



A Note on Survive and “Excalibur”

“S UPPOSE ALL THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD *WERE* REDUCED TO just one line; suppose that one line were to be written today and given to you...” —L. Ron Hubbard

Long before the advent of either Dianetics or Scientology, those at all familiar with L. Ron Hubbard had come to expect he would eventually make a remarkable entrance into the philosophic realm. That entrance, largely conceived through the course of an extraordinary week in early 1938, is remembered today as “Excalibur.” In the simplest terms, the work may be described as a first philosophic statement. Previously (and as we shall see in forthcoming articles) he had traveled far and established much as regards a philosophic foundation. Yet here, at the age of twenty-six, came his earliest formal summary, “to align my own ideas,” as he modestly termed it, “for my own particular benefit.” Given all the manuscript eventually inspired, however—two copies were actually stolen by agents of foreign intelligence services who wished to appropriate those ideas for political ends and only sections remain—such a description seems hardly enough.

At the core of “Excalibur” is Ron’s revelatory statement on Survive as the single common denominator of existence. That all life forms are attempting to survive is, of course, a known datum. But that life is *only* attempting to survive—this was new. Moreover, how he interpreted the datum was new, i.e., a “finite measuring stick,” as he elsewhere terms it, with which whole fields of knowledge might be coordinated. Those at all familiar with the works of Herbert Spencer (Ron himself apparently waded through at least the principal ten volumes of the *Synthetic Philosophy*) may recognize the concept:

“The proper field and function of philosophy lies in the summation and unification of the results of science. ‘Knowledge of the lowest kind is un-unified knowledge; science is partially unified knowledge; philosophy is completely unified knowledge.’ Such complete unification requires a broad and universal principle that will include all experience, and will describe

The L. Ron Hubbard home at Port Orchard, Washington, above Puget Sound. Here stood his legendary writer’s retreat, also known as the “Hilltop Cabin” and where he authored a first philosophic work, remembered today as “Excalibur.”





the essential features of all knowledge. Is there a principle of this kind?”

To which, of course, “Excalibur” replies unequivocally with *Survive!*

How Ron actually arrived at *Survive* is a fairly monumental story, but particularly involves a pivotal sequence of 1937 cytological experiments wherein he was able to demonstrate a cellularly inherited response to toxic substances. That is, having cultured a strain of bacterial cells, the culture was exposed to jets of steam, which affected the cells not at all. Next, applying jets of inherently toxic cigarette smoke, he keenly observed the culture both reacting and retreating from the threat. After continued “taunting” with smoke, he then substituted steam to observe the cells now misidentifying the steam as toxic and similarly retreating. Finally, culturing second and third generations of cells from the first, he found that when these later-generation cells were exposed to steam, they likewise misidentified the steam for toxic smoke and retreated in the name of survival.

If the point seems academic, it is not; for according to Darwinian theory, and hence the foundation of all biological and behavioral thought, learned responses cannot be inherited.

Puget Sound,
Washington: site
of intense LRH
research and
discovery from
1937 to 1940

Rather, all life is said to be directed by chance, by a dumb roll of genetic dice as it were. Thus, for example, the ancestral bird develops wings purely as a biochemical function and

Or as Ron himself explains, “This book’s design is to indicate the true perspective of a man’s life.” That “Excalibur” did not, however, also offer a workable therapy was the principal reason Ron

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not according to some inherent thrust towards survival. Yet the moment we introduce survival as a pervasive drive, passed on from cell to cell, we are introducing an *intelligence* behind the scheme of life—an “X factor,” as Ron initially termed it, that shapes and gives meaning to life in ways that Darwin simply could not explain. As of those first weeks of 1938 and the drafting of his manuscript, Ron would say little more regarding this X factor. But in considering the central message of “Excalibur,” he could not help but wonder who or what first gave that resounding one command, *Survive!*

Needless to say, the scope of “Excalibur” is immense and proposes not only the means of placing all life—be it human or cellular—into a definitive framework of *Survive*, but a method of resolving any problems related to existence.

finally chose not to publish the manuscript. That is, if the whole of his quest may be defined in terms of a conviction that philosophy must be workable, must be capable of application, then “Excalibur” could only be regarded as a steppingstone. Nevertheless, with the eventual development of Dianetics, all that is essentially “Excalibur” was made public and, in fact, may be found in *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* and *Dianetics: The Original Thesis*.

