they have been changed by life. Today, chemists find there are innumerable compounds which can be manufactured only by life. The cells manufacture these things; they are actually changing matter and energy in space and time. So the cells are making new compounds, and this is an actual physicaluniverse evolutionary change. These cells take on chemicals and put out other chemicals in other forms; they pick up things, combine new elements and discard them. Man builds a railroad and abandons it; he is changing matter and energy in space and time. This is the evolution of the physical universe. So that gives us another type of evolution, a physical-universe evolution chain. And there is still another one, which is the unit-organism evolution chain.

In Dianetics we have been calling this life energy theta, just to give it a symbol so it won't get mixed up with anything else. And there is a theta evolution chain of some sort. I am not quite sure what it is, but it seems to exist there. As organisms go on and get more complex, evidently the theta body,' you might say, becomes more complex. Life seems to have been formed out of the whole stuff of life into individualities, and those individualities seem to travel along.

As soon as you get up to this level and you find that this data begins to be supported by actual evidence which can be sensed, measured and experienced, you begin to see that maybe we are dealing with a system which is perhaps a little closer to being workable than past systems.

We are not having to worry now about whether or not this is the human soul, or what is the behavior of the human soul, or what is the fate of it. Somebody else can worry about that. We just know there is an energy there. We can prove there is an energy there.

That energy, life, in its individualised forms of the organism, stays in pretty good alignment with the whole purpose of life except as the organism begins to be pounded around by the physical universe. Then you get aberration, you get inefficiency, you get other things.

An organism is life plus the physical-universe energy and matter—life force plus the physical-universe form. This organism is a mobilised unit which has the purpose of conquest and which attacks various projects in the physical universe—to make more organisms, to fit the environment better so that life can conquer it, and so on.

In this process practically every life form outlives its usefulness. This is the value of death. Life comes into the organism—call this conception—it grows, comes up to a peak, falls on off and then goes over to death. Conception is entrance for theta; death is exit for theta. The organism dies and the cadaver—the purely physical-universe part of the individual—just drops off. But that is the cycle: theta comes in, goes through this cycle of growth and decay, and out it goes. A whole species will go through this or just one man will.

Now, death is terrifically valuable because without death, there would never be a change of organism form. If the army didn't scrap tanks, they would still be fighting with World War I tanks, if tanks lasted forever. So there is a certain destructibility which is desirable in any organism.

The theta or life energy part of the thing evidently picks up more knowledge about the physical universe in every cycle. That is not very esoteric; it just means that we know more about the science of physics than Isaac Newton's generation did. Knowledge is coming along in the whole culture.

A culture, by the way, goes on this cycle too: It is new, it develops a tremendous body of information, it gets up to a peak, then it coasts off and slides on down to "America, 1952." And the whole culture will go on this cycle, or a single organism or the species—any one of these things.

The point that I am trying to make is that the theta does an evolution. It gets to know more and more about the physical universe it has contacted. We have, today, atomic physics; that is a lot more than we knew ten years ago or fifteen years ago; it is refining. But how does theta get this knowledge?

The organism collides with a piece of the physical universe and this creates an enturbulated area; the organism pulls back and says, "Well, I'm not supposed to run into fence posts." It has learned something. It has learned that when walking toward a fence post one takes a step sideways in order to go around the fence post, and then one doesn't hit the fence post and one doesn't get a headache. This is very simple and elementary, but this is the basic lesson. And that lesson stays in the organism, represented by stored pain.

Now, organisms were pretty stupid before man came along, and man is not doing too badly right now, if you want to be charitable. Man is a thinking entity, but life before man wasn't.

A dog is a thinking entity to a very slight degree. He has a prefrontal lobe. The prefrontal lobe is evidently the site of the consciousness, the site of awareness, the site of the computation. The dog has one about the size of a pea; an elephant has a pretty big one, about a fifth the size of a man's.

So here is man with this tremendously big frontal lobe. There has been a big jump there in evolution; either we skipped a lot of steps on the way or something happened there, but man got up to a point where he developed a brand-new method in evolution.

