

The Cult Test

Questions

After viewing the movie [Kumaré](#) look through this document 😊

- [1. The Guru is always right.](#)
- [2. You are always wrong.](#)
- [3. No Exit.](#)
- [4. No Graduates.](#)
- [5. Cult-speak.](#)
- [6. Group-think, Suppression of Dissent, and Enforced Conformity in Thinking](#)
- [7. Irrationality.](#)
- [8. Suspension of disbelief.](#)
- [9. Denigration of competing sects, cults, religions, groups, or organizations.](#)
- [10. Personal attacks on critics.](#)
- [11. Insistence that the group is THE ONLY WAY.](#)
- [12. The group and its members are special.](#)
- [13. Induction of guilt, and the use of guilt to manipulate group members.](#)
- [14. Unquestionable Dogma, *Sacred Science*, and Infallible Ideology.](#)
- [15. Indoctrination of members.](#)
- [16. Appeals to "holy" or "wise" authorities.](#)
- [17. Instant Community.](#)
- [18. Instant Intimacy.](#)
- [19. Surrender To The Group.](#)
- [20. Giggly wonderfulness and starry-eyed faith.](#)
- [21. Personal testimonies of earlier converts.](#)
- [22. The group is self-absorbed.](#)
- [23. Dual Purposes, Hidden Agendas, and Ulterior Motives.](#)
- [24. Aggressive Recruiting.](#)
- [25. Deceptive Recruiting.](#)
- [26. No Humor.](#)
- [27. You Can't Tell The Truth.](#)
- [28. Cloning — You become a clone of the group leader or other elder group members.](#)
- [29. You must change your beliefs to conform to the group's beliefs.](#)
- [30. The End Justifies The Means.](#)
- [31. Dishonesty, Deceit, Denial, Falsification, and Rewriting History.](#)
- [32. Different Levels of Truth.](#)
- [33. Newcomers can't think right.](#)
- [34. The Group Implants Phobias.](#)
- [35. The Group is Money-Grubbing.](#)

- [36. Confession Sessions.](#)
- [37. A System of Punishments and Rewards.](#)
- [38. An Impossible Superhuman Model of Perfection.](#)
- [39. Mentoring.](#)
- [40. Intrusiveness.](#)
- [41. Disturbed Guru, Mentally Ill Leader.](#)
- [42. Disturbed Members, Mentally Ill Followers.](#)
- [43. Create a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt, and dependency.](#)
- [44. Dispensed existence](#)
- [45. Ideology Over Experience, Observation, and Logic](#)
- [46. Keep them unaware that there is an agenda to change them](#)
- [47. Thought-Stopping Language. Thought-terminating clichés and slogans.](#)
- [48. Mystical Manipulation](#)
- [49. The guru or the group demands ultra-loyalty and total commitment.](#)
- [50. Demands for Total Faith and Total Trust](#)
- [51. Members Get No Respect. They Get Abused.](#)
- [52. Inconsistency. Contradictory Messages](#)
- [53. Hierarchical, Authoritarian Power Structure, and Social Castes](#)
- [54. Front groups, masquerading recruiters, hidden promoters, and disguised propagandists](#)
- [55. Belief equals truth](#)
- [56. Use of double-binds](#)
- [57. The group leader is not held accountable for his actions.](#)
- [58. Everybody else needs the guru to boss him around, but nobody bosses the guru around.](#)
- [59. The guru criticizes everybody else, but nobody criticizes the guru.](#)
- [60. Dispensed truth and social definition of reality](#)
- [61. The Guru Is Extra-Special.](#)
- [62. Flexible, shifting morality](#)
- [63. Separatism](#)
- [64. Inability to tolerate criticism](#)
- [65. A Charismatic Leader](#)
- [66. Calls to Obliterate Self](#)
- [67. Don't Trust Your Own Mind.](#)
- [68. Don't Feel Your Own Feelings.](#)
- [69. The group takes over the individual's decision-making process.](#)
- [70. You Owe The Group.](#)
- [71. We Have The Panacea.](#)
- [72. Progressive Indoctrination and Progressive Commitments](#)
- [73. Magical, Mystical, Unexplainable Workings](#)
- [74. Trance-Inducing Practices](#)
- [75. New Identity — Redefinition of Self — Revision of Personal History](#)
- [76. Membership Rivalry](#)
- [77. True Believers](#)
- [78. Scapegoating and Excommunication](#)

- [79. Promised Powers or Knowledge](#)
- [80. It's a con. You don't get the promised goodies.](#)
- [81. Hypocrisy](#)
- [82. Lying. Denial of the truth. Reversal of reality. Rationalization and Denial.](#)
- [83. Seeing Through Tinted Lenses](#)
- [84. You can't make it without the group.](#)
- [85. Enemy-making and Devaluing the Outsider](#)
- [86. The group wants to own you.](#)
- [87. Channelling or other occult, unchallengeable, sources of information.](#)
- [88. They Make You Dependent On The Group.](#)
- [89. Demands For Compliance With The Group](#)
- [90. Newcomers Need Fixing.](#)
- [91. Use of the Cognitive Dissonance Technique.](#)
- [92. Grandiose existence. Bombastic, Grandiose Claims.](#)
- [93. Black And White Thinking](#)
- [94. The use of heavy-duty mind control and rapid conversion techniques.](#)
- [95. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who leaves the group.](#)
- [96. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who criticizes the group.](#)
- [97. Appropriation of all of the members' worldly wealth.](#)
- [98. Making cult members work long hours for free.](#)
- [99. Total immersion and total isolation.](#)
- [100. Mass suicide.](#)
- [Bibliography](#)



To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.

QUESTIONS 1 – 10

1. The Guru is always right.

The Guru, his church, and his teachings are always right, and above criticism, and beyond reproach.

In some cults, the guru is dead, but the principle is the same. I use the word "guru" loosely here; in many cults the charismatic leader has the title of minister, priest,

yogi, swami, prophet, or all-knowing wise man. Or even, "Chairman Mao." In any case, the leader is always right.

Likewise, the teachings of the guru are always right, and when he dies, his writings become holy scriptures, infallible and unquestionable. And the guru's church is always right, and the guru's successors are always right, and everything about the cult is always right.

Jeffrey Masson had this to say about phony gurus:

Every guru claims to know something you cannot know by yourself or through ordinary channels. All gurus promise access to a hidden reality if only you will follow their teaching, accept their authority, hand your life over to them. Certain questions are off limits. There are things you cannot know about the guru and the guru's personal life. Every doubt about the guru is a reflection of your own unworthiness, or the influence of an external evil force. The more obscure the action of the guru, the more likely it is to be right, to be cherished. Ultimately you cannot admire the guru, you must worship him. You must obey him, you must humble yourself, for the greater he is, the less you are — until you reach the inner circle and can start abusing other people the way your guru abused you. All this is in the very nature of being a guru.

My Father's Guru, Jeffrey Masson, 1993, page 173.

(Please note that there is another kind of "guru" — the genuine kind. Jeffrey Masson was writing about his own experiences with a "spiritual teacher" — Paul Brunton — who was a fraud and a fake. But there are some real ones around, even if they sometimes seem as rare as hens' teeth.)

The degree to which the cult glorifies the leader is often absurd. L. Ron Hubbard, the leader of Scientology, was lauded as the most magnificent person who had ever lived — indeed, he was single-handedly the greatest cause of human advancement in all time, because he had been reborn in lifetime after lifetime, returning to Earth again and again, each time bringing yet another great discovery or advancement to humanity. It seemed that L. Ron Hubbard had been, in successive reincarnations, *most all* of the greatest and most famous men who had ever lived, throughout all of human history.

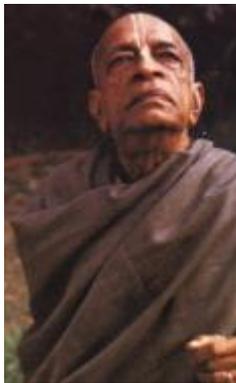


Lafayette Ronald
"L. Ron" Hubbard

The Scientology organization publishes a series of 20 books — the "RON series" — which exalt L. Ron Hubbard in all of his aspects: *RON the Filmmaker*, *RON the Master Mariner*, *RON the Auditor*, *RON the Philosophy of Administration*, *RON*

the Adventurer/Explorer, RON the Artist, RON the Photographer, RON the Writer, RON the Humanitarian, RON the Horticulturist, RON the Music Maker, RON the Poet/Lyricist, etc... Hubbard's practice was to dabble in something a bit, like sailing a sailboat for the summer, and then declare himself a **Master** of the art, deserving of another book...

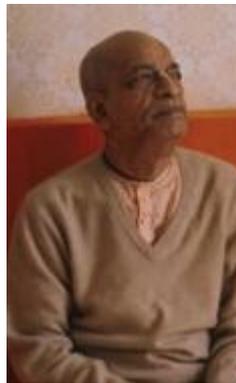
In many of the cover photographs on those books, Hubbard gazes upwards, towards Heaven, to tell us that he is a spiritual visionary who is above mundane earthly concerns. Coincidentally, on the cover of the Hari Krishna (ISKCON) book *The Science of Self Realization*, the creepy fraudulent guru A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada strikes exactly the same lofty "spiritual" Heaven-gazing pose. Those phony gurus sure do like to gaze up towards Heaven a lot. (Perhaps because they know that that's about as close to Heaven as they are ever going to get...)



A.C.
Bhaktivedan
ta Swami
Prabhupada



L. Ron
Hubbard



A.C.
Bhaktivedan
ta Swami
Prabhupada



L. Ron
Hubbard



A.C.
Bhaktivedan
ta Swami
Prabhupada

Not to be outdone, Moon's Unification Church claims that Sun Myung Moon and his wife are "The Perfect Parents," the only two perfect people on the planet Earth. And Moon is the new Messiah, here to finish the work that Jesus Christ didn't quite manage to get done right...



Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his wife, and some expendable followers.

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon is boss of the Unification Church, more commonly known as the "Moonies". Now into his eighties, the South Korean sage proclaims that the Virgin Mary was not a virgin and that he and his wife — the "True Mother" — are Christ's heirs, on earth to finish Christ's work and unite all Christian churches into his. He has also done time in a US penitentiary for tax evasion.

It just goes on and on. In cult after cult, the leader is just the greatest thing.
"Ultimately you cannot admire the guru, you must worship him."

If you have any doubts about whether the cult worships the guru, just ask a member, ***"What are the 10 biggest mistakes that the guru made in setting up the organization and formulating its doctrines?"*** True believers will give you a look of horror and insist that the guru has never made any mistakes... ***"The very idea is unthinkable."***

There is one big disadvantage for the guru when the cult declares that he is perfect — he has to act that way, and at least do a good job of faking it. If he is found to be stealing all of the money and screwing all of the girls, it can hurt his believability. A few cults have a clever work-around that spares the cult leader from having to be perfect: *Somebody Else*, like a dead saint, or an angel, or Jesus, or the Virgin Mary, is the perfect one, and the cult leader merely "channels" the Perfect Master's messages. In that way, what the leader says is still unquestionably true and unchallengeable, because it comes from a Higher Power, but the cult leader can indulge in all of the pleasures of the flesh himself without creating a contradiction. After all, he never said that he was perfect, or any more holy than anybody else. He

is just more attuned to the Higher Spheres, and able to hear the Voice of a Higher Power...

Oh, and of course the received messages will suit the leader's whims. Suppose, for instance, that there is a cute young woman whom the leader fancies, but she has gotten involved with another male member of the group. Well, suddenly the Angel or Ascended Master is criticizing that other fellow for indulging in base desires, and telling him to knock it off and have nothing to do with women. Then, when the cult leader jumps on the same young woman, the Ascended Master has no criticism of him... Funny how that works. You can use your own imagination to dream up another dozen similar tricks.

The Church Universal and Triumphant used that technique. There were supposedly seven Ascended Masters, including St. Germaine, Jesus, and Buddha, and they chose to only speak through one person — Elizabeth Claire Prophet. What she said was supposedly infallible, because it was the Masters speaking.

2. You are always wrong.

The individual members of the cult are told that they are inherently small, weak, stupid, ignorant, and sinful. Cult members are routinely criticized, shamed, ridiculed, discounted, diminished, and told in dozens of ways that they are not good enough.

This cult characteristic is sometimes expressed in the infantization of the cult members: They refer to the leader as "Father", while he refers to them as "my children."

Cult members are also told that they are in no way qualified to judge the Guru or his church. Should you disagree with the leader or his cult about anything, see [Cult Rule Number One](#). Having negative emotions about the cult or its leader is a "defect" that [needs to be fixed](#).

A corollary to this rule is the practice of lowering members' self-esteem by a variety of methods:

- Elders or higher-ranking members will berate the newer members and tell them that their work or their spirituality isn't good enough. Again, the beginners are abused by the guru and his henchmen until they reach the inner circle, at which time they can turn around and do it all to someone else who is just beginning.
- It is almost a universal cult characteristic that, in the opinion of the cult leader and other elders, [newcomers cannot think correctly](#). They are too "new", or "unspiritual", and they haven't been members long enough, or they

haven't prayed or chanted or meditated long enough, or they haven't been off of drugs and alcohol long enough, or something... It's always something.

- Members will criticize themselves and confess all of their sins and faults, sometimes engaging in public self-criticism or confession sessions. This is used by everybody from Maoist Chinese Communist groups to Christian cults.
- Sometimes other members will attack them and criticize them in "group therapy" sessions, or [Synanon games](#).
- Members are taught [not to trust their own minds](#) or their own judgement:
 - *Your thinking has been corrupted by sin.*
 - *Your judgement is no good.*
 - *Your thinking is no good.*
 - *Your mind is no good.*
 - *You have a criminal mind.*
 - *You have an alcoholic mind.*
 - *You need a complete make-over.*
 - *Your thinking is controlled by your addictions.*
 - *Your thinking is controlled by your sexual desires.*
 - *Your thinking is controlled by Satan.*
 - *You haven't been chanting or meditating or doing yoga long enough to have a clear head.*
 - *You haven't been off of drugs and alcohol long enough to have a clear head.*
- Members are taught not to trust their own motives:
 - *Your motives are no good; everything you do is just for yourself.*
 - *You are selfish, vain, egotistical, self-seeking, and always trying to get your own way.*
 - *You are just seeking ego-gratification.*
 - *You are lazy.*
 - *You are always trying to do things the easier, softer way.*
 - *You just want to get laid.*
 - *You just want to get drunk or high.*
 - *You just want to avoid the hard work of getting right with God.*
 - *You just want to be happy.*
- Members are taught [not to feel their own feelings](#).

Steven Hassan wrote

Since mind control depends on creating a new identity within the individual, cult doctrine always requires that a person distrust his own self.

Combatting Cult Mind Control, Steven Hassan, 1988, page 79.

In Scientology, if you say that you are angry at someone else, a Scientologist will ask you, "What did you do to him?" The assumption is that you cannot be angry at someone else without having committed an "ethical violation", because anger is

"down-scale" — down the "emotional tone scale". So if you are angry because someone else has wronged you, you have to figure out what you supposedly did wrong.

Scientists are trained to believe that whatever happens to them is somehow their own fault, so much of the discussion in the Hole [a Scientology prison] centered on what they had done to deserve this fate. The possibility that the leader of the church might be irrational or even insane was so taboo that no one could even think it, much less voice it aloud.

Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief, by Lawrence Wright, page 266.

The fawning hero-worshiper and sociology professor [Dr. Lewis Yablonsky](#) praised [Synanon's](#) mind-control tactics like this:

The development which takes place is best described as a "resocialization process." The individual is, in a fashion, "brainwashed" to give up his old deviant patterns.

The Tunnel Back, Synanon, Lewis Yablonsky, page 261.

Prof. Yablonsky seems to have really gotten a kick out of watching tough old thugs beating up on the wimpy newcomers — he just gushes with praise for their skill in tormenting the newcomers:

Attacking the Criminal Past: A "Haircut"

The criminal-addict's self-concept makes him inept and keeps him on the wrong side of the law. A postulate at Synanon is that this face to the world must be changed and a new one developed. At Synanon, this is vigorously attempted. It involves a "180-degree" turn from the offender's past patterns of behavior.

...

Chuck [Dederich] described part of Synanon's resocialization process in this area to my graduate class in Social Welfare at U.C.L.A.:

"First you remove the chemical. You stop him from using drugs, and you do this by telling him to do it. He doesn't know he can do it himself, so you tell him to do it. We tell him he can stay and he can have a little job. We tell him we have a lot of fun and he might get his name in the newspapers. We say, 'People come down and you can show off and have a fine time as long as you don't shoot dope. You want to shoot dope — fine — but someplace else, not here.' He stops using drugs. Then you start working on the secondary aspects of the syndrome.

The next thing you do is attack the language. Eliminating their criminal language is very important."

...

Language is, of course, the vehicle of culture and behavior; and at Synanon, it is instrumental in shifting the behavior patterns that the addict has used in the past. He begins to use a new, still-undeveloped set of social-emotional muscles. This shift is not accomplished by loving and affectionate cajoling or by discussion of the criminal's symptoms of addiction and crime. *There is minimal symptom reinforcement of criminal patterns.* Behavior and thinking are modified by verbal-sledgehammer attacks. The attack is modulated and tuned by the expert synanist. The individual is blasted, then supported, and he seems to learn to change his behavior as a result of this *positive traumatic experience.*

...

An important method of attack therapy in Synanon is the "haircut." This form of verbal attack employs ridicule, hyperbole, and direct verbal onslaught. In part, the "haircut" attack keeps the rug pulled out from under the recovering addict. As Chuck [Dederich] describes it: "If he gets set, begins to feel a little complacent, and feels he's in control of himself —



Founder Chuck Dederich lectures at daily meeting. Revered by addicts for his compassion, he explains, "My needs are people."

Charles "Chuck" Dederich

which, of course, he isn't — he may even think he can reward himself with a little dope or a pill. Then, of course — BLOUIE — he's dead again." This, of course, is also the classic pattern of the rise and fall of the alcoholic.

...

The elements of exaggeration and artful ridicule are revealed in this "haircut." In addition, the pattern of attack and then support is demonstrated. A typical "haircut" goes beyond the bad behavior of the moment and into a more serious problem, and this is also revealed in the session. Unlike synanons, it is not interactional. A "haircut" is usually delivered by several older Synanon members to younger members.

The Tunnel Back, Synanon, Lewis Yablonsky, pages 239-242.

So the new member is always kept off balance and the rug is constantly pulled out from under him by the attacks of the elders. He is taught that he cannot trust his own thinking, because he is just a criminal addict, and [newcomers can't think right](#). All of that is in addition to the regular confession sessions, called "synanons" and "[The Game](#)", and "The Perpetual Stew". And that was supposed to brainwash the new member into being a wonderful transformed drug-free person. Too bad [the technique didn't work](#).

Also note the assumption that the member never recovers. He cannot ever be allowed to feel healed and in control of himself — he must be knocked down every time he tries to stand up — which leads to the next item, *No Exit*.

Incidentally, the pattern of behavior described there as a "*positive traumatic experience*" — "blasted, and then supported" — is actually a textbook example of the classic pattern of abuse called "battering". It's what abusive wife-battering husbands do to their wives: beat them up, and then sooth and comfort and reassure them, and apologize and tell them that it won't happen again, and then turn around and beat them up again, then sooth and comfort and reassure them again... And the effect it has on the wives is to paralyze them with fear and anxiety — they never know what to do because they never know what's going to happen next. They end up so confused that they don't know if they are coming or going. And plenty of wife-beating husbands rationalize their actions by saying, "Well, I had to teach her a lesson. It was for her own good."

And while Yablonsky was describing only *nonviolent* attacks on the junior Synanon members, [it didn't stay that way](#). Later on, things got really bad. As Chuck Dederich later said, "Nonviolence was just a position we took. We change positions all of the time." In the end, Synanon became very violent. [Dederich and two of his goons were even arrested for attempted murder](#), to which they pleaded guilty. They actually put a big old rattlesnake, minus rattle, in the mailbox of a lawyer who was suing them, and it bit him. He just barely survived, and his arm was crippled for life.

3. No Exit.

There is simply no proper or honorable way to leave the cult. Period. To leave is to fail, to die, to be defeated by evil. To leave is to invite divine retribution.

Members are often taught that all kinds of bad things will happen to them if they leave: They will lose all of the spiritual progress that they made while they were in the cult, or they won't be able to get into Heaven, or the Devil or demons will get them, or they will relapse and die of drugs and alcohol... They say that world is a bad place — people are bad and it's the domain of Satan. That is another standard cult characteristic: [The Group Implants Phobias](#), and more of the usual threats and fears are listed under that item.

Obviously, if everybody leaves the cult, then the phony guru's game is over. So he is the one who really has reason to fear people leaving.

There are often tremendous obstacles to leaving:

- There is usually some form of peer pressure, where loyal cult members will work 'round the clock on any member who has doubts about the cult and longs for his or her old life. (The other cult members don't want to get left behind, and splitters shake their own "faith".)
- The obstacles may be physical ones, like where the cult lives communally in an isolated area, and the cult won't give the member a ride back to "the evil other world".
- Often, the cult has taken control of all of the members' checkbooks and credit cards, and the member is literally penniless and will have great difficulty getting out.
- In extreme cases, like in Rev. Jim Jones' People's Temple, [they even shot those who tried to leave](#).

William Olin wrote about Synanon:

The *only* subject you could never talk about in Games was splitting, for once you did, no one trusted you any more, and your former brothers and sisters couldn't squeeze you out fast enough. As [the cult leader] Chuck [Dederich] was fond of saying, "That's just the way it is."

Escape From Utopia: My Ten Years in Synanon, William F. Olin, page 179.

The Scientology "Code of Honor" includes these items:

- 2. Never withdraw allegiance once granted.
- 3. Never desert a group to which you owe your support.

And Scientologists who are members of the "Sea Org" (sea-going organization) sign a *billion-year* contract, swearing to serve the cult leader L. Ron Hubbard in all future reincarnations for the next billion years. How's that for not ever leaving the group?

A corollary to the "No Exit" rule is the demonization of those who leave:

- *They are evil, weak, and selfish.*
- *They are stupid and foolish.*
- *They are wandering in darkness, unable to see.*
- *They are traitors, quitters, turn-coats, disloyal, deserters.*
- *They have sold out.*
- *They are Enemies of the Cross.*
- *They have chosen Evil over Goodness.*
- *They are losers, trying to throw stones at winners.*
- *They didn't chant enough, or they didn't meditate enough, or they didn't do enough yoga.*
- *They weren't really trying.*
- *They didn't follow the procedures correctly.*
- *They were unable to resist the temptation to sin.*
- *They hid their problems, and didn't reveal them to the group.*
- *They couldn't overcome their cravings for sex, alcohol, or drugs.*
- *They couldn't give up their attachments to money and possessions.*
- *They couldn't be honest.*
- *They were always stupid, real losers.*
- *They never could get it right.*
- *They are the spawn of Satan.*
- *They were always trying to destroy our movement.*
- *They were never a part of us to begin with.*
- *We are much better off without their bad influences.*

The musician Carlos Santana was an admirer of Sri Chinmoy for a while, he said in a *Rolling Stone* interview, but, "Everything about [Chinmoy] turned to vinegar." And he said that after he left, the group became "vindictive."

When some people left Jim Jones' People's Temple commune in Guyana:

In a barrage of angry meetings, Jones vilified the defectors as "murderers" — defectors not merely from Jonestown but from socialism, who would rather "pay taxes which buy guns to kill black babies" than stand with the poor and oppressed trying to build a better society in Jonestown. With a no-more-Mr.-Nice-Guy edge in his voice, he announced the beginning of a campaign to fight dangerous bourgeois backslipping within the community; and then fell silent for another few weeks.

Awake in a Nightmare, Ethan Feinsod, 1981, page 142.

In some cults, members are told to absolutely avoid any contact with people who have left the cult. They are told that the departees are evil and dangerous, and must be shunned and ostracized. Good Scientologists may not have any contact with people who have been "declared Suppressive Persons." Jehovah's Witnesses may not talk to or associate with those who have been "disfellowshipped." Likewise, good Moonies may not communicate in any way with those who have left. That is an act of self-preservation for the cult: They don't want to risk their members being told some sensible things by people who were lucky enough to get out.

Such ostracism also acts as a strong deterrent to people who may be thinking about leaving. [Cardigan, in "Mainstream Cults,"](#) makes the point that the fact that every member of the cult knows for certain what will happen if they leave is a potent psychological threat. It goes beyond a vague, remote, "you'll burn in Hell for eternity" threat. It's an immediate, here-and-now threat: "We will not associate with you ever again. You will be completely cut off and totally alone." No one wants to risk being completely ostracized by his or her friends. And since most cult members associate almost exclusively with just other cult members, such ostracism means being cast completely adrift, and left totally friendless and alone.

Michael Rogge describes the dilemma of those who leave this way:

The true nature of the so-called friendships within the group will only be revealed after a devotee has left the fold. Members have seen this happen, but did not give it a thought at the time, because it happened to someone else. But when they undergo the same fate themselves they will feel the humiliation of not being greeted anymore, marriage gone — even not being recognized by one's own children anymore.

The outcast feels thrown in an abyss. He is cut off from social contacts, his life in pieces.

The magnitude of this desperate experience should not be underestimated. The renegade will feel deep shame. He may have confessed in the group intimate secrets, which are now being ridiculed by his former so-called friends.

The expulsee, deeply hurt, may become embittered and even enter into a suicidal mental state.

ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS, [Michael Rogge \(URL\)](#)

A few cults, like Yogi Bhanjan's 3HO, specialize in kicking people out as a means of practicing terrorism; you either instantly obey all orders and believe everything you are told, or you are gone, banished in disgrace. But that still isn't an honorable exit.

In the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jehovah 'sifts out' those not truly 'in the truth', those without 'the right heart condition' which is why people leave or must be "disfellowshipped". In the eyes of the cult, no one leaves for legitimate reasons.

On the other hand, some other cults, like Scientology, are extremely possessive: they won't allow members to leave at all, under any conditions. Some cults, including Scientology, will even track down and physically retrieve runaways. Scientology actually maintains fortified and armed prison camps where out-of-favor Scientologists are hand-cuffed, chained, and imprisoned, like the "Gold Base" — the Gilman Hot Springs Scientology base, and the "Happy Valley" camp near Hemet, California. Members who attempt to run away are sent there for "RPF" — "Rehabilitation Project Force".

In the earliest days of Alcoholics Anonymous, the alcoholics were all just a part of the Oxford Group cult. Clarence Snyder had gathered a group of alcoholics in Cleveland, Ohio, who made the weekly trek to Akron to attend the Oxford Group meetings there. Then he decided that the alcoholics would be better off separated from the Oxford Group. When Snyder announced that the Cleveland alcoholics would henceforth be holding their own independent meetings, the Oxford Group attacked:

Clarence said, "I made the announcement at the Oxford Group that this was the last time the Cleveland bunch was down as a contingent — that we were starting a group in Cleveland that would only be open to alcoholics and their families. Also we were taking the name from the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous.'

"The roof came off the house. 'Clarence, you can't do this!' someone said.

"'It's done.'

"'We've got to talk about this!'

"'It's too late.'

"The meeting was set for the following week [May 11, 1939]," Clarence said. "I made the mistake of telling these people the address. They invaded the house and tried to break up the meeting. One fellow was going to whip me. All in the name of pure Christian love!"

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, page 164.

Note that the anonymous A.A. staff who wrote "*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*" were falsifying history there. Clarence Snyder did not take the "Alcoholics Anonymous" name from the book. The book did not exist then, and the writing of the book would not be even started until late 1939. Bill Wilson wrote chapter 5 with the 12 Steps in December of 1939, so there was no way that Clarence Snyder could take the name "Alcoholics Anonymous" from the book in May of 1939.

The truth is the other way around. Clarence Snyder created the "Alcoholics Anonymous" name for his group when they separated from the Oxford Group. [In April of 1940, Bill Wilson used that name for the book and the whole organization](#), but Bill Wilson didn't like to share the credit for anything with anybody, so he rewrote history to deny Clarence Snyder any credit for the name, and now we get this false story that Clarence Snyder took the name from the book.

Clarence's wife added,

"As a matter of fact," Dorothy said, "at one of our very first meetings, all the strict Oxford Group contingent came up from Akron and was very bitter and voluble. They felt we were being extremely disloyal to everyone in doing this. It was quite a step to pull away from Akron."

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, page 165.

The A.A. members who wrote the book *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* were falsifying history a bit there — this is exactly backwards: "Also we were taking the name from the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous.'"

Actually, it was Clarence Snyder who made up and first used the name "Alcoholics Anonymous" for his group. [The book got the name from Clarence Snyder](#), not the other way around, but the true believers in New York City who were busy perpetuating the A.A. mythology didn't want to give too much credit to Clarence Snyder, because Clarence Snyder dared to [criticize Bill Wilson's financial dishonesty](#). The A.A. leaders even purged Clarence Snyder's story from the fourth edition of the *Big Book*, and made Clarence into a Stalinesque "non-person".