Presented here are the opening pages of “Excalibur.” As an additional word, it might be mentioned that all events recounted here took place in Ron’s Port Orchard, Washington, cabin—except, of course, Ron’s prefatory note on his near-fatal operation at the Bremerton, Washington, dental office of Dr. Elbert E. Cone... ■

Port Orchard, Washington

January 1, 1938

It began with an operation. I took gas as an anesthetic and while under the influence of it my heart must have stopped beating, as in my terror I knew I was slipping through the Curtain and into the land of shades. It was like sliding helter-skelter down into a vortex of scarlet and it was knowing that one was dying and that the process of dying was far from pleasant. For a long time after I knew that “Death is eight inches below life.” It was terrible work, climbing up out of the cone again, for Something did not want to let me back through the wall, and then, when I willed my going, I determined it against all opposition. And Something began to cry out, “Don’t let him know!” and then fainter, “Don’t let him know.”

Though badly shaken I was quite rational when I was restored. The people around me looked frightened—more frightened than I. I was not thinking about what I had been through nearly so much as what I *knew*. I had not yet fully returned to life. I was still in contact with Something. And in that state I remained for some days, all the while puzzling over what I *knew*. It was clear that if I could but remember I would have the secret of life. This in itself was enough to drive one mad, so illusive was that just-beyond-reach information. And then one morning, just as I awoke, it came to me. I climbed out of my tall ship’s bunk and made my way to my typewriter. I began to hammer out that secret and when I had written ten thousand words, then I knew even more clearly. I destroyed the ten thousand and began to write again.

EXCALIBUR

By

Ronald Hubbard

I

THE LOST KEY

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EXCALIBUR

by L. RON HUBBARD

ONCE UPON A TIME, according to a writer in the *Arabian Nights*, there lived a very wise old man—and wise he must have been—who made it the work of his life to collect all the wisdom in the world. He wrote an enormous and learned volume, setting forth everything he had found and, at last, sat back contented with a task well done. Presently, his contentment was dissipated by the thought that he had written too much. So he sat himself down for ten years more and reduced the original volume to one a tenth its size.

When he had finished, he again thought himself content, but again discovered he was wrong. With painstaking exactitude, he reduced this second work to a single page. Another ten years passed and the ancient philosopher grew even wiser. He took that single page and reduced it to just a single line which contained everything there was to be known. A decade more found the old scribe close to death. He had placed that remarkable line in a niche in the wall for safekeeping, intending to tell his son about it. But now he changed his mind once more.

He tore up even that line.