With a dog, he is tearing along as a puppy and he runs into a fence post, then he steps sideways and goes around the fence post. The next time he starts to run into a fence post, he will just begin to get near the fence post and he will start to get pain at the last place he hit. It won't even come into his consciousness but will just slightly agitate, and he will dive sideways and go around the fence post.

You take a dog, and you are training him to do something: You do a set of actions with him, and if you keep working with him, interrupting the line between his thinking process and his muscles—if you keep working his muscles instead of letting his thinking process work his muscles—you can get him into any kind of a conditioning you want. You can turn a dog into a robot that way. A well-trained dog is actually a robot, whereby the master has interrupted the dog's thinking process, and the master's thinking process has been substituted for the dog's. You don't even have to do it with much punishment, but you have to do it with physical energy, so that when you say "Sit" the dog doesn't say "Let's see—sit. That is a three-letter English word and the action means to squat down on my haunches because I have watched other dogs do it."

He doesn't do that. His muscle response is, when you say "Sit," to immediately sit down. The reason he does that is that you have told him "Sit" lots of times and made him sit. He finally gets to the point where you don't have to touch him anymore. You say, "Sit" and he feels your hands on him pushing him down. He gets the sensation of being pushed down when you say "Sit." So to avoid the pain he sits down; he is just conditioned into it. That is what you would call conditioning.

Now, a man has another gimmick, a very interesting one, called mimicry. A man learns by watching another man; he doesn't have to be punished into it. As a matter of fact, if he is punished into it and made into this robot proposition like the dog he becomes very aberrated, because a man was evidently built to learn by mimicry, not by punishment. His prefrontal lobes got up to the point where he could think things out; he could actually figure things out. The first time he ever tapped his forehead on anything—he walked up to something, maybe a fence post, and it bumped his head, only he didn't even hit himself very hard—he looked at it and said, "You know, it's a funny thing but every time I run into hard objects, I hurt. Now, that means that I should avoid all hard objects in the future." So he does. He can extrapolate such tremendous distances.

A dog will stand on the curb and watch another dog get run over and he will not learn the datum that a dog gets run over if he runs in the road. He could go out in the road then and he might get run over too. But a man can watch somebody walk out into the road and be hit, and then suddenly say, "No jaywalking for me! Completely aside from tickets, it's not healthy."

There is the difference of learning process. A man's learning process is tremendously extended, and man does not any longer have the need of this stored pain as such.

Psychologists, working with and observing dogs and watching dogs' stimulus-response reactions to pain, erroneously conceived the idea that a man is trained only by pain. A man is

aberrated only by pain, because a man will fight to retain control of himself in his environment. He will really fight to try to accomplish that.

The urge toward self-determinism is so strong in a man that it takes two or three years in the army to break it down. It is really rough. You have to do the most fantastic things to a human being to get him to give up some of his self-determinism .

Of course, you can get a society that is very constricted, that is very aberrated, that believes an individual has to be beaten and pounded and punished into being a social animal, that has developed a whole field of learning which depends wholly upon punishment drive—"Men have to be punished in order to make them good"—and then never observed the fact that the more you punished a man the worse he got. Our societies have had fifty thousand years to observe this fact and they have never observed it!

The next time I see a psychiatrist, I am going to ask him to let me in on his next "cure" of one of his patients so I can take a look at the prefrontal lobe and find out if it could possibly develop much further. Because it has got to develop a little bit further: there are some stupidities along the line which really don't entitle man yet to the title of "sentient, thinking being." Some of man's activities are very thoughtless.

For example, what is the best thing a society can now do with a criminal? Put him in jail. That is recent. What was the best thing to do with a criminal a century ago? Whip him—corporal punishment—and then never observe that after you had whipped a criminal he became more criminal.

In 1780 there was a tremendous upsurge of crime in England. It followed immediately on the heels of the introduction of corporal punishment to a degree which had never before been accomplished in England. Economics were bad, and a man would go out on the street and pick up a slice of bread or something like that off a counter and run with it. He would hang. A fellow would go out on the high road, stop a traveler and do a little more than pass the time of day, and he would be hung, drawn and quartered! That was kind of rubbing it in.

