

# The Satirist

## America's Most Critical Book

Volume 1

Dan Geddes

Copyright © by Dan Geddes 2012

First edition

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-90-819997-0-0

Illustrations and cover design by Fred Schellart

Published by Omin Press

Amsterdam

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

*For Maria, for making our lives charmed and beautiful*

## Author's Note

Nothing in this book is real.

This is a collection of satires, satirical news, reviews of imaginary movies and books, and a few, hopefully humorous, poems and stories. It is all fiction of one stripe or another.

Many of these pieces originally appeared in *The Satirist: America's Most Critical Journal* ([www.thesatirist.com](http://www.thesatirist.com)) from 1999 to 2012.

*The Satirist* online journal also features serious reviews of actual books and films. These will be collected in a separate volume.

Dan Geddes  
12 December 2012  
Amsterdam

# Contents

Satires.....	1
The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders .....	1
A Modest Proposal to Convert Shopping Malls into Prisons.....	8
Are You an AEIOÜ? Take the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth!.....	12
The New Dictionary of American Cultural Literacy .....	19
Junior Bushleague .....	24
Are You a Conspiracy Theorist? Take the Test! .....	29
The Pathetic Lives of Satirists and Critics .....	36
Imaginary News .....	39
Capitology: Fastest Growing Cult in U.S.....	39
Man Claims Local Bagel Shop is a “Basic Human Right”.....	39
“People from Families” Should Vote Republican .....	40
Man Injures Shoppers Fighting for “Almost Handicapped” Parking Spot.....	40
Millions March in the <i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?</i> Man March.....	40
Bush May Hold Cheney’s Hand During 9/11 Testimony.....	41
Cheney Agonizing Whether to Seize Saudi Arabia’s Oil Now or Later.....	42
Palin Addicts Form “Sarah Palin Anonymous” .....	42
US Supreme Court: Tasing Pregnant Women Not “Excessive Force” .....	43
Americans Protest Public Health Care, Social Security, and Public Water .....	43
New Reality TV Show <i>Foreclosure</i> .....	44
Obama Drops 10,000 Tons of Boots on Libya.....	45
US Supreme Court Overturns Social Security .....	45
US Unemployment Rate Drops to 0% .....	46
Meat Packer Introduces “Pink Slime Classic” .....	46
Man Who Developed Great Abs Says Life Still the Same.....	47
Amsterdam High School Relocates to Save Historic Coffeeshop .....	48
US Replaces Labor Day Holiday with “Capitalist Overlord Day”.....	49
Supporters Praise Romney for “Not Being Obama” .....	51
IRS: Frozen Bodies Are Subject to Income Tax .....	51
Jesus Look-Alike To Be Crucified for Feeding 5,000 Homeless People .....	53
Lost Geniuses.....	55
Max Sazonov: Russia’s Greatest Poet?.....	55
Dr. Claire Hoyt: “Shrink to the Stars” .....	64
Claude Roger: Philosopher or Fraud? .....	71
Karl Kinski: “The Anti-Artist” .....	79
Felix Spielenhammer: “The Heavy Mahler”.....	86
Alexandria Czechtealeaves: True Psychic .....	97
Hans Donkerzijde’s Amsterdam City Gate.....	100
Last Interview with the Zen Master .....	105

Reviews of Imaginary Movies .....	113
Disney Movies .....	113
Disney's <i>Genesis</i> .....	113
Disney's <i>King David</i> .....	116
Disney's <i>The Book of Revelations</i> .....	117
Disney's <i>Animal Farm</i> .....	119
Disney's <i>1984</i> .....	120
The Movies of Jake Steiger .....	123
<i>Mr. Kleen</i> .....	123
<i>Meet the Gambinos</i> .....	124
<i>Bringing up Eight</i> .....	125
<i>Serial Murderers Naturally</i> .....	126
<i>Ford</i> .....	128
<i>The Lusitania</i> .....	128
Quentin Tarantino Movies .....	131
Quentin Tarantino's <i>Scent of a Banknote</i> .....	131
Quentin Tarantino's <i>Harder</i> .....	133
Reviews of Imaginary Books.....	135
Review: John Irving's <i>The Third Leg</i> .....	135
Lost William Faulkner Novel Found?.....	137
Review: Thomas Pynchon's <i>Dys</i> .....	140
Poems .....	143
Saint Nicholas and Count Monet .....	143
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Tax Return .....	151
Lost in Florida .....	153
Fast Food Satori.....	153
My First Cubicle.....	155
Fridays at the Blind Pig's Pub.....	162
Last Night in Deerwood.....	172

Writing long books is a laborious and impoverishing act of foolishness: expanding in five hundred pages an idea that could be perfectly explained in a few minutes. A better procedure is to pretend that those books already exist and to offer a summary, a commentary.