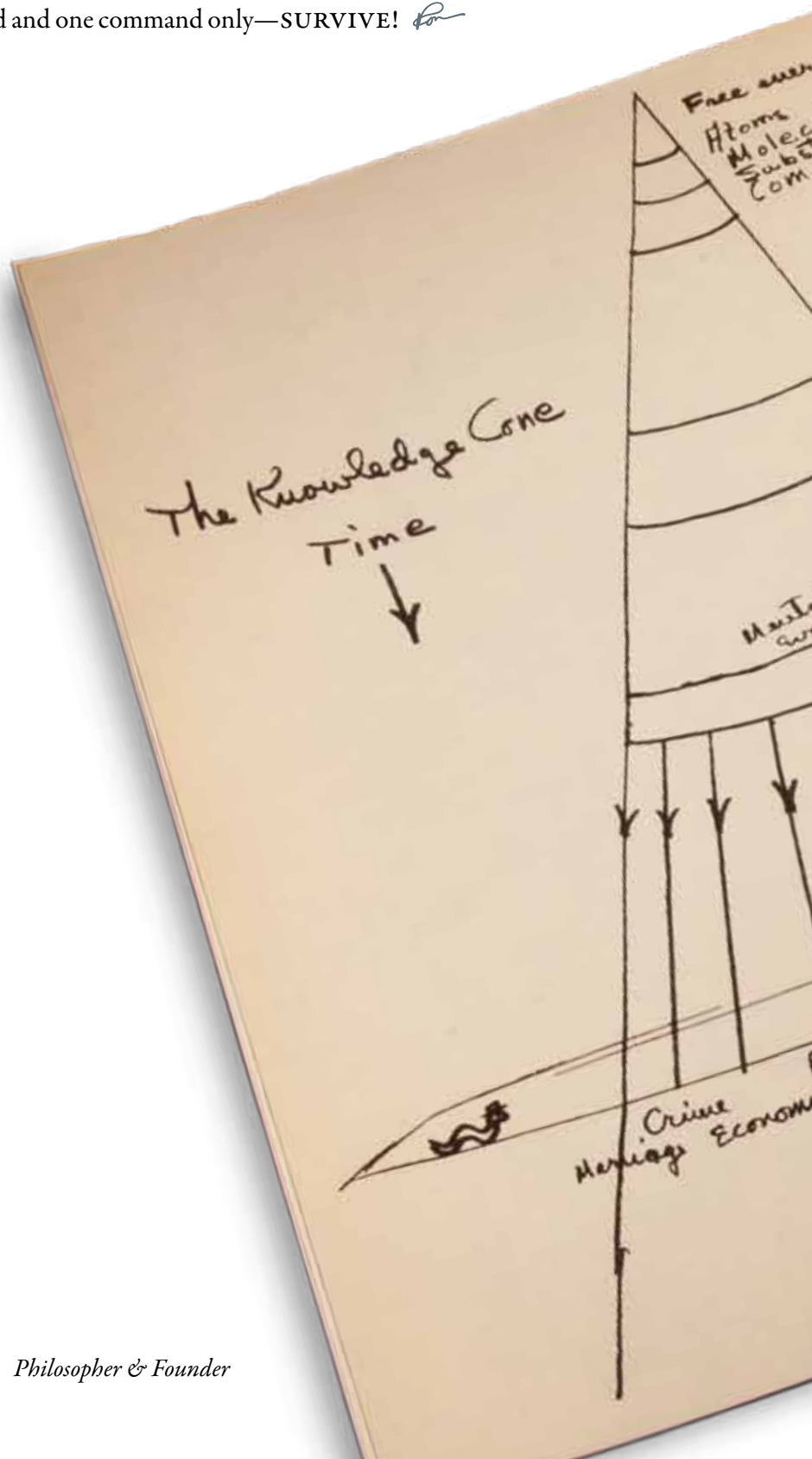
Suppose all the wisdom of the world *were* reduced to just one line; suppose that one line were to be written today and given to you. With it you could



understand the basis of all life and endeavor: love, politics, war, friendship, criminality, insanity, history, business, religion, kings, cats, society, art, mythology, your children, communism, bankers, sailors, tigers and other matters without end. More: suppose this one line could tell you all about yourself, could solve all your problems, quiet your restlessness.

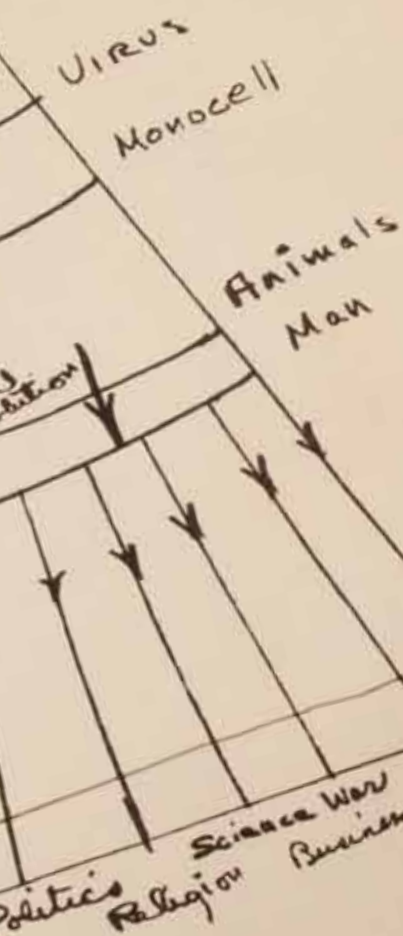
If all the wisdom of the world could be compressed into a single line, certainly it would do all these things and more. There *is* one line, conjured up out of a morass of facts and made available as an integrated unit to explain such things. This line is the philosophy of philosophy, thereby carrying the entire subject back into the simple and humble truth.

All life is directed by one command and one command only—SURVIVE! *for*



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EXCALIBUR

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