

THE ANATOMY OF THE ENGRAM

A lecture given on
15 August 1950

The tape recording of this lecture has not been found. A transcript has been located and is reproduced here. Without the recording we have not been able to verify the accuracy of the transcript.

The Analytical Mind Beset

I want to discuss the anatomy of the engram. The understanding of this beast is very necessary to putting him down and to shooting him. It is something like big game hunting, except that he only occasionally bites back. Of course, if you have ever seen a preclear come up off the couch to wrangle with you, “You did this; you did that. You know you can’t do that”—that is an engram fighting back.

A professional auditor was running a psychotic one day, a paranoid whiz. As the psychotic lay there he started into an engram. Suddenly he rolled over on his side, reached into his pocket, brought out an 8-inch knife, opened the blade and took a look at the auditor. The auditor said, “Put away the knife; go back to the engram.” So he closed the knife, put it in his pocket and went back to the engram.

Therefore, the hunting of this beast is not without some of its dangers, but I don’t think very many of you are going to get into trouble. If you do a very good job of it you will keep your friends and influence people. If you do a very bad job of it your preclears are liable to wind up hating you. A touchy subject with some people is that they have engrams. In view of the fact that everybody seems to have acquired them in a lifetime, however, the number of the beasts for you to hunt is practically unlimited.

We want to give you the habitat, diet, combative methods and so forth of this beast, so that you can track him down to his lair and do him in rather rapidly. If you don’t know about him thoroughly and if you don’t know your subject well, you must realize that you merely reactivate him, and he gets very mad and chews up not only the preclear but sometimes you too.

There are misconceptions about engrams. Some people think they include the analytical mind; some people believe the only reason the analytical mind behaves is because it has engrams—a lot of nonsense. One of the most remarkable things about the engram is its utter parasitic quality. It is without doubt the world’s greatest parasite. It can’t act, it can’t do anything unless it has an analyzer through which to act. Therefore, to talk about the anatomy of the engram we must immediately begin with a discussion of the analytical mind, because the analytical mind is the switchboard, or control system, which the engram uses in order to handle the human being. Remove the analytical mind, and you could leave the engram and the whole reactive bank completely in place.

Now, to remove the analytical mind would of course make the patient more tractable; it would “adjust” him better. That is to say, he could be so thoroughly adjusted that after that, one never had any trouble with him at all. A reductio ad absurdum of this is that it often kills him to remove his analytical mind. Nevertheless, the engrams are not disturbed—they are still there. The work which has been done with the prefrontal lobotomy, the transorbital leukotomy and the topectomy does demonstrate that.

For example, a man has been going around saying “They’re swearing at me all the time. They’re cursing me. They just keep cursing me. I can’t stand it any more. I keep hearing them.”

Then he is given a prefrontal lobotomy. He is sitting there quietly about two or three weeks later and someone asks him, "How are you getting along?"

"Fine."

"Do you hear those voices any more?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, do they bother you?"

"No."

"What are they saying?"

" 'Oh, you son of a bitch. To hell with you.'"

"Well, doesn't it worry you?"

"No." He is adjusted.

That gives you some sort of an idea of the engram action. Of course, that engram has been licked in that it can no longer activate. It can't charge out against the psychotic because the switchboard has been wrecked. It is something like blowing up a freight engine because the engineer has gone a little bit off his nut. This is not so much a criticism of the prefrontal lobotomy as it is a demonstration of the actuality and the identity of an engram.

The engram bank, the reactive bank, is a separate bank. I did not know that before about a year ago. I used to say "By analogy it seems to work better if one considers it a separate storage bank." We have discovered now the odd fact that the engram can be affected biochemically, independent of the analytical mind, in such a way that it itself will nullify with no diminution of the intelligence and so forth of the analytical mind. This speaks for the probability of a separate entity and a separate storage place. The engram really is not a sort of block in the standard memory storage. It is evidently something that is standing out separately.

There is only one difference between the reactive bank and the analytical mind's standard banks, but it's a very important difference as far as the storage capacity is concerned. The engram bank stores pain. No pain is stored by the analytical mind. There is a notation stored in the standard banks that such things are painful, or that pain may be received. The standard banks cannot handle the proposition of pain, saying instead, "Do this, you will get hurt." The analytical mind is perfectly competent to do that, but it doesn't store pain.