—Jorge Luis Borges



# Satires

## **The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders**

Techniques for creating successful religious cults have changed dramatically since the cult heyday of the 1970s. Millions of people are desperate to find the definitive “answers” to life’s big questions—even if incorrect—that religions and cults have always supplied.

Effective cult leaders have always leveraged the dreams of the dependent and co-dependent. The new millennium has opened up lucrative opportunities for cult leaders with the boldness and vision to exploit others. The rise of cable television and the Internet provide rich media to supplement the word-of-mouth buzz upon which cult formation has always relied.

## **The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders**

### ***Grooming***

Your personal appearance must be polished, at least at first. Only later can you degenerate into bad hygiene. But be careful! If you “go natural” too early in the cult’s development, you will just be smelly, and will destroy your cult in its infancy.

### ***Strength***

It is wise to be physically stronger than everyone else in your cult. This gives you the appearance of vitality and makes others look up to you. It’s also helpful in case of an emergency, e.g., if you are unmasked as a fraud and must run for your life or fight a gang of outraged cult members. To help preserve your relative strength, keep your followers on a low protein diet. Very low. This will affect both their muscle mass and brain function.

### ***Delegation***

Delegate all undesirable tasks. Learn to extract the most work from your disciples with the least effort. Find reliable people to manage daily operations.

### ***Time Management***

Do not waste time on trivial personages within the cult, especially time burglars, who ask annoying questions about the holes in your philosophy. Buy *The Cult Leader’s Day Planner™* to help schedule only the most crucial meetings (such as with your first disciple and your accountant).

### ***Humility***

You must maintain the illusion that you are the meekest, kindest, godliest person in your flock, despite the fact you drive the most expensive car—bought with their money. Some cult members may well be cleaning up your very excrement for you as well. Do not let that trouble you! You deserve it!

### ***Fellowship***

Create a sense of fellowship by scheduling small treats as if they are a big deal. Few things can create a sense of community more than gelatin desserts, which are always comforting. Stock up on crackers as well.

### ***Mind Control***

Make your followers sleep to the piped-in sounds of your own television infomercials. Controlling your followers' thoughts while they sleep is an important tool in maintaining your position.

## **Beyond the Seven Habits: How to Establish a Successful Cult**

Establishing a successful cult demands tremendous effort by the cult's founder, just as with any successful start-up enterprise. Many people have tried to start their own cults without proper training, often with disastrous results. Such ill-starred attempts are characterized by total disdain for human gullibility and a lack of appreciation for the subtleties required for deception on a mass scale. Human history teaches us the critical role played by dynamic individuals in teaching these false “truths” to millions in order to control their lives and take their money.

Indeed, most people do not believe in specific religious ideas—which when analyzed often lead to hopeless contradiction or confusion. Instead, people believe *in other people* whom they believe have greater powers of understanding than themselves. People depend on the *conviction of others*, and this is precisely what you need to supply.

## **Conceiving Your Cult**

First you must choose your target demographic and formulate the theme of your cult.

Few cult leaders have enough originality to start their own belief-systems totally from scratch. Instead, you will probably have to copy some ideas from established belief-systems, such as the Christian or “countercultural” traditions. But be creative! During this time of idea-formation, it is important to let your ideas flow freely. America is all about diversity, and your freedom of self-expression includes creating a cult that reflects your own sense of style. Never forget that.

## The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders

Consider your own intellectual strengths and religious training. If you frequently attended church during your youth, you should work within that tradition, as it will give you invaluable experiences to draw from. But if you have rarely or never attended church, you should attend a few times, at least to learn just how ecumenically lax on moral issues most religious denominations have become. Alternatively, you should attend some leftist gatherings if you intend on working the countercultural angle, or at least study some Eastern religions as fodder for your new syncretic religion.

Of course, you could also create your cult from your own ideas, but this requires the hard work of writing down your “beliefs” in order to garner publicity. If you are intellectually strong, this approach has some merit. If you word your tract carefully, it will be vague enough to withstand the test of time. Besides, you are the ultimate authority anyway. Many people are drawn to a brand “new” philosophy.

Once you have decided on a tradition to work in, you need to develop your “hook,” the unique selling point of your cult compared to your competition (i.e., other cults, organized religion, everything else). This idea should be short, memorable, and non-falsifiable. In the golden years of the 1970s anything with “love” in it was a good bet, such as “Share the Love” or “Love is All,” but these are now somewhat hackneyed.

**Play to your strengths.** If you have a business background, you could build a theme around “the Lord’s Blessings” or “Pray for Success.” Invoke the time-honored scripture about the Lord repaying you one hundred fold for whatever you give to the Lord. Many people take this literally, and will see your collection plate as an extremely efficient mutual fund. Do not divest them of these notions.