This was William Olin's exit experience. First, he spoke to the group about the problems that were making him think about leaving Synanon, and the cult's response was harsh:

There once was a time, however, when I had been convinced from the top of my pointed head to the soles of my flat feet that we *did* have a very important answer — *the Synanon Game*. ... I had been a true believer in its almost limitless possibilities, as I used to ponder a big mural in the Oakland House which depicted a circle of Game chairs superimposed on the United Nations building.

Ever since moving in, however, my enjoyment of and trust in the Game had gradually diminished until the root beer incident [*when Chuck Dederich poured a can of root beer on a woman who disagreed with him*], when both took a nosedive. The magic circle had deteriorated into a monodimensional psychic cattle prod for keeping us troops in line — especially regarding whatever the Founder's latest fad was. If you didn't like it, of course you could scream yourself blue in the face, but that wouldn't affect policy one iota. The Synanon Game had become a placebo and I felt disenfranchised. I supposed that newcomer Games still served their original purpose of positioning animals fresh off the streets as well as giving them a chance to vent their spleen. But that didn't do much for me personally — not at this point in my life.

Besides, the torrent of newcomers had become just a trickle as our population steadily dwindled. Although the doors were still nailed open, character-disorders who had even one cylinder working peeked inside at the madness awaiting them and opted for the program down the block, which usually resembled Synanon in the early sixties. The decline in popularity held true for squares as well.Game Club attendance was way down, and consequently, so was the influx of new lifestylers. Over the years, the box had obviously flipped on us, but since nobody was willing to admit this, the movement seemed doomed. Instead of thoughtful dialogue, all I heard from the little Chucks were silly rationalizations laced with the latest buzzwords like, "Pressure always reduces quantity but improves quality" and "At this time, we are tacking towards population compression." Bullshit, Synanon was dying of arrogance.

...

I expressed misgivings about the explosive combination of no-think and extremism — especially in light of current directions in Chuck's "great conversation," such as childlessness and physical violence. Young men clamoring for vasectomies so they could lay their balls on the line for Synanon and their devout female counterparts gaming about abortions did not entirely thrill me. Worst still was singling out anyone "standing in our way" — either a bureaucrat like the county planning director or a simple soul like Gambonini — as an "enemy of Synanon." Nobody had been more positive about self-protection than I was, but once again, we had "gone right past the money." Did anyone in the Temple *really* know what the hell we were up to anymore? Not only had my faith in the Game process diminished, but my trust in the entire movement was rapidly disintegrating, and I suspected that everything was not being made public, as I had once

so naively believed. Instead of stirring slogans like "Character is the only rank," the well-worn chestnut about the corruptive propensities of power kept running through my head like an old song.

A newer dopefiend, who had taken an open chair to talk to his girlfriend, got visibly agitated as I babbled on. Finally, he blurted angrily, "Hey, motherfucker, if you don't like it here — why don't you just get the fuck out?" After thanking him for his astute comment, I admitted that the question he raised was the very one that had plagued me for a year.

... Before long, Phyllis [Olin] returned from her break, looking as white and drawn as when she had left. Apparently, she hadn't slept very much. Several of the stewers immediately positioned her with, "Your asshole husband says he's going to split. How about you?" She neither flinched nor answered directly, but instead used her Stew to talk about the black cloud that had hung over our marriage for so long and how she had looked forward to this moment with both anticipation and dread. Even though she had watched me suffer for months and knew what was on my mind, this would be our very first conversation about the possibility of my leaving Synanon — God, how straight we had played it.

...

After a fitful nap in the Stew Dorm, I boarded a Synacruiser for my return to the Homeplace, where I had work to do. Was it my imagination, or did I pick up a certain coolness from my fellow passengers? Well of course! I already knew that part of my Stew had been broadcast, and no communal gossip traveled faster than split talk.

...

What turned out to be an abbreviated stay at the Homeplace was positively unreal. It began the moment I picked up my farbus (now filled with drawings and papers) and headed for the Connect to check in. The Lodge door opened and out popped a long-stemmed beauty wearing a T-shirt I hadn't seen before. Emblazoned in red across her chest were the words, "I Love It Here." My knees jellied and I had to fight the impulse to jump back on the jitney. Everyone's automatic smile seemed more mechanical than ever and their "hihowareya" greetings even more perfunctory. I felt like an undesirable alien in an island of humanoids.

Things were no better at the translator's office. Old friends were unmistakably distant — especially Bob Greenfeld. After brief conversation about a couple of projects, he disappeared and I lost myself in the familiar narcotic of work for the rest of the afternoon. Not surprisingly, I found myself in a Game with Bob that night. He immediately let me have it with both barrels. I had never seen him so angry. Apparently, after I had "spilled my guts" in the Stew, he had been decimated in a Big-Shot Game for his "sick contract" with me. The specific indictment had been that his lust for my translator skills had blinded him to the obvious truth that "I was no longer on Synanon's side — just a sour, ungrateful asshole on the way out the door."

Bob got lots of support in our game, and I was urged to leave in a rich

variety of rhetoric. Betty, a sweet woman who had once worked with Phyllis in the School, was especially scathing in her remarks. Two weeks later, she was gone herself. A Synanon truism was that "All projections are valid."

...

For some reason, Chuck wasn't inviting me to lunch these days. I couldn't even look at him — I felt like such a traitor. After hurriedly eating with two of our cooks whose table conversation ranged from vegetable roughage to mid-term abortions, I slipped off to the bunkhouse to read and think. Just as I was about to go running, Jady Dederich's dog-robber came by to inform me that my presence was requested in a Game that was already in process. Oh-oh, I thought, I'll bet this is *it!* I put my pants back on, jogged over to the 'Big Game' room, and took a seat, surrounded by 'Homeplace heavies'.



Charles "Chuck" Dederich

After the wrap-up of some weighty action between our princess/director and her commoner consort, the focus shifted to me. Someone began an indictment about the gross impropriety of my sour presence at the Homeplace, when Jady imperiously interrupted and positioned me unambiguously, "I want to hear your answer to one question — right here and right now and I don't give a shit about anything else you might have to say. Are you making plans to split from Synanon?"

... I heard my own voice from far off somewhere, intoning, "Yes... I am." The Game shifted off me immediately, and after a few minutes I left and went for my run.

Bob Greenfeld invited me to supper, where he announced that my services were no longer required at the Homeplace. In Synanese, I was 'being shipped out on a door.'

...

The following afternoon, I jitneyed over to the Executive Offices at the Ranch for my appointment with Dede [Chuck Dederich Jr.]. I was surprised to find that Pete was there too. They asked me if what they had heard about my splitting was true. All true. What, in God's name, did I have waiting for me out there? Nothing — except, perhaps, my freedom. They both laughed and agreed with each other that I had gone totally crazy. Freedom to what

— starve? Die of loneliness — or maybe, boredom? Yeh, I admitted, it did look a little rough, but I'd survive. ...

[A few days later...]

A few hours before departure time for San Francisco, an old friend served me with divorce papers from Phyllis. I hadn't expected that. Upon a moment's reflection, though, I should have. A real Synanite doesn't muddle around indecisively for very long but takes a strong position — Boom, just like that! And Phyllis was certainly one of the most loyal soldiers of them all.

Escape From Utopia: My Ten Years in Synanon, William F. Olin, pages 248-249, 251-252, 254, 255-256, 257, 258.

Bill Olin's reward for ten years of selfless service to Synanon was that they hated him for leaving, and harshly condemned him for it. Of course. The departure of a respected elder shook [the certainty of the true believers](#), and planted doubts in their minds, and made them ask themselves what they were really doing and why they were doing it. They couldn't tolerate that, so they angrily blamed Olin for their discomfort.

Olin's story also illustrated several other common cult characteristics, besides *No Exit*:

- The Guru is always right. Everything Chuck Dederich said was always right, period. His orders, or his latest fad, were to be followed without question, even if it meant being sterilized or aborting a much-longed-for baby.
- You are always wrong. Olin actually felt bad — guilty — for standing on his principles and speaking up for what he believed was true and right, and choosing to not participate in the evil any longer. He was made to feel like a deserter and a traitor for choosing right over wrong, truth over falsehoods, and freedom over slavery. ["I couldn't even look at him \[Chuck Dederich\] — I felt like such a traitor."](#)
- That "You are always wrong" attitude also clearly shows in the demonization of those who choose to leave.
- Likewise, the cult members gave us lots of examples of [Ad Hominem](#) and [Personal Attacks On Critics](#).

"You are a piece of dirt if you dare to criticize our cult, the Founder, or his wonderful teachings. And you are insane if you are thinking about leaving the wonderful cult."

When Olin criticized the faults of the cult, they responded by calling him a "motherfucker" and an "asshole". And Dede and Pete agreed that Bill Olin "had gone totally crazy" when he decided to leave Synanon.

- [Grandiose claims and bombastic idealism](#). *"We are special. We are the wave of the future. The United Nations could learn something from us. Only we have a style of life worth living. Everybody else is dying of loneliness and boredom, while we build Heaven on Earth."*

- [Sacred Science](#). "*We have the new technology, the panacea, that will save the world — The Synanon Game.*"
- [Confession sessions](#). "*The Game*" and "*The Stew*" were just modified confession or self-criticism sessions, very similar to the Red Chinese brainwashing self-criticism sessions where they reversed the logic and everyone had to criticize someone else. In *The Game* and *The Stew*, everyone ganged up on one person at a time, and ripped them to shreds. Then they would "flip the box" and lavishly praise the person they had just crushed. Then they would rotate the target to someone else and repeat the routine until everyone had had his ego destroyed.
- [Pseudo-democracy](#). You can voice your opinion, and even scream it in Game sessions, but your opinion doesn't really matter and will actually change nothing.
- [Royalty and The Inner Circle](#) — "Saint Charles" Dederich, "Princess Jady Dederich", 'Prince Dede', the "Homeplace heavies", and "The Big-Shot Game". Any purported "equality" in the cult is a hoax. *Everybody is equal, but some people are more equal than others.* And the slogan was "Character is the only rank", but that wasn't how things really worked.
- [Different levels of information](#) — The general membership didn't know everything that was happening; that knowledge was reserved for the inner circle.
- Which brings up, [Dual Purposes](#). Synanon began as an idealistic drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, and ended up being whatever Charles Dederich said it was. Lastly, he said it was a religion and a research project exploring how Synanon could supply the leaders with rich, luxurious, elegant lifestyles. (*No joke. That's the literal truth. That's what he said.*) At the end, "fine dining" — two-hour, multiple-course dinners of the finest available cuisine — was one of the inner circle's major daily tasks.
- [True Believers](#) and [Inability To Tolerate Criticism](#). They all intensely believe in their cause — they believe that it is perfect, and they can't stand any doubts or criticism of their group or its activities.
- [Cloned copies of the leader](#) — the "little Chucks".
- [Isolationism or separatism](#). The cult has a siege mentality of "us versus them out there." And there is no reality outside of the cult. Life outside of the cult is seen as absurd, shallow, lonely, hard, boring, and pointless.
- [Enemy making](#). Anybody who won't do what the cult wants is an enemy of the cult. Olin mentioned the county planning director, whom Olin found to be an okay guy when he went and talked with him, or Gambonini, the rancher next door, who had done nothing to Synanon. --Which, in turn, revealed the growing paranoia of the cult. And even the old-timer Synanon member William Olin himself was labeled "*no longer on Synanon's side*" for telling the truth about some of the faults of Synanon.
- — Which shows yet another cult characteristic: [You Can't Tell The Truth](#).
- [Cult-speak, Slogans and Thought-terminating Clichés](#).

- "Character is the only rank."
- "Pressure always reduces quantity but improves quality."
- "We are tacking towards population compression."
- "All projections are valid."
- "Take a strong position."
- "Flip the box."
- Denial. True believers [deny the truth](#), and cannot tolerate any criticism.
- Isolation, ostracism, and shunning of splitters.
- [A system of rewards and punishments](#). When Olin announced his desire to leave, all respect, praise, and positive feedback vanished. He was subjected to numerous rounds of torment and torture, verbal assaults and psychological attacks, as well as ostracism and shunning. Olin was also punished by the group attacking his co-worker, Bob Greenfeld, for Olin's "crime" of leaving.
- [Obligation](#) and [reversal of reality](#). Even though William Olin was a non-addict "lifestyler" and a successful architect who had joined Synanon because he had believed in it as a utopian social movement, and even though Olin had given Synanon his life savings and had worked for Synanon for free for ten years, the cult claimed that Synanon had given him everything, and that he was **"just a sour, ungrateful asshole."**

Note the statement that Olin would starve outside of Synanon. There was no recognition of the reality that he was a competent non-addict architect who was quite capable of making a living and taking care of himself outside of Synanon. That little *"you will starve"* slur also smacks of [Phobia Induction](#) — trying to make Olin afraid to leave. And, it may also be the other cult members giving voice to their own suppressed fears that *they* would starve if they tried to leave the cult.

- [Conditional friendships and conditional love](#). Your "true friends for life" who give you "unconditional love" will withdraw their "love" in a flat minute if you violate the cult's rules, and fall out of favor, by doing something stupid like saying that you want to leave. Your own wife might even immediately divorce you.
- [Members get no respect. They get abused](#). The rank-and-file membership worked more than full time for wages that ranged from \$2 to \$25 per week, while the inner circle explored elegant lifestyles and fine dining. And still, the leader Chuck Dederich often berated the members by saying that he was forced to support all of their incompetent lazy asses. That's another example of *"You Are Always Wrong."*, and it's also an example of ["You Owe The Group"](#).
- And then Synanon was extremely [intrusive](#), and violated people's personal boundaries and invaded their private lives to an unwarranted degree, even for an organization that was supposedly a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. The leader Dederich said that he didn't want any more children around, and he actually felt entitled to order all of the men (except himself)

to get vasectomies, and the pregnant women had to get abortions — even women who really wanted their babies, and had been trying to get pregnant for years.

4. No Graduates.

No one ever learns as much as the Guru knows; no one ever rises to the level of the Guru's wisdom, so no one ever finishes his or her training, and nobody ever graduates.

As Synanon degenerated from a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program into a crazy cult, graduation ceased:

The End of "Graduation". Other changes also influenced Synanon's growth and development. The end of the policy of "graduation" in 1968, for example, implied an end-of-the-road mentality for dope fiends that was not validated by the many splittees who had experienced success on the outside. Every Synanite knew about these happy outcomes. Many also knew that a major reason for the policy change was a renewed focus on containment and a resentment toward Synanon "graduates" who took positions with other drug-rehabilitation organizations. The end of graduation was particularly ironic in light of the de facto graduation program established for juvenile offenders in the mid-1970s.

The Rise And Fall Of Synanon; A California Utopia, Rod Janzen, page 226.

Sometimes the wording of "graduates" is deceptive. In Werner Erhard's "*est*" "human potential" cult, people were called "graduates" as soon as they had completed their first 2-weekend course of "training." But then they were immediately pressured to take another course, so that the "benefits" of the first course would really take hold. And then they were supposed to take yet another course, and then another and another (and each course cost hundreds of dollars, of course). So they may have "graduated" from the first course of training, but they were never really finished with their expensive *est* training.¹

Scientology does the same thing too. First you are a "pre-clear", and then you graduate and become a "Clear", but then you need to become an "Operating Thetan", but then you need to become a higher-level Operating Thetan, working your way up through the levels from "OT I" through "OT VIII", which are increasingly expensive, many tens of thousands of dollars for each of the higher levels. (And, as long as the cult leader L. Ron Hubbard was alive, they kept inventing yet another higher level.) And then they have something else called a

"Class XII"... Then you need to learn how to do it all to somebody else — you need to learn how to be an Auditor, or a Case Supervisor (C/S), and brainwash other people. There are many more levels of that. It costs *at least* \$375,000 to do all of the levels and all of the courses. Only [rich celebrities](#) like John Travolta and Tom Cruise could afford it all. And even then, you still aren't quite clear enough to graduate and leave Scientology.

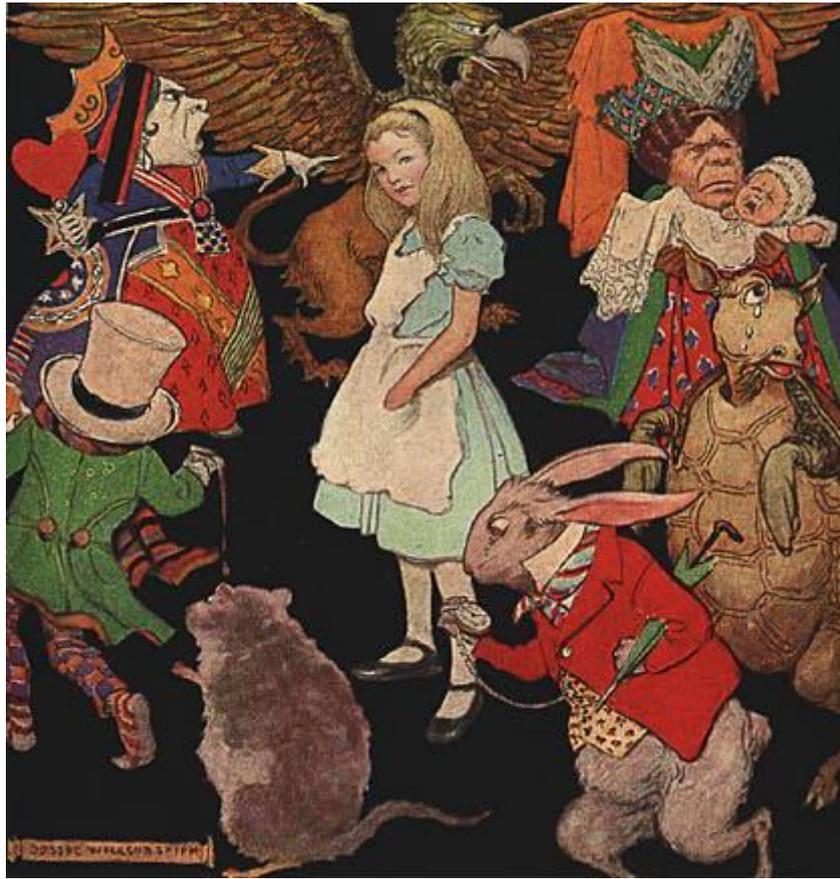
5. Cult-speak.

The cult has its own language. The cult invents new terminology or euphemisms for many things. The cult may also redefine many common words to mean something quite different. Cult-speak is also called "bombastic redefinition of the familiar", or "loading the language".

"Loaded Language" is one of Dr. Robert J. Lifton's [Eight Conditions of Thought Reform](#) — an essential part of any effective brainwashing program. The cult-speak may include a bunch of well-worn [slogans](#), which Dr. Lifton called "thought-terminating clichés. The special words constrict rather than expand human understanding, and the slogans stop thought.

Beginners have to learn all of the new terminology in order to fit in, and understand what is being said. Then, the new language has the effect of separating the newcomer from his old world, and from his old circle of friends. His new cult friends will tell him that "[Only another cult member understands](#)", and it will be true. When he babbles nothing but cult-speak, nobody but another cult member *will be able to understand*.

Loading the language and redefining words has a long history. Lewis Carroll described it very well in the *Alice in Wonderland* sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*:



"... and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get unbirthday presents."

"Certainly," said Alice.

"And only *one* for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!"

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knockdown argument for you.'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knockdown argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master — that's all."

Alice was too puzzled to say anything, so, after a minute, Humpty Dumpty began again. "They've a temper, some of them — particularly verbs, they're the proudest: adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs. However, *I* can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say!"

"Would you tell me please," said Alice, "what that means?"

"Now you talk like a reasonable child," said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. "I meant by 'impenetrability' that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to

do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life."

"That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

"When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra."

"Oh!" said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

"Ah, you should see 'em come round me of a Saturday night," Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side; "for to get their wages, you know."

(Alice did not venture to ask what he paid them with; and so, you see, I can't tell *you*.)

Alice in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll, p. 238.

Back in the "real world", because leaving the cult is one of the worst crimes that a member can commit (according to the cult), most cults have a special term for leaving, like "going tai-tan", "backsliding", "leaving the fold", being "lost in maya", being "trapped in samsara", "straying from the path", "falling from grace" or simply "going out". When that dreaded phrase is uttered, everyone knows what it means.

Sometimes euphemisms or redefined phrases can take on truly evil dimensions. Adolf Hitler's "special handling" of the Jews, and sending them to the "final solution", are classic examples. And this one is really gruesome: the poison gas Zyklon B, with which millions of Jews were killed, was called "material for the resettlement of Jews".

Likewise, Mao Tse Tung sent his enemies and critics to slave labor on remote farms for "re-education" so that they would learn to "blossom properly".

When Rev. Jim Jones gave the order to murder the 276 children at the Jonestown People's Temple commune, he didn't say, "Kill those kids" or "Give them the cyanide." He asked, "Would someone help those children in crossing over?"

Throughout the entire second half of the twentieth century, various United States Presidents used the term "police action", rather than "war", to get around limitations on Presidential powers, and to avoid having to tell the public that we actually were in yet another war. President Nixon would not say that the U.S. and South Vietnamese armies had actually "invaded" Cambodia; it was only an "incursion".

"An important art of politicians is to find new names for institutions which under old names have become odious to the public." — Talleyrand.

Carl Sagan called such terminology "weasel words".

There are plenty of contemporary examples of loading the language, or bombastically redefining words:

- In many cults, "You must have faith" really means, "You must believe what I'm saying."
- "The Lord will reward you" really means, "I'm not going to pay you."
- In one cult, "Sharing the love of God" means practicing prostitution to get money for the cult, and "Allowing God to bless others" means cheating people out of money which then goes to the cult.
- In David Berg's "[Children of God](#)" cult, "FF" means "Flirty Fishing", which means women members practice prostitution to get more money and new male members for the cult.²
- Likewise, in *The Children of God*, "forsaking all and following the Lord" means giving all of your worldly wealth, including your house, to the church, and then obeying the orders of David Berg,³ which often includes the women practicing prostitution, and their husbands pimping them on the streets, to get the cult more money.
- And David Berg redefined "true spiritual freedom" and "perfect love" to mean that all of the women in the *Children of God* cult, even his own daughter, should freely have sex with him.⁴
- To the Moonies, "[heavenly deception](#)" means misleading, deceiving, and lying to nonmembers to promote the church's goals.
- Scientologists are actually supposed to read Scientology literature with the Scientology dictionary in hand. Any time they read something that they do not understand, or disagree with, they are supposed to look up the words in the Scientology dictionary to get their new official meanings. Thus, the members allow Scientology to redefine the whole language, and actually, to redefine reality.
- In Scientology, "EOC" — "End Of Cycle" — is church jargon for suicide. Scientologists have actually been sent out as assassins, with orders to kill critics of Scientology and then *EOC* after the target was terminated.⁶

Another feature of cult-speak is the misuse of language. Cults often twist and mangle language in their own peculiar ways. For example: Nounify verbs and verbify nouns. That is, use verbs as nouns, and nouns as verbs. That gives language a crazy sound that is jarring and stunts the growth of thought. Scientology is especially notorious for this. The "EOC" example above uses a noun as a verb.

Another aspect of loading the language is constant redefinition or reinterpretation of anything and everything, whenever it is convenient. For instance, you may be reading the teachings of a phony guru, and find errors and logical inconsistencies in his teachings, and point it out to members. The true-believer cult members will answer, "Oh, you don't understand. What it *really* means is..." And then they will explain and reinterpret the guru's words until he sounds like a genius who deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. Eventually, it seems like [everything means something else](#), and nothing is as it appears...

Another twist on that *constant redefinition* game is that some groups let words have two very different definitions, simultaneously. Which definition will be used at any given time depends on the circumstances. Thus, the very same sentence can have different meanings at different times. This is especially true of cults that hide the truth from newcomers. An innocent-sounding saying may have an entirely different meaning after you learn [the real meanings of the words](#).

When it comes to sheer density of incomprehensible psycho-babble or techno-babble, Scientology is hard to beat. This quote comes from someone who quit Scientology, and is now criticizing it, but he still hasn't quite "*cleared*" his language yet:

I sec-checked a new OT VIII completion from Spain on the subject shortly after he completed OT VIII (I was ordered to sec-check him despite that I was OT VII and he was OT VIII because I was the only OT 7 Nots auditor there was...

I had given him his whole upper level bridge from OT Eligibility to Solo Nots EP check. ...

Three people who were in their early 50's died of cancer, months after completing new OT VIII. As a result, the New OT VIII C/S was RPFed (Laura Wolfe, wife of Milton Wolfe who was jailed on behalf of the GO and later ended up as CO FSSO (FSSO: Flag Ship Service Org, The service org on board the Freewinds.) The replacement C/S, Sue Walker, wife of Jeff Walker, one of the original Class XII who was Snr C/S Int at the time (and who later blew and got declared I'm told — If he got declared he should be contacted, he was a very good friend of mine and we had much respect for each other. ...)

http://www.whyaheytheydead.net/krasel/aff_96.html

Wow. Can you believe that they talk like that all of the time?

"Sec-check" means "security check" — a process of questioning a Scientologist while he holds the lie-detector tin cans, to see if he is loyal enough and has the right beliefs. It's a kind of inquisition, not unlike the Catholic Inquisitions of the Middle Ages.

That quote also reveals the extreme beliefs of Scientologists. Scientology claims that when someone's mind has been properly processed — they call it "auditing" — that he will get mind over matter powers, even immortality. Hence Scientology also teaches that dying of cancer is just lazy immoral behavior. When those three very high-level Scientologists (OT-VIII, Operating

Thetan Level 8) died of cancer, Scientology punished their trainers — called "auditors" or "case supervisors" (C/S) — for "unethical" behavior — for having failed to fix the clients' minds properly, and for having failed to teach the clients how to be immortal.

RPF means "Rehabilitation Project Force", which means torment and torture, even getting sent to the Scientology prison camp at Hemet, California. Strange but true.

And notice the shifting of blame: When someone dies, it means that their case supervisor has failed, not that the Scientology teachings are really all a pack of lies from a paranoid schizophrenic. The Scientologists continue to believe that nonsense even though the nutcase leader of Scientology, Lafayette Ronald "L. Ron" Hubbard, up and died of a stroke.

Oh well, better luck in the next lifetime.

6. Group-think, Suppression of Dissent, and Enforced Conformity in Thinking

The cult has standard answers for almost everything, and members are expected to parrot those answers. Willfulness or independence or skeptical thinking is seen as bad. Members accept the leader's reality as their own.

Ask a candid question,
Get a canned answer.

There are two corollaries:

- A) Independent or critical thinking is discouraged, especially critical thoughts about the leader or the group or the cult's teachings.
- B) Positive thoughts and statements about the leader and the group are encouraged.

In cults, no criticism of the leader, his teachings, or his organization is seen as valid — such criticism is always automatically wrong, *just because* it criticizes the guru, his teachings, or his group. (And of course such criticism of the guru or his group also breaks Cult Rule Number One, "[The Guru Is Always Right](#)".)

Dissent and disagreement are also seen as impolite and inappropriate. One should "respect" the "traditions" and "ancient teachings". *"They are much older than you are. After all, what do you know? Just go along with it."*

Cults also often try to equate critical questions and comments with hatred, bigotry, bias, prejudice, and unfairness. Cults confuse "critical perspectives" with "hatred". If you ask about serious problems in the church, the true believers respond with, "Why do you hate our church?"

Cults also assert that questioning the group's doctrines will lead to bad results. You might not get into Heaven, or you might not get enlightened, or your doubts will make you backslide, or something like that.

Cults consider it immoral, or at least a serious spiritual failing, for someone to think independently, rather than parroting the standard slogans and text. And actually criticizing the illogical or irrational aspects of the cult's doctrines is considered a very serious moral offense.

Cults will even claim that you are harming other cult members by questioning the craziness — you are keeping others from going to Heaven, or you are weakening their faith, or you are leading them into temptation and you are leading them to their downfall, causing them to become "lost souls". So criticizing the cult is killing people, they say.

Cults almost invariably have strong contempt for the intellect, human intelligence, and any attempt to think independently. They even use the word "intellectual" as an insult.

The reason for such a strong anti-intellectual bias is simple: critical and analytical thought is very threatening to a cult's precepts. The cult's irrational dogma simply cannot stand up to rational examination, so the intellect is treated with scorn and contempt to try to preclude such examination.

Anti-intellectual attitudes, and contempt, fear, and hatred of the intellect — to the extent that the very word "intellectual" is a term of abuse — are typical of totalitarian regimes from Nazi Germany to Maoist China. They are also common features of totalist cults.

Group-think is not restricted to cults. It is a common problem throughout the world of groups and organizations. In her youthful

drunkalogue, *Smashed*, Koren Zailckas encountered it while she was a football cheerleader who partied with the jocks:

The experts say that jocks are susceptible to "group-think," a decision-making model that includes collective rationalization (i.e.: "There is no *I* in *TEAM*") and the illusion that shit can't happen.

Smashed, Koren Zailckas, page 128.