I am not talking about thinking, now. I am talking about the memory bank. We use the word memory bank, by the way, because in working with big electronic brains one can change their memory banks. Take a brain computer—lots of wheels, cogs, flashing lights and ringing bells. Over at the side is a punch card system memory bank. The brain takes data out of the memory bank, compares it and puts it back in the memory bank again. That is standard operation for one of these giant electronic brains. There actually seems to be such a storage system in the human mind.

So we distinguish the standard banks from the reactive banks. The reactive banks contain high priority stuff, according to the structural basis on which they were built—a very high priority because pain results if the data there is not handled just so. The mechanism is as simple as that. The person who cannot follow through the command of the engram gets hurt by the engram. If the commands can run off all right, everything is going to be fine. That engram is going to be perfectly content to be reactivated and played.

It actually blocks off the standard banks, uses the analyzer and channels its way down through another mind, the somatic mind. This mind is merely the border control system of the body. For instance, when a man learns to drive, after a while it gets filed down in the somatic mind and he does not think about it any more.

The engram can reactivate certain muscles and do certain things as long as it is unblocked and uninhibited. There is harm to the organism itself, of course, when the engram says "I have got to kill myself" and he blows his brains out. Nevertheless, the person wouldn't get any original pain of the engram. But as soon as the engram is stopped or blocked, then it has a weapon which it uses and one gets pain. No dramatization, pain; dramatization, no pain. That's the complete choice a person has, if you can call it a choice.

Therefore, when you start to erase an engram you have got to get the preclear near the source. If you rise up from the source, sometimes he will

dramatize rather than experience the pain in the engram. If you can get him to experience the pain in the engram and the various perceptics with it by standard therapy, the engram folds up. Unfortunately, in late life, it's a matter of "can't dramatize, feel the pain." Just one-two; there are no other choices.

The engram contains all perceptics: sight, sound, kinesthesia, hot and cold, saline content—over 26 perceptics the last time they were counted. Tactile, kinesthesia, sight, sound and smell are the ones that you use on your standard list. Of course, there is joint position, muscular tension and a whole catalog of small perceptics that come in just as a matter of course. You don't have to worry about them, but the engram records every one of them.

The analytical mind goes unconscious, and immediately there is a file system spread out of all these perceptics with some other data added: "The organism is such-and-such now, such-and-such an age, such-and-such a physical structure," the amount of unconsciousness (which we call anaten, analytical attenuation), and "The injury present is so-and-so." It's just laid in.

If you had some sort of a visio-audio-tactile phonograph, you could put the content on a wax platter and there would be the engram which could be more or less detached from the body to that degree. It isn't any good; it won't do anything until it is put back in, behind the analytical mind, and has the analytical mind work through it. It is nothing up to the point where it starts playing behind the analytical mind.

Some prenatal engrams (you find this out when you are clearing a case) will have slumbered 20 or 30 years with no reactivation, yet will be vicious engrams. For instance, in one case there must have been about 110 engrams, each one of which called for an enormously powerful migraine headache, and not one of them reactivated until the person was 22 years of age. Then, chain fashion, they all reactivated. The mysterious cause of the migraine headache was evidently an airplane crash where the person got a headache. Actually there was not even a head injury in the airplane crash, but there were about three words spoken while the person was unconscious which reactivated the chain.

That is the engram. It has very specific content. It contains pain, and part of the registry of that pain is unconsciousness. It is an actual chemical commodity. It is how much the analyzer is off, but that is part of the pain. That along with perceptics is all it actually contains.

The age of a human being is a perception of that person's age. An analytical attenuation is still a perception of how closed down the analyzer was at that time. So it is just perception that is all you are trying to get out of an engram.

If you ever get the idea that the analytical mind is confronting you, that the preclear is resisting analytically, you are off on the wrong track. Of course, any rational human being will resist poor, destructive auditing.

A person who gets chewed up with some bad auditing today, tomorrow, the next day, will not want to go on with this. That is basic personality coming through and putting on the brakes. Basic personality under a lot of persuasion and some good auditing will eventually kick back in again.