Again, if your strengths are intellectual, you are probably shooting for a disaffected countercultural demographic, which remains a large cluster even to this day. Christianity is usually spurned by this group, so try Buddhism, or some form of mysticism. This is also an ideal group if you want to start a belief-system from scratch. But be sure to include references to literary figures like Blake, Rilke or Allen Ginsburg, or to musicians such as Jim Morrison.

**Exercise:** Formulate the theme of your cult, paying special attention to your target demographic. If you are working within a conservative Christian tradition, be sure you are ready to field questions about such “Christian” topics such as abortion or gun control. If you are working in a vaguely “leftist” tradition, you could try to dismiss all political questions as pointless, but will have to be well-versed in countercultural claptrap such as the writings of the Beats, Carlos Castaneda, or Fritjof Capra.

## Preliminary Cult Leader Training: Joining a Cult

It is absolutely essential that you devote at least three months of your life to your training, without which you are beginning your cult on a shaky foundation.

Let us assume you will be working within the “countercultural” tradition.

After you have formulated the theme of your cult, you must undertake some field research. In other words, you should *join* a cult.

Some would-be cult leaders have skipped this vital step to their own detriment. Joining a cult gives you a view of the inner workings of an existing cult, its leaders, and his or her followers. You can learn much by watching a practicing cult leader in action. If the cult is at all successful, you will see a highly developed theme used to good effect.

I recommend joining a cult near its prime, when it has entered its “isolation phase,” in which a self-sufficient compound has already been erected to ensure minimal contact with “outsiders.”

Joining a cult has its dangers—you may well end up losing your senses and becoming brainwashed yourself. If this happens, face it: you were obviously not cult leader material anyway. Or perhaps, as has happened, the cult leader identifies you as a mole or a spy. If you suspect that cult members are suspicious of you, you must leave immediately. Your field reconnaissance is a dangerous but necessary part of your training. Other cult leaders are correct in wanting to stamp you out.

After a few weeks or months, it will be time to leave the cult. This may well be the most important lesson, for one day you will need to figure out how to stop people from leaving your own cult. Some underdeveloped cults let people leave at any time, no questions asked. Others may ask for a steep “exit donation” until they can find someone to “replace” you in your demeaning manual labor. There are many policies on this. After your escape, formulate a policy that will work for you.

## Creating Your Aura

Creating your aura isn’t difficult once you understand your target demographic.

- **Hair.** To lead a countercultural cult, grow your hair long. If working within the more traditional Christian tradition, cut it very short. Or make it big and poofy in the televangelist style, but not long.
- **Eyebrows** are also crucial. If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then the eyebrows are the curtains to the drama raging in your eyes. It is essential to develop absolute control over your eyebrow muscles. Highly developed brow muscles are required for “browbeating” skeptics into submission, or to otherwise mesmerize follows with your “intensity.”
- **Physique.** For a countercultural style cult, you should ideally be either very thin (the emaciated wise man) or well-built (physical vitality is an

## The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders

essential part of convincing others of your own health and dynamism). Even portly individuals can lead cults, but this is usually due to believers unconsciously associating you with the Buddha. You should encourage such comparisons.

- **Speaking.** For a countercultural cult, you should probably adopt a soft, soothing speaking voice, as if you have already discovered the great truths of the beyond. Strident, powerful speaking is reserved for leftist political activists who are angry about things. You are selling peace, tranquility and “dropping out” from the world, not political activism.
- **Infallible Pronouncements.** Once you are established, you will have to adopt an oracle’s tone of voice. It is essential for you to develop a high tolerance for contradiction early on. Contradictions may be noted by some of your brighter followers, who must be silenced or removed from the group. Thus, it is important to have ready answers like: “Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds” (Emerson) or “I contain multitudes” (Whitman)—best said in a bellowing voice. If you’re working within the Christian tradition, you can use the ever-handly “The Lord works in mysterious ways” to explain away any contradictions.

### First Disciple

Early in your practice, even perhaps before your first public appearance, you will need to discover the one person who believes in you implicitly. This person must be willing to walk through fire for you, and will hopefully be unfazed by the frequent contradictions you will be uttering. Such a person may seem like an unlikely, even ridiculous choice (a former convict, a fallen minister, a recovering drug addict still on the brink), but he or she will prove handy in convincing others you are a worthy cult leader. He or she can also perform countless thankless tasks on your behalf.

Note that it is vital that your first disciple *actually believe in you*. Former cult leaders who have allowed a trusted confidante to play the part of first disciple have usually met with disaster. The cult leader and first disciple were sometimes caught gloating together, often seated before a table loaded with cash. The secret they share is too irresistible. No, the cult leader must walk a solitary path, and trust no one; that is his strength.