Many cults claim to have some divine, infallible teachings, "[Sacred Science](#)", "*The True Word of God*", "so of course any criticism of the guru or his teachings is always wrong, and downright evil, because it is going against God." ...Or because it is going against *The Spiritual Principles of the Cosmos*, or it is going against *Nature*, or whatever the purported Higher Principle is...

In some cults, dissent is considered synonymous with demon possession because "Satan opposes the group's great works." Criticism of the cult, the cult leader, or his teachings is seen as proof that someone is dominated by evil forces.

In many cults, the attitude is, "Those who agree with us are 'saved'. Those who disagree with us, or criticize our group, our beliefs, or our leader, are "the lost", or "the unsaved"."

Likewise, in cults, there is a reversal of judgement. The cult itself is never judged, or subject to judgement; rather, the people who comment on the cult are judged by what they say about the cult. People who say good things about the cult are deemed (by the cult) to be good people. People who say bad things about the cult are deemed to be bad people.

Cults can be quite harsh in [punishing deviant or critical speech or thought](#).

[Frank Buchman's Oxford Groups/Moral Re-Armament cult](#) (that was the precursor of Alcoholics Anonymous) insisted that anyone who criticized 'The Movement' was immoral:

Moral Re-Armament cannot be honestly opposed on intellectual grounds because it is basic truth.... Opposition to Moral Re-Armament has special significance. It always comes from the morally defeated.

Remaking Men, by Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, page 66.

Dissenting members are advised to seek a consensus in all matters. One fundamentalist Christian cult taught, "[In the abundance of counselors there is safety. He who trusts his own mind is a fool.](#)"

Likewise, the *Love Family* cult told members who tried to think critically, "What's inside your mind is lies. We are your mind. The group is your mind."⁵

In the book *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief*, Lawrence Wright describes how one long-time Scientology member became disillusioned with the Church of Scientology and began questioning it:

...Haggis began an investigation into the church.

What is so striking about Haggis's investigation is that few prominent figures attached to the Church of Scientology have actually looked into the charges that have surrounded their institution for many years. The church discourages such examination, telling its members that negative articles are "entheta" and will only cause spiritual upset. In 1996, the church sent CDs to members to help them build their own websites, which would then link them to the Scientology site; included in the software was a filter that would block any sites containing material that vilified the church or revealed esoteric doctrines. Keywords that triggered the censorship were Xenu, OT III, and the names of prominent Scientology critics.

Although Haggis had never used such a filter, one already existed in his mind. During his thirty-four years in the church he had purposely avoided asking too many questions or reading materials that he knew would disparage his faith.

Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief, by Lawrence Wright, page 311.

As Synanon degenerated from a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program into a crazy cult, dissent was suppressed: In debates of Synanon policies on the floor, often too few representatives of the commune were involved. And once decisions had been made, it was dangerous to critique them. Those who did so were silenced with accusations of whining, negativism, or lack of commitment. Such indictments were often accompanied by allegations of contracting with other residents who felt the same way — other dissenters — though the very act of dissent was an essential contract-breaking activity. There was, in other words, no way one could effectively or appropriately disagree with decisions made by top officials. One was caught in a Catch-22 net of conformity. As Bill Olin described it, "The magic circle had deteriorated into a mono-dimensional psychic cattle prod for keeping us troops in line."⁹

9. Olin, William F., *Escape From Utopia*, 249.

The Rise And Fall Of Synanon; A California Utopia, Rod Janzen, pages 218-219.

Group-think usually means no real thought at all; just repeat the buzz-words and slogans and follow the program. And group-think usually just means that the group thinks that the Guru is always right.

Jeffrey Schaler wrote in his paper *Cult Busting*:

One way of testing the cult nature of a group is by challenging the ideology binding the group together. We can discover something about the nature of a group by how well its members tolerate opposition to the ideology that holds the group together. How well do members tolerate difference of opinion, opinion that challenges the very ideological heart of the group?

Members of the cult are like a colony of insects when disturbed. A frenzy of activity and protective measures are executed when core ideologies are challenged. The stronger the evidence challenging the truthfulness of the group ideology, the more likely members of the cult are to either lash out in a more or less predictable fashion, fall apart, or disband into separate cult colonies.

Another aspect of group-think is something that might be called "group-feel." The cult dictates what feelings or emotions good members are supposed to feel. Usually, all members are supposed to maintain a cheerful disposition all of the time, happily proclaiming that the guru and his teachings are just wonderful and will save the world, or some such thing. Anger is permitted only when criticizing non-conforming or under-performing cult members, or when faulting outsiders — especially when condemning "enemies" of the cult and other outsiders who criticize the cult, and when condemning competing cults or groups. Otherwise, everybody wears a smiley happy face. Negative emotions about the cult or its leader are considered especially bad — a sure sign that someone is failing the standards of holiness.

7. Irrationality.

The beliefs of the cult are irrational, illogical, or superstitious, and fly in the face of evidence to the contrary.

- The Hari Krishna cult (ISKCON), for example, believed for many, many years that the Earth was flat, in spite of our astronauts' journeys into space, and all of those beautiful pictures of a big blue round Earth taken from outer

space, and from the Moon. (An ISKON member recently told me that they finally abandoned that particular belief.)

- Scientologists believe that you can be harmed by memories of injuries that happened to you during previous lifetimes. They also believe that, if you pay enough money to Scientology and take enough courses of treatment and training, you can become immortal — a fully-developed spiritual being with mind-over-matter powers who is above physical death. (Ignore the fact that "L. Ron" Hubbard, the crazy founder of Scientology, died of a stroke.)

Scientologists also believe that you can be bothered by "body thetans" and "clusters", which are the ghosts, or clusters of ghosts, of millions of people from another planet who were murdered here millions of years ago by the evil Galactic Overlord Xenu. Those ghosts are supposedly now clinging to your skin and trying to get into your body and giving you all kinds of pain and troubles. But for only \$375,000 or more, Scientology will help you to get rid of those pesky interplanetary cooties.

- Many cults believe that God will answer all of their prayers and rearrange the world to suit them. They imagine that they get [miracles from God on demand](#). (Often, their theology isn't too clear about just *why* they get miracles on demand when lots of other people obviously don't — like the millions of sick and starving and earthquake-crushed and tsunami-drowned and typhoon-killed people around the world.)
- And many cults believe in faith healing — that somehow, one way or another, God will answer their prayers and cure whatever ails them. We could devote an entire chapter just to the insanity of some people's belief in faith healing, and the circus side-show manner in which it is practiced, but I'll just mention one thing:

Haven't you ever noticed how God only heals invisible ailments that cannot be verified?

God never instantly strips 200 pounds of ugly fat right off of an immensely obese bikini-clad woman with a glandular problem, right there on stage in front of the TV evangelist, the TV cameras, and some independent witnesses. God never puts new legs and arms on amputees and war veterans on Sunday Morning TV shows, or on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Nope, it's always cancer, arthritis, paralysis, gall bladders, blindness, pinched nerves, or other things that the TV camera cannot see; things where independent verification is not possible.

And, where verification *is* possible, like with the Viet Nam Veterans who have been paraplegics since the Vietnam War, well, God doesn't bother to fix any of them in faith-healing ceremonies. God never fixes their broken spinal cords or replaces their lost arms and legs. God doesn't seem to like the Vietnam Vets who have authentic medical records. The Lord sure does work in mysterious ways.



Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists chanting and praying to a scroll called a *Gohonzon*. The scroll is on the wall, just beyond the left-hand edge of the picture. The priests in the far-left center of the picture are bowing to it.

More irrational beliefs:

- The Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists (Sokka Gakkai) believe that a printed scroll, called a *Gohonzon*, will grant all of your material wishes if you chant to it enough. It's a real *Santa Claus* cult. At every church get-together, people stand up and give testimonials about all of the wonderful things they have gotten by chanting to a Gohonzon, and then they talk about what they are going to chant for next: a better job, more money, a new car, a house, or whatever.



The Prayer Gohonzon

Their core belief is that if you just chant the name of an old book of Buddhist wisdom, that you will get all of the benefits of the wisdom in the book. You don't bother to *actually read* the book or practice the philosophy; you just chant the name of the book: "Nam myoho rengo kyo".
(Is that judging a book by its cover? Or absorbing a book by its cover?)

They also believe that they can achieve world peace if one third of the people on Earth chant their chant. They offer no explanation of how this will happen; it is just a given. They happily ignore the obvious possibility that even if one third of the world does chant peacefully, the other two thirds can continue to gleefully slaughter each other and blow each other off of the planet, just the same as usual, not at all inconvenienced by the chanters.

- The Moonies, that is, Rev. Sun Myung Moon's **Unification Church**, have a good racket going: The main plank of their belief system, as laid down in Moon's "*Divine Principle*", is that you can help people after they die. So recruits are encouraged to buy expensive trinkets from the church that, they are told, will assist loved ones who are suffering deprivations in the afterlife. A settlement of \$150 million was made to former members of the Unification Church in Japan who claimed that they had been subjected to undue pressure to buy the otherwise worthless artifacts.

The commercial cult Amway tells people that they can become rich by having other people sell a lot of soap for them, but they never explain that the mathematics of the Amway system cannot possibly work — that it's completely illogical and irrational.

For someone to be living a life of luxury and wealth — to be a "Diamond" — he must have approximately 1000 "downlines" working under him who are making little or nothing. Those downlines work and slave and recruit and sell soap and constantly attend meetings and motivational seminars and conventions and listen to inspirational tapes in the hopes that they will one day work themselves up to the top of a pyramid, too.

But they don't realize that it is impossible for all of the members of Amway to have or get 1000 downlines working for them and making them rich. By definition, all of those low-level downlines would need to get 1000 downlines working under them too, to get rich, and then all of those downlines will want their own 1000 downlines, so they can get rich too, and so on and so on, *ad infinitum*. There just aren't enough people on the planet. There aren't even enough sentient beings in the entire physical universe for "The System" to work. Whenever Amway saturates an area, the last to join are destined to have few or no downlines, and [to make no money](#).

So it is physically impossible for everyone to succeed in Amway like they advertise. "The System", as they call it, isn't a way for great numbers of people to achieve prosperity and security and happiness and financial independence — it can't be. "The System" cannot possibly be anything other than a pyramid that only benefits a few at the top while the vast majority suffers. But that removes all incentive for the lowly grunts to stay in Amway and continue working for free. So the structure collapses when the bottom layers learn the truth and quit.

As one critic said, "**Wake Up and Smell the Numbers!**"

This is a cute brain-teaser puzzle:

Imagine that you have a bacterium that reproduces every minute, by splitting in half and doubling its numbers. You put one bacterium into a bottle of food at 8:00 AM, and let it grow. You come back at noon, and notice that, at the stroke of noon, the bacteria are just eating the last of the food and exactly filling the bottle with bacteria.

They have turned a whole bottle of food into a bottle full of bacteria. The question is: "When was the bottle exactly one-quarter full of bacteria?"

If you try to calculate the answer going forwards in time from one bacterium, it is very difficult to solve.

But if you work backwards in time, the answer is pathetically easy:

- At noon, the bottle was exactly full.
- At one minute before noon, the bottle was half full.
- At two minutes before noon, the bottle was one quarter full.

You can continue that sequence backwards a few more times, and find that at seven minutes before noon, the bottle was only $1/128$ full of bacteria — less than one percent full. If they could have, the bacteria might have looked around and said to themselves,

"We have miles and miles of empty space and tons of food left. We can reproduce forever."

Little did they realize that they were only seven minutes from the end.

Amway says that it has not saturated America — no, not at all — that it has only one percent of the market. So how many minutes before the end is it for Amway?

A corollary to all of this irrational nonsense is the implicit assumption that you are not supposed to criticize the irrational nonsense. Cults often demand that people stop thinking logically and just "have faith". Cults consider it immoral, or at least a serious spiritual failing, for someone to say that the cherished tenets of the group are illogical and crazy. Cults will even claim that you are harming other cult members by questioning the craziness — you are keeping them from going to Heaven, or you are weakening their faith, or you are leading them into temptation and to their downfall.

8. Suspension of disbelief.

The cult member is supposed to take on a childish naïveté, and simply believe

whatever he is told, no matter how unlikely, unrealistic, irrational, illogical, or outrageous it may be. And he does.

For example:

- Fortunate coincidences are accepted as proof that God favors the Guru and his cult: "*The Big Man upstairs is really looking out for us.*"
- Superstitious, religious, or magical rituals and ceremonies are performed without skepticism.
- Some cults pray or chant incessantly for almost everything imaginable, as if God were Santa Claus, and they actually believe that their amateur magic ceremonies will really work, and will really change reality and get them what they want.
- If the Guru starts seducing all of the 14-year-old girls in the religious community, you are supposed to believe that he is just giving them spiritual lessons ([Swami Muktananda](#)).
- If the guru claims that he is the Son of God, and has the right, even the spiritual duty, to have, sexually, *all* of the post-pubescent girls and women in the community, in order to create the Grandchildren of God, you are supposed to believe it and hand over your wife and daughter (Vernon Howell, a.k.a. David Koresh of the Branch Davidians — the wacko from Waco).
- And if the guru suddenly starts performing miracles, this is to be accepted as believable (Rev. Jim Jones, People's Temple).

People's Temple children had seen the "miracles" Jim Jones performed and had heard both their parents and him say he was God. When they begged on the streets, they never took any of the money, for Jones had warned them that if they did, he would know it and punish them severely. One street-wise boy took the chance, however, and stole ten dollars. He waited for Jones' lightning. When nothing happened, he realized they were all being duped, and left the church before the Guyana exodus. His cynicism saved his life.

The Children of Jonestown, Kenneth Wooden, page 80.

Jones believed that the end justified the means, which meant that he was continually asking people in his movement to override the boundaries of what they felt was appropriate because it was "good for People's Temple." Even outrageous behavior on the part of Jones was interpreted as a lesson, and the people around him would ask "what is he [Jones] trying to show us?"

Hearing the Voices of Jonestown, Mary McCormick Maaga, page 65.

Well, one of the things he was trying to show them was his male genitalia.

Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, the daughter of David Berg (a.k.a. Moses David), the founder of the *Children of God* cult, wrote a book about the cult which contains a very perceptive explanation of the role of the suspension of disbelief in the process of brainwashing new cult members. She explains that we voluntarily suspend disbelief in order to enjoy a movie like *Star Wars*. For a few hours, we allow ourselves to believe in a fantasy world of spaceships and robots and Jedi knights. But we return to reality when the movie ends and we leave the theater.

The person who joins a cult goes through a similar process. In order to become one of the group, he must embrace all of the beliefs and teachings of the cult, so the newcomer suspends his disbelief and enters into the movie. But the person who joins the cult doesn't leave the movie theater.

Unlike the movie-goer, however, a cult victim who suspends his disbelief doesn't necessarily come out of it. He stays in that state. The cult and its doctrine become his reality. It is significant that when we go to a movie theater we are already prepared to suspend our disbelief. We fully intend to enjoy the movie. So it is with the cult victim. In many cases he is ready to suspend whatever mental reservations he has in order to "enjoy" life. Stoner and Park, the authors of *All God's Children*, write, "These young people are idealistic and are frequently searching for a goal, a purpose, and a sense of community, so the promises of the cults appeal strongly to them. Many are willing, even anxious, to be persuaded." [Page 240.]

The enjoyment a prospective cult member seeks lies on a much deeper level than mere entertainment; he is hoping to find fulfillment, purpose, and direction for life. But like the movie-goer who attends *Star Wars* seeking enjoyment, an individual joins a cult because he wants to enjoy the movie of life. ...

When a cult recruit crosses the invisible barrier in his mind — when he enters the world of the cult and its doctrine at some point in his flirtatious sampling of the cult — he is tripping the switch of his voluntary suspension of disbelief. Brainwashing or mind control then occurs naturally, sometimes effortlessly. In many cases the new cult member will struggle hard to brainwash himself. He must do this in order to balance out the guilt he feels. When doubts rush in like a flood, he tells himself, "I am following the truth. The rest of the world may be going to hell, but I am following the truth!"

Other brothers and sisters are there to encourage the new recruit. He either accepts their help and counsel, or he rejects it. If he rejects it, he doesn't stay around long. If he receives their help, he goes deeper into the cultic doctrine. He will sell flowers, chant, memorize, litness [witness and raise funds with literature], or read Mo Letters, whatever it takes, to the utmost of his ability to prove to himself and others that he is right. The brainwashing that occurs in cults is the finest, purest, and most effective around. The Communists have something to learn from Moses David.

The Children of God; The Inside Story, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, pages 171-172.

Note the voluntary nature of the process. Deborah Davis makes the point that joining a cult is not just a process of being fooled by a slick phony guru or of being quickly brainwashed without knowing what is happening. On some level of his mind, the newcomer must voluntarily buy into the game, or else he will leave the cult.

This leads to another cult characteristic: [*Mentally Disturbed Followers*](#). Meaning: You really do need your head examined if you insist on staying in a cult and believing in the proclamations of a phony guru.

Wanting to believe is perhaps the most powerful dynamic initiating and sustaining cult-like behavior.

The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 137.

"The world longs for authority, finality, and conclusiveness. It is weary of theological floundering and uncertainty. Belief exhilarates the human spirit; doubt depresses."

Billy Graham

quoted in *Holy Terror: The Fundamentalist War on America's Freedoms in Religion, Politics, and Our Private Lives*, Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, page 144.

Also see: *The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society*, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 143.

Certainty (as Billy Graham testified) is one of the great benefits of religious belief.

The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 144.

Part of the attraction of believing the leader's views and actions to be of paramount importance is that the follower's own sense of importance is heightened.

The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 67.

So the suspension of disbelief is also another veiled ego game, where the follower likes to believe that he is very important, involved in very important work, doing the Lord's Will and saving the world...

"If the leader and his religion are saving the world, and I follow the leader, then I am saving the world, which makes me very good and very important, and deserving of a place in Heaven."

("But if the leader is a fraud and a con artist, then that makes me a gullible fool who might not be going to Heaven. So the leader must be a saint, because I'd rather not be a fool...")

Cult members are playing spiritual make-believe, and they sure don't want to hear that their "guaranteed" ticket to Heaven is actually a counterfeit that they bought from a con-artist ticket scalper.

Speaking of enjoying Star Wars movies, there was an uncanny coincidence in the *Heaven's Gate* cult suicides. Remember [Lieutenant Uhura, the Communications Officer](#) in the original Star Trek series? She was played by [Nichelle Nichols](#). Well, the actress' brother, Thomas Alva Nichols, was one of the *Heaven's Gate* suicides in San Diego on March 26, 1997. The actress Ms. Nichols just pretended to be an astronaut on a starship for the TV cameras, but her brother believed in all of that spaceship fantasy stuff so fervently that he committed suicide so he could go hitch-hike a ride on a flying saucer and become an astronaut for real. Now that's really never leaving the movie theater.

Also see:

[New York Times article on Heaven's Gate](#)

http://www.adherents.com/lit/Na/Na_213.html — The Heaven's Gate Cult
[If Sambo Were A UFO](#)

9. Denigration of competing sects, cults, religions, groups, or organizations.

This is commonplace, and hardly needs any explanation.

What is curious is the degree to which the hatred of others is based on similarity. That is, the closer two groups are in their beliefs, goals, activities, philosophies, appearances, and everything else that defines the group, the more they seem to hate each other. For instance, two Christian cults may viciously attack each other for only the tiniest of differences in beliefs, while neither has such intense passionate feelings about the Democratic or Republican political parties, both of which must presumably have some very large philosophical differences from the Christian cults, on at least some issues.

Similarly, the extremist Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland — Irish Christians, one and all — hated and killed each other for the better part of a century, and yet, they had no such vicious hatred of Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems, or Communist atheists, people with *very* different religious beliefs... Likewise, during the Middle Ages in Europe, the Christian Catholics and Protestants slaughtered each other by the millions, in the Twenty Years War and the Forty Years War. Those vicious Christians also waged war on Muslims in the Crusades, but the Muslims got off easy, in comparison to the other Christians.

And Scientology has a pathological hatred of psychiatry and psychiatrists, who offer a very different model of the human mind, and how to improve it, than the model that Scientology sells to its members. Scientologists are very vocal in denouncing modern psychiatry and its pharmacology. (One reason for this is that

Lafayette Ronald "L. Ron" Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, was a paranoid schizophrenic with delusions of grandeur who did not like psychiatrists labeling him insane. Another reason is that modern psychiatry rejects Hubbard's ideas about the human mind and how to cure insanity.)

Moon considers himself a messiah — "God's ambassador, sent to Earth with his full authority," as he puts it. "Humanity's savior ... returning lord and true parent."

Moon has compared gay people to dung-eating dogs. He has told Jews that the Nazi Holocaust was retribution for the murder of Jesus and that they must "repent and follow and become one with Christianity" through him.

He opposes the separation of church and state, and he wants all religions abolished as the world comes together under one faith led by — wait for it — Sun Myung Moon.

Under Moon's rule, we would all speak Korean and be "assigned" our marital partners. (He's famous, recall, for mass weddings.)

Eric Zorn, "Some find sushi, and Rev. Moon, hard to swallow" Chicago Tribune, April 13, 2006.
http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/chi-0604130084apr13,0,4728711.column?coll=chid_opinion_columnists-utl (Dead Link.)

10. Personal attacks on critics.

Anyone who criticizes the Guru, the cult or its dogma is attacked on a personal level.

Rather than honestly and intelligently debating with critics, using facts and logic, the cult will resort to low personal attacks on the critic, using name-calling, slander, condescending put-downs, libelous accusations, personal slurs, accusations of bad motives, and casting aspersions on the critic's intelligence and sanity --

- "You are just an atheist, a liar, a dummy, a sinner, a drunkard, stupid, crazy..."
- "You are only in it for the money."
- "You are stupid."
- "You have a low vibrational level."
- "You are evil and working for the Dark Side."
- "You are a moron."
- "You are unenlightened and don't know the Master's Wisdom."
- "You are a liar."

- "You are selfish and just trying to get something for yourself."
- "You have ulterior motives."
- "You don't know what you are talking about."
- "You are just one of the ignorant, unwashed masses."
- "You are a pawn of Satan."
- "You just want an excuse to keep on whoring and drinking and getting high."
- "You are a Liberal, or a Socialist, or a Communist, or a Nazi, or a Tea Party nutcase."
- "Your soul is damaged from years of sinful living."
- "You are brain-damaged from years of drugs and alcohol."
- "Your body is impure from eating the wrong foods."
- "And you have bad taste in music and an ugly hair-cut, too."

Scientology calls critics "*Suppressive Persons*", and claims that they are evil people who are trying to keep the human race enslaved (—enslaved to the evil Galactic Overlord Xenu, that is). The Scientology founder and leader, L. Ron Hubbard, instructed his followers to attack critics any way that they could — to investigate them and discover any crimes or dirty secrets that could be used against the critics, and, "If you can't dig up any dirt, make something up."

"So BANISH all ideas that any fair hearing is intended and start our attack with their first breath. Never wait. Never talk about us — only them. Use their blood, sex, crime to get headlines. Don't use us."

== Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, the founder of Scientology

The Moonies claim that their critics are Satanic and working for the Forces Of Evil.

Amway fanatics call those who have quit the cult and criticize it

- "losers"
- "ex-distributors who couldn't make it"
- "dream-stealers"
- "failures that got out of Amway"
- "lost dreams"

Another red flag to watch for is how angrily cult members react when the cult or its guru is criticized. Most ordinary or "normal" people can tolerate some questioning and criticism of their organizations and leaders without blowing up and insisting that the critic is satanic, or working for the forces of evil, or part of a big conspiracy to destroy the organization, but cult members often cannot. They go non-linear very rapidly when you point out too many faults or shortcomings of the group or its leader — especially when they cannot refute that criticism.

It is just in the nature of [true believers](#) to demand absolute certainty in their beliefs. They like black-and-white all-or-nothing thinking, and they have little or no

tolerance for doubts and uncertainty. So they irrationally attack the speaker at the first hint of criticism. True believers prefer simple certainty over uncertain complexity, and they don't like shades of gray or subtlety. Like George W. Bush said, "I don't do nuance." (See Eric Hoffer, [*The True Believer*](#).)

[Continue to questions 11 to 20...](#)

Footnotes:

[1\)](#) See *Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile*, Steven Pressman,

[2\)](#) See *The Children of God: The Inside Story*, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis with Bill Davis, pages 111-124. "Flirty Fishing" prostitution to get the cult more money and members was so commonplace that Deborah devoted a whole chapter to it. Also see: *Heaven's Harlots, My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult*, by Miriam Williams. The whole book is full of stories of prostitution done in service of the cult.

[3\)](#) Ibid., page 116.

[4\)](#) Ibid., pages 9 to 12 and 99 to 101.

[5\)](#) *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change*, by Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, 1978, page 157.

[6\)](#) See: *Time Magazine*, May 6, 1991, page 50 — ***Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power***.

The Cult Test

Questions 11 to 20

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

11. **Insistence that the group is THE ONLY WAY.**

The group is *the only way* to Heaven, or world peace, or enlightenment, or clean and sober living, or do-it-yourself psychotherapy, or whatever the goal is supposed to be.

There are corollaries:

- Only the faithful will be saved.
- Only members of our church will be raised when the Rapture comes.
- Only our sect will survive Armageddon.
- Only our church has the correct interpretation of the Scriptures.
- Only we have *the knowledge*.
- Only our version of God will save you.
- Only our church has *The Answer*.
- Only our Holy Book is true.
- Only our group understands.
- Only our leader has the New Wine for the New Bottles.
- Only our leader has the New Technology of the Mind.

For instance,

- "In the last days of the world, the people will be divided into the Servants of the Lord, and the Servants of the Anti-Christ. Members of our church are the Servants of the Lord, and we will be taken up into Heaven during the Rapture. Non-members will be listed in the roll call of the Anti-Christ."
[Jehovah's Witnesses]
- "Only our church has received this special new revelation from the Lord."
- "Our leader is the only one with the magic formula for World Peace."
- "Only our group is going to Heaven." [Heaven's Gate cult]
- "Our God gives us a place in Heaven. What does your god offer you?"
[Pentacostals]

- "Our leader is the anointed Messenger from God. And yours isn't. So there."
- "Only we have *The Game* and the *great new social organization* that reliably produces clean and sober man-days." [Synanon]
- "Only our leader has discovered 'the secrets of the Ancients'."
- "Only our church has the correct understanding of the Bible."
- "Only our church follows the commandments of the Lord correctly."
- "Only our leader fully understands this new technology, this great new science of the mind." [Scientology]

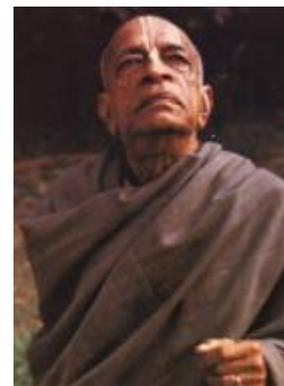
Scientology regards Scientologists as the only sane people on the planet. They are "*Operating Thetans*", which is something like "functional intelligences", or more like "immortal god-like functional intelligences." All of the rest of the people on Earth are considered to be so brain-damaged, non-functional, and insane that they are hardly worth dealing with. But Scientology is working tirelessly to rescue as many people as possible, by bringing them into the cult and "auditing" them into new Operating Thetans.

Likewise, the founder-leader of the Hari Krishna cult declared:

This age of Kali is called a fallen age. At the present moment, people are short-living and very slow at understanding self-realization, or spiritual life. They are mostly unfortunate, and as such, if somebody is a little interested in self-realization, he is misguided by so many frauds. The only actual way to realization of the perfect stage of yoga is to follow the principles of the *Bhagavad-Gita* as they were practiced by Lord Caitana Mahaprabhu. This is the simplest perfection of yoga practice.

... No other process can be successful in this age.

The Science of Self-Realization, "His Divine Grace" A. C. Swami Prabhupada, page 131.



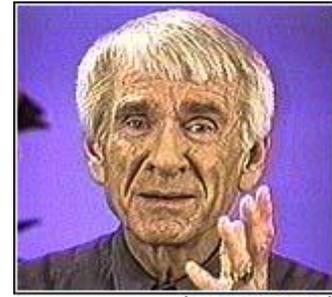
A.C.
Bhaktivedanta
Swami
Prabhupada

And there, Prabhupada also shows several other cult characteristics

- [We Have The Panacea.](#)
- [Sacred Science](#)
- [Newcomers Need Fixing.](#)
- [Hypocrisy](#)
- [Reversal of reality](#) — as if Prabhupada wasn't a con artist who misguided his followers.

Members of the Heaven's Gate cult believed that they had the *ONLY* way to get to Heaven: commit suicide and hitch a ride on a flying saucer that was hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet. They made video tapes ("exit statements") just days before their mass suicide, where they talked about how they felt just unbelievably fortunate to have been born on the right planet, at the right time and place, to have been able to meet and learn from the cult leaders "Ti" and "Do" (Bonnie Lu Trousdale Nettles and Marshall Herff Applewhite), and get prepared for the Big Journey to Heaven (suicide). And all of the other people on Earth, who wouldn't be committing suicide and making the trip to the Hale-Bopp comet and the flying saucer hiding behind it?