That is about the only circumstance under which you would say the preclear refuses. The fellow who is saying “Oh, I just can’t believe it, I just can’t believe what I am running here. After all, I don’t know whether this is true or not. I haven’t got any idea about this. I don’t really see. My parents couldn’t have done this to me,” is just playing an old record over and over. Poor guy. This doesn’t mean that Dianetics has invented a self-trapping mechanism by which everything a person objects to is automatically in an engram. I wouldn’t go so far as to say that.

All of the principles with which we are dealing came about through a hard analytical effort to follow the operation, the *modus operandi*, of the human mind. We found out what it couldn’t do and found out why it couldn’t do it. And we found out what it was trying to do and then how we could assist it to do that. It so happens that when Dianetics makes an advance in its techniques, it is usually toward a simplification.

Dianetics contains this factor: Suddenly we have found something, so now we can more closely approach the actual operation of the human mind. There is a parallelism of operation between Dianetics and the mind, and of the mind trying to do something and Dianetics trying to do something. The person says, “I can’t go back. I can’t go back.” The attention units of his mind can’t go back because of an engram. Dianetics can fix it up so that we can send him back. The analytical mind has been trying to do that all the time.

As a consequence, we get this play between the Dianetic processes and the action of the analytical mind. In order to understand the anatomy of the engram, we have to go into that a little more closely. One of the main things that the analyzer is attempting to do, of course, is think. The other thing it is trying to do is execute. It is trying to do both, and it thinks and executes in order to be.

Now, anything which interrupts its thinking or its execution interrupts to some degree its ability to be, until it gets down to a point where it says, “To be or not to be, that is the question.” (I have found that in an engram bank several times.)

The analyzer in order to do these things has to be in communication with its own standard banks. It has to reach back into yesterday to get data which it can compare with the data of now (which it is perceiving), and from these two things work out the future, whether it is tomorrow or the next ten minutes. In other words, it perceives in the present, adjudicates on the basis of the past data, and uses its thinking to work out something it will execute. Its reality, then, has to be past reality, present reality and future reality—the three stages of reality.

Where a preclear says, “I don’t believe my parents would do that to me,” he can’t indeed believe his own data. He may say, “Oh, no. They couldn’t have done this to me. It is impossible. And besides, I think I lived in Duluth when I was 9 years of age.” If you ask him quickly what his name is he might not even know that. Yesterday’s reality is foggy. If he does not know what is in yesterday, how can he use that data in order to compare with this data?

Take a person and find out through his past performance how ably or unably he has performed and executed solutions about tomorrow. Start checking off business failure, divorce, kid bad, lost his job, and so on: failures, failures, failures. Maybe they were just little failures, he wasn’t getting along, but yesterday is foggy. How can he compare today’s reality? How can he find out if it is real if there isn’t any reality of yesterday?

There has got to be a feeling of reality for a mind to be. When the mind is not in contact with that reality, when that reality is not present, when it is not perceived, then there is not going to be any reality of mind in the future. That is to say, the mind is not to be. It has just moved back off existence that much.

The engram is exterior force entered into the being. Of course, it is done very mechanically. A person gets knocked out and a lot of people talk around him; or someone forces him to do something, he doesn't respond and is punished. Life itself has been busy punishing him, too, for errors of omission. He forgot to turn off the electric light switch when he went to fix those bulbs, and life punished him for that little omission and off went the analyzer.

But life didn't count on language. His wife came in and said, "Oh, my God. I know you're dead. Come here, come here, Agnes; he is dead."

"He's unconscious, he can't hear anything."

"Oh, you shouldn't have said that."

"He is unconscious, he can't hear anything. Be calm, be calm; keep it down. Now hold it down. " Later this fellow woke up and he was not the same man.

Now, when he starts back into the past, there is a blocker there on the channel. He tries to get back to his standard bank with the analytical mind, but there is a phonograph record there. It might be still in the files. Then one day he hears the sound of a crackle, buzz-buzz—the same noise—but he is wide awake at this time. It goes buzz-buzz and all of a sudden he doesn't feel well about life. He is a little bit nervous. A few days later his hearing starts to cut down. He supposes he must have contacted a germ or something.