They executed people, they put them in stocks, they beat them with whips. They were unable to keep their navy in good order or get volunteers for the navy, so they introduced and used lavishly the cat-o'-nine-tails, until a failure of a seaman to properly use the right word to an officer would cause him to be lashed to a grating and given twelve lashes with the cat, which would of course put him in bed for days because twelve lashes with the cat would lay open the flesh and show his spine to the air.

That was the period of the greatest amount of crime in England. The more they punished, the worse it got. And they kept right on punishing.

We do that in America today. For instance, take a little child who is rather rebellious. Somehow or other nobody quite notices the point where this kid starts to turn bad. He goes up and he starts to tear off wallpaper, and he goes around and pulls all of Mama's dresses down off the coat hooks and cuts them up with a pair of scissors, and every time he does one of these tricks he gets punished.

So the next time he does it, he makes sure he gets only the best dresses and he pulls those down and he cuts them up only with the sharpest scissors. If you work on this child enough, you can get him up to the point where he will commit these crimes deviously enough so he can't be detected, but the crimes are eight or nine times as bad. He is really winning then.

Man almost refuses to be driven out of his heritage or his mission, his overall mission given him by life, to conquer the physical universe. He can be driven away from it, he can be disassociated from it to some degree and he can be badly malconcentrated on this subject, but to drive him completely off it is to drive him insane.

That is actually the only thing wrong with the insane. They have lost any ability they might have had to control their environment, to conquer the physical universe.

If you auditors remember that in treating a psychotic, by the way, you can really start laying stuff out. You could take this fellow who is under standard psychiatric "treatment"—they have him in cuffs, in restraints, in a small cell, and people come in and slap him—and you could say, "Is there anything wrong with this in the treatment of psychosis? Well, in view of the fact that it was too much restraint in the first place that drove him psychotic, I wonder what would happen if we took the cuffs off him?"

They found that out, by the way. The governor of one of the northcentral states issued an order one day to remove all the restraints from the psychotics in the state institution. He had to say it, I think, about five times and fire about twelve people before he finally got it into effect. He had all restraints removed. Everybody that had had anything to do with psychotics at that time said, "If you do this, that's going to finish everything. I mean, they'll go around and murder all the keepers." They had had a lot of bad incidents in this institution. But they took off all the restraints and they opened a lot of cell doors that hadn't been opened before, and the turbulence in this asylum went right down. It became calm. And once in a while they could even discharge a patient as well, which they hadn't been able to do before. That is just from removing restraints.

In other words, it is restraint, it is telling the person that he has no right to conquer the physical universe, it is denying him part of the mission of life and denying him part of groups' missions in conquering the physical universe that drives him down and disassociates him from his fellows and that finally will put him in an aberrated state. Put him into too much of an aberrated state about that and life will start removing him. He becomes destructive; he goes on down and out the bottom.

This is the cycle on which life might be said to be engaged. A person comes up till he is effective, and then when he can no longer affect the physical universe around him he goes on out. But this can happen at any point in his career. The longevity of the organism should not be postulated on how many years this organism has got to go, because that will only tell you what will be his physical decay if no other factors enter. You have to take into consideration the fact that at the time he ceases to be able to adequately effect change or conquest of the physical universe around him he will decline rapidly and die. You can see a child lose it at the age of nine; you then know he will probably—unless some terrific miracle happens—be dead by the time he is twelve. It doesn't matter that he is now only nine; by accident, by illness, by any one of a thousand factors in a complex society, he will accomplish demise. You can watch this. People lose their belief in the ability to affect the physical universe, and they are asked to hand in their checks right there—by suicide, or maybe the fellow doesn't have any appetite all of a sudden; he doesn't like to eat. He imagines a bug coming along and that this bacteria is very lethal. Somebody says it isn't but he insists that it is and he dies from it. This is really wonderful.

If you want some data on this, take a look at the obituary column of a paper.

There is nothing like looking at the real universe. It is all very well to go and find a book, but I have never seen a book yet that wasn't just a small part of the physical universe. A book is a rectangular solid with a lot of blackened symbols in it. But that is the only part of the physical universe about it. Maybe the table sitting alongside of you, if you looked at it squarely, would tell you more about the physical universe than all the books stacked on it.