Well, sadly, they just missed the boat, and they won't be going to Heaven... They weren't wise enough, or lucky enough, to follow the right teacher.



(Amateur Video)

Marshall Herff
Applewhite
Heaven's Gate leader
"Do"

And those people who committed suicide even had special patches sewn onto their sleeves that read, "Away Team". Yep, we're really special. We're on the *Away Team*. Out of the entire population of the planet Earth, only 39 people made it onto the Away Team, and we are those 39. We're that special.

12. The group and its members are special.

Brother, do they ever believe they are special:

- "We are different from ordinary people."
- "Only another cult member understands."
- "We are special because we belong to the right religion."
- "We are special because we have the new technology."
- "We have the new dispensation."
- "Our leader is the new messiah, and only he has the new wisdom, which he is giving to us."
- "Our organization is a wonderful new movement that is sweeping the world. We will usher in a new age of peace and enlightenment."
- "Our organization is the latest manifestation of God's generosity towards mankind." [Moonies]
- "We are God's Chosen Children."
- "We are the wave of the future."
- "We have been trained, processed, audited, purified, tested or prepared in ways that no one else has."
- "No non-Scientologist has ever seen a thetan, much less checked it for electricity, so how could anyone possibly disprove this [L. Ron Hubbard's] theory?"¹

- "Our group is so special that only another group member can even understand how wonderful it is."

In spite of the fact that the individual cult members are often told by their higher-ranking mentors and superiors that they are very stupid and foolish, the cult members are also told that they were very smart and very lucky, on the whole, to have joined the cult: *"The vast majority of the human race is stupid and lost. Only these few select ones had the good fortune and wisdom to come here."*

Frequently, the cult members even regard themselves as *The Chosen* — the elite, chosen people who will do something grand like save the world, usher in the New Age, or go to Heaven.

Cult members believe that what they are doing is of a higher purpose than anything anyone else is doing. Other people are just living — breathing, working, paying the rent, surviving — but the cult members are transforming, building, achieving, doing great things, even saving the world.

Evil cult leaders find it easy to manipulate their followers by telling them that they are special, chosen by God, and that what they are doing is of special importance, that they are doing the Will of God as they work for the cult for free. And the cult leader will tell his followers that they are much smarter and more honest and spiritual and moral than the outsiders who won't join the cult. What the cult leader is doing is, of course, manipulating people by appealing to their egotism and vanity.

The attitude of specialness naturally reinforces the cult doctrine of "[you can't ever leave the cult](#)", because if you do, then you won't be special any more, and you won't be doing the Will of God any more.

Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi leader who was the head of the Gestapo and SS, told his SS troops:

"Never forget we are a knightly order, from which we cannot withdraw, to which we are recruited by blood."

An unrepentant widow of a senior SS officer, Florentine Rost von Tonnigen, declared,

"Himmler was a man of vision and out of this vision came the Wewelsburg [the castle that was the headquarters of the 'knightly order' of the SS]. The SS is the true absolute elite of all that has been. The world today considers us criminals, but there is no purer,

more intense, and intellectually higher body than the SS. Thank God there are still a few German people who know something of the Wewelsburg."

The BBC TV program *Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail*

Marjorie Harrison, in reporting on the [Oxford Group](#), said that they considered themselves to have "a special something":

Time after time you hear new converts saying that they were first attracted to the Group because "these people have something that I lacked". This little something some others haven't got is usually described as happiness or joy. The truth is that that "little something" is a happy capacity for a facile credulity. The majority of those who are attracted by the teaching have this capacity in some measure, whether they are aware of it or not. Otherwise there would be a very small Group and a much better one.

Saints Run Mad; A Criticism of the "Oxford" Group Movement, Marjorie Harrison (1934), page 86.

The specialness of the cult is frequently expressed by contrasting the cult with "everyone else out there." Those other people weren't smart enough or good enough to join the cult. A mindset of *us versus them* is encouraged. There is almost always a distinction, *usually aggrieved*, between "us" and "them".

In Amway, a commercial cult, members are often contrasted with non-members by emphasizing how much the wealthy members who are at the top of the pyramid enjoy lives of leisure. The "Diamonds" (rich high-ranking members) enjoy luxurious vacations in Switzerland where they go on "buying trips" — not shopping trips, *buying trips* — where they buy expensive diamond jewelry, while ordinary Americans — impoverished non-members — are forced to go camping in the USA for their vacations, and "squat in the woods".

Michael Rogge describes the specialness of a cult this way:

Uniqueness of the movement

Movements will usually extol their superiority over others. After all, there should be a strong reason to select that particular group. Some present

themselves as being the sole way towards salvation, or being God's chosen people. Others promise a benefit that is reserved solely for members of that sect. To divert attention, some pride themselves in not having a teaching, or for their openness and democratic rules.

In short, new movements will advance a variety of reasons for their uniqueness. Herewith a few:

- Never before has mankind been offered this discipline / interpretation / insight of our leader.
- Do not pour new wine in old bottles.
- God's, or a celestial, new message to mankind for this particular time.
- Impending disaster (pollution, atomic explosion) calls for drastic measures. Salvation reserved, only for faithful members.
- Fresh interpretation of holy book thanks to insight / revelation of founder.
- Esoteric tradition, once accessible to adepts only, now revealed.
- New channel for teachings of esoteric lodge / brotherhood.
- New doctrine / insight based on latest scientific discoveries, reveals truth.
- Only those following this particular work on self, discipline, or belief, will reach eternity, be released from earth's satanic attraction, cycle of rebirths, etc.
- Preparatory group to make way for the coming of the new messiah / world-teacher / avatar.

Noteworthy is the vehemence with which groups stress differences between each other. The more closely movements share an outlook, the more virulent the attacks on their rivals become, much more so than on other groups which follow completely different beliefs. This manifests itself especially when groups split. In [medieval] Christianity, one could not stoop too low in attacking other followers of Christ who held a slightly different opinion of things. It resulted in disastrous wars. [The Twenty Years War, The Forty Years War, The Hundred Years War.]

ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS, Michael Rogge ([URL here](#))

13. Induction of guilt, and the use of guilt to manipulate cult members.

Cult members can be faulted, and made to feel guilty, for anything and everything, from their sexual desires to their weakness in getting tired and making mistakes after 16 hours of working for the cult for free. Many cults use public confession or self-criticism sessions to induce more guilt. Errors and sins committed in the past are also a fertile ground for inducing guilt, especially since the cult member can not now do anything to change or fix the past. This guilt can, in turn, be used to control

the minds of cult members: "You thought that was a good thing to do? Your mind is useless. Your mind is corrupted. Just do what you are told, and quit trying to think so much."

The cult also induces guilt by holding up an inhuman, impossibly lofty standard for the perfect member. The members can't ever live up to the standard, so they always feel guilty and inadequate. See the item [An Impossible Superhuman Model of Perfection](#) for more.

Guilt induction is a very powerful tool for manipulating people's minds. In his study of Communist "brainwashing" of American and British prisoners during the Korean War, Edward Hunter wrote:

The Reds had found that the easiest way to subdue any group of people was to give its members a guilt complex and then to lead them on from self-denunciation to self-betrayal. All that was required to put this across was a sufficiently heartless exploitation of the essential goodness in people, so that they would seek self-sacrifice to compensate for their feelings of guilt. The self-sacrifice obviously made available to them in this inside-out environment is some form of treason.

Brainwashing, From Pavlov to Powers, Edward Hunter, page 169.

For example, the brainwashers would criticize a white prisoner for having lived a life of luxury, never caring about the fate of the poor Negroes, being just an uncaring heartless monster who went along with the Capitalist agenda because he personally benefited from it, even if it was killing others. Then the confused white fellow had to confess all of that in public self-criticism sessions. Then, to make amends, he had to do something like snitch on a fellow prisoner, or memorize and espouse Communist dogma. And then it went on and on like that until a few prisoners had switched sides.

Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer also wrote that one of the essential ingredients of [any effective brainwashing or mind control program](#) is **"Create a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt, and dependency."**

Thus, any cult that combines guilt induction with [confession and self-criticism sessions](#) has a good start on a mind-control or brainwashing program. The cult will simply offer the member some other form of self-sacrifice, usually a life spent fund-raising or recruiting or working for free.

14. Unquestionable Dogma, Sacred Science, and Infallible Ideology.

The cult has lots of it to teach you. Dogma can also be defined as doctrine, beliefs,

convictions, teachings, precepts, or tenets. And they are all true, always. No critical questions about the leader, doctrine, or policy are seen as legitimate, *"because God gave our leader these teachings, so of course they are absolutely right and infallible. Anybody who criticizes our leader's teachings must be an agent of Satan."*

"Unquestionable dogma" is also called *"Sacred Science"*, which is one of Dr. Robert J. Lifton's [*Eight Conditions of Thought Reform*](#). The cult's "truth" is the absolute truth, sacred and beyond questioning. The cult's laws, rules and regulations are absolutely correct, always, and therefore to be followed automatically.

There is a reverence demanded for the leadership. They have ALL of the answers, they say, and only to them is given the revelation of "truth". The ultimate moral vision becomes the ultimate science and the person who dares to criticize it is considered immoral, irreverent, and "unscientific". A [Moral Re-Armament slogan](#) was,

"MRA, scientific medicine for the moral ills of the world."

(There was, of course, nothing "scientific" about [Moral Re-Armament](#).)

Another aspect of cult dogma is how cults will make sweeping arbitrary groundless statements that are based on no commonly-accepted facts at all. For instance, the 3HO cult says that the reason that men have beards and women do not is because men have an energy center in the middle of their chin that must be protected from the feminine lunar energy or else the men will become hysterical and act like women. *Say what?* Where did that come from?

Similarly, the "Hari Krishna" cult (ISKCON) declared that Swami Prabhupada was the Earth's guru for the next 10,000 years. Who says that the earth even has just one guru, never mind the idea that one guy gets to monopolize the position for 10,000 years, even after he dies?

Where do they get such stuff? Well, they just make it up.

Relatively new members rise in status and confirm their membership in the group by showing their skill in attacking dissidents and critics with the standard dogma and arguments — that is, by showing their skill in parroting the party line.

Often, the cult will claim that it possesses some great new discovery, invention, or revelation from God.

- *"Never before in history has mankind had this great new blessing which our guru has brought to us..."*

- The cult leader claims, *"God has revealed to no man before what He has revealed to me."*
- The cult declares, *"God has given us the 'new dispensation'."*
- The cult declares, *"God has chosen to speak to us in this age like He spoke to other nations in the past."*
- The cult leader claims, *"No one understood the true meaning of the Scriptures before I saw the light."*
- In Scientology, the leader L. Ron Hubbard bragged that he had made breakthroughs in human psychology that no person had ever accomplished before, and that he had then developed a new technology of the mind unknown to humankind before. (And you couldn't prove him wrong about anything because you weren't an advanced Scientologist — you are so primitive and brain-damaged, they say, that you cannot even see the truth that Hubbard saw.)

In an article that criticized the public school system, Jill Haunold clearly described the problem of stubbornly-held dogmatic beliefs and fervently-believed ideology:

"I don't agree with you people," a teacher told me. "I don't believe that teachers intentionally harm children." Not that I had ever said teachers intentionally hurt children but this was apparently her interpretation of my story about the effect school disciplinary systems have on the behavior of children and adults. She conceded that school conditions were less than ideal for teachers or students. But, she concluded by saying given large class sizes, the little value our society places on children, teachers, and learning as well as other societal problems, which were unlikely to change, there was simply nothing teachers could do. Not wishing to antagonize her further, I simply said that I did not think teachers intentionally hurt children.

But I have to question why a teacher would defend her position by telling me teachers don't intentionally do harm. Does this mean she knows teachers hurt children but it is unintentional? Does unintentionality excuse behavior that harms children? And does the unintentionality of the harm allow her to further believe there is nothing she can do about it since she is unaware of what she is doing?

Lacan suggests once "illusion," or a myth that is universally accepted amongst the population of a particular culture, has taken hold, in this case that schools are fine but for a little tweaking, there is little hope for change because facts will simply serve to support the

ideology behind the fantasy. That the teacher said she did not think teachers intentionally hurt children instead of simply saying that teachers did not hurt children, would not surprise Lacan. How can it be explained that teachers would continue to do something that causes harm? The popular belief is that if it is just pointed out what they are doing they would change. But using Lacan's logic, it is not likely that teachers do not know what they are doing, nor that they will change. Instead, they are making the choice not to do anything differently because they believe so strongly in the ideology defining what they do. The ideology is the illusion that transforms any knowledge into that which supports the myth itself (Zizek, S. 1999). Here we are speaking of the belief that outside of a few bad teachers, and a few problems that could be improved through better public support, school is essentially a good thing. Thus, what is done in the name of school is justifiable. The end justifies the means. Ideology filters any information that would contradict the "goodness" of school. Critical consciousness is required to remove the filters.

Zizek, S. (1999). "The sublime object of ideology." In J. Rivkin and M. Ryan (Eds.) *Literary theory: An anthology*. (pp. 312-327). Oxford: Blackwell.

It's about Time: Schooling as Oppression, Jill Haunold, *Anarchy; A Journal of Desire Armed*, No. 57, Spring-Summer 2004, Vol. 22. No. 1, page 45.

Irrationality in the group's beliefs and teachings is one of the big red flags to watch for. Another giant warning sign is the refusal to fix things that are wrong, and refusal to even admit that something is wrong. The cult will usually claim that all of its beliefs, teachings, and tenets are sacred and cannot be changed. If you find something that is wrong — even an obvious error — they will either deny it, and claim that it is right and you are wrong ("You don't understand"), because of some explanation that often involves redefining a bunch of words, or they will rationalize the error and say that it's all okay anyway and shouldn't be changed, for some reason or other. They simply will not modify their beliefs to agree with the facts. It's like the old saying, "I won't allow my opinions to be swayed by mere facts."

Some of the most outrageous cult tenets are statements that are unverifiable, unprovable, or unevaluable (at least, in this world). For example:

- I have tested you before. We were both monks in ancient Egypt, and I was your teacher then. (Paul Brunton, see [Jeffrey Masson](#).)
- I am from Venus.
- God spoke to me.
- My real home is Sirius, and when I die, I will return there.
- I was voluntarily, consciously, reborn on this planet to help get mankind through this crisis.
- God is pleased when you follow these principles. ([Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman](#) and William G. Wilson)
- The reason you feel all of that tension and stiffness in your neck is because the way you died in your last incarnation was you were beheaded.
- The reason you feel such hostility towards her is, she killed you in your last incarnation.
- Having sex with a negative person will damage your spiritual body.
- Master is the Messiah. (Moonies, Rajneeshees, Premies, and many others)
- Or, Our Master is the new prophet.
- Or, Our Master is the new teacher with the new revelation, or the New Way. (Oxford Group)
- The Devil is trying to get into your mind and influence your thinking, and lead you astray. (Moonies)
- The only reason we are born in this world is to attain Self Realization. (ISKCON, the Hari Krishnas)
- Buying these expensive trinkets for your dead ancestors will make them happy. (Moonies)
- When we get one-third of the world chanting, we will achieve World Peace. (Nichiren Shoshu, aka Soka Gakkai)
- There is a flying saucer hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet, just waiting to take us to Heaven. All we have to do is discard our physical bodies and go hitch a ride on it, to get to Heaven. (Heaven's Gate)
- Ten generations of your ancestors are stuck at a lower level in the spirit world, and they are depending on you for their salvation. If you don't follow Rev. Moon, all of those ancestors will accuse you throughout eternity of failing your responsibility. (Moonies, see Hassan, [RTB](#), p.236.)
- Our leader has reincarnated time after time, throughout history, bringing mankind yet another great invention or discovery each time. He has been many of the greatest and most famous men in history. Without our leader, mankind would never have progressed beyond the dark ages. (Scientology, see [John Atack](#).)



Obviously, none of those statements can be tested to see if they are really true or not (not without dying, that is). Some cults spin huge webs of such vague fluff, until it seems like everything anyone in the group is saying is just more of the same indefinite and unprovable nonsense. In turn, that vague, insubstantial feeling about so many things helps to make the cult members more detached from reality.

Eric Hoffer, in his classic book *The True Believer*, described cult dogma this way:

The effectiveness of a doctrine does not come from its meaning but from its certitude. No doctrine however profound and sublime will be effective unless it is presented as the embodiment of the one and only truth. It must be the one word from which all things are and all things speak. Crude absurdities, trivial nonsense and sublime truths are equally potent in readying people for self-sacrifice if they are accepted as the sole, eternal truth.

It is obvious, therefore, that in order to be effective a doctrine must not be understood, but has to be believed in. We can be absolutely certain only about things we do not understand. A doctrine that is understood is shorn of its strength. Once we understand a thing, it is as if it had originated in us. And, clearly, those who are asked to renounce the self and sacrifice it cannot see eternal certitude in anything that originates in that self. The fact that they understand a thing fully impairs its validity and certitude in their eyes.

The devout are always urged to seek the absolute truth with their hearts and not their minds. "It is the heart which is conscious of God, not the reason." [--Pascal] Rudolph Hess, when swearing in the entire Nazi party in 1934, exhorted his hearers: "Do not seek Adolph Hitler with your brains; all of you will find him with the strength of your hearts."

...

If a doctrine is not unintelligible, it has to be vague; and if neither unintelligible nor vague, it has to be unverifiable. One has to get to heaven or the distant future to determine the truth of an effective doctrine. When some part of a doctrine is relatively simple, there is a tendency among the faithful to complicate it and obscure it. Simple words are made pregnant with meaning and made to look like symbols in a secret message. There is thus an illiterate air about the most literate true believer. He seems to use words as if he were ignorant of their true meaning. Hence, too, his taste for quibbling, hairsplitting, and scholastic tortuousness.

The True Believer, Eric Hoffer, pages 79 to 80.

Indeed: ***"One has to get to Heaven or the distant future to determine the truth of an effective doctrine."***

That makes it extremely difficult to prove that the phony guru is wrong.

15. Indoctrination of members.

Members have to learn and believe all of that dogma. The indoctrination can be anything from merely making people listen to sermons to prolonged intense study to industrial-strength brainwashing. Christian cults are notorious for having "Bible Study" meetings every night. Other cults listen to lectures by the leader, or meet to study his writings, or listen to his tapes, or watch videotapes...

16. Appeals to "holy" or "wise" authorities.

The authorities can be anything from the Bible or other religions' holy scriptures, to the words of someone deemed to be a knowledgeable authority on some subject, to the words of dead saints, real or imagined. And all of them are supposedly endorsing the cult.

Those endorsements can take on a wacky circular logic: the cult says that a certain man is wonderful and wise because that man says that the cult is wonderful and wise. For instance, [Adelaide Bry wrote a book](#) that glorified Werner Erhard and his "est" "self-improvement training" hoax which prominently featured not letting people go to the bathroom, and insisting that people "get it", without ever defining what "get it" actually meant. She described Erhard as a "genius", "a magnetic and attractive man with the body of a tennis player and the eyes of a prophet" (page 171):

He is obviously brilliant and for some it may be more comfortable to label him a charlatan than to look at what he has to say and what he's doing. Anyone who has experienced the training and who also has knowledge about the mind of man, and the traditions of philosophy, theology, and psychology, cannot fail to see how Werner has pulled them all together in a meaningful way that people who aren't philosophers, theologians, or psychologists can grasp.

It is easy, also, to write off what Werner is doing by seeing it merely as the sum of its parts: some basic Zen, a little Gestalt, a dash of Psychosynthesis, and some shrewd business management. That's like saying Picasso's work is merely the integration of all the brush techniques and stylistic devices ever created by all the great artists who came before him.

This point of view fails to recognize the mark of genius. Werner's genius becomes evident when you see that what a lot of great thinkers have been saying for centuries is what *est* is essentially saying, too. The difference is that *est* doesn't say it. Werner has developed a way for people to experience truth through their own experience.

With other teachers, you read what they have to say. With Werner you

get it.

est, 60 hours that transform your life, erhard seminars training, Adelaide Bry, Avon Books, page 165.

Then Werner Erhard reviewed the book, and the publisher printed his comments on the front cover:

Adelaide Bry did a great job. The book is readable, accurate, and gives a balanced view of *est*. Adelaide has demonstrated her integrity as a writer by extensive research, verifying the quotes she uses, checking and rechecking her facts; and stating her opinion as opinion rather than as fact. I support the author.

Werner Erhard, founder of *est*

est, 60 hours that transform your life, erhard seminars training, Adelaide Bry, Avon Books, front cover.

So Werner Erhard "supports" the fawning, gushing, starry-eyed authoress who worships him. Gee, what a surprise.

17. Instant Community.

You get a ready-made extended family when you join the cult. Sometimes, you move into their living quarters upon joining, and really get an all-encompassing community. Or you just spend all of your spare time at the temple or center or meeting hall, only associating with other members, who are your new circle of friends.

A common characteristic of this *instant community* attitude is, "We love you because you are one of us." The cult members will instantly love you, and consider you a beloved part of their family, because you chose to join their group. You are automatically one of the Good People because you joined the cult.

18. Instant Intimacy.

"Since we are all just one big happy family, we should not keep any secrets from each other."

Or:

"Get rid of all of your old mental garbage by talking it out. You can't take the power out of it if you don't talk it out."

Or:

"Your secrets will keep you sick."

This "instant intimacy" often takes the form of [confessing all of one's sins and faults and dirty little secrets to the whole group](#), which can then of course be used for [guilt induction](#) or blackmail.

And that instant intimacy always requires that the cult member immediately reveal any negative thoughts about the cult or its leader or its practices — he cannot have any privacy, not even in his own mind. Such instant and constant intimacy makes critical thought very difficult: if someone must always reveal his every thought to the other cult members around him, then he doesn't even have time to crystallize negative thoughts about the cult before the other cult members are "correcting" his thoughts and changing his mind.

Also, confessing personal secrets to a group of strangers creates an illusion of closeness and brotherhood, because [cognitive dissonance](#) kicks in. Ordinarily, we only reveal our innermost secrets to our closest, most trusted friends. When we are pressured and pushed into revealing our secrets to a room full of strangers, it creates an inner conflict. The subconscious mind's answer to the problem is to come to believe that those people *really are* our closest, dearest friends, so there isn't any problem.

Scientology does it in a different way: all newcomers allegedly need "auditing" to clear their minds. In auditing sessions, the neophyte holds in his hands a couple of tin cans or other metal objects that are wired to a meter that measures galvanic skin response (skin resistance). If the neophyte is under stress, he sweats a little, which lowers the skin resistance, and it shows on the meter. The neophyte must reveal all of the times that he was injured, and all painful experiences in his life, and talk them out until the meter no longer shows an emotional response. Every little intimate detail must be revealed to the auditor, who then keeps a case file on the subject, which can be used for blackmail later. If the neophyte tries to quit Scientology, or criticizes Scientology, he can be threatened with revelation of what is in his case file.

19. Surrender To The Group.

New members are expected to hand over their minds, their wills, their lives, and sometimes even their souls, to the group. (And, often, also their credit cards, checkbooks, and the deed to their house.) This is often masked as surrendering to God or Jesus or "the Will of God", but since God isn't around to issue new orders, the cult will do it for Him. It's just like when the TV evangelist tells you to give your money to God, he instructs you to make the check out to his church, not God.

Part of surrendering to the cult is giving up on having a personal life or personal goals. Newcomers are instructed to abandon "selfishness" and to devote their lives to serving the master, his group, and their "great cause" (whatever that may be). "[The Death of Self](#)" is a commonly-stated goal of cults.

In David Berg's *Children of God* cult, followers were required to "*Forsake All and Follow Jesus*". That really meant "[Give all of your worldly wealth to the cult, and](#)

obey all orders without question", even the orders to pimp and prostitute one's wife to raise more money for the cult.

Likewise, newcomers should give up on having their own minds or personalities. Any skepticism or reluctance to believe in the teachings of the leader is interpreted as a personal failing, a vice like selfishness or a lingering love of evil things. Questioning the guru is "negative." Devotion to the guru must be complete.

Vic Kitchen described his conversion to a true believer in Frank Buchman's *Oxford Group* cult:

First, they said, I would have to make clean contact — much as in forming an electrical connection. In setting up aerials for the family radio I had scraped the ends of the copper wire often enough to know that. To get my contact points clean, they said, I would have to face up to my sins, and "sin" they defined as anything which came between me and any other person or stood between me and God.

[Translation: He would have to confess all of his sins to the Oxford Group.]

Then they said I would have to surrender my will and make it subject to the will of God. I would have to give up entirely the old life of self-assertion and self-determination. There was, in other words, no use in clearing a telephone line to God if I was just going to sit back at my end of the wire and make up my own mind whether or not I wanted to do what He told me. They also said that, just as I would not trust a wilful child with an automobile, God would not *trust* me with any of his dynamic spiritual power unless He *knew* that I was going to use it as Jesus Christ would use it — for purposes of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.

I Was A Pagan, V. C. "Vic" Kitchen, pages 56-57.

*So what's wrong with that? Where is the hole in that logic?
It is this:*



Vic Kitchen

*"Who decides what God is saying? Who decides what is the Will of God?"
In Frank Buchman's cult, it was Frank Buchman. Everybody had to do what he said, not what God said, because Buchman declared that no matter how much you polished your "spiritual wires", you still couldn't hear the Voice of God as well as he could.*

Vic Kitchen went on to describe how he gradually surrendered his life to the Oxford Group more and more, and God told him to go to parties:

Before this, in other words, I had been passively obedient to God. I was now put actively and creatively to work for God. And while, with my first surrender, my life had been greatly altered, this new surrender completed the reversal and started me in a direction which lay absolutely opposite to all of my old ways. I took up a re-directed path, not only in the physical or sensuous environment, but in all the social-intellectual and spiritual-volitional areas of life.

In the physical area, as already suggested, I used to be guided only by the pull of my desire for a sensual indulgence. I would boorishly, for instance, refuse to give or to go out for an evening party unless I saw there some chance to excite my senses through conquests at bridge, to dull my senses through the conquest of more alcohol than others could drink, or to gratify my senses through flirting with some lady who was not my wife. Today I give parties or go to them, not because I hope for sensual excitement, but because God has *told* me to do so. And He tells me to give or go to a party because, at that party, He has some definite and creative work for me to do.

I Was A Pagan, V. C. "Vic" Kitchen, pages 83-84.

The idea of surrender is confused in a cult. There is a phenomenon of surrender in real religious or spiritual training, but it gets distorted in a cult and gets turned into something like servile obedience to a dictatorial master. Baba Ram Dass wrote this about surrender in a relationship with a genuine guru or teacher:

In the spiritual literature, the true surrender is spoken of as the surrender that is no surrender. That is, one opens — through faith and trust — to a method such as a guru only when such faith resonates with truth at the depths of one's being. Then there is a readiness for such opening. If one is still rooted only in intellect or emotion, any act of surrender is but another act of ego and can, based on misjudgment, lead to horrendous consequences. So one cannot *choose* to surrender to the guru. But when the devotee and the guru have met at the depths of being then such surrender is not actually surrender to another person but, rather, surrender

to one's own God-nature.

Miracle of Love: Stories About Neem Karoli Baba, Ram Dass, pages 300-301.

To repeat, you cannot *choose* to surrender. If you do surrender while you are still "wearing your ego", then it becomes just some more egotism: "Look at me. *I'm one of the special people who is doing the will of God. I've surrendered to God, and you haven't, so I'm more spiritual than you are. So there.*"

And even worse: "Look at me. *I am totally, unquestioningly, obedient to the Leader, and you aren't, so I'm more spiritual than you are. So there.*"

20. Giggly wonderfulness and starry-eyed faith.

The cult wallows in an anti-intellectual euphoria.

It just seems like there are always a few cult members around who giggle a lot, and proclaim that it's all so wonderful. "Praise the Lord! Sing hallelujah! Glory be! Thank you Jesus! It's a Miracle!" (or something similar) is their standard response to everything. It's like a giggly hysteria or mania. Those people have shut down their logical thinking minds for the duration, in trade for group acceptance and a world of spiritual make-believe.

You will notice that some members attribute every fortunate occurrence to the deliberate actions of a God or some other powerful spiritual being who is looking out for and taking care of the cult members — "The Big Man is really looking out for us" — ostensibly, because the cult members are doing *the right practices*, the ones that please God. Every time something good happens, they proclaim that it's another miracle, as if God has nothing better to do than wait on them hand and foot all day long, and arrange events to make them happy, and rig football games to make their team win.

You will also notice a phenomenon where one member has an intense emotional or sentimental experience, and gets all choked up, and calls it a religious experience, and the other cult members are all happy to jump in and validate the experience, and rave about how wonderful this organization is, and how wonderful the leader is, and how wonderful God is, and how wonderful it is that they are all making such great progress in following the guru's teachings... Like sharks in a feeding frenzy, or cows in a stampede, the members happily egg each other on, and work themselves up into a real tizzy over nothing. (And they will really resent you if you rain on their parade by not playing along — by remaining calm and level-headed and being a little skeptical of the whole routine.)