It is also dangerous to use your spouse/partner as a first disciple, unless he or she is also a very gullible creature. Note too that if your spouse is the first disciple then you might end up sharing the spotlight, which is not to all cult leaders’ tastes.

After one person has been genuinely convinced of your powers, then the precedent has been set. Other people can always point to the first disciple’s conviction—and then each other’s—as evidence of your authenticity.

## The Cult in Embryo

Now that you've completed your training, it's time to get your cult off the ground.

College campuses are excellent places to begin cults, as there are so many young people searching for the answers to life's questions. College students are still at an age when they are open to new ideas—as they must be to join your cult. If your marketing budget is small, you may start with posting flyers in the student union. But be sure to include a picture of yourself on the flyer—not just text. This is a cult after all. This is about you. If you are photographed at an oblique angle sitting insouciantly, students will understand the message that you have new ideas.

During the first meeting, *do not let on* that it is the first meeting. Say that you've just been hanging out in Madison, Wisconsin, or Athens, Ohio, where they loved you. Say that you didn't want to leave, but you were "called" to this town. Don't specify whether it was God or your old college roommate who called you.

This is your big chance, so don't blow it. Hopefully you have carefully planned the format of your cult's "meeting" or "service" or "gathering." Music is essential, but you should get someone else to play guitar or piano for you, even if you can do it yourself. Although singing along is OK during the early days of the cult, eventually you will outgrow the need to lend your own precious voice.

Your "message" will probably be some variation on the theme that "society" has deteriorated, and that only grassroots movements such as your own can recapture authentic spirituality. Organized religion is an obvious and easy target and one of your main competitors—after all, you are not yet organized. Other familiar targets include the government, the media, and big business.

Your cult should provide promising answers to some of life's most vexing questions, including:

- **The Afterlife:** You should absolutely promise one. You lose nothing. It is the ultimate post-dated check.
- **Good vs. Evil:** It's clear who is who here. You and your followers are the elect, the good; the rest of the world is deluded or riddled with evil. But it is wise to blame the evil on the Devil, or someone else similarly unaccountable. The world is misguided, not willfully evil, but you and your group have all the answers.
- **The Meaning of Life:** Clearly the meaning of life is to serve God, or whatever you call your particular absolute end. Earthly considerations (including responsibilities to family, friends, and society) are not so important.

After preparing the soil of your followers' minds by attacking common enemies, you are ready to share your own "testimony." This has got to be

## The Seven Habits of Highly Efficient Cult Leaders

good. Your testimony should include such classic themes as abusive parents, broken homes, drug abuse, and your own personal struggles with evil itself. You were a normal person once, too, before your calling. Perhaps you had a mystical experience, after which you understood the interrelatedness of all things, or the cosmic oneness. It is helpful to coin a new phrase here, or else people might question your originality.

Remember that your testimony may be your greatest single asset. It is an enriched version of your life-story. It is vital that it is memorable and easy to summarize. It should be a good *meme*. People with fascinating life-stories have started all successful religions. Learn from them.

### **Cultivating the Cult**

In an age of cynicism, your most difficult task is generating enthusiasm. People must leave your gatherings muttering that you are “amazing” or “incredible.” If they do not, then you just may not be cult leader material and should consider finding a less inspiring vocation, such as a Congressional representative.

Like any good marketing campaign, your cult must focus on certain demographic clusters. Although you may already believe that you are universally charming, in reality you will never appeal to all people.

**Be selective.** Follow these two cardinal rules:

- Target the vast oceans of gullible people out there. (Don’t waste your valuable time on skeptics.)
- Target people with low self-esteem.

### **Conclusion**

Starting a profitable religious cult takes research, field work and preparation. Many would-be cult leaders blithely underestimate the skills and talent required to convince other people that they are the messiah and to swindle them out of their money. Some would-be cult leaders have even become brainwashed themselves or have been exposed and then beaten by an outraged mob of once docile followers.

Still others have made the classic blunder of choosing their spouse or best friend (people who know the would-be cult leader too well to have blind faith in him) to serve as their first disciple.

By following the steps outlined above, and by buying some of our associated products, you too can avoid these traps and establish your own highly profitable religious cult.

## **A Modest Proposal to Convert Shopping Malls into Prisons**

Converting shopping malls into prisons is a cost-effective way to create prison space to house America's growing population of non-violent criminal offenders.

America has an undisputed need for prison space, as we keep more than two million people behind bars. The tendency of courts to coddle prisoners makes the cost of housing criminal offenders mount inexorably.