An interesting thing is the untraceableness of these triggers. One fellow who had asthma had an allergy to cold, clean air. All of his life, his family had been expending a fortune to send him to the mountains where he could get cool, clean air, but a restimulator was cool, clean air.

One doesn't know much about when these things are going to reactivate. The sequence is this: electric shock and a platter is made, then there is a little restimulation and the platter goes on to the turntable. It is now keyed in. That is the second stage. Now it just waits.

Life has given him the chance. It says, "You know, this might happen again." When he gets this little restimulation life says, "Yes, it can happen again; it will happen again. Let's move this thing over and get it ready."

Now, the reality of yesterday goes out a little bit because this has emergency priority. Suddenly we get a person who is operating on a turntable. I have seen quite a few who operate almost exclusively on a turntable system. One can count absolutely on getting the same words back from them with the same stimulus. For example, tell somebody, "I wouldn't do that," and he says, "I will . . ."—the same strain of words called back from him.

Sometimes it may be a very rough dramatization. People who speak mainly in cliches and so on are more likely to be dramatizing turntables. Very often, they don't run off with any great degree of savageness, because the emotional degree of consciousness—one of the contents of the engram—is not very heavy. If the emotion of the engram is "bored with it," the person who gets this engram reactivated is bored. It does not have to be apathy or anger necessarily, the emotional content of the engram can even be extreme joy. Such people are seen around institutions; they're happy, yes. Any one of the emotional reactions, then, can get held out.

Here we walk into something else. The engram can only dictate action along those lines which the analytical mind can perform. The engram says, "Build a great bridge." If the analytical mind has the capability and the data to build a great bridge, it will then do so.

Without the engram, it would probably go on and build a better bridge. With the engram there, it has to build a bridge. That is a compulsion operating. It has no choice, that is the trouble with the engram. It is a lesson learned once which cannot be forgotten but which must also go into effect on certain given stimuli. So the engram has a very definite position there, with pain and perceptics, but it hasn't any life. The only life it has is the analytical mind.

If the analytical mind can imitate well, then any imitation dictated by the engram will be activated and become effective; but if the analytical mind can't imitate well, if it doesn't have that ability, and yet the engram says to go ahead and imitate well, the analytical mind is not going to go ahead and follow through.

It is like this. Suppose an individual has very short legs and he has been rather weak all his life, barely able to crawl around, but the engram says "You have got to be the world's greatest runner." Well, he can charge around a lot, but he won't make it. If it merely says "Run, run, run" and this fellow can't run, then he doesn't run. Of course, he will get an urge to run. But if the somatic mind and the body were able to run and run well, then he would run.

Just because the engram says "You must take a hundred pounds of lead in your right hand and throw it 652 feet" is no reason a person can. I stress this point so that you, as auditors, never become confused about what you are examining there. If the preclear starts to do something and the auditor suddenly believes that it is the preclear himself, even though it appears to be his natural nature—"He is naturally a bad-tempered man, and he is naturally this and that"—if he believes this, he starts to push against the preclear and he is upsetting the auditing equation to this degree.

The only reason the auditor can reach an engram is that the analytical mind of the preclear joins up forces with the analytical mind of the auditor to go down against the engram. Now, if the auditor fights the preclear in any way, or spoils his affinity with the preclear, he is then setting up this type of equation: analytical mind of the preclear versus engram power and analytical mind of the auditor. The preclear can't do it. The analytical mind of the preclear is already less than the engram power, otherwise he would have blown it up himself. If we can add to the analytical mind of the preclear the analytical mind of the auditor, that engram will blow up. The auditor can get it now; but the other way around, he won't be able to achieve it. That is one of the reasons why it takes an auditor.

The engram, a savage beast, has the power of the organism. That is all the power it has. The reactive mind is also a part of the organism. If that reactive mind is capable of storing and of activating a great deal of pain, then the engram is going to be more effective.

Now, there might be a very dull reactive mind which can't do much with these engrams or with the pain. Let's say the turntable is starting. It is not going to do anything, except for the gadget which puts the platters on and even that doesn't do a good job, so the person is relatively unactivated by his engrams. Psychotics seem to have some specific thing wrong with their reactive minds, because I have found some of them without nearly as many engrams as some people passing for normal.