[Dr. Robert Jay Lifton](#) called that whole process "Mystical Manipulation", and described it as:

- Everyone is manipulating everyone, under the belief that it advances the "ultimate purpose."
- Experiences are engineered to appear to be spontaneous, when, in fact, they are contrived to have a deliberate effect.
- People mistakenly attribute their experiences to spiritual causes when, in fact, they are concocted by human beings.

In the Oxford Group cult, the leader Dr. Frank Buchman encouraged giggly wonderfulness. He instructed people at meetings to [confess their sins in a jocular manner](#) that kept the audiences laughing. The slogan was, "Brevity, Sincerity, Hilarity". Frank Buchman also told his followers to [make religion look like a lot of fun](#), a real laugh:

"You've got to get hold of that important pagan bunch. Play with 'em — show 'em what they're missing. Give 'em the feeling that religion's more fun than cocktail parties."

== Frank Buchman, quoted by Dr. H. Hensley Henson, the Bishop of Durham, and reprinted in *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament*, by Tom Driberg, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965, pages 197-198.

The Oxford Groupers were all laughing so much, and showing off how much fun their religion was, that one contemporary critic, Geoffrey Williamson, commented, "[I dislike their forced heartiness...](#)"

Phil Kerns wrote [a moving book that exposed Amway as a pseudo-religious commercial cult](#) that falsely promises to make all of its followers wealthy. Phil and his friend Don, both ex-Amway distributors, went to an Amway distributors' rally in Portland, Oregon, to observe the event. He witnessed this:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the greatest leader who ever lived. Our BODY could not exist without a head like this. The most wonderful man in the world..."

It suddenly hit me that this was how they had announded this leading dignitary! I had heard that sort of glorification at rallies all over the country. "But isn't Christ the head of the church body?" I thought.

The crowd was now laughing. As I looked up, I could see this leader, who was exalted much like a god, moving even faster than before. Body gyrations and descriptive arm and head motions accompanied his every

word.

"Do you people out there want to be free?" The crowd now sprang to its feet and screamed back to him, "Yes! Yes!" Their arms were stretched outward and upwards, hands open, in a Pentecostal fashion. Many were swaying and waving their arms back and forth as they responded to the speaker.

"How many of you want to tell the boss to kiss off?" Again the crowd screamed back, even louder than before. The applause now became rhythmic. They all stood and clapped in unison. Some stamped their feet while others beat on the tables! It just kept going on and on. This pseudo Christlike figure lifted his hands towards the heavens and nodded his head to each beat. It was an orgy of enthusiasm.

Even after the crowd sat back down, their voiced responses continued. Each statement the speaker made generated more excitement in the crowd. The beating of the tables became more intense. Those sitting at the table closest to me stood again. Hundreds of enthusiastic followers all across the room followed suit. Each was fully engrossed in the leader's words. As I looked out into that sea of faces, every eye appeared to be fixed upon the speaker with a glassy stare. They seemed hypnotized.

One black fellow directly across from me was beating the table so hard with his fist that the water goblets were beginning to spill. His face expressed utter jubilation, and his body was rocking to the throbbing beat.

Hundreds were now screaming at the top of their lungs, encouraging the speaker on. Dozens of individuals stood on their chairs; some whistled while others took their napkins and twirled them over their heads like rodeo stars.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It just wouldn't stop! For a moment the noise began to die down, and I thought they were going to quit. Instead the unified clapping took an intense upswing. They were whistling, stamping and beating on the tables faster than ever. The noise was deafening. Bodies were twisting, jumping and dancing to the beat.

The speaker was dripping with sweat. His head was nodding with intense rhythmical sways. His hands, fists clenched, beat up and down as if striking invisible drums. He intermittently lifted his arms upward and outward in a victory like stance.

"What do you need if you're going to succeed?" he roared into the microphone.

The crowd responded instantly. They knew the answer, and without missing a beat they chanted loudly, "Books, tapes, rallies! Books, tapes, rallies! Books, tapes, rallies! Books, tapes, rallies! Books, tapes, rallies!"

After what seemed like an eternity of chanting, the leader, much like the

conductor of an orchestra, thrust his hands out slashing the air in an apparent signal for the crowd to stop. Instantly the room became silent. One could have heard a pin drop.

Then, after a few moments, one could see that people were now looking at each other. Some were smiling. Others were laughing. The host for the evening's program was now making announcements of future events, and the black fellow near me, like many others throughout the room, went around and began to shake the hands of everyone within reach.

"Ain't it great? Man, I'm excited!" he would exclaim to each person. Many, in turn, would acknowledge that they too, were excited.

This fellow then came up to me and put his sweating palm into mine and with a gleaming smile asked, "Are you excited, Brother? Are you excited?"

I really didn't know what to say, so I just returned the smile. He went on and shook another dozen hands, expressing the joy and delight that he felt that night.

This same type of electricity was being generated all over the room. Don came and stood next to my side. I wondered what he was thinking.

All of this allegiance shown to the leader reminded me of what Lee Brown, Diamond Direct, had told a crowd at a different function. He urged them on with words similar to the following:

"Step out on faith now, not understanding, like I did not understand. I didn't know what it was all about, but I believed in my friend. I believed in my sponsor! And I stepped out in faith, not knowing what to do; but everything he suggested I did. But I also believed my sponsor and my friend would not do anything to hurt me. Do as your friend and your sponsor will do. Accept that on faith. And do what is suggested for you to do. And just follow these principles which are proven to work, to have whatever you want in life!"

As I reflected on Brown's words, I felt Don nudge me. "C'mon, let's get out of here, Phil. All of this is making me sick. How could we possibly have been taken in by all of this at one time? We were so blind."

I stood fast and took one last long look. I felt compassion. My heart ached for all those I was watching.

"Phil, let's get out of here," Don pleaded. I surrendered to my friend's request. It seemed to me that reaching those people with the truth would be an insurmountable task, but I knew we had to try.

[*Fake It Till You Make It, Phil Kerns*](#), pages 79-81.

That performance clearly displays several more standard cult characteristics:

- [1. The Guru is always right](#) and

- [61. The Guru Is Extra-Special.](#)
The leader was actually introduced as "the greatest leader who ever lived. ... The most wonderful man in the world..."
Why? Because he made some money selling soap? Because he got even richer by getting other people to sell more soap for him, and to buy his books, tapes, and rally tickets?
- [71. We Have The Panacea,](#)
- [7. Irrationality,](#)
- [14. Unquestionable Dogma, Sacred Science, and Infallible Ideology,](#)
- [77. True Believers,](#) and
- [82. Denial of the truth. Reversal of reality.](#)
They claim that they have the Big Answer for prosperity, riches, success in life, and happiness for everybody — "...just follow these principles which are proven to work, to have whatever you want in life!"
That is quite untrue; that is just the opposite of the truth. There are no "principles" in those cult practices, and they have not been proven to work. Quite the opposite — they have been *disproven*. [The mathematics of making everyone rich by feeding off of others cannot possibly work](#). Ponzi schemes and pyramid-shaped "multi-level sales" scams do not work and cannot work for everybody. It is a physical and mathematical impossibility. The people at the bottom of the pyramid always get burned while a few people at the top get rich. Stubborn refusal to see that the system cannot work for them and make them rich is irrational behavior, and the mark of a true believer.
- [79. Promised Powers or Knowledge](#) (And promised riches.)
- [80. It's a con. You don't get the promised goodies.](#)
- [92. Grandiose existence. Bombastic, Grandiose Claims.](#)
"Ladies and Gentlemen, the greatest leader who ever lived. Our BODY could not exist without a head like this. The most wonderful man in the world..."
You can "have whatever you want in life..."
(Oh really? Well, what I want is a non-poisonous alternative energy source for America, so that our children will not freeze and starve in the dark when the oil supply runs out. Can Amway give me that?)
- [6. Group-think, Suppression of Dissent, and Enforced Conformity in Thinking,](#) and
- [27. You Can't Tell The Truth.](#)
That rally was a dramatic example of mob psychology, where the group does the thinking. Critical thinking is difficult, and effective dissent is impossible, in a situation like that, which is precisely why they stage so many rallies like that. Emotional hooplah displaces intelligent thought.

Especially notice the repeated demands to "have faith", to "step out on faith", and to trust your sponsor and obey your sponsor, because you don't understand. That shows several more standard cult characteristics:

- [33. Newcomers Can't Think Right.](#)
- [90. Newcomers Need Fixing.](#)
- [39. Mentoring](#)
Sponsors will teach the stupid newcomers how to think right.
- [50. Demands for Total Faith and Total Trust](#)
Trust your sponsor and your uplines. They wouldn't cheat you out of money to make themselves even richer — no, not ever. It's unthinkable.
- [89. Demands For Compliance With The Group](#)
- [86. The group wants to own you.](#)
- [69. The cult takes over the individual's decision-making process.](#)
"...And do what is suggested for you to do. And just follow these principles... Do as your friend and your sponsor will do. Accept that on faith."
- [72. Progressive Indoctrination and Progressive Commitments](#)
- [25. Deceptive Recruiting](#)
- [23. Dual Purposes, Hidden Agendas, and Ulterior Motives.](#)
 - In the beginning, Amway was presented as merely a wonderful business opportunity, and the beginner just agreed to sell soap, and to get a bunch of new downlines selling more soap for him, in order to grow wealthy.
 - But then the instructions that he received gradually changed into demands for total faith and total obedience, and adherence to the Amway right-wing political agenda, and belief in their pseudo-religion, and acceptance of their arrogant materialistic value system where wealth determines human worth.
- [44. Dispensed existence](#)
The cult sets the standards for good and bad, and decides who and what merits admiration. In Amway, "good" means that someone makes a lot of money.

It is easy to see why Phil Kerns called Amway a modern-day Baal.



[Continue to questions 21 to 30...](#)



Footnotes: 1) Cooper, Paulette, *The Scandal of Scientology*, page 149.

The Cult Test

Questions 21 to 30

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

21. Personal testimonies of earlier converts.

When you go to meetings, cult members will all tell you that the cult is wonderful and the best thing that ever happened to them. (And if there are a lot of former members who think that the cult totally sucks, well, they won't be around to tell you that, will they?)

In some groups, a standard part of every get-together or church service is a session where people "testify", or "witness", or "share", and tell stories of what wonderful things the cult has done for them. That helps to both indoctrinate the newcomers and strengthen the "faith" of the current members. In some groups, members graduate from beginner status to regular membership when they can stand up before the whole group and recite an acceptable speech about the wonderful benefits they have gotten from belonging to the cult.

For example, Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism is a Santa Claus cult where you chant for whatever you want — just grab your Christmas wish list of things to get (money, car, house, laid, whatever), and start chanting to the *Gohonzon*, which is a reprint of an ancient scroll. No joke. [You chant to a printed piece of paper](#), which the faithful insist has the magical power to grant wishes, among other things. (The true believers will even entertain you with stories about the Jumping Gohonzons, which allegedly jumped down off of the wall and hopped out of a burning monastery in ancient Japan, and some believers will also tell you that they get advice and guidance from their Gohonzon.) Whenever you get something good, you have to stand up before



Gohonzon

the whole church and brag about all of the wonderful things you have gotten from chanting to the *Gohonzon*.

The Scientology book *What Is Scientology?* is loaded with testimonials, like:

- The end result of my Drug Rundown restored me to my teenage years — when I was honest, didn't take drugs or alcohol; when I was so full of life and enthusiasm; when everything was new and wonderful and I could do anything. All I had to do was decide I wanted something or to do something and it happened. That state has been restored to me now.

I'm fifty-three.

S.L.D.

Dianetics Auditing

What Is Scientology?, page 358.

- I have been a Scientologist for many years and I can say with no reservation whatever that the single most important thing for me is that through Scientology auditing I have gained total certainty that I am a spiritual being. To me that knowledge alone is more important than anything else in life.

F.K.

Scientology Auditing

What Is Scientology?, page 358.

- Before I came into Scientology, I knew there was something more to understand about myself and about life. I would wonder "Who am I?" but never really found an answer, until Scientology. The most valuable thing I have gained from Scientology is a complete certainty of myself as a spirit. It may sound unbelievable to say that Scientology delivers the promise of personal immortality, but it's true. I know without doubt that I am a spiritual being and that I can create a future for myself that is bright, expansive and long-lasting. And to me, that knowledge is priceless.

L.G.

Scientology Auditing

What Is Scientology?, page 359.

Promises of restored youth and personal immortality are, of course, also an example of another standard cult characteristic: [Promised Powers or Knowledge](#). Scientology is so outrageous that they actually claim that they can sell you immortality (for only \$250,000).

Many cults routinely show off a chorus line of "poster children" who all swear that the cult saved them from a fate worse than death, or gave them enlightenment, or brought them to Jesus, or got them off of drugs and alcohol, or some such great

thing... Those cults love to collect and show off rich and famous people, like movie stars and champion athletes.

Scientology displays in its trophy case the heads of:

- Tom Cruise (actor)³,
- John Travolta (actor)^{2 3},
- Kelly Preston (actress, and wife of John Travolta)⁸
- Chick Corea (keyboard player)²,
- Stanley Clark (jazz bass player)²,
- Isaac Hayes (jazz musician and actor, and former cartoon voice of "Chef" in South Park)²,
- Karen Black (actress)³,
- Judy Norton-Taylor (actress, Mary Ellen on *The Waltons*)²,
- Anne Archer (actress)²
- Mimi Rogers (actress)⁸
- Sonny Bono (Palm Springs mayor and performer, formerly singer with *Sonny and Cher*)⁸
- Nancy Cartwright (the cartoon voice of Bart Simpson)^{2 3},
- Jenna Elfman (actress)²
- Bodhi Elfman (actor)²
- Haywood Nelson (actor)²
- Jeff Pomerantz (actor)²
- Kimberly Kates (actress)²
- Edgar Winter (musician)²
- Priscilla Presley (Elvis' former wife)²,
- [Lisa Marie Presley](#) (Elvis' daughter)²,
- Seamus Heaney (a poet),
- Juliette Lewis (actress) ⁹,
- Kate Ceberano (singer, songwriter, & actress) ⁹,
- Terry Jastrow (TV producer & director) ⁹,
- Mark Isham (musician & composer) ⁹,
- Pete Medak (director) ⁹,
- Eduardo Palomo (actor & vocalist) ⁹,
- Carina Ricco (singer, actress, & composer) ⁹,
- Giovanni Ribisi (actor) ⁹,
- Catherine Bell (actress) ⁹,
- Jason Beghe (actor) ⁹,
- Danny Masterson (actor) ⁹,
- Leah Remini (actress) ⁹,
- Floyd Mutrux (writer, director, producer) ⁹,
- Geoffrey Lewis (actor) ⁹,
- Michelle Stafford (actress) ⁹,
- K. Patrick Warren (keyboardist) ⁹,
- Jennifer Aspen (actress) ⁹,

- Karen Nelson Bell (producer, director, & musician) ²,
- Michael Fairman (actor) ²,
- Haywood Nelson (actor) ²,
- David Campbell (composer & arranger) ²,
- David Pomeranz (songwriter & recording artist) ²,
- Michael D. Roberts (actor) ²,
- Carl-W. Röhrig (artist) ²,
- Keith Code (motorcycle racing instructor) ²,
- Xavier Deluc (actor) ²,
- Gloria Rusch-Novello (singer, writer, & actress) ²,
- Megan Shields (physician) ²,
- James T. Sorensen (photographer) ²,
- Cory S. Trammell (fire captain) ²,
- Barbara Pease Stewart (businesswoman) ²,
- and Kirstie Alley (actress)^{2 3}.

And from 1993 to 1998, Kirstie Alley was listed as Narconon's international spokesperson. *Narconon* is Scientology's version of a 'narcotics anonymous' organization. Scientology also has *Crimanon*, for criminals, but Kirstie Alley doesn't represent that one. Notice how the Scientologists couldn't even think up original names for their copy-cat organizations. They just copied the Al-Anon, Narcanon, and Narcotics Anonymous naming so closely that you might confuse one organization with the other — which just might have been the idea all along. (To keep them straight in your mind, remember that NarCONon is a Scientology CON. Narcanon is the wives' and childrens' auxiliary for Narcotics Anonymous — not really good, but cheaper than Scientology.)

Speaking of chorus lines, "est", the "Erhard Seminar Training" scam, bragged about having bagged "John Denver, Valerie Harper, Cloris Leachman, Joanne Woodward, Yoko Ono, and Jerry Rubin — 'with incredible results'."⁴ Later, they added the actor Roy Scheider and Broadway stage actor Raul Julia.⁵ But they never did explain what "incredible results" they got...

22. The group is self-absorbed.

That is, the cult is the most important thing in the lives of the cult members. Sometimes, it is their *entire* life.

Faithful members will tell you that the cult has given them a whole new life, but that new life is often nothing more than working for free all of the time to raise money for the cult, and recruit new members for the cult, and going to meetings, "Bible study classes", "worship services", chanting sessions, meditation sessions, prayer sessions, work parties, "auditing" sessions, training sessions, conventions and other get-togethers. Sometimes, cult members live together in communal

houses and have few social contacts besides other cult members. And all they talk about is the cult.

23. Dual Purposes.

The cult has a publicly advertised purpose, and a hidden purpose. The cult has a hidden agenda.

For example, many cults will, while raising funds, claim to be very busy solving social problems like alcoholism, drug addiction, homelessness, poverty, or abandoned orphans. But when the money is spent, little or none of it goes to the good cause; rather, the money is used to support the cult, and further its hidden agenda, and finance the leader's luxurious lifestyle.

Rev. Jim Jones and his People's Temple were notorious for sending children out into the streets, begging for donations to support programs to get people off of drugs or to help orphan children. But Jones' biggest expense was actually indulging his own whims, and his biggest activity was self-glorification and faking miracles.

This is a very common hidden agenda: A church may claim to be doing charitable relief work, feeding starving people (especially children) in foreign countries, but their real mission is proselytizing and trying to convert other people to their religion. They feel completely justified in lying and deceiving others — both their donors in the USA and the people in foreign countries — in order to "bring more souls to Jesus", or some such thing. They imagine themselves to be very holy, "serving God", but they really have the morality of a cancer cell or a virus. All they want to do is turn everybody around them into clones of themselves.

Antioch Church in Texas sent young women to Afghanistan to illegally proselytize for Jesus while pretending to be relief workers who were there to help the poor and starving. Perhaps you remember that a few months before September 11, 2001, the Taliban arrested two American women relief workers for proselytizing and trying to convert Afghanistans to Christianity. Everybody involved denied it and said that the Taliban were just crazy Islamic fundamentalists.

Half a year later, the U.S. Army invaded Afghanistan and rescued the relief workers, and the news media made a big deal out of the rescue of those two women and other relief workers. Those women even continued to lie and deny their proselytizing activities when they gave a press conference in the USA when they came home. The truth didn't come out until the mother of one of the two young women gave NBC news [an interview](#) telling the whole story: the Taliban were right. The women had been actively proselytizing and trying to make converts and establish Christian "cells" which would (hopefully) grow into large Christian churches.

The mother made these revelations because she was very worried — her daughter and her daughter's friends in Antioch Church were planning to return to Afghanistan and do it all again, and the State Department wouldn't stop them. Apparently, religious bigotry, lying and deceit are not against international law, or against American foreign policy, either (as long as you are a Texan Christian).

Likewise, at least one of those Christian "*save the children in foreign countries*" charities that advertises on TV that "*we don't preach or proselytize or try to convert the people whom we are helping*" is lying.

I know, because I made the mistake of sending them money. When you become a donor, they send you their magazine, which includes stories of how they are teaching the people in foreign countries to abandon their "primitive native beliefs" and convert to the relief workers' ideas of fundamentalist Christianity. An African woman who believed that God was like the sky, immense, clear, and boundless, was told to believe that God is a king sitting on a throne in Heaven. I never sent that organization another penny.

"Dual purposes" also means that the cult is two-faced. The cult has a public face, which is usually an altruistic, happy, smiley face, and then the cult has a hidden face, perhaps that of a greedy, grasping, abusive, mind-controlling organization, or that of a dogmatic, expansionist, fundamentalist religion.

David Berg's *Children of God* cult begged for donations to "help youth off drugs", but they actually had no program for getting anybody off of drugs. What they really did was get all of the girls *into* prostitution — "Flirty Fishing" is what they called it — to get the cult more money and more male members.⁶

For another example, Werner Erhard launched "the Hunger Project" which ostensibly was supposed to alleviate world hunger, but which was really just another scheme to promote and enrich his *est* "self-improvement training" hoax:

From the very outset of the Hunger Project, [project director Joan] Holmes herself made it clear that the program had much more to do with spreading the transformational message of est than with actually doing anything to end hunger. Hunger, as Holmes candidly told readers of the *Graduate Review* in August 1977, had little to do with the overall goals of the project. "Of course, I'm not insensitive to the people who are hungry and starving," said Holmes. "But the truth is that it could be any issue. The process is the same."

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, page 158.

While the money began pouring in [1978], Werner Erhard made good on his pledge to refrain from helping to feed people directly or feeling guilty about massive hunger and starvation. After raising more than \$1 million during its first full year in business, the Hunger Project contributed the

grand sum of \$1000 to a San Francisco church that operated a soup kitchen at Christmas. The previous year, the project gave \$2,500 to OXFAM, a prominent hunger organization.

It wasn't long before the Hunger Project began attracting critical attention from some of Erhard's skeptics. "Werner Erhard is using the Hunger Project not only for self-aggrandizement but for promoting the for-profit corporation he founded, as well," concluded *Mother Jones* magazine in December 1978, following a six-month investigation. "I have serious doubts about the social value of the Hunger Project," one hunger expert in Washington told the magazine. "It's probably collected more money in the name of hunger and done the least about hunger than any group that I can think of." After threatening a libel suit against *Mother Jones*, est responded instead with a call for seminar participants to devote two minutes of "negative energy" on the magazine's writers.*

* Six years after *Mother Jones's* investigation of the Hunger Project, the magazine announced that a follow-up look had revealed that the Hunger Project had severed all financial and legal ties with est while instructing its staff and volunteers not to recruit any new customers into est, which was soon to be replaced anyway by a new Erhard program. *Mother Jones*, however, made it clear that it firmly stood by everything reported in its 1978 article.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, page 162.

Hungry destructive narcissists use the childish tactics of pouting and sulking when dissatisfied or when they are thwarted from getting their own way. This is a form of revenge, whereby you are supposed to understand that they have withdrawn their love and approval from you and will continue to hold out until you come around and become more satisfying and accomodating.

Loving the Self-Absorbed, Nina W. Brown, Ed.D., LPC, NCC, page 79.

That *Mother Jones* article also said,

The Hunger Project is a thinly veiled recruitment arm for est. Hunger Project volunteers have said that est-trained Hunger Project staffers have pressured them until they agreed to do the \$300-a-shot est training. Others told of being asked to lend their cars or provide other services to est.

The Hunger Project has nonprofit status — which gives it the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions. But this use of a nonprofit organization to recruit customers for a for-profit is in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of Internal Revenue Service laws.

In various cities across the country, Erhard's disciples have organized a "Hunger Project Seminar Series" at \$30 per enrollment. Yet the proceeds go, not to the Hunger Project, but directly to est.

"LET THEM EAT est, We Confront Werner Erhard With Our Awareness Of His Manifestation Of What We're Clear Is A Big Scam", by Suzanne Gordon, *Mother Jones*, December 1978, page 42.

In November [1980] popular television actress Valerie Harper traveled as a Hunger Project representative to the famine-ravaged country of Somalia, where refugee camps were filled with the hungry and malnourished victims of a cruel five-year border war with Ethiopia. Describing the Hunger Project as a "free public-relations firm for the voiceless," the est-influenced Harper admitted that "we don't send one grain of rice but we support those who are."

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, pages 163-164.

Undaunted by the mountains of criticism, Erhard and other Hunger Project officials planned a promotional "relaunching" of the project in the fall of 1987, to celebrate its tenth anniversary. "Well, folks, I don't know about you," John Denver said at the time, "but when you listen to Werner articulate what it is that we're about, you truly have the sense that we're participating in something historic."

A UNICEF volunteer in Portland, Oregon, had a different reaction to the lavish celebration that marked the completion of the Hunger Project's first decade. "For what they spent on that production," he told a local newspaper reporter, "I could feed the nation of Ethiopia."

Erhard and his fellow Hunger Project enthusiasts had little patience for such complaints. Instead, they continued as they always had to spread a fuzzy message about "taking responsibility" for ending hunger while collecting millions of dollars in the process. Between 1977 and 1989 the Hunger Project collected more than \$67 million from around the world while claiming to have "enrolled" some 6.5 million people into its ranks. During that time it gave less than \$2 million to other organizations directly involved in antihunger efforts. The rest of the money remained inside the Erhard network, paying for glossy publications and other promotional campaigns to keep expanding the Hunger Project.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, pages 166-167.



Synanon leader Charles "Chuck"
Dederich

"Nonviolence was just a position we took.
We change positions all of the time."

Likewise, Synanon advertised itself as a wonderful new-age utopian community of people dedicated to saving themselves and other people from alcoholism and drug addiction. Synanon founder Chuck Dederich, who was an old alcoholic and ex-member of Alcoholics Anonymous, claimed to have taken the best parts of Alcoholics Anonymous and made them into a new program that would work better for drug addicts. (Notice the similarity between the names "Synanon" and "Al-Anon". "Synanon" = "Sinners Anonymous".)

In the beginning, Synanon really was a remarkable self-help organization that got hundreds of people off of drugs and alcohol.

But Synanon degenerated into [a crazy leader-worshipping cult](#) where:

- Dederich took over control of all of the members' sex lives and marriages, as well as all of the rest of their lives, and all of the men except the leader Chuck Dederich had to get vasectomies, and the pregnant women had to get abortions, so that they wouldn't have any bothersome children.
- Then Chuck made everyone get divorced and marry someone else, on the grounds that most couples will break up sooner or later, so why not get it over with now? (But note that the leader Chuck didn't have to divorce his wife Betty...)
- Then Dederich declared that Synanon was a research organization, investigating how Synanon could supply the leaders with rich, elegant lifestyles.
- Then Dederich declared that Synanon was a church.
- And then he had a goon squad of heavily-armed thugs — "*The Imperial Marines*" — who physically attacked and brutally beat up non-conforming members, splitters, and outside critics alike, sometimes with surprise attacks with baseball bats from behind in the dark of night. The Imperial Marines practiced terrorism, pure and simple. (And so did [the People's Temple goon squad, "The Angels"](#).)
- Then they tried to kill a lawyer, Paul Morantz, who was suing them, by putting a huge old rattlesnake in his mailbox, minus the rattle, so that there would be no warning buzz. It took eleven vials of anti-toxin to save Paul's life, after the snake bit him, and he suffered permanent damage to his arm.
- And finally, when the police came and arrested Chuck Dederich, he was so drunk that they had to carry him away on a stretcher — he couldn't even walk.

Not exactly your garden-variety drug-and-alcohol rehab program.

Not exactly a wonderful new-age answer to all of our drug and alcohol problems.

But even while all of those insane things were going on, Synanon still continued to advertise itself as, and solicit funds for, a 'wonderful' drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. They continued to collect funds for that good cause even after they stopped accepting any new addicts, claiming that fresh, undetoxed, addicts were "too much of a distraction." Dederich didn't say what they were a distraction from...

As a side note, it just seems like the drug and alcohol rehab business is a fertile ground for the development of cults and similar crazy groups. There are far too many stories to list here; see the page [Boot Camps: Children's Gulags](#), for more.

While all of the craziness and child abuse and even child killing is going on, the boot camps and other children's gulags still advertise themselves as wonderful rehabilitation centers, saving the children from lives wasted by drugs, alcohol and crime, and the gulags solicit funds from charities and government agencies alike, to continue their "good work."

It's funny how so many politicians and bureaucrats imagine that Buchenwald look-alikes will be good for getting children off of drugs. It does not seem to ever occur to them that child abuse and bad environments are often what drove the kids to drugs in the first place.

24. Aggressive Recruiting.

Cult members work hard at getting more members. That, and fund-raising, are often *the* major activities of the cult. Sometimes, a member can't rise above 'newbee' status until he recruits somebody else. The Oxford Group cult [had the slogan](#): "A person isn't completely changed until he changes someone else." And when members recruited and indoctrinated new members, and those new members in turn recruited more members, the elder members gained status in the cult and were said to have "[spiritual children and grandchildren](#)".

The cult may use a variety of rapid-conversion techniques to recruit new members, like

- love-bombing,
- "acquiescence by default",
- isolation — a.k.a. "milieu control",
- information overload,
- [guilt induction](#),
- [appeals to "holy" or "wise" authorities](#),
- [personal testimony of earlier converts](#),
- [mentoring](#),
- [instant community](#),
- [instant intimacy](#), and
- [lies and deceit](#).

"Love bombing" is over-whelming a prospect with attention and friendliness. The prospect may have been alone and lonely, but now he is the center of attention, and friendly girls who insist on hugging or touching him tell him that he is "really neat" or some such thing.