By a happy coincidence, America's stock of shopping malls is aging ungracefully. Malls built during the shopping mall's gold rush days of the 1970s are now depressing environments, plagued by empty stores and roamed by unkempt hooligans. Efforts to convert these malls into community centers are usually ineffective, and an increasing number of these malls—some less than twenty years old—are being razed because they no longer appear to serve any purpose. This is a tragic fall from the vital civic function they once served.

Why not use these cavernous malls to satisfy our government's need for more prison space? It is not so far-fetched once you consider it. Shopping malls tend to be huge, windowless, concrete structures. They feature adjoining parking lots that provide ample room for recreation yards and for buffers between the prison and nearby suburban populations, who wish to keep these convicts at bay.

Refitting a shopping mall into a prison takes surprisingly little effort. The inmates could be housed in the stores themselves. A former shoe store, for example, can house up to fifty inmates comfortably. All stores are already equipped with a metal gate for their front doors. The gate can be pulled down and locked to keep the prisoners inside. And with some "poetic justice," shoplifters can be confined in the very stores in which they once practiced their craft.

At meal times, prisoners can visit a centrally located food court, where extensive kitchen facilities are already in place.

Malls are already designed to hold people in place for the maximum period of time. Consider the design of the parking lots. Special zoning permissions already allow nearby traffic lights to remain constantly green in order to allow people to enter the mall (or prison), while persistently red lights obstruct the exits. Guard posts erected at these bottlenecks would make escape very difficult.

### **"It's a Mall World After All"**

Although simply using shopping malls as prisons could save taxpayers millions of dollars in new prison construction costs, creative incarceration

## A Modest Proposal to Convert Shopping Malls into Prisons

programs could lead to lower operational costs of running the prisons, as well boost our economy by encouraging prisoners to be full-fledged consumers.

The number of guards needed to man a prison is a decisive factor in its operational costs. However, many studies have shown that if prisoners are suitably occupied, then their idle brains do not hatch plans to escape. As expected, installing televisions in prison cells, especially cable television, has led to such atrophy of mind and spirit among the prisoners that guards were scarcely needed in those prisons. Granting unlimited internet access to prisoners will also render many prisoners sedentary and supine, just as with “couch potatoes” and internet addicts in the general population.

Keep in mind that thousands of inmates are non-violent, and serve time only for such crimes as recreational drug use or political dissent. These non-violent offenders can participate in the pilot program.

Let’s call it “It’s a Mall World After All.” The shops in the new prison malls are reopened, but are staffed entirely by prisoners! Constant video surveillance prevents theft. Video surveillance technology is already in such widespread use in shopping malls that equipment upgrade costs are minimal.

At night prisoners can sleep in the stores in which they work, making sure to first lock themselves in with the metal gates already in place. The stores are open every day from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (until 11:00 p.m. during the week before Christmas), and prisoners are scheduled to work ten hours per day.

For their labors, each prisoner is allotted a \$10,000 voucher per year to spend in the shops, where the prices are dramatically inflated to match those found airports or amusement parks. After their ten-hour day work, they have four hours per day with which to shop. The schedules are arranged so that there are always non-violent offenders shopping.

Remember that states currently spend an average of \$40,000 per year to incarcerate one prisoner. Under the “It’s a Mall World After All” plan, we estimate a savings of \$5,000 dollars per prisoner, even after granting each prisoner an allowance of \$10,000.

Here’s how:

- a \$5,000 per prisoner savings in new prison construction costs;
- a \$5,000 per prisoner savings in prison guards. A few machine-gun wielding guards can be placed in skylights and at the mall exits, nearly all of which can be blocked off with giant dumpsters containing the waste generated by the mall prison;
- a \$3,000 per prisoner subsidy paid by the merchants, taken from the store’s profits;
- a \$2,000 per prisoner savings in food costs, as prisoners are required to feed themselves at the food court out of their \$10,000 allowance.

Assuming the \$40,000 currently being spent to keep an inmate in jail, this would save the government \$15,000 per prisoner. The \$10,000 allowance

given to the prisoners pays for itself through lower costs, and by creating a more robust prison economy.

With 400,000 non-violent offenders behind bars, that's a savings of \$2 billion per year. Part of the \$2 billion should be earmarked to fight the War on Drugs and put even more non-violent drug offenders into the "It's a Mall World After All" program.

And consider the more meaningful lives the prisoners themselves can lead! After a leisurely morning of shopping or browsing, the inmates could visit the food court for lunch. Although the lunch served at food courts is perhaps even more perilous to their health than the fare served at most prisons, the prisoners' consumption of cheeseburgers and sweetened coffee may well decrease their life-spans in incarceration, even while validating their identity and self-esteem as consumers—with the same freedom to make significant life choices as people in the outside population.