So, we have the difference of the reactive mind and the difference of the analytical mind. The auditor is not terribly concerned with the difference of the reactive mind, but he is concerned with the difference of the analytical mind. Take now a strong, capable analytical mind. And take an able reactive mind, if the reactive mind is ever able. Without his engrams, this person would be quite a powerhouse, but with these engrams feeding upon him and using him, he is quite likely to become a case that is very, very hard to open or attack.

A sad thing in Dianetics is that a lot of people who are very able are very hard to work on. It takes somebody with some push in order to force down against those engrams, because the engram all of a sudden will restimulate; on goes the platter up against the reactive mind, and right away this fellow has the most marvelous reason, "Let me come up and have a smoke,

and we will go back to it in a few minutes. I am sure I can get this in a few minutes.” He will come out of it and have a smoke. That is a very rough thing on an auditor. He has to know enough to sit on this case and hold it down, because the engram is using a very powerful analyzer in order to activate. The analyzer itself is a thoroughly self-determining unit unless influenced by the engram, but it doesn't know the engram is there until the engram is brought into view or deintensified.

The analytical mind is a fascinating subject; it is the thing which the clear is most interested in. It works best when self-determined, and it learns by mimicry and so on. I cover it here from the therapeutic processing side, because this is what the engram is reactivating against.

The engram, then, is this phonograph record which contains all these perceptics plus pain (of course, pain is a perceptic too). Each one is a separate record. They can play without any sense of order; in other words, one from the age of 10 could just as soon play as one which occurred two months postpartum. Whatever happens, it has got just about as much sense as a jukebox. The records, too, make about as much sense. We drop a nickel in the slot, which is our stimulus—a little circumstance, a little mild stimulation—and the reactive bank picks up the record and plays against the back end of the analytical mind, and a person dramatizes something. It's pathetic.

He has an analyzer which will defend to the death its ability and its right to be right. The analyzer works on the principle that it is right, and if it isn't right, it's got to adjust itself to find out why it isn't right. Naturally, if it observes the organism itself operating or acting in a certain way, and everybody is saying “That's wrong, “ then it has got to find some justification, some reason why it is not wrong. It can't be wrong; to be wrong is to be dead.

So, the analytical mind just can't help itself much about one of these things, except when a new mechanism—necessity level—cuts in. Evidently back along the track of evolution somewhere, there was the ability to cut this mechanism in. A terrific need against some threat to survival' right in the moment of now, in present time, will kick out the engrams; that is to say, it will destimulate them, it won't throw them back into the bank and annul them. But a person can operate on that necessity level, and he can go ahead and override his engrams.

It is actually possible for a person to trip a false necessity level, “Well, I have got to do this,” and sort of automatically ride above this engram bank once he knows it is there. A person is not then just a puppet to his engrams. Necessity level can get very confusing to people, who say, “Well, the engram isn't known, and it doesn't do this. How on earth then can the analytical mind ever rise above it?” They mistake the fact that an organism which is not prepared to throw an all-out thrust against the threat to survival is subject to a natural selection. Natural selection has been cutting out organisms which couldn't for a very long time.

The organism can, during a great threat to survival, act in a highly sentient, powerful way, very rationally. Out go the engrams, for the moment. You see, it is in times of stress. The house burns down; somebody carries out the grand piano. He is liable to come around afterward and say, “You see, my engrams are useful. I had no recollection of carrying out that grand piano until there it was, sitting on the front lawn.”

And you say, “Well, what gave you the power to do that?”

“Well, naturally, operating this way, it must have been an engram that did this.” Well, it was not; that was necessity level at its highest pitch.

A person will do some very remarkable computations when necessity swings. All attention units have to be brought up to present time. It was all right to be back there walking around on the track inspecting the strange things that happened yesterday, but all of a sudden, bang! here is death right in the face. And the equation now reads “death or victory.” Bang, bang! All the attention units go up to present time with complete concentration and dedication of

action. Sometimes it happens so fast that it is merely recorded in the standard banks what the person did or said. But he handled the situation very ably.