In the Moonies' cult — The Unification Church — the prospect is never left alone for a minute — he can't even go to the bathroom alone — and he is simply completely immersed in the cult and its teachings all of his waking hours, and constantly surrounded by smiling, friendly faces that tell him that the cult is the greatest thing since sliced bread. And he is deprived of sleep, too, kept awake and busy for long periods of time, so that his waking hours, and his indoctrination time, are very long. The lack of sleep, and lack of free time, helps to stop critical thinking, and the instant intimacy makes resisting the indoctrination difficult.

And then the prospect is pulled further into the cult through a technique called "*acquiescence by default*." That means that the prospect is induced to do things just by doing nothing. For example, the young fellow who is being love-bombed may be told by the local group leader, who may not be much older than the prospect, "Sam and Harry should go canvas the university for 'winners' [vulnerable-looking prospects]. Mary and Fred [the new prospect] should take the van and go to the farm for the weekend." Now Fred had not intended to spend his weekend at the cult's commune, but the idea of spending the weekend with Mary is tempting, (and the leader knows it,) so Fred is still debating what he would really like to do when he is shoved into the van by Mary and he's off to a weekend of more intense indoctrination.

Then, if he even starts to think about leaving, the circle of people around him breaks out in 'spontaneous' song:

We love you, Fred,
We love you more than anyone,
We don't want you to leave us —
And we don't mean maybe!

The Making Of A Moonie: Brainwashing Or Choice?, Eileen Barker, page 113.

After that weekend, Fred may find himself staying for another week or two, just the same way, and then he stays even longer, and eventually, he finds himself selling flowers on a street corner sixteen hours a day for no pay, and he isn't quite sure how he got there, but he knows that it's the right road to Heaven...

Steve Hassan, in his book, "*Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves*", described something very similar: Hassan discussed how, as a 19-year-old student at Queens College in New York City, he was approached by three attractive women who said they were also students, and invited him to dinner. He had just broken up with his girlfriend, so he was lonely, and didn't mind having some female companionship. He wound up accompanying his new friends to a few weekend workshops — all in the spirit of being "open minded."

"It dawned on me when I was driving with them to an estate in upstate New York owned by the Unification Church. I'd ask them, '[Why are we going there?](#)' They

would turn it around on me and say, 'Why, are you afraid?'" Hassan recounted. And [that deception was the beginning of several years](#) of "service" to the cult.

Guilt induction is just what it sounds like: make the prospect feel guilty about everything and anything, and convince him that only by joining the cult can he change his life for the better. The guilt-inducers love to visit jails and drug and alcohol detox and rehab facilities, and tell people, *"Well, you tried living your own way, and it didn't work out well at all, did it? It turned you into a horrible monster, and a real loser, didn't it? So now you should start living God's Way."* — And it is always "God's Way" *as they define it*, of course.

Another standard feature of cult recruiting is "actionizing." The trick is to get new members out recruiting others fast. The newcomers have just been inducted into the cult, they only know a little of the dogma, and already they have to go recruiting. There is a very good reason for that: The act of trying to convert others will cement the new dogma in the minds of the recent converts, and they will be convincing themselves as they try to convince others. They will also have to study and learn more dogma in order to be able to recite it to the prospects. It's the propaganda technique called "[Self-Sell](#)" — get them to sell the cult to themselves while trying to sell it to others.

The booby prize for the most aggressive recruiting technique ends up being a tie between two pseudo-Christian cults, both of whom encourage their female members to become prostitutes. One of the requirements for female members of *"The Way International"* is to prostitute themselves in order to draw potential recruits into the organization. Imagine being the guy in that situation. He would never guess that his new girlfriend is a prostitute, because she doesn't ask him for money. She just wants him to come to church with her, after sex. Isn't it amazing what some people can rationalize, by saying, "It's all okay, because it's being done in the service of the Lord." ("[The end justifies the means](#)" is another standard cult characteristic.)

And then there is the pseudo-Christian cult, David Berg's "Children of God", which actively encourages its female members to practice "Flirty Fishing" and to work as "Happy Hookers for Jesus", using sex to bring both money and new male members into the church. They operate near many large American military bases overseas, and take advantage of lonely servicemen with their come-ons. The cult leader David Berg (a.k.a. Moses David) even went so far as to tell the husbands to pimp their wives on the streets.¹

In [Boot Camps: Children's Gulags](#), we saw how Jim Jones used another ancient recruiting strategy: steal a bunch of other people's children and raise them up to be the kind of true believers that he wanted.

25. Deceptive Recruiting.

What you are joining isn't what you think you are joining. And they won't tell you the truth until they've got you, and it is your turn to go recruit others in the same manner.

A common characteristic of deceptive recruiting is hiding or distorting the truth, and only revealing the truth to prospects and recent converts a little bit at a time. (See Steve Hassan's description of the "[Heavenly deception](#)" practiced by the Unification Church — the "Moonies.")

Cults rationalize this behavior by saying that

- the newcomers are too "unspiritual" or "new" or "ignorant" to be able to handle the whole truth,
- or they haven't done enough yoga or meditation yet, or chanted enough,
- or they haven't gotten enough Scientology-style "auditing" yet,
- or, they haven't been off of drugs and alcohol long enough yet,
- or whatever the excuse is...

It is almost a universal cult characteristic that, in the opinion of the elder cult members, [prospects and new converts have defective judgement](#) and are not capable of thinking for themselves, so the cult must do the thinking for the newcomers, for their own good. So withholding the truth from the newcomers in order to recruit them and keep them coming back is, in the eyes of the cult elders, occasionally both necessary and appropriate.

Other common themes are the use of front groups for recruiting, and masking the true nature of the organization. Steve Hassan reported in his book *Combatting Cult Mind Control* that when he was recruited by the Unification Church, he was recruited through a front group that was supposedly working on social problems. "We aren't a religion," they told him. Hassan wrote that he was in the organization for a couple of months before he learned that he was actually in the Unification Church.

When I asked a member why I hadn't been told the truth about the religious quality of the movement, he asked, "If you knew in advance, would you have come?" I admitted that I probably wouldn't have.

Combatting Cult Mind Control, Steve Hassan, 1988, page 18.

That's another recurrent theme:

- "We aren't a religion", (remember the Rosicrucians, who say "Not A Religion" in every magazine ad,) or,
- "[It's spiritual, not religious](#)", or

- "It's just the perennial philosophy, not a religion", or
- "It's a brotherhood of adepts who practice ancient techniques for gaining wisdom, not a religion", or
- "This is just a civic organization, working on social issues." (Moonies front groups)

If you believe that the cult is a religion, you might see it as conflicting with your current religion, which would probably stop you from joining the cult. But if you think that it's just a spiritually-oriented organization, then you won't see any conflict (until later, [when they tell you to dump your current religion and just believe in their stuff](#)).

26. No Humor.

Try telling jokes about the leader and the church. If the members go ballistic on you, you are involved with a bunch of religious fanatics. ("**Screech!!! That's NOT funny!**") Jokes about other stuff don't count — the jokes must specifically poke fun at the leader and his church and the church's beliefs. Some humorless cults pretend to have a lot of humor by laughing and joking all of the time about everything except the leader, the cult, and their beliefs.

Alan Watts said that his definition of sanity was the ability to come off it. If you can poke fun at someone's foibles and get him to laugh and come off it, then he's okay. On the other hand, if he just says exactly the same thing again, but twice as loud, because you were apparently too deaf to hear it the first time, and couldn't understand his genius, then you have a problem on your hands.

27. You Can't Tell The Truth.

If you find that you can't tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, when speaking to the group, that you have to censor your own speech, and can only say certain things in order for what you say to be acceptable to the group, then you should strongly consider the idea that you are in the wrong group.

A corollary to this is that you can't ask for the whole truth, either.

Another way to say "*You can't tell the truth*" is "[Suppression of Dissent](#)". You are not allowed to disagree with the leaders. You are not allowed to say anything that contradicts the leader or his teachings, even if you are telling the truth. When in doubt, refer to Cult Rules One, Two, and Six:

- ["1. The Guru is Always Right"](#),
- ["2. You Are Always wrong"](#), and

["6. Group-think, Suppression of Dissent, and Enforced Conformity in Thinking"](#).

28. Cloning — You become a clone of the group leader or other elder group members.

You must adopt a new identity, which is "group member".

Many of the followers end up looking, dressing, acting, talking, and thinking just like copies of the group leader.

In the 3HO cult, for example, all of the followers have to wear turbans, just like the leader, and all of the men have long beards and long hair hidden under the turbans, and they all dress and look exactly the same as their leader, Yogi Bhanjan.

In ISKCON, the Hari Krishna cult, all of the men shave their heads, except for a little pigtail in back, while all of the women grow their hair long, and hide it under a sari. And they all dress in the same orange robes and sandals, and again, the men all look just like their leader, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Even when the cult doesn't enforce an outlandish dress code, the members still start looking a lot alike. Many fundamentalist cults require the men to wear suits and ties, or office dress shirts and ties, while the women all wear long dresses. But the worst aspect of cloning is that the member's minds become just as uniform as their hair and dress. Members don't just look like the leader, they also talk and think like the leader. Cults simply rob members of their individuality.

In addition, many cults give fresh recruits new names to further the process of disconnection from their old identity and adoption of their new cult identity.

In the book *Escape from Utopia: My Ten Years in Synanon*, the author William F. Olin described how the cult leader, Charles Dederich, accumulated a group of clones who looked and acted so much like him that the less-brainwashed members of Synanon disparagingly referred to that circle of sycophants as "the little Chucks". Olin wrote:

At the very top, Dan Garrett's role as the ultimate yes-man ("Yeah, man!") totally turned me off. He deliberately stuffed his own brilliance and parroted every utterance of the Founder — never publicly crossing him — in or out of Games. It was embarrassing. I felt love and esteem for the Old Man, but still recognized his consummate humanity and the reality that his ideas and remarks ran a gamut from inspired genius to banal and asinine. Yet the little Chucks who ran my life accepted each new concept indiscriminately, urging it onto the rank and file as the current "fantastic" gospel according to St. Charles [Charles "Chuck" Dederich]. Either these lieutenants were stupid or

else they were able to keep the higher goals of the 'Synanon vision' constantly in view. I had lately begun to suspect that the former was true more often than the latter: After all, Adolph Hitler was big on experimentation. Change was not necessarily growth. God, how sick and tired I was of being a guinea pig!

Escape From Utopia: My Ten Years in Synanon, William F. Olin, page 250.

The book "*est, 60 hours that transform your life*", by Adelaide Bry, is a piece of propaganda that sells the cultish '*est*' "Erhard Seminar Training" self-improvement hoax of "Werner Erhard" (really, Jack Rosenberg), which featured refusing to let people go to the bathroom, sometimes not until they wet their pants, and making people "*get IT*" (which was never defined). The authoress gives us a funny example of a tap-dance as she tries to explain that the clones of the leader are just as good as the leader (who was glorified as a unique genius), so you shouldn't feel cheated if you get an assistant trainer instead of the real guru for your money when you get "trained" — the clones are just as good as the leader — exactly the same, in fact — but don't think that they are mindless clones — they have minds of their own, well, almost, but not too much:

The trainers fall into a very special category. As Werner's emissaries (I've heard them referred to, affectionately, as sub-gurus) the fourteen trainers are alter egos if not quite carbon copies and yet each has an individual personality and is his or her own person. They are rigorously trained over a long period. I understand that the main concentration of their apprenticeship is to learn to re-create "where Werner comes from" (with the use of videotape among other things) and for the trainer-trainee to get his or her own personality out of the way so the regular trainees can "be there" with themselves. That they all have the same air is, I suppose, a way of saying that the differences between them is [*sic.*] irrelevant to the training. There are three women trainers, one of whom does the children's training. Word is that Werner is not a male chauvinist.

There are no specific standards for becoming a trainer — no tests, no job descriptions, no applications for this position. Werner says that "many people come out of the training wanting to be a trainer. What I do is to set up an obstacle course and whoever gets through it is a trainer. The course is made up of anything they've been unwilling to give up, anything they're attached to, anything they need in order to survive. It's a huge sacrifice. What they really have to give up is their ego."

...

The trainers have gone through this kind of preparation — and more. The nine trainers whom I've seen in action have in common a kind of transparency, an objective quality, that transcends personality, judgement, and biases so that the only experience you get is your own right back again.

When I mentioned this to someone who had taken the training, she disagreed with me vehemently. "But they're always 'on,'" she said. "They're brilliant actors — stern and unbending sometimes, clowning and funny at others, beautiful, polished, clever..." Exactly. What you experience from the trainers during the training is a duplication, out of their own experiences with Werner, of the training he created.

[Notice the contradiction there. The authoress gave us a long description of the junior "trainers", and then she quoted a participant who "vehemently disagreed" with her, and said that the truth was just the opposite. What is this double-talk? Whom are we supposed to believe? Also, notice the deception where the "vehement disagreement" was actually just more praise of the trainers, so it wasn't disagreement at all.]

The trainer exists not as a teacher but as a catalyst, to *allow* experience. He never interprets what's happening, as would a therapist. He gets out of your way, leaving you alone with your resistance, your vomit, your headaches, your backaches, your hunger, thirst, or bursting bladder. He's there to hack away at your belief system. And to do that he has to be Dale Carnegie, John Barrymore, Jack Kennedy — *and* Werner Erhard — all rolled into a neat super-guru package.

est, 60 hours that transform your life, erhard seminars training, Adelaide Bry, Avon Books, pages 161-163.

Just for the record, as far as Werner Erhard not being a male chauvinist pig goes, another biographer, one who wasn't trying to sell *est* training, reported that Werner Erhard was a vicious woman-hater and woman-beater, the worst kind of male chauvinist pig. [Look here](#).

Werner Erhard was also a megalomaniac who insisted that everything was about him, that his employees existed only to be his clones:

At the end of 1975, during a four-day staff meeting, a new staff member stood up to be introduced to the rest of the group.

"I'm happy to be joining the staff," said the new employee. "I'm happy that I will be able to bring my professional skills to bear."

Erhard cut him off sharply, yelling at the new employee, "Stop! I don't want your goddamn professional skills. I don't give a crap about your goddamn professional skills. You're not here because of your professional skills. You are here to re-create me." In Werner Erhard's world, *est* employees were there to imitate the boss, to reflect his image in everything they did.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, page 86.

Warning: Werner Erhard is gone, but his racket is still continuing under the names "The Forum", "The Landmark Forum", "The Landmark Educational Forum", and

"Landmark Educational". They like to specialize in so-called "corporate training".
See: <http://clever.net/ozark/awareness/>

29. You must change your beliefs to conform to the group's beliefs.

The price of admission to the club is that you must come to believe what they believe. You must also be ready and willing to change your beliefs in an instant, whenever the leader expounds some new doctrine.

This one is so obvious that it is easy to overlook. At first glance, you might think, "Isn't that what all religions demand? That you believe what they believe?" Well yes, it is, more or less. But imagine the opposite. If you have a group that *does not* demand that you change your beliefs to conform to the group's beliefs, then that is very un-cult-like behavior. So it is still relevant.

In addition, there is the issue of variability. Cult leaders tend to make up new doctrines whenever they feel like it, while established churches may take centuries to modify their beliefs.

There is also the issue of how much you must conform. Most mainstream religions are tolerant of members who have diverse or differing beliefs on some issues. But cults demand great conformity, and can be very unforgiving of any deviation from standard dogma. So it's a matter of degree.

And then there is the question of just what you are asked to believe. Cults will believe and do amazing things. It's hard to imagine that a bunch of Jesus-freak kids would believe the declaration that all of the young women should now go out on the streets and practice prostitution to attract new male members and get more money for the church, and their husbands should pimp for them, all in the name of God, but that's what happened in David Berg's *Children of God* cult. And they actually believed it, and did it. Miriam Williams wrote a book, *Heaven's Harlots*, where she explained how she did it for fifteen years before she wised up. They were all in such a gullible *true-believer* state of mind that they just accepted as Gospel Truth whatever new policies David Berg declared. When "Moses David", as he liked to call himself, wrote another "Mo" letter, the cult members immediately accepted it as revealed truth, and did whatever "Mo" said.

Then again, it's also hard for us to imagine that dozens or hundreds of people would really believe it when the leader says that it's time to commit suicide now, but they have done it. Think of Jim Jones' *People's Temple*, Luc Jouret's *Solar Temple*, Vernon Howell's (a.k.a. "David Koresh's") *Branch Davidians*, and Marshall Herff Applewhite's *Heaven's Gate* cults. That's really some crazy strong belief.

30. The End Justifies The Means.

When the cult engages in unscrupulous behavior, they say that it's okay, because it's all done in the service of God (or for some other good end).

- The Hari Krishnas routinely short-change people, and rationalize it by saying, "It's all God's money anyway, so it's okay to get more of it for God."
- Most cults practice deceptive recruiting, and rationalize all of the lies by saying that they are saving souls, or getting more souls for God.
- The Moonies routinely practice "Heavenly Deception" — deceiving nonmembers to further the church's goals — and consider that okay too, because it advances God's cause.
- And I just mentioned the Christian cults that encourage their female members to become prostitutes in order to bring more money and members into the cult. That must require a good bit of rationalization...

The eminent philosopher Erich Fromm wrote about ends versus means:

The overemphasis on ends leads to a distortion of the harmonious balance between means and ends in various ways: one way is that all emphasis is on *ends* without sufficient consideration of the role of means. The outcome of this distortion is that ends become abstract, unreal, and eventually nothing but pipe dreams. ... The isolation of ends can have the opposite effect: while the end is ideologically retained it serves merely as a cover for shifting all the emphasis to those activities which are allegedly means to this end. The motto for this mechanism is "The ends justify the means." The defenders of this principle fail to see that the use of destructive means has its own consequences which actually *transform* the end even if it is still retained ideologically.

Man For Himself; An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics, Erich Fromm, pages 197-198.

Nori Muster gave a good example of the drift from emphasis on ends to emphasis on means in her book *Betrayal of the Spirit: My Life behind the Headlines of the Hare Krishna Movement*. She described how

1. in the beginning, the goal was, at least for her, to learn, live, and retransmit truth and Eastern wisdom.
2. In order to further that end, it was necessary to expand the ISKCON organization, and have temples in every city to spread the great teachings.
3. In order to do that, it was necessary to raise money.

4. In order to do that, slightly unscrupulous means were okay for getting more money. The end justifies the means. The great work is important.
5. And then [grossly, feloniously, dishonest means were okay](#).
6. Eventually, many of the women spent most all of their time practicing underhanded fund-raising techniques like selling books in airports and then short-changing the customers.
7. And other members smuggled suitcases full of drugs into the USA to raise more money.
8. The original goal of spreading truth, love, light and wisdom was quite forgotten in the rush to raise money to expand the group.
9. But the leaders still said that it was all good, and all okay.



[Continue to questions 31 to 40...](#)



Footnotes:

1) Steve Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, page 103, documents: "Flirty fishing" means women members practicing prostitution to get more money and new male members for the church. Also see the following three references:

- *The Children of God: The Inside Story; by the daughter of the Founder Moses David Berg* Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis with Bill Davis
- *Heaven's Harlots; My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult* Miriam Williams
- *Final Report on the Activities of the Children of God to Honorable Louis J. Lefkowitz, Attorney General of the State of New York,* Herbert J. Wallerstein, Charity Frauds Bureau, Sept. 30, 1974.

2) *What is Scientology? Based on the Works of L. Ron Hubbard*, Compiled by Staff of the Church of Scientology International
Celebrity endorsements are on the inside front cover, and pages 231 to 253, 316, and 317.

- 3) *Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile*, Steven Pressman, footnote on page 28.
- 4) *est, 60 hours that transform your life, erhard seminars training*, Adelaide Bry, Avon Books, inside front cover.)
- 5) *Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile*, Steven Pressman, page 164.
- 6) *The Children of God: The Inside Story*, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis with Bill Davis, page 116 for the "helping youth off drugs" reference, and the whole chapter, pages 111 to 124 on Flirty Fishing.
- 7) *NBC News*, 3 AM PDT, Monday, 24 June 2002.
- 8) Time Magazine special report on Scientology, Time Magazine May 6, 1991, page 50, ***The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power***, said: "Adherents include screen idols Tom Cruise and John Travolta, actresses Kirstie Alley, Mimi Rogers, and Anne Archer, Palm Springs mayor and performer Sonny Bono, jazzman Chick Corea and even Nancy Cartwright, the voice of cartoon star Bart Simpson."
- 9) *What Is Scientology?*, pages 308 — 347 is all testimonials from former converts.



The Cult Test

Questions 31 to 40

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

31. Dishonesty, Deceit, Denial, Falsification, and Rewriting History.

Cults are dishonest in many areas:

- they practice deceptive recruiting,
- they are hypocritical,
- they lie about the faults or shortcomings of the leader or leaders,
- they lie about the real nature of the group,
- they lie about the real goals and purposes of the group,
- they lie about what they have done in the past,
- and they lie about their finances.

"Truth is the most valuable thing we have.

Let us economize it."

== Mark Twain

The cult has no respect for the historical truth. Like a Communist country that changes the history books every time a new dictator takes over, evil cults revise their history whenever it suits them. The cult won't allow mere facts to hinder it in its pursuit of wealth and power.

Speaking of Communists, two of the most famous and notorious examples of rewriting history were the regimes of Joseph Stalin and Chairman Mao Tse Tung. Both of their regimes were *non-religious* cults built around the personality of the leader. Both of those leaders had their own ideas of history, and what had happened, or what they wished had happened. Both of them tended to "re-educate"

people who remembered the wrong things, and the re-education took place in horrendous gulags in Siberia, or communal farms in rural China, where death was common as dirt.

Stalin's agents even went into libraries, and cut pages out of books, and glued in new pages, to change history. And Stalin's enemies had a funny habit of getting air-brushed out of old photographs... Stalin's boys even invented the Orwellian term "non-person", which is what somebody whom Stalin disliked turned into... Those "non-persons" didn't do anything wrong. They weren't killed on Stalin's orders. They simply never existed in the first place.

A little closer to home, Jehovah's Witnesses will deny that they ever believed that Armageddon would come in 1975 — even those people who sold their homes or delayed getting medical treatment didn't ever believe it. They didn't gather on hilltops waiting for the Lord to come. It *did* *not* happen.

Scientology provides us with plenty of outrageous examples of falsification of history, particularly the history of the founder Lafayette Ronald ("L. Ron") Hubbard. Scientology propaganda tells us things like that young Hubbard was in China and Tibet in 1927, instructing oriental sages in the wisdom of the ancients, when he was actually just another unspectacular high school student in the USA. And then they tell us that he was a great naval commander and war hero in World War II, but his contemporaries tell us that he was the commander of a barge for a very short time, where he blasted away at the empty ocean with a deck gun, insisting that he was shooting at a submarine that no one else could see. One of his commanders wrote in his competency report, "Under no conditions should Hubbard be given command of a ship."² But books published by the Scientology organization still tell us that L. Ron Hubbard was a brave war hero.

And Frank Buchman's *Oxford Group* cult was good at rewriting history, too. Buchman was notorious for admiring and [praising Adolf Hitler](#) before World War II: "I thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler...". Frank Buchman also repeatedly declared that he wanted everyone to live under a "[Christian Fascist dictatorship](#)", and "[the dictatorship of the living spirit of God](#)" and "[the true dictatorship of the living God](#)".

But after World War II, they totally changed their story. Garth Lean's obsequious biography of Frank Buchman, [On The Tail Of A Comet](#), contains two chapters about the years before World War II, called "*Awakening Democracy*" and "*America Has No Sense of Danger*", where he explains that Frank Buchman had always been a super-patriot who opposed fascism and Adolf Hitler — that Buchman was a prescient moral leader who struggled to awaken a stupid, complacent America to the imminent dangers posed by the rising tide of fascism...

Likewise, Frank Buchman's [fascist disciple Peter Howard](#), who became the leader of Buchman's organization after Buchman's death, was a member of Sir Oswald Mosley's *New Party*, which morphed into the *British Union of Fascists*, and Howard bragged about street fighting against the leftists in Britain. Peter Howard was also the leader of Mosley's *New Youth Movement* — Oswald Mosley's copy of the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) organization. But in 1941, when Britain was at war with Germany, Howard wrote in *Innocent Men*, his book of praise of Frank Buchman, that he, Howard, had only been a follower of Mosley for a few months, and that he was always strongly opposed to fascism.¹

32. Different Levels of Truth.

Some pieces of information, or "truths", are given to outsiders, but others are only revealed to insiders. Likewise, the beginners and the guru's inner circle get different "truths". Some items of information are only accessible to the innermost circle.

Ken Ragge said it well:

All cults have different levels of truth. "Outsider doctrine" refers to information and "truths" which are told to the general public.

Complementary to this "outsider doctrine" is "insider doctrine" which is revealed to members alone and then usually only gradually as they attain status. For example, the outsider doctrine of the Scientologists is that their organization works for mental health and human potential. The insider doctrine includes belief in past lives on other planets and other unusual beliefs. The reason for this separation of doctrine in cults is that it would be impossible to recruit if people knew what the organization really was about.

The Real AA, Ken Ragge

Ken Ragge just left out some of the most extreme (and entertaining) stuff:

Scientology also says that you can be harmed by memories of injuries (engrams) that you received millions of years ago, in *really distant* previous lifetimes on other planets. And Scientology says that you can be inhabited and hurt by "body thetans" and "clusters", which are the spirits, or clusters of spirits, of aliens who were murdered 60 million years ago in a huge purge of the excess population of a remote over-crowded planet, by the nasty Galactic Overlord Xenu.

Yes, boys and girls, it's [The Attack of The Interplanetary Cooties!](#)

Furthermore, if you are really a competent, functioning, intelligent being, you should be immortal and have great mind-over-matter powers. It is called being an Operating Thetan. Getting injured, getting sick, and even dying are all considered evidence that you are just being lazy and immoral.

One test of competency is the Ash Tray Test: You go into a room where there is nothing but a table and a few chairs, and an ash tray on the table. You do not leave the room until you levitate the ash tray with your mental powers. Should you fail to do that, it proves that you are immoral, damaged, and non-functional, and need to pay Scientology lots more money and take more Scientology courses for some more "self-improvement."

Is that nutty enough for you? Obviously, that isn't the kind of stuff that they tell the prospective new members out on the street. Like Ragge said, the newcomers are only told that the Scientology organization works for improved mental health and increased human potential by clearing out harmful engrams.

In speaking about patterns of cult behavior in many of our government institutions, Dr. Arthur Deikman wrote:

Secrecy supports cult-like behavior, as we saw in the Life Force group, where the hierarchy was maintained through limiting access to information. Secrecy functions not only to cover up unethical activities from outside eyes, but also to increase authoritarian control over the larger group. By promoting the idea that the leader or the in-group have special information and expertise, they remove themselves from criticism and justify the exclusion of others from the decision-making process.

In the case of religious cults the special information and expertise is described as divine inspiration or enlightenment. The cult leader's presumed higher state precludes lower beings from judging his or her actions. Similar claims are made in government where special knowledge of the enemy or secret technical information is said to justify decisions that would otherwise be objected to on moral or even practical grounds.

The Wrong Way Home, Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 145.

33. Newcomers can't think right.

The elder cult members believe that prospects and new converts are incapable of exercising good judgement.

Since newcomers can't make good decisions, the cult must do the thinking for the newcomers, for their own good.

The reasons that the cults give to explain the newcomers' mental handicaps vary from one cult to another.

- Some cults will say that the newcomers have not been exposed to enough Holy teachings to overcome the evil influences of Satan.

- Others will say that they haven't progressed spiritually enough, or that they haven't prayed enough, or that they haven't learned enough to know the Truth, yet.
- Other cults will declare that the newcomer has not yet done enough meditation, chanting, or yoga to have a clear mind.
- Recovery- and psychotherapy-oriented organizations claim that newcomers have not yet recovered enough to have sane, clear minds. Scientology calls them "pre-clears" because they haven't bought enough courses of "auditing" to fix their minds and become "clear".
- The previous item, [*Different Levels of Truth*](#), provides another reason to believe that newcomers can't think right: They haven't been told the important information, so they can't make informed decisions.

In most cases, the elder cult members believe that withholding the truth from newcomers is occasionally justified, necessary, and appropriate. The elders believe that they are justified in practicing [*deceptive recruiting*](#) to get new people to join their group, precisely because the newcomers cannot think correctly, so it doesn't really matter what the newcomers are told, or what they think, anyway.

"Tell them anything to keep them happy while they get indoctrinated and converted into good cult members and true believers. Eventually, they will get fixed, and think the right things."

Steve Hassan reports in his book *Combatting Cult Mind Control* that he was repeatedly deceived and lied to while he was recruited by Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, and they rationalized it this way:

When I asked a member why I hadn't been told the truth about the religious quality of the movement, he asked, "If you knew in advance, would you have come?" I admitted that I probably wouldn't have. He explained that the world was controlled by Satan after he had deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying God. Now God's children had to deceive Satan's children into following God's will. He said, "Stop thinking from fallen man's viewpoint. Think about God's viewpoint. He wants to see his creation restored to His original ideal — the Garden of Eden. That's all that matters!" Later, it became evident that this "heavenly deception" was used in all aspects of the organization — recruiting, fundraising, public relations. Since members are so focused on meeting their assigned goals, there is no room for "the old morality." The group even uses the Bible to "show" that God condoned deception several times in history in order to see His plan accomplished. By accepting the way in which I was deceived, I set myself up to begin deceiving others.