After lunch, the shopping continues. Or perhaps the prisoners choose to take in a movie. The inmates could prove a captive audience at the Cineplexes for Hollywood's latest spectacle, providing important focus group feedback in exchange for free movie passes and popcorn.

Credit card companies will certainly take note of this new demographic cluster with secure incomes and infinite time to shop, and so inundate the prisons with credit card applications, albeit with higher interest rates. They will set up booths to encourage passers-by to sign up—and the credit card companies can easily verify the applicant's address. The existing dental and optical centers in malls could be utilized to service the prisoners.

Note that with \$10,000 in hand to spend in a fully stocked shopping mall, prisoners would have little incentive to leave, and so security costs would be streamlined. To prevent any black market from arising and breeding gangs, a few shops would be dedicated to serving the prisoners' needs for such vices as cigarettes and soft drugs. Certainly inmates who have smoked some marijuana, and then ambled into a novelty store will become fixated on the available merchandise, and will lack the motivation or will to attempt escape. Prisoners who develop an entrepreneurial knack could also open a few bordellos, knowing that a steady business is theirs for the asking.

Willing prisoners can even sign-up for the "Shop Until you Drop" plan, whereby they forego their rights to appeal, parole, probation, health care, and counseling, in exchange for an additional credit-line of \$5,000 per year.

The prisoners will feel much more a part of normal society, and so will be less vengeful and more easily assimilated if they ever rejoin society at large. From their extensive experience in shopping malls, they will have gained the social skills needed to find a place in society, and perhaps a job as a cashier, unless cashier jobs have all been automated away by that time.

A chief criticism against this proposal is that life inside the prison walls is so appealing that more people would want to go to prison. After all, it seems

## A Modest Proposal to Convert Shopping Malls into Prisons

little different from the lives of the people on the outside, except that their commute to their deadening wage-slave jobs is much shorter than the commute of wage-slaves still on the outside.

But this is an unconvincing critique of the proposal, as there is little danger that many people would deliberately commit non-violent crimes just to be allowed to live in the prison malls. The \$10,000 yearly income is simply too small to satisfy most people's needs for cheaply made consumer products that are often disposed of almost immediately after being purchased. Most people would rather work for more consumer goods, even if it means accruing back-breaking consumer debt as well.

A more convincing argument for this proposal is the profoundly beneficial impact it would have on our economy as a whole. The large and growing prison population, while it currently benefits a few companies with lucrative government contracts, is of little use to the economy at large. By transforming inmates with infinite time on their hands into dedicated shoppers or movie viewers, we can spur our economy into even more furious fits of consumption and growth.

And from that, we all benefit.

# Are You an AEIOÜ? Take the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth!

## Introduction

Human resource professionals are always demanding more efficient psychological tests for their staffs.

Many human resource departments across the country have replaced the Myers-Briggs test with the more efficient Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth.

The Breyers-Devere Probe consists of only fifteen questions. While the Myers-Briggs test captures only four facets of human personality, the Breyers-Devere Probe captures five—and with much greater efficiency!

The five personality types measured by the Probe are:

- Absolutists (A) vs. Relativists (R);
- Egotists (E) vs. Team Players (T);
- Intellectuals (I) vs. Feelers (F);
- Optimists (O) vs. Pessimists (P); and
- Übermensch (Ü) vs. Sheep (S).

## The Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth

**Instructions:** For each question, select “I agree” or “I disagree.”

*Hint:* Try to forget that this will be read by your current and all future employers. Most people who take the test are not ultimately terminated as a result.

## Questions

1. Absolute right and wrong do not really exist, especially in a corporate context.

I agree /  I disagree

2. When working on a team, I congratulate other team members for their nominal contributions to my achievements.

I agree /  I disagree

3. Spontaneous weeping during a business meeting is perfectly OK. It’s not a sign of psychological weakness, depression or mental illness.

I agree /  I disagree

4. This may well be the worst of all possible worlds.

I agree /  I disagree

5. Parties can be useful platforms for me to showcase my wit and other talents (even if some people there are consuming alcohol or drugs).

I agree /  I disagree

Are You an AEIOÜ? Take the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth!

6. I am free to do whatever I want without being punished, unlike previous generations who worried about God watching their every action.

I agree /  I disagree

7. If I am served unsatisfactory food in a restaurant, I demand that the waiter bring me better food immediately.

I agree /  I disagree

8. Because I'm such a "people person" I would rather meet a new colleague than think up a great new idea that would advance my career.

I agree /  I disagree

9. Even on my "good days" it is difficult to fight an implacable sense of doom.

I agree /  I disagree

10. While dining with others, I have the right to the last piece of any shared foodstuff (e.g., chicken wing, pizza slice, slice of bread or cake).