I recollect one time coming over the brow of a hill on a wet asphalt road, during a storm in Maryland. A tree had fallen, and the next thing I knew I had stuck the nose of the roadster in the exact place it would fit underneath the tree so as to just dent the roadster. I had missed very expertly the high-tension line which was lying there burning grass. I had to go back and reconstruct the scene, because I was traveling about 55 or 60 miles per hour, and there was no time to brake on the asphalt road. The only thing you could do was skid the car underneath the tree. In other words, there must have been an estimate of the situation and of what to do without wrecking the car, as well as a coordination of how to make the wheels skid in order to get in there just at the right moment and a noting of the high-tension wire to be avoided so as not to get electrocuted.

Here is an enormous awareness. The analytical mind comes up and operates 100 percent. It pulls up to itself all attention units and they come up to present time.

In shock the attention units knock out and disorganize; they do not come up into a line. The analytical mind has the power of taking all the attention units it has and aligning them suddenly on a threat, but that threat has to be very great. Shock turns off the analyzer, usually. It gets up to a point where it could do something, but then, suddenly, it is unable to bridge it, and as a sort of a penalty off it goes. It has failed at that point. All shock therapy lies as a new engram. In some of these cases that have had a hundred shocks, each one of those shocks has to be treated separately.

I have noted people who knew Dianetics behaving much more rationally and sentiently about things. The analyzer has got new data to compare.

The analytical mind works as an independent unit, as the thinking, executing unit of the body. It operates on the verb "to be" and "is." The engram bank is a superimpression of other entities and forces exterior to the body which sought to be, and by seeking to be to some degree overcame the unit.

The fact that we have engrams, that these things are there and are not released easily and so on, might possibly be traced to a dietary alteration in man's past. Someplace back down along the track, man might have stopped eating what he was eating—maybe due to some change of climate. Up to then, he might have been an automatic clearing engine. We have found in biochemical research that plant drugs and so forth are pretty dull in operating against engrams. But we have found that food and lots of it has a tendency to kick out the engram bank, and certain types of food and food products start an automatic clearing process. Man might possibly have had a certain diet in the past, and evolution brought him along very neatly and nicely.

Obviously the mind has a self-clearing mechanism in it. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to clear people's minds of engrams. We can do so, and furthermore we can actually set the mind running so that it will do so. By paralleling the attempt of the mind to clear itself, we accomplish processing. The thing was all set up. It is not something I invented.

It is very amusing, by the way, that every time we discover something in Dianetics that does not quite follow along the status quo, people come around and look at me very accusingly as if I were guilty of the whole thing. That repeats a foolishness. In trying to shape up scientific research and keep discovering things, we occasionally find something that looks pretty incredible. Well now, because it looks incredible, do we take it up and just throw it away? That would not be very good research. So, we include it in the research where it belongs. Then people look at it and say "This is crazy"—an automatic reaction.

Nobody at the Foundation invented the way the mind operates, but we are trying very hard to discover the methods of operation and know them a little better. We are trying to move over a

little bit into structure now without much luck. Structure is really complex; science has given a lot of names to a lot of parts, but how the mind actually operates structurally is unknown at the present time. Evidently the mind was able to do automatic clearing for a long time. We can look over the past few centuries and say, "Well, man has made some great and remarkable advances." But we don't know what remarkable advances he might have made in the past when he was an automatic clearing mechanism. It seems to be indicated that he might have been one once. It seems that we are on the downward evolutionary slope. That is the current thought on the subject, probably to be refined and all changed by next Tuesday.

There is the engram. It sets up two things: the valences and the analytical circuitry. Those are very important and often confused with the engram itself. They are analytical effects of the engrams.

The existing tape ends at this point. It is thought that there may have been a second lecture (or a continuation of this lecture) given on the same date further covering the subject of the analytical mind. The missing lecture may have formed the basis for an article titled "The Analytical Mind" which appeared in the October 1950 edition of Astounding Science Fiction magazine (which is reproduced in Volume I of the Technical Bulletins of Dianetics and Scientology, page 27). However, a transcript issued in the 1950s titled "The Analytical Mind" was not a separate lecture but an edited transcript of the lecture reproduced here.