Combatting Cult Mind Control, Steve Hassan, 1988, pages 18-19.

Meanwhile, over in Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard was saying that

"... new followers or potential converts should not be exposed to [the language and cosmology of the group] at too early a stage. 'Talking whole track to raw meat' is frowned upon."

Cults In Our Midst, The Hidden Menace In Our Everyday Lives, Margaret Thaler Singer with Janja Lalich, 1995, page 71.

In the Oxford Group, Dr. Frank Buchman declared that beginners could not hear the Voice of God correctly in their "Quiet Times", because they had not confessed enough, and prayed enough, and they had not totally "surrendered to God" yet, so the newcomers were required to always submit their received "messages from God" to the elder cult members for review and approval. Those elders would then tell the new members what God really said and what God really wanted people to do. (Notice how that policy changed "Hear the Voice of God and obey God" into "Hear the cult elders and obey the cult elders".)

Also see the cult characteristic "[*You Are Always Wrong*](#)" for more examples of claims that members cannot think right. Especially see Chuck Dederich and other Synanon elders attacking the thinking of newcomers. Also see "[*You Can't Trust Your Own Mind*](#)".

34. The Group Implants Phobias.

Members are made to fear that terrible things will happen to them if they leave the group, or fail to follow the orders of the guru, or even question the group's teachings.

Fears are part of the cult member's belief system, and the cultish mind-set contains numerous fears to keep the member imprisoned.

Dr. Marlene Winell is a psychiatrist who treats people who have been traumatized by fundamentalist religions. The web site "The Freethought Police" (TFP) interviewed her, and asked about people leaving fundamentalist religions:

TFP: OK. Say somebody decided their religion isn't working for them anymore and they want to leave. What kind of message of hope can you give to someone trying to overcome indoctrination?

DMW: Well, many people have done that. It's possible. It's not your fault. It's a little bit like domestic violence: the person who thinks it's her fault and she keeps going back and why doesn't she just leave? Well, it's very difficult, but people do leave. And just because you've been told, over and over, that if you leave terrible things will happen, that you'll die, that's not true. Because, it's not so much that you'll go to Hell when you die, but that terrible things will happen right now. That you'll go crazy. You'll become addicted to drugs. You'll become a criminal. That you'll become

depressed. All sorts of things. Your life will be terrible if you leave the faith, if you leave the fold. If you leave this group. The world is a bad place. People are bad and it's the domain of Satan. So, you're very reckless to leave. So, people are very afraid. And that's true. That's a phobia indoctrination.

Interview with Dr. Marlene Winell, Author of *Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving their Religion*.

<http://freethoughtpolice.com/2012/08/18/interview-with-dr-marlene-winellauthor-of-leaving-the-fold-a-guide-for-former-fundamentalists-and-others-leaving-their-religion/>

[Steve Hassan](#) lists numerous Physical, Psychological, Spiritual and Social fears that various cults will implant in their followers. For just a few examples, cult members fear that if they leave the cult they will:

- die painfully or violently.
- become an alcoholic or drug addict.
- go insane.
- be a failure.
- lose control completely.
- lose their dreams.
- lose all hope of a happy future.
- become unspiritual.
- lose their relationship with God.
- be defeated by Satan.
- be possessed by demons or evil spirits.
- lose their chance for immortality or salvation.
- be judged unworthy when Armageddon takes place.
- not be taken up to Heaven when the Rapture happens.
- be unloved.
- be ostracized and rejected by the group. **(This threat is real.)**
- be abandoned.
- be accused unjustly.
- be persecuted by psychiatrists or other mental health specialists.
- be tortured or tormented by deprogrammers or exit counselors.

35. The Group is Money-Grubbing.

The cult is preoccupied with fund-raising.

This is simple. The cult is just always scheming to make more money, one way or another, either from cult members or from outsiders, and often, from both.

- Often, cult members are required to buy books written by the cult leader. Most every sect has some kind of holy scriptures or documents. The Hari Krishnas (ISKCON) have many books written by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and the Scientologists have *many dozens* of books by L. Ron Hubbard to buy...

- Often, the cult members spend a lot of their time selling something, or collecting donations, or working at a cult-owned business. Cults are also often dishonest and deceptive in how they get money.
- The Hari Krishnas (ISKCON) want to sell you books, and then short-change you. They rationalize their actions by saying that it is all God's money anyway, so it's okay if they steal it from you and give it to their guru. Nori Muster described *sankirtan* (fund-raising) activities this way:

Women also did traveling *sankirtan*, but the ones I knew generally stayed at the temple to work Los Angeles International Airport, conveniently just fifteen minutes from the temple. Some women agonized over their quotas. For others, talking to people and selling things came naturally. There was also an element of deception in some of the transactions; it was called the "change up." In the change-up routine a *sankirtan* woman might pin a paper flower on a man's lapel and say, "Hi, sir, I'm giving a flower to all the cutest guys in the airport." Then she might say, "Can you please give a donation to print educational books for college students? [Everyone's helping out today.](#)" If the man opened his wallet to reveal large bills, the devotee might say, "Oh, sir, I've been collecting all day and I have so many dollar bills I feel like a walking salad bowl. I could change a hundred."

If the man pulled out the bill, the devotee added it to her collection and then started counting back change, slowly. "Five, six, seven, eight, nine. Sir, could you give the rest in charity? It will come back to you a thousandfold." At the L.A. temple, change-up techniques were exchanged in the ashram and demonstrated to all *sankirtan* devotees in a presentation in the temple room. The technique slipped out to other temples, as well.

Even though the L.A. women's team brought in \$20,000 a week, they had no real power. Women couldn't make decisions for the organization or hold any rank. They could be mistreated unless a male sympathizer acted as an advocate.

Betrayal of the Spirit, Nori J. Muster, Page 36.

ISKCON even got involved in drug-running and money-laundering to bring in cash:

His [Rishabdev's] service in ISKCON was to cultivate "congregational members" and get them to give large cash donations to the BBT. He had received encouragement from above, even though his flock happened to include international drug smugglers from the Brotherhood of Eternal Love. The Brotherhood had roots in Eastern

spirituality and was associated with Timothy Leary when LSD first became popular during the early 1960s. The Brotherhood tried to instill Eastern philosophy along with the psychedelic drugs its members manufactured and marketed. One former Brotherhood follower joined ISKCON and eventually became one of the eleven gurus. ... These congregational members gave generously to the ISKCON mission, and Rishabdev welcomed their donations with an open heart. ... Devotees seeking private support for their projects flocked to Laguna Beach for the abundant cash that seemed to circulate there.

Rishabdev, the link between ISKCON and the Brotherhood, made the necessary introductions for those who wanted to become smugglers. Despite the moral questions involved in such practices, some devotees willingly risked their freedom for the promise of quick financial independence and the ability to support chosen projects. New couriers had their photos taken with Dridha-vrata, the ringleader, and the photos became their identification cards for the hash oil connection in Pakistan. ... Their "service" was confidential, of course, because ISKCON prohibits intoxicants, but it would be foolish to say that the Governing Body Commission was completely innocent. "Money is money once it's in the coffer" was the rationalization of those who took the cash.

Betrayal of the Spirit, Nori J. Muster, Pages 61-62.

- The Moonies want to sell you books and flowers, and they also have a scam where church members must buy expensive trinkets from the church to comfort their unhappy dead ancestors. The cult also demands that members surrender all of their worldly wealth to the church — just hand over your checkbook and credit cards. Really. Literally.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi sold people words to chant while doing Transcendental Meditation ("*mantras*") because "Americans are so materialistic that they wouldn't value the words if they got them for free." (I love that: "*You American kids are too materialistic, so give me all of your money.*") Then Maharishi got into the business of selling his students "flying lessons" — lessons that ostensibly taught the art of levitation. Rumor has it that students who were having trouble flying were taught to bounce up and down on a cushion to get started... It seems that they were working on their hang time even before Michael Jordan popularized the skill.
- Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had 93 Rolls Royces as well as countless millions of dollars in cash and other trinkets because he convinced his followers that they should show their love and devotion to him by buying him more and more expensive gifts.

- We were just talking about Scientology. They *always* want to sell you something, either a book, or an overpriced E-meter, or more auditing, or another horrendously overpriced "course" — or a dozen of them, for another \$100,000 or two...

Scientology takes all of your money in a clever round-about way: In order to be "cleared", you must take a whole lot of courses of "auditing" to process your "engrams". (Translation: Fix your mind by removing the harmful effects of memories of past injuries.) They start off by offering you a free "personality test", but the results of the test are *always* that you need to take a Scientology course, and you should buy a book, too.

The courses start off being relatively inexpensive, like \$75, but after the first few courses, the prices go up sharply, and they keep going up. The cost of the higher-level courses ranges from \$8000 to \$77,000, each. To become a "**Clear**" costs \$128,560, even with discounts. For the upper levels you have to pay *at least* an additional \$250,000.

If you intend to take all of the courses, plan on selling your house and giving the money to Scientology. Literally. That's what Scientology leaders have conned gullible members into doing — mortgage their houses to the hilt and give the money to Scientology for more "courses" and "auditing". And then they want you to max out your credit cards, and borrow all of the money that you can possibly borrow — to put your entire life in hock — and give it all to Scientology.

Would you like to be a "patron" of Scientology, like some movie stars are? These are the prices:

- Patron — \$40,000.
- Patron with Honors — \$100,000.
- Patron Meritorious — \$250,000.
- Gold Patron Meritorious — \$1,000,000.

I knew one woman who was into Scientology, who said, "You know, if I **only had \$50,000, I could really get my head together.**" (That was \$50,000 in 1980 dollars.)

I had to agree that she needed her head examined, but didn't agree about the proper course of treatment.

In one of his bulletins to Scientology officials, the cult leader L. Ron Hubbard told them to, "**Make money. Make more money. Make others produce so as to make money... However you get them in or why, just do it.**"

And lately, Scientology has been advertising a new racket on the streets — the "Purity Rundown". They will clear your body of harmful toxins, for a price. Scientology says that you are being harmed and held back and kept from your true powers and your grand spiritual destiny by all kinds of nasty toxins that are lodged in your body and poisoning you. Not only do you have a problem with all of the environmental poisons you were ever exposed to, the junk in the air you breathed and the water you drank, but, Scientology says, if you ever took any drugs, even maybe just smoked a little pot in college back in the sixties, then you still have residual poisons from those things lurking in your body, doing terrible things to you, and you need to be detoxified by skilled Scientologists.

Curiously, the pamphlet that advertises this detoxification treatment says that Scientology makes no claims that you will get any medical benefits from it; it only says that you will get "spiritual" benefits...

On the other hand, the U.S. Surgeon General said that the Scientology "Purity Rundown" does have medical effects, and it is very dangerous to your health. It has even caused a few deaths.

- Synanon had quite a variety of scams: Soliciting donations from anyone and everyone for their wonderful work in getting people off of drugs, *demanding* large donations from the parents of young addicts, demanding that any member who had any money pay rent to Synanon, even while working for Synanon for free, selling office supplies to sympathetic businesses, and running a wide variety of ordinary businesses like gas stations or building contractor services, using the free labor of members. Like so many other cults, it was a rich multi-million-dollar empire when the police took the leader Charles Dederich off to jail.

36. Confession Sessions.

Members will criticize themselves and confess all of their sins and faults, sometimes engaging in public self-criticism or confession sessions. This is used by everybody from Maoist Chinese Communist groups to ultra-Fundamentalist Christian cults. Confession is one of Dr. Robert J. Lifton's [*Eight Conditions of Thought Reform*](#). Guilt induction and self-criticism (confession) sessions were at the heart of the [Chinese Communist brainwashing program](#) that was used on the American and British prisoners during the Korean War.

Willa Appel compared the study sessions and confession sessions in Chinese brainwashing and in Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification church:

In China, the purpose of such [study] sessions was to ensure that everyone understood the lectures and accepted them unequivocally.

Following the study groups were self-criticism sessions in which each person was prevailed upon to criticize his or her life using proper Communist behavior as a yardstick. Past and present faults were dissected by the group, whose members expressed their own zeal for reform in the intensity with which they tore down each other's defenses. Once a person demonstrated sufficient humility and offered a satisfactory confession, the group's attitude would soften and become more accepting. The very process of confessing, then, provided satisfaction. It rewarded confessors with a sense of belonging and acceptance that was particularly valued after having been reviled and rejected. Some people, especially those who had not previously had a clear commitment or goal, experienced this process as a rebirth. They were exhilarated by their feelings of "belonging" and "purpose". For these people Chinese brainwashing was like a religious conversion.

Cults in America; Programmed for Paradise, Willa Appel, page 84.

The similarity between religion conversion and Communist conversion may be much more than just a coincidence. Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman went to China as a Lutheran missionary in 1915, 1916, and 1918, and pushed his degrading, humiliating, version of conversion that he called "changing people" (into his true-believer followers). His methods relied heavily on what Dr. Lifton described: lots of confession sessions and meetings with group pressure to confess, and confession of personal flaws and shortcomings and personal worthlessness, and confession of powerlessness over sin, and "you can't think right because you are a sinner and you have been defeated by sin," and all the rest of it.

Is it just a big coincidence that 30 years later the Chinese Communists were using Buchman's techniques for "changing" people into obedient Communists? It is more than just a possibility that some of Frank Buchman's converts quit his cult and joined the Communist Party, and taught the Communists the conversion techniques that they had learned from Buchman.

(The Communists were there when Buchman was there, and Buchman was in competition with them for the hearts and minds of the people. Buchman unhappily noted that the Communists were winning. And they were winning because the Communists did not insult the Chinese people by declaring that their culture was stupid or primitive or "unChristian". and the Communists did not display arrogant, condescending, know-it-all attitudes towards "the heathens", and the Communists were not out to destroy the local cultures.)

Then there was the story of a Moral Re-Armament (the renamed Oxford Group) member who was a soldier in the Korean War, and who was captured and became a POW in North Korea. When he was subjected to the Chinese Communist brainwashing, he remarked that it was just like an MRA meeting.



Synanon leader Charles "Chuck"
Dederich
In a "Synanon Game" called "The
Perpetual Stew"

Synanon popularized "confrontational attack therapy" where people both confessed their own faults, and attacked others for their faults.

Sometimes members will attack and criticize each other in *reverse-confession* "group therapy" sessions or Synanon games. A "Synanon game" is something like a group therapy session, except that everyone gangs up on and attacks one person, listing every imaginable fault that the person has, listing everything that that person should be confessing. Then, after everyone has exhausted all of their complaints against the victim, they will suddenly switch modes, "flip the box", and lavishly praise the person they just denounced. Then the target will be changed, and everyone attacks someone else. This continues in a random fashion until everyone's ego has been shredded (except for the ego of Chuck Dederich, the cult leader, of course). This is very similar to a variation on confession that the Maoist Chinese Communists sometimes used, where everyone had to criticize someone else at the meeting.

Scientology cleverly disguises its confession sessions by making them look like psychotherapy sessions. People who are being "audited" hold a couple of tin cans which are connected to a meter that measures skin resistance (Galvanic Skin Response), like how a lie detector machine does. Then they answer questions about their past, and eventually reveal their every secret, and confess everything to their auditor, who keeps a file on them which can be used to blackmail them later, and keep them from leaving the cult, and keep them from publicly criticizing Scientology or telling the truth about the cult.

37. A System of Punishments and Rewards.

The cult has some kind of a system for punishing those members who "stray from the path" or break any of the cult's many rules and procedures. And there is also some kind of system of rewards for those who conform and obey and follow all of the rules.

The systems of rewards and punishments can start off with seemingly innocuous things, like the praise of the cult leader. Those who fail to sell enough flowers or books or bring in their quota of contributions receive the harsh criticism of the leader, while those who do bring in the bucks receive the leader's praise. The same goes for bringing in new recruits.

Then things get worse, with things like denying people food or sleep, or baths, making them do punitive work, or sentencing them to long chanting sessions, or just about any kind of torture you can think of.

Jim Jones' People's Temple routinely beat people for even minor infractions, like getting a parking ticket on a Temple vehicle. Scientology has "RPF", the "Rehabilitation Project Force" which actually runs fortified and armed prison camps for out-of-favor Scientologists, like the "Gold Base" — the Gilman Hot Springs Scientology base, and the "Happy Valley" camp near Hemet, California.



**"Don't mess with us --
you can get killed dead,
physically dead."**

Synanon leader Charles "Chuck"
Dederich

[Synanon](#) had "[The Game](#)", which was sort of like an encounter group crossed with a Red Chinese reverse-confession session — a session where everyone criticizes someone else. In *The Game*, large numbers of people would gang up on and denounce one person who had failed to conform to the rules in some way, or whose behavior was less than sterling. There were [variations on The Game](#) where the victims were forbidden to defend themselves. They had to just take all of the abuse and criticism that others heaped on them. Then the group could sentence the victim to some kind of punishment, called "*giving them a contract.*"

The "Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints" (FLDS) cult in Utah, Arizona, and Texas, that is led by Warren Jeffs, has a really draconian system for rewarding or punishing followers. Warren Jeffs' son, who has quit the cult and wrote a book about it, explained how Warren Jeffs would take the wives and children away from dissident members who failed to follow his orders, and give them to a different follower who was obeying Warren Jeffs. The dissident member was then ostracized, and the former wives and children could not even talk to their former husband and father.

In the FLDS church, they believe that the number of wives that a man has on Earth establishes his future status in Heaven. One wife is good, but two is better, and three is much better, and four wives gets a man the highest rank in Heaven. Thus, Warren Jeffs taking a man's wives away from him not only wrecks his life here on Earth; it also ruins his ticket to Heaven. That makes being stripped of one's wives and children a doubly-horrible punishment.

The most extreme cults often have an armed goon squad "for security" and to enforce the rules.

- Synanon had "[The Imperial Marines](#)" and the People's Temple had "[The Angels](#)", both of whom viciously, brutally, beat up non-conforming members and outside critics alike.
- Synanon leader Charles Dederich said in a tape-recorded message, while talking about the lawyer Paul Morantz who was successfully suing them for beating up Synanon members, "Yes, I do want an ear in a glass of alcohol, I really do." Dederich and two of the Imperial Marines, Joe Musico and Lance Kenton (son of the famous band leader Stan Kenton), were arrested for and found guilty of the attempted murder of Paul Morantz (by putting a rattlesnake in his mail box).
- The People's Temple *Angels* killed everyone who didn't "voluntarily" commit suicide at Jonestown.

38. An Impossible Superhuman Model of Perfection.

In all mind control cults, an *ahuman* model of perfection is held out. *Pure* and *impure* are defined by the ideology of the organization. The demand for *purity* is intense.

Dr. Robert J. Lifton calls this item *Self-sanctification through Purity*, and it is one of his [Eight Conditions of Thought Reform](#). (*Thought Reform* is what Lifton called the Chinese Communist brainwashing.) "Only by pushing toward perfection, as the group views goodness, will the recruit be able to contribute."

The model of perfection is simply impossible to attain, because it is too idealized, too lofty, too perfect. Someone would have to be a living saint or an angel to be that good. This is, of course, great for making people feel guilty and inadequate, which is the goal. Then people are punished and learn to punish themselves for not living up to the group's ideals.

"I hate to see any of my followers driving a dented car, because that means that someone had a moment of unawareness when he wasn't paying attention to what he was doing."

== Yogi Bhaijan

heard by author at Bhaijan's compound in Espanola, New Mexico, 1978.

Oh really? It couldn't be that one of your followers was economical and bought a used car?

What if the follower bought a used car because he didn't have much money left because he had already given most of his money to you?

In her book about the *Children of God* cult, Miriam Williams described how she gave birth in a natural home delivery, and everything went well except that she tore a little during delivery and had to go to the hospital afterwards to get a few stitches. Then a higher-ranking woman in the cult attacked her:

"My husband has already talked to Cal [Miriam's husband]," she said sharply. "We have prayed about this, and we believe that you two must seek the Lord for an answer."

"An answer to what?" I asked.

"Well, as to why the delivery went so badly," she retorted, looking surprised that I would not know. "I want you to pray about this and write me a report today."

I was left speechless. The absolutely most beautiful memory that a woman can have in her lifetime, that of giving birth to her firstborn, had been splattered with this acid of someone else's cruel reality. Now every time I recalled that wonderful experience, I would remember that I had

somehow failed.

Heaven's Harlots, My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult, Miriam Williams, page 61.

[You are always wrong.](#) Miriam Williams could not even give birth naturally, without the aid of a doctor or pain-killers, without one of the cult leaders still attacking her and accusing her of less than perfect, super-human, performance of her motherly duties.

Speaking of which, the Scientologist Tom Cruise made the same demands of his wife Katie when she gave birth to their baby: no pain-killing drugs, and no noise. (Oh, and then Cruise said he was going to eat the placenta. Some people think Cruise has flipped and [gone way off of the deep end.](#))

Like you, I eagerly anticipated the birth of Tom Cruise's out-of-wedlock child and, like you, I am more than a little curious to find out if Katie "The Doormat" Holmes managed to comply with Cruise's quasi-religious stricture that it be done silently.

All religions have goofy precepts and rituals, but Scientology leads the pack with L. Ron Hubbard's cracked notion that babies are better off if they enter a world that is as silent as the womb.

It might be good for the baby, but it is not going to work for the mother unless she is drugged into unconsciousness — one of the many bits of modern medicine that Scientology disallows.

During delivery, mother's moanings, father's encouragements and doctor's orders are discouraged, as is, I suppose, the playing of music, such as the Rolling Stones' "Under My Thumb," which is the most appropriate theme music for this relationship that I can imagine.

I don't know about you, but the birth of my first child would have been cause for my excommunication from Scientology. The spinal block didn't take, and I had an emergency Caesarean section with the equivalent of the Novocain you'd use to numb a bad tooth. By the time the child arrived, I had my husband by the throat and was howling, "I want furniture and jewelry for this."

Susan Reimer, *The Baltimore Sun*, April 20, 2006

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rnrs/message/5421>

“You only have to see the placenta,” commented one young mother this week, “in order to decide whether or not to eat it.” But the same logic could be applied to many other foodstuffs when you see them in the raw, as it were. The trick, as Tom Cruise will doubtless testify, having this week reportedly promised to scoff the placenta and umbilical cord of his newborn baby, is in the preparation.

Roasting the placenta with onions, peppers and garlic is one method of preparation, but others include frying, mincing or turning into pâté. More modern recipes suggest placenta lasagne, or even power drinks, but the 21st-century mother is surely most likely to turn hers into a smoothie with banana, strawberries and yoghurt.

Eating placenta is commonplace throughout the animal kingdom, and also in some non-western societies. In fact, the real controversy over Tom Cruise’s suggestion that he would eat his baby’s placenta – also known, less palatably, as the afterbirth – centres on the question of whether it was his to eat.

There are many who consider the placenta to be the best and most nutritious thing since sliced bread, and some have criticised Cruise for denying his partner, Katie Holmes, the life-giving, nutrient-rich organ.

Richard Moore, MSN Health, 2006.04.19

<http://www.msn.co.uk/health/placenta/Default.asp?MSPSA=1>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rnrs/message/5430>

Swami Prabhupada, the leader of the ISKCON (the "International Society for Krishna Consciousness") reinterpreted the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita, this way:

11. I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire. I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles, O Lord of the Bharatas [Arjuna].

The strong man's strength should be applied to protect the weak, not for personal aggression. Similarly, sex life, according to religious principles

(*Dharma*), should be for the propagation of children, not otherwise. The responsibility of parents is then to make their offspring Krsna conscious. Bhagavad-Gita; As It Is, "His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada", page 252.

The first paragraph is from the Bhagavad-Gita; the second paragraph is Swami Prabhupada's interpretation of it. Prabhupada says that sex is only for making children; forbidden otherwise. The Bhagavad-Gita does not say that — it says only that sex should not be performed against religious principles, like no adultery or seducing children, or such things. Prabhupada decided all on his own that sex is only for making children, and that married couples could not enjoy sex just for the joy of it. And in his ashrams, married couples had to sleep separated in sex-segregated quarters, just to make sure.

Dr. Edgar H. Schein, in his book on Red Chinese brainwashing — "Coercive Persuasion" — wrote:

The ultimate avowed aim of thought reform is, of course, the "new man" who will be ideally fitted for the Communist society of the future. The "new man" has the following characteristics. He should be completely concerned about "others," "The People," and the ideology. He should not look at things subjectively, from a self-centered or selfish point of view, but "objectively," recognizing that the greatest good for himself is that which is the greatest good for the group as a whole. He should be an *active* enthusiastic supporter of the cause (apathy and indifference are tantamount to opposition). He should be enthusiastic about physical labor and manual labor as the essential means to the glorious "ends" of the revolution rather than being concerned with intellectual and aesthetic activities, which are often pursued selfishly as ends in themselves; intellectual and aesthetic activities should be pursued only for the purpose of effectively communicating the Communist conception of society and rallying others' support of it. He should be enthusiastic about the simple, unembellished life rather than being concerned with material possessions and luxuries of life; he should adopt the simple values and standards of the working people and peasants, including their language, manners, and morals. In short, the "new man" should be truly *collectivized*.

The image of the "new man" was continually held up by the authorities and by the propaganda organs as the ideal to strive for, and any tendency of a citizen or a prisoner to behave in a manner not consistent with this idealized image could and did lead to his being severely criticized.

[*Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the "Brainwashing" of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists*](#), Edgar H. Schein with Inge Schneier and Curtis H. Barker, W.W. Norton, New York, 1961, Pages 52-53.

(The Cambodian Communists, the *Khmer Rouge*, went far beyond criticism. They murdered a million people to "purify" Cambodia. See the movie *The Killing Fields*.)

Likewise, Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman and his Oxford Group cult insisted that all good people had to live by the high-falutin' standards of "The Four Absolutes": *Absolute Purity, Absolute Honesty, Absolute Love, and Absolute Unselfishness*. Those are impossible standards.

- For instance, someone who practices Absolute Unselfishness should give away his food and money to a hungry homeless person.
- But he should also practice Absolute Love. He should love the hungry guy, and he should love himself, too, as another servant of God. But if he loves himself, and takes care of himself, so that he can be of greater service to God, he will keep some food and money for himself, so that he won't starve.
- But that is less than Absolute Unselfishness. Now he's being selfish, perhaps even a little egotistical, keeping some food and money for himself, thinking that he is more worthy of the food than someone else.
- He can't win. He can't live up to both standards at once.
- And if he confesses the truth, that the standards are impossible, unrealistic, bombastic, and downright absurd, then he's guilty of violating Cult Rule Number One — don't criticize the guru or his teachings — *The Guru Is Always Right*.
- But if he doesn't confess the truth, then he is being less than Absolutely Honest...
- Obviously, you can drive yourself crazy with that kind of stuff. Such absolutism is Absolute Nonsense.

We could think of many similar problems with such "Absolutes", but one classic example really stands out: The conflict between Absolute Love and Absolute Honesty. Suppose you are speaking with a really fat, ugly woman. If you are loving, you will ignore the negative aspects of her appearance and try to relate to her good qualities. But if you are absolutely honest, you will tell her how she looks to you. But that certainly isn't loving. It's one or the other; you can't do both at the same time.

That predicament is an example of the more general problem where someone asks you to speak ill of another behind his or her back. If you are *really being absolutely honest*, you will say that the other person has numerous flaws and faults. But if you do that, you are being less than a friend to the criticized person, talking about him behind his back like that (not practicing absolute love towards that person). So which do you do, be honest and realistic, or be a loving friend? [Damned if you do, and damned if you don't.](#)

(There is an escape: It is to declare that you have taken a holy vow never to speak ill of someone behind his back. But that is a sort of a dodge, isn't it? You are still just avoiding being totally honest.)

Another facet of the demand for Superhuman Perfection is the idea that we all create our own reality. Scientology and Werner Erhard's *est* and its clones like the "Landmark Forum" or "Landmark Educational Forum" all push that idea.

Werner Erhard constantly exhorted people to "Take responsibility for making their lives work", and "take responsibility for ending world hunger".

Scientology actually teaches that getting sick and dying is a sign of laziness and immorality. If you were really a high-energy Operating Thetan, you would be immortal. (They still teach that, in spite of the fact that the founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, suffered a stroke and died... Go figure.)

Here is another example of Scientology teaching that you must have perfect mind-over-matter powers: After you take a "personality test", and rate yourself on the answers...

WITH THE HELP of the CHART OF ATTITUDES let us take a look at your present-day environment.

You may have realized, while inspecting this chart, that you were not quite at the top. You need not worry particularly if you discovered this. Unlike some witch doctors in modern dress, this book is making no effort to condemn you. There were various reasons why you permitted yourself to be lowered on this Tone Scale — for you had to give your permission to have anything serious happen to you (a matter which we will cover under SELF-DETERMINISM in a later section of this volume.)