I agree /  I disagree

11. If I were trapped with my dog and my best friend without food for more than thirty days, then I would probably end up eating both of them.

I agree /  I disagree

12. I am far more interesting than the average person.

I agree /  I disagree

13. I secretly like stupid movies, as long as they make me laugh or cry.

I agree /  I disagree

14. I still see myself with this company in five years.

I agree /  I disagree

15. When my boss is unfair to me I sometimes stick up for myself (or have harmless fantasies about his or her death).

I agree /  I disagree

**How to Score the Test**

Absolutist/ Relativist	Questions 1, 6, and 11. If you agreed with two or three of these you are a Relativist (R); else an Absolutist (A).
Egotist/ Team Player	Questions 2, 7, and 12. If you agreed to two or three of these you are an Egotist (E); else a Team Player (T).
Intellectual/ Feeler	Questions 3, 8, and 13. If you agreed to two or three of these you are a Feeler (F); else an Intellectual (I).
Optimist/ Pessimist	Questions 4, 9, and 14. If you agreed to two or three of these you are a Pessimist (P); else an Optimist (O).
Übermensch/ Sheep	Questions 5, 10 and 15. If you agreed to two or three of these you are an Übermensch (U); else a Sheep (S).

## **The Design of the Test**

Many questions are designed to evoke feelings of injustice in the subjects, as both agreement and disagreement may sound like admissions of guilt. This is perfectly natural; everyone is guilty of something. People who hesitate to answer the questions may be highly nuanced thinkers, i.e., indecisive sheep (S), and so are clearly unfit for senior management, where rapid decision-making is essential.

Human resources who leave the test blank are officially scored as a RTFPS. This is not a mistake, but part of the test's design. By default the test reflects the personalities of most people, even if they don't take the test. This is not a “value judgment” about the quality of human *life*, a value that we feel is best left to the biogenetic industry or other corporate interests to decide. As human resource professionals, we are concerned mainly with what is becoming known in HR circles as “human worth,” i.e., the value of human resources (as opposed to technological ones) within a corporate structure.

## **Moral Absolutist (A) vs. Moral Relativist (R)**

Moral absolutists believe in an absolute moral structure, usually based upon a religion or some long discredited belief-system such as Freudianism and Marxism. They are apt to use phrases such as “It's only right!”

Relativists believe that morals are relative to a situation, and can therefore rarely make expedient business decisions, or even decide where to have dinner.

## **Egotists (E) vs. Team Players (T)**

Egotists perform best in individual endeavors, such as the arts, in which it is imperative that a single individual grasps the whole undertaking. They also relate everything that others say to events in their own lives—no matter how remote the connection.

Team Players function best in a team environment, but they may or not be leaders (see *Übermensch*). Team Players may be Sheep who hide their mediocrity in the crowd.

## **Intellectual (I) vs. Feeler (F)**

Intellectuals approach life mentally rather than emotionally, but can't even have a coffee with you without telling you about some book you never read.

Feelers respond emotionally and immediately, and do not tend to filter experience through their logical faculties. Feelers want their feelings affirmed, and understood, but rarely analyzed, especially by Intellectuals.

## **Optimist (O) vs. Pessimist (P)**

Optimists believe the universe tends toward progress and usually carry themselves in a happy manner that is especially irksome to Pessimists.

## Are You an AEIOÜ? Take the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth!

All Pessimists believe that they are realists, and that their individual lives are programmed for defeat, whether by God, the Devil, or perhaps a global conspiracy.

### Übermensch/Überfrau (U) vs. Sheep (S)

Übermensch types have overcome self-doubt, and do whatever they do confidently. They are the leaders of the team if Team Players, and often are blazingly original minds if Egotists. Masters of themselves, they refuse to be dominated by (or even interested in the lives of) other people.

Sheep, whatever their other qualities, follow the herd, and try to hide their indelible mediocrity by blending in. Sheep who are also Team Players, function well in such a milieu, while Egotistic Sheep always make bleating-like noises about being better than the other sheep—and even being Übermensch material—but they seldom are.

Once you have calculated your proclivities to the five personality polarities, find yourself in the chart below.