Go and get an obituary column and look at it. But if you really want to do some research you don't want to go and find out what somebody has written, because he might not have observed it correctly. Let's find out first-hand; go and call up the widow.

"So sorry to hear that John is dead."

“Oh, did you know him?”

“Yes. I haven’t seen him for a number of years. What happened to him?”

“Well, it was after his business failure. I always told him it would be his business failure that would be his downfall. I told him he ought to have sold that business.”

“How long ago was this?” “Oh, it was about two years ago.”

“Well, what happened?”

“Oh, didn’t you hear about it? His partner cheated him and ran away with all the money. He couldn’t start up another business, he said. I told him he could start up another business, but he said he wouldn’t be able to. He said he guessed that was too much, and I guess it was the fact that he was a friend of the fellow. But anyway, it was a couple of years ago, and he never really has been right since. Maybe it’s better that he is dead.”

Call up Bill, and Suzie, and Agnes, and the other survivors in the obituary column. Unless the people who died were riding with an accidentprone in an automobile that swerved sideways and ran into another automobile driven by another accident-prone, and got themselves involved as secondary effect on a couple of life rejections, you will find the same story.

There was a peak; after that the physical universe conquest could no longer be effected, and that was the end. Sometimes it takes as long as three years. But if anybody is knocking together life insurance statistics and he doesn’t pay attention to this one, his statistics won’t be very correct.

I checked some statistics at an insurance company, and I was astonished to find out a couple of things about some of the most dangerous professions in the world. These people are practically noninsurable, the insurance people said, but they were smiling about it because the longevity of people engaged in those professions is fantastic. But those activities are awfully dangerous. There are lots of accidents in those professions. The liability toward death is tremendous. They were talking about deep-sea divers and test pilots.

There was a fellow by the name of Hubbard—another Hubbard—and he was Boeing’sl test pilot up in Seattle. He became an innocent bystander to one of these accident-prone affairs. An army pilot on the first B-172 that was sold to the army was checked over by Hubbard. Hubbard was turning the plane over to the army. He had been flying it successfully for a long time. And he said, “Now, you’ve got her all checked out. You’ve got that whole list checked, haven’t you?” And the army boy said, “Oh yes, we’ve got it all checked out.” So they taxied down the runway and took off at the end of the runway—only they didn’t take off. They had checked out everything but the controls lock. That plane hurtled down the runway at umpteen miles an hour with its controls still locked. That was the first B-17 to be delivered to the army. Hubbard lingered for about three days and died. But he was a secondary cause.

The point is that these people—deep-sea divers, test pilots—are up against a tremendous amount of physical universe. I suppose most of these test pilots have kicked around at six hundred miles an hour in level flight and so on. Look at the physical universe they have their hands on. The mortality rate is not very high amongst test pilots. But these fellows are really conquering MEST. If you talk to these boys you find that their elan is way up. Unfortunately they live in the vicinity of lots of people who are on the other side of a life rejection. They have to trust.

It is wonderful how these pilots’ personalities—you might say, their own persistence in life—will repair carburetors or put together broken crankshafts ten thousand feet in the air. Planes come in that never should come in; things happen that never, by any possible chance, should happen, and yet these boys will come out of it alive. And then some morning some mechanic will have a fight with his wife and come out to fix the motor or something, and will really “fix” it up—make a nice death trap. He walks off, the test pilot gets into it, starts to take off and it

blows up. Of course, the mechanic does it to the test pilot because the test pilot is the guy who is doing something dangerous, so that mechanic can really effect some death there.

These people, then, not only get over the top of the hump and become life rejects—some of them more or less slowly, some of them rapidly—but they seem to have a mission of looking around them and finding out how many other organisms they can reject from life and how much other havoc and destruction they can bring. It is very interesting to observe the contagion of this sort of thing: it is as though a person who goes over the hump then has a mission of taking four more out with him. That is a very crude example.

I am not trying to give that to you as any really basic scientific lore. But I have watched quite a few of these dangerous professions. I wrote a series of stories about them one time just to get up close to them, and those boys really fascinated me—what they can live through! Inevitably it will be somebody who has nothing to do with them, really—who really shouldn't be around them—that will cause their death. They are in a position where death can be caused.