### The 32 Personality Types and Suggested Vocations

Abs. - Rel.	Ego. - Team.	Int. - Feel.	Opt. - Pess.	Über. - Sheep	Likely Careers for Overachievers/Underachievers of Each Type
A	E	I	O	Ü	Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank/ Ayn Rand's Butler
A	E	I	O	S	Think-tank Economist/ Pretzel Vendor
A	E	I	P	Ü	Self-Help Charlatan/ Philosopher
A	E	I	P	S	Accountant/ The Unabomber
A	E	F	O	Ü	The Antichrist/ Televangelist
A	E	F	O	S	Hollywood Actor/ Street Hawker
A	E	F	P	Ü	Visionary Madman/ Opera Singer
A	E	F	P	S	Homeopathist / Ball Retriever at Driving-Range

Satires

<b>Abs. - Rel.</b>	<b>Ego. - Team.</b>	<b>Int. - Feel.</b>	<b>Opt. - Pess.</b>	<b>Über. - Sheep</b>	<b>Likely Careers for Overachievers/Underachievers of Each Type</b>
A	T	I	O	Ü	World Leader/ Cheerleader Coach
A	T	I	O	S	Robot's Secretary/ Greeter at Wal-Mart
A	T	I	P	Ü	Cult Leader/ Congressional Representative
A	T	I	P	S	Sociologist/ Person Willing to Do Gross Things for Money
A	T	F	O	Ü	The False Prophet/ Football Coach
A	T	F	O	S	Missionary/ Peace Corps Lifer
A	T	F	P	Ü	Orchestra Conductor/ Traffic Manager
A	T	F	P	S	Secretary of the Interior/ Car Washer
R	E	I	O	Ü	Archbishop/ Investment Banker
R	E	I	O	S	Middle-Manager/ Lighthouse Keeper
R	E	I	P	Ü	Venture Capitalist/ Philosopher
R	E	I	P	S	Film Critic/ Extra in a TV Commercial
R	E	F	O	Ü	Prime Minister/ Occasional Poet
R	E	F	O	S	Starbucks Barista/ Town Crier

Are You an AEIOÜ? Take the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth!

Abs. - Rel.	Ego. - Team.	Int. - Feel.	Opt. - Pess.	Über. - Sheep	Likely Careers for Overachievers/Underachievers of Each Type
R	E	F	P	Ü	Prophet of Doom/ Weather Forecaster
R	E	F	P	S	Nurse/ Pantomime
R	T	I	O	Ü	First Lord of the Admiralty/ Hot Dog Vendor
R	T	I	O	S	Spineless “Yes-Man” Executive/ Mortgage Broker
R	T	I	P	Ü	Junk Bond King/ Degenerate Gambler
R	T	I	P	S	Poet/ Typist
R	T	F	O	Ü	Marketing Director/ Copywriter
R	T	F	O	S	Marriage Counselor/ Used Car Salesman
R	T	F	P	Ü	Survivalist Leader Movie Usher
R	T	F	P	S	Assistant Coach Lifer Barmaid

### Conclusion

While skeptics (often classic REIPS’s) may doubt that the test can accurately gauge personality traits on the basis of a few questions, our studies have shown that the Breyers-Devere Probe is accurate enough to determine the fate and future careers for most human resources.

Much more meaningful data is generated about the subjects from the Breyers-Devere Probe than from old-paradigm personality assessments. Corporate clients can also buy supplemental literature, *A Corporate Guide to the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth*, which suggests further conclusions that can be drawn about each prospective employee who has taken the test. For example, applicants who agree with the statement “Parties can be useful platforms for me to showcase my wit and other talents (even if some people there are consuming alcohol or drugs)” may be Team Players, but should also

## Satires

be red-flagged for alcohol and drug abuse testing. Other respondents who disagree may be AEIPS and so fit our Unabomber profile; their home telephones should be wiretapped forthwith. This allows employers an extra level of analysis in regards to their current and prospective employees.

Although the personality of the human animal remains too difficult to map absolutely, the Breyers-Devere Probe of Human Worth marks an advance in personality metrics for employers. Ultimately, through advances in neuroscience, all human actions will be able to be deterministically anticipated, and verbal diagnostics such as the Breyers-Devere Probe may become obsolete. But until that time, such tests remain an indispensable addition to our understanding of human resources.





## About the Author

Dan Geddes is the editor of *The Satirist: America's Most Critical Journal* ([www.thesatirist.com](http://www.thesatirist.com)), a unique collection of satires, serious reviews, reviews of imaginary works, fiction, essays, and satirical news.

His work has also appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Dry Bones Review*, and *The Modern Word*.

Geddes' serious criticism in *The Satirist* online has been widely cited in books, newspapers, academic papers, and websites.

Geddes was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1970. He studied philosophy and history at Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College and later in graduate programs.

He has also written a novel, a screenplay, a one act play, and a collection of travel stories.

Geddes enjoys writing, traveling, and playing guitar. He lives in Amsterdam.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions and support.

To Fred: for the great illustrations and your unwavering support.

To Eric: for your always sharp comments.

To Diane: for help with French translations.

To Richard: for help with German translations.

To Michael: for appreciating my work so long ago (even the Zen master).

To Tom: for your uncannily good judgment.

To Maria: for still loving me despite all the time I've lavished on these little literary sandcastles.