Handbook for Preclears, L. Ron Hubbard, page 91.

So Scientology teaches that if you are less than perfect, it is because you *allowed* someone to damage you.

Also notice the invocation of the standard Scientology bogey-man: psychiatrists, whom Hubbard called "witch doctors in modern dress". L. Ron Hubbard was insane — a paranoid schizophrenic — and he hated and feared the doctors who said that he was insane.

Everybody chooses his life, they say. People suffer because they have chosen a life of suffering. The poor are poor by their own stupid, lazy, choice. Cripples chose to be cripples, and mentally retarded people stupidly choose to be that way.

Alcoholics and drug addicts all voluntarily choose to be that way. Obviously, you can discard all compassion for the suffering people of the world if you believe such things. And you can feel terribly guilty about all of the things in your own life that are less than perfect. (And that is a big part of the idea: [to make you feel guilty.](#))

But if you think about it for a minute, the idea of everybody choosing his own reality is absurd. It implies that we are all gods with superhuman powers, in total control of the world.

- Did a little girl whose parents were just killed in a car accident choose to become an orphan? How?
- Did the wives who became widows in the September 11 World Trade Center disaster really choose the single life? How?
(That opens up very screwy lines of logic like: If the widows really did choose that reality, then the hijackers who flew the airplanes into the skyscrapers were really just the mental slaves of the wives, doing the bidding of the wives, rather than carrying out their crazy ideas of the Will of Allah, weren't they? So the September 11 disaster was really the fault of the wives and orphans who are now collecting on the life insurance policies...)

The truth is that neither extreme is true. We do not totally control our lives, and determine everything that happens, but neither are we powerless and unable to control our fates at all. The truth is somewhere in the middle.

39. Mentoring.

The group has a system of mentoring, where newcomers are taken under the wing of an elder, and indoctrinated and trained in the ways of the group. It is a given that the "old-comers" must supervise the newcomers, and educate and train them and make them think properly, and make them follow the rules and conform to the group's standards.

In a cult, the newcomers are abused by their mentors or the guru, or both, until they graduate to the inner circle, at which time they can then abuse others as they were abused. Dr. Robert J. Lifton, the author of the classic study of Chinese Communist brainwashing, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China*, called this "the psychology of the pawn." Abused, tormented personalities get their kicks not by rebelling against their oppressors, but rather by graduating to become one of the oppressors, and doing it all to someone else.

"The dearest ambition of a slave is not liberty, but to
have a slave of his own."
— Sir Richard Burton

In the classic science fiction novel *Stranger In A Strange Land*, Robert Heinlein told the story of Michael, a human child who had been orphaned on Mars, and raised by Martians. When he was brought back to Earth, Michael was unable to understand humans or laughter until he was at a zoo one day, and saw the monkeys fighting. A medium-sized monkey had a banana, but a bigger monkey came over and punched him and took the banana. The medium-sized monkey immediately ran over to a smaller monkey and punched him. Michael collapsed laughing, because he felt that he had finally come to understand humans.

Cult members make that story all too true.

Some cults, like *Heaven's Gate* and David Berg's *Children of God*, called the mentoring system a "buddy system." In both groups, new inductees could not go anywhere without their buddy, not even to the bathroom. The C.O.G. cult leader's daughter, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, described the system in COG like this:

All new members were placed under the strict scrutiny of an older disciple. This was the "buddy" system. At such a time that they proved to be strong, mature disciples, they were no longer considered "babes" and were free to be on their own. This period usually lasted about three months. One girl told me in later years, "Oh, I had the worst trial of my life at TSC [The Soul Clinic]; I was constantly with my 'buddy.' I couldn't do anything without her. I couldn't even go to the bathroom alone. Beds were in short supply, and I even had to sleep in the same bed with her!"

Ironically, without any prompting from the Chinese Communists, we unconsciously incorporated many of the same conditions used by the Chinese in their Thought Reform programs. Many of these mind-control techniques seem to erupt "spontaneously" in cultic organizations. We boasted that we were "heartwashing" new converts.

Everyone who came to TSC as a dropout or hippie or college student left with a new identity. Everyone took a new name from the Bible — this was part of Forsaking All. God was making "new creatures" out of us; all the old things were done away with. A new convert broke all relations with the past, both family and friends. The break with one's former life had to be complete, absolute, because that's what Jesus wanted.

This sudden loss of identity often brought deep conflicts for disciples who suffered the after-pains of leaving their former life-styles and families.

This was why everyone had a buddy. When the older disciple perceived that the younger one was wavering and suffering doubt, he was right there to pick him up. Although it was never revealed, the older disciple often harbored the same doubts. By encouraging the younger convert, the older member strengthened himself. It was a good system that accomplished its purpose well.

The Children of God: The Inside Story, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, 1984, pages 81-82.

Ms. Davis said that the Children of God were allowed to separate from their buddy after about three months. In the *Heaven's Gate* cult, they were never allowed loose. They stayed paired right up to the time when they committed suicide together.

Note that Deborah Davis touched on a couple of other indoctrination and conversion techniques besides just mentoring: milieu control and [self-sell](#). Milieu control means that the environment and information intake of the convert are controlled. When the new convert is cut off from family and former friends, he cannot receive any negative information about the cult that might lead him away from the cult, and he can't even get any 'common-sense' messages that might "bring him back to Earth" and interfere with his indoctrination. At the same time, the older buddy is busy selling himself on the cult and assuaging his own doubts by selling the cult to the younger buddy. That's self-sell.

Deborah Davis also described several other standard cult characteristics:

- [15. Indoctrination of members.](#)
- [28. Cloning — You become a clone of the group leader or other elder group members.](#)
- [66. Calls to Obliterate Self](#)
- [75. New Identity — Redefinition of Self — Revision of Personal History](#)
- [94. The use of heavy-duty mind control and rapid conversion techniques.](#)

40. Intrusiveness.

The cult is very intrusive, and pokes into members' personal lives. Often, the guru and his helpers want to totally run the member's lives, dictating everything from what work the followers will do, where they will live, what they will eat, when they will sleep, with whom they may communicate or associate, to what they will wear. Sometimes, members need permission to visit their families. Sometimes, the cult even goes so far as to dictate when and with whom members may have sex or marry. Many cults also feel entitled to take people's children away from them and put the kids into special "schools" where they are beaten and abused, and brainwashed into being the next generation of true believers.

In many cults, especially recovery cults, the elders will proclaim that you simply cannot have any kind of privacy or private life — that you will just commit sins, or

drink, or take drugs if you have the freedom to do so — so they won't let you have any freedom or privacy. Such cults want to own you; they want all of your time; they want to dominate your whole life. No part of your life is not subject to their inspection and their "guidance".

The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim all excellence for his nation, his religion, his race, or his holy cause. A man is likely to mind his business when it is worth minding. When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people's business.

The True Believer, Eric Hoffer

Dr. Frank Buchman's "Oxford Group" cult was so intrusive that Buchman declared that even sex between married couples was an unspiritual "indulgence" that would harm the children:

Indulgence by the married, while having the cloak of legitimacy, may nevertheless be the source of irritable tempers and of inability to answer to the real needs of the children. Parents indulgent inside marriage need not be surprised if their children are indulgent outside marriage. A union which could otherwise be powerful for remaking the nation thus remains a soft and uninspiring association.

Remaking Men, Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, 1954, quoted in *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament; A Study of Frank Buchman and His Movement*, Tom Driberg, 1965, page 258.

Notice the completely groundless declarations: *Sexual indulgence by married couples produces irritable tempers*. Since when? What study or poll or survey ever found that? It seems like not getting laid is far more likely to produce irritable tempers.

And notice the fear-mongering: If married couples enjoy sex inside of marriage, their children might enjoy sex outside of marriage. Says who? Where did that come from? What evidence is there for that?

Likewise, how does sexual indulgence by married couples make parents unable to "answer to the real needs of the children"? Who ever established anything like that? That is completely baseless.

And sex between a man and his wife will reduce the marriage to "a soft and uninspiring association." Oh really? Says who?

Nevertheless, undisturbed by the lack of any supporting facts for their crazy ideas, Buchman's unthinking followers Peter Howard and Paul Campbell dogmatically declared that sex between married couples is bad.

At Synanon, the leader Chuck Dederich ordered everyone to get divorced and marry someone else. His logic was that everyone eventually breaks up and gets divorced anyway, so why not get it over with now? Then they had a new Game, *Changing Partners*, where women were auctioned off each evening for a one-night stand. Then Chuck ordered all of the men, except for himself, to get vasectomies, and all of the pregnant women had to get abortions, so that there wouldn't be any bothersome children around.

Jim Jones was personally very sexually promiscuous, intrusive, and exploitative, but at the People's Temple commune in Guyana, everyone else had to follow his strict rules of sexual conduct:

The Jonestown code of sexual conduct prohibited casual sexual encounters. A couple who desired to enter into a sexual relationship was obliged to apply to a Relationship Committee, and then endure a three-month nonsexual waiting period, at the end of which, if suitable accommodations could be found, the relationship could finally be consummated.

Awake in a Nightmare, Ethan Feinsod, 1981, page 117.

Werner Erhard's *est* was just the same:

Throughout *est*'s existence, Erhard had treated sex as simply another form of human behavior to be controlled and manipulated in ways that enhanced his own overpowering control over the lives of others who inhabited the *est* culture. Long before he ever started *est*, Werner Erhard — even when he was still Jack Rosenberg — used his powerful sexual appeal and charismatic energy with women to intensify their own sense of loyalty and devotion to him. During his bookselling days, Erhard maintained the nucleus of a dedicated, and predominately female, staff partly by showering his romantic attention from time to time on some of the women who followed Erhard first into Mind Dynamics and later into *est*.

Inside the emerging *est* culture, Erhard continued to view sex as an integral part of his obsessive demand that others around him pledge their devotion. He required staff members to divulge the most intimate details of their personal lives as part of a series of policies aimed at controlling their thoughts and behavior. A staff policy imposed in the mid-1970s instructed *est* staffers to "stay in communication" with Erhard about their personal relationships, particularly those of a sexual nature.

Although the policy was designed to proscribe sexual relations between staff members, exceptions were possible in cases in which Erhard was informed about existing affairs. These relationships could continue to include "fucking," the staff was told, but only as long as the trysting staffers got their jobs done and showed no signs of "upsets." The policy made it clear to the staff that Erhard would attribute declining job performance to the fact that "you are fucking whomever you fuck" and would ask the offending party to leave est.

Erhard generously added a "family policy" to the est rules governing sexual conduct, mindful of the occasional desire among married staff members to enjoy dalliances with other partners besides their spouse. The policy, which otherwise prohibited extramarital affairs, allowed such liaisons as long as Don Cox received a letter from an est staffer's wife or husband allowing their spouse "to fuck someone else." The letter also had to include "guidelines" aimed at identifying those with whom the spouse could enjoy sexual intimacy.

In the early years of est, Erhard had a habit of announcing strict rules proscribing sexual liaisons among staff members, only to drop them at particularly opportune times and reinstate them at a later date. While treating the staff to a weeklong Mexican cruise in 1974, Erhard abruptly lifted the sexual ban, delighting many along for the trip. After an amorous week at sea, Erhard reimposed the no-sex rules back in San Francisco.

...

No such self-reporting sexual rules applied to Erhard. Instead, he entrusted to his closest aides the confidential role of assisting in the steady, though usually clandestine, flow of women in and out of his private black-painted bedroom on the second floor of the Franklin House. Sometimes his partners came from the ranks of celebrity est enthusiasts, including actress Cloris Leachman, with whom Erhard maintained a relationship for a few years. Otherwise, Erhard helped himself to the sexual favors offered to him by an assortment of attractive staff members and est volunteers. A comely Franklin House assistant once confided to an est trainer that another Erhard aide "schedules Werner's cock" and that she planned "to get on the schedule."

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, pages 143-145.

Synanon, The People's Temple, and the Hari Krishnas (ISKCON) all took members' children away from them, and brutally beat and abused those children. Many people found that they couldn't even get their kids back when they tried to leave the People's Temple. Timothy Stoen, who had been a lawyer for the Temple before he quit the cult, never did succeed in getting his own son away from Jim Jones, who argued in court that the kid was his, and refused to give the kid up.

Timothy Stoen's son and 275 other children were murdered during the Jonestown massacre/mass suicide, given cyanide Kool-Aid to drink, on the orders of Jim Jones.

And at the *Branch Davidian* compound of Vernon Howell, also known as "David Koresh", in Waco, Texas,

According to Koresh, sexual life was fine in past ages; indeed, it was necessary for the propagation of the species. However, just before the end of time, those who have purified themselves for the new creation and for the Kingdom of God must separate themselves from this passing, obsolete state of life. Celibacy was hard for the other Davidians to accept, to put it mildly.

...

Once in a Bible study session Koresh had one of the women stand and lift up her dress, exposing her legs and underpants. He told everyone to look at her for a moment, then asked how many of the men had been aroused or distracted although they had no legitimate reason to have sexual thoughts toward this particular woman. Such a demonstration attempted to illustrate how human sexuality is an untamed force that actually leads to deceit and disruption in human relationships. Koresh stressed the ideal potential of the liberated person, free from lust, which even when legalized by marriage is a distraction from higher and ultimate purposes. He emphasized that the group, as part of the vanguard of the age to come, needed purity. Most went along with this teaching, and the men and women of the group began to live separately.

Why Waco?, James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, 1995, page 71.

However, a little later, "David Koresh" promulgated his "*New Light*" revelation, which gave him a sexual claim upon all of the women in the group — in fact, he said that only he had the right to procreate, because he was the Son of God, and he was entitled, even biologically and spiritually obligated, to have all of the women and post-pubescent girls sexually, to create the new Grandchildren of God. (What's really amazing is that most of the other guys in the cult went along with it and handed over their wives and daughters. Only a couple of guys quit the cult over that.)¹



Footnotes:

1) Peter Howard, *Innocent Men*, pages 11 to 15.

2) [John Atack, *A Piece Of Blue Sky*](#), and
L. Ron Hubbard, *Letters and Journals; Early Years of Adventure*, pages 18 to 25.

3) James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco?*, 1995, pages 68, 81-86,
and 160.



[Continue to questions 41 to 50...](#)



The Cult Test

Questions 41 to 50

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

41. Disturbed Guru, Mentally Ill Leader.

[The S.O.S. Europe web page](#) says it beautifully:

Disturbed Gurus

Cult leaders are often charming, charismatic figures with above-average intelligence. The "charismatic charmer" is one their false faces — a pseudo-personality.

Many cult leaders suffer from borderline, disassociate or multiple personality disorders. Members feel honored to be with, and be seen, around them. But their personality can change dramatically in a flash. Cult leaders are always very disturbed individuals. They are usually **victims** turned **persecutor**, having a history of involvement in other social, political or religious cults and/or suffering the effects of a traumatic childhood. Behind their strong and confident exterior (pseudo-personality) they need their leader position to compensate for a very fragile sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-identity.

This is also shown by the fact that they cannot "hack it" in the real world and need to live in a cult/sect environment to live out their problems. Their past histories show social marginality and a tendency to drift from one cause to another, one cult to another, one job to another, one marriage to another, etc. They spend their lives dedicated to their cause (also, increasing through the Internet, now). They are obsessive-compulsive, fanatical and manipulative.

Nothing will stand in the way of their visions, schemes and self-glorification — not even the well-being of their partners or children. They manipulate the minds of vulnerable members, extorting money and sexual favors and/or abusing them psychologically, physically and/or sexually.

For example, Steve Hassan reported that Rev. Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church, would play the role of the charismatic charmer, lavishly praising his followers in public, honoring them for all of their hard and faithful work, and then Moon would take them to his palatial estate, where he would switch personalities, and play the role of judge and executioner, attacking and denouncing those same followers for not working hard enough.

Werner Erhard, the leader of the *est* "human potential" training hoax, was a vicious woman-hater with an unstable personality:

Even more troubling was the darkest side of Werner Erhard that neither Murphy nor most other est outsiders ever managed to glimpse at all. In public, Erhard was almost always the picture of charm and good manners, able to use his warm and energizing smile and penetrating pale-blue eyes to create an unnerving sense of charisma that helped, in large part, to explain the enthusiastic devotion of so many est adherents. Meeting him for the first time, many insisted they had been in the presence of no less than a holy man. Some were dazzled by what they insisted was an aura of light surrounding him and overwhelmed by his seeming sincerity. One of his aides, a woman deeply imbued with a sense of spiritualism, attributed the Erhard mystique to a "sense of grace" that seemed at times to pervade the premises of Franklin House where he lived and worked.

But there were uglier incidents, moments of a flashing temper and vulgar behavior, that defined Werner Erhard and the est culture he created around him. Behind the scenes at some of his Franklin House feasts, Erhard turned into a raving tyrant, provoked by the slightest miscue or oversight. ... On another occasion, in 1976, an angry Erhard lit into one of his aides, Jack Rafferty, for not following Erhard's precise orders to clean up a closet where he kept some of his clothes. Yelling at Rafferty while he angrily tore the closet apart, flinging its contents around the room, Erhard did not let up even though he knew Rafferty's mother was seriously ill at the time. "I don't give a shit if your mother dies!" Erhard screamed.

Werner Erhard seemed to reserve his fiercest hostility for some of the women who were part of the est culture. Though the feminist movement in the United States roughly paralleled the rise of est, Erhard rarely hesitated to make demeaning remarks about women who worked for him. He would deride women as "snakes," and insist that men were the source of power, leaving women to fill subservient roles. Once, when one of his aides walked into a meeting to let him know his next appointment was scheduled to begin in a few minutes, Erhard glanced at the busty woman and then chortled to others in the room, "Pretty good, a clock with tits." At other times he tossed around crude remarks, telling one employee, for example, how nice she looked in the "fuck-me shoes" she wore to work that day.

But his demeaning attitudes toward women did not stop with his verbal

insults. Though he was insulated by a layer of protective personal aides, there have been persistent reports that Erhard allowed his quick and sometimes violent temper to spill over into physical abuse of women. Though he could be seductively charming, Erhard also possessed a deep-seated resentment of women... Now, as the mystique of est conferred upon Erhard still more power over the lives of his most faithful followers, he carried his behavior and attitudes toward women to even more disturbing depths. On more than one occasion, it became the task of one of his closest aides and confidants inside Franklin House to be ready with an ice pack and some soothing words to treat a blackened eye and comfort another of Erhard's victims. Werner Erhard's seductive charm sometimes had a habit of giving way to the back of his hand.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, pages 97-99.
(So, "[Word is that Werner is not a male chauvinist](#)", huh?)

Werner Erhard was a spectacular example of a "Disturbed Guru, Mentally Ill Leader", a "charismatic charmer whose personality can change dramatically in a flash". Erhard was a raving textbook case of it. He was a heartless psychopath without any compassion or empathy, incapable of considering the feelings of others, and he didn't care whom he hurt in his pursuit of wealth, power, and ego-aggrandizement. He even took more than \$60 million that was supposed to buy [food for the poor, starving people of the world](#). That was literally taking food out of the mouths of babies. You have to be one really cold-hearted monster to do that. And to think that Werner Erhard took in countless millions of dollars by claiming to teach people how to be sane.

Narcissistic vampires believe they are so special that the rules don't apply to them. They expect the red carpet to be rolled out for them wherever they go, and if it isn't, they get quite surly.

They don't wait, they don't recycle, they don't pay retail, they don't stand in line, they don't clean up after themselves, they don't let other people get in front of them in traffic, and their income taxes rival great works of fiction. Illness and even death is no excuse for other people not immediately jumping up to meet their needs. They aren't the least bit ashamed of using other people and systems for their own personal gain. They boast about how they take advantage of just about everybody.

Emotional Vampires: Dealing with People Who Drain You Dry, Albert J. Bernstein, Ph.D., pages 135-136.

Werner Erhard was also a megalomaniac who insisted that everything was about him:

At the end of 1975, during a four-day staff meeting, a new staff member stood up to be introduced to the rest of the group.

"I'm happy to be joining the staff," said the new employee. "I'm happy that I will be able to bring my professional skills to bear."

Erhard cut him off sharply, yelling at the new employee, "Stop! I don't want your goddamn professional skills. I don't give a crap about your goddamn professional skills. You're not here because of your professional skills. You are here to re-create me." In Werner Erhard's world, est employees were there to imitate the boss, to reflect his image in everything they did.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, page 86.

But it was far worse than just that:

Erhard's heavenly aspirations may have reached their climax in the fall of 1977 when he appeared at a meeting of est seminar leaders at a beachside retreat near Monterey. Flushed with enthusiasm about the transforming power of doing Werner's work, some of the leaders asked Erhard where he placed himself on the spectrum of human transformation. Swept up in the fervor of the discussion, one of the seminar leaders got to his feet with a serious look on his face.

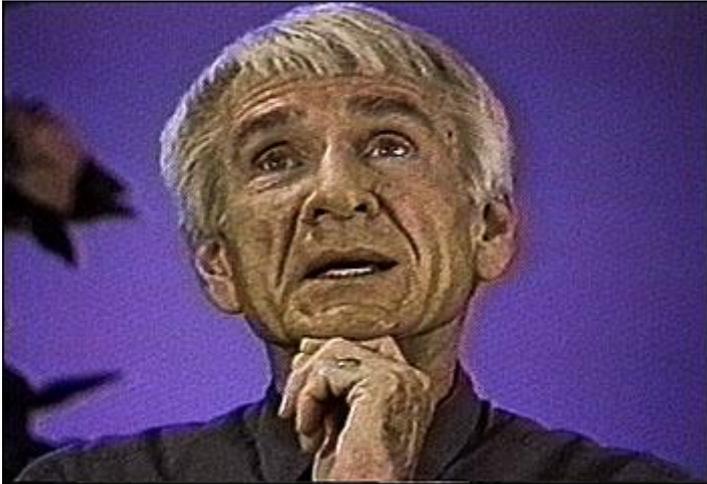
"The question in the room that nobody is asking," the man told Erhard solemnly, "is 'Are you the messiah?'"

The room grew silent as Erhard looked out to the curious faces of some of his most devoted disciples. After a few moments he replied, "No, I am who sent him." Undoubtedly, there were many in the room who were sure they had just witnessed the ultimate transformation of a man; Werner Erhard wanted them to believe he was on par with God.

Outrageous Betrayal, The Dark Journey of Werner Erhard from est to Exile, Steven Pressman, page 147.

Warning: Werner Erhard is gone, but his racket is still continuing under the names "The Forum", "The Landmark Forum", "The Landmark Educational Forum", and "Landmark Educational". They like to specialize in so-called "corporate training".

See: <http://clever.net/ozark/awareness/>



Marshall Herff Applewhite, a.k.a. "Do"



This is the initial image seen when logging on to the Heaven's Gate website

The Heaven's Gate logo from their web site

Another example of a disturbed, mentally-ill leader:

Marshall Herff Applewhite, leader of the Heaven's Gate cult, preached that individuals had to rise above "sensuality" and other bodily urges. Yet the origins of that doctrine became clear only in the days after Applewhite and 38 other cult members who committed suicide were found dead March 26 in a mansion outside San Diego. Bit by bit a portrait of Applewhite emerged as a man so tormented over his own homosexual drives that he had himself castrated to put an end to them.

...

Applewhite did not condemn homosexuality more than heterosexuality, however. In one videotaped session he compared heterosexuality to apples and homosexuality to oranges and said that both hindered advancement to a higher state of being. In addition to Applewhite, several other members who committed suicide had been castrated, apparently in an effort to end all sexual drive.

Deadly Denial, Advocate, 04/29/97, Issue 732, p13.

It's interesting to compare Marshall Herff Applewhite and [Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman](#), both of whom were crazy cult leaders, and also homosexuals who were tormented by sexual desires which were considered *very* socially unacceptable in their time. Mind you, homosexuality does not usually drive men to become insane cult leaders — it almost never does — but in the case of those two nuts, it was certainly a contributing factor. As a Lutheran minister in 1902, it was simply totally unacceptable for Buchman to be a homosexual, and Marshall Applewhite was fired from his job in 1970 as a music professor at the University of St. Thomas in Houston after school administrators learned that he had an affair with a male student. Both were probably insane anyway, or heading that a' way, for other reasons, but those negative experiences just helped to increase their sense of isolation and loneliness, and push them further into their madness... Tragic.

The Victorian Board of Inquiry into Scientology, in Victoria, Australia, investigated Scientology and its leader Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, and in October, 1965, diagnosed L. Ron Hubbard as "a paranoid schizophrenic of long standing, with delusions of grandeur. He claims to have twice risen from the dead."

L. Ron Hubbard was described by a Scientology insider — one of his personal aides called "The Messengers" — like this:

He had long reddish-grayish hair down past his shoulders, rotting teeth, a really fat gut ... He didn't look anything like his pictures.

The Messengers went everywhere with LRH. We chauffeured him, we followed him, we followed him around carrying his ashtray and cigarette lighter, and we also lit his cigarettes for him. LRH would explode if he had to light his own cigarette.

I found LRH was very moody, and had a temper like a volcano. He would yell at anybody for something that he didn't like, and he seemed mad at one thing or another 50% of the time. He was a fanatic about dust and laundry. The Messengers, at the time I was there, were also doing his laundry. There was hardly a day that he wouldn't scream about how someone used too much soap in the laundry, and his shirts smelled like soap, or how terrible the soap was that someone used (though it was the same soap used the day before), so someone must have changed the soap ... I was petrified of doing the laundry.

He is also a fanatic about cleanliness. Even after his office had just been dusted top to bottom, he would come in screaming about the dust and how "you are all trying to kill me!" That was one of his favorite lines — like if dinner didn't taste right — "You are all trying to kill me!"

A Piece of Blue Sky; Scientology, Dianetics, and L. Ron Hubbard Exposed, Jon Atack, 1990, pages 40-41.



Lafayette Ronald
"L. Ron" Hubbard

A person with [Narcissist Personality Disorder](#)... has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations...

DSM-IV-TR = *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision; Published by the American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC. 2000; pages 658-661.

And of course, Jim Jones, David Koresh, and Marshall Herff Applewhite were such crazy lunatics that they actually led their followers into mass suicide...

And Jim Jones was such a monster that...

Mama died [of cancer] in Jonestown ten days before the massacre, with Larry never leaving her bedside. She died without pain medication because Jim [Jones] had consumed it himself. For two months Larry watched our mother drift away from life without any relief from her agony until she finally succumbed to her lung cancer.

Seductive Poison, Deborah Layton, 1998, page 297.

You mean Jim Jones took a dying woman's pain-killers so he could get high on them himself? In a word, yes. Now that is cold, really cold.

(Yes, but so is making 914 people, including their children and babies, commit suicide for you.)

Ironically, the People's Temple had passed itself off as [a successful drug and alcohol rehabilitation program](#) for a while, saving people's lives by picking them up off of the streets and detoxing them, and turning them into praying Christians and true believers. They really did do that, for a while. But in the end, Jim Jones was a vicious, insane monster who was whacked out on stolen drugs all of the time.

Likewise, Charles "Chuck" Dederich, the crazy nut who ran the drug-and-alcohol rehab program called Synanon, [was falling-down drunk when the police came to arrest him](#) and haul him off to jail for attempted murder. He was so drunk that he couldn't even walk to a police car. The police had to carry Dederich out on a stretcher. That's quite a performance from the director of an alleged drug and alcohol treatment facility.

42. Disturbed Members, Mentally Ill Followers.

This one is tough. Some anti-cult pundits like to warn that cult leaders are so slick and so clever that they can instantly hypnotize anyone, and just suck them right into the cult. Supposedly, in no time at all, the cult leaders can have newcomers brainwashed and turned into drooling zombies and fawning sycophant followers who mindlessly parrot cult dogma forever after. Alas, it ain't necessarily so.

Baba Ram Dass stated that cult members actually con themselves — A slick cult leader is good at reading body language, and seeing what excites a member — sex, wealth, power, grandiose claims of spirituality, big ego trips, possible immortality, or whatever — and then the con artist cult leader will pretend to offer those things to members. Likewise, the leader will see what members are afraid of, be it death, shame, rejection, ostracism, embarrassment, weakness, or whatever, and the phony guru will use those fears to manipulate members' minds.

But in truth, the cult members still con themselves. It isn't like they can't ever see that something is fishy, that things are not what they are advertised to be, that the phony guru isn't delivering the goods, that the guru and his cult are dishonest. The

members have to deliberately overlook a lot of contradictions and discrepancies in order to become and stay true believers. They have to rationalize and explain away a lot of stuff, and deceive themselves about what is really going on. So in the end, the cult members con themselves.

Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis mentioned this idea in the item about [Suspension of Disbelief](#).

F.B.I. Agent Fox Mulder on the TV show "The X-Files" had a poster on his wall that read, "I Want To Believe." That is the national anthem of a lot of cult members. They just want to believe, in spite of any and all evidence to the contrary.

Wanting to believe is perhaps the most powerful dynamic initiating and sustaining cult-like behavior.

The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 137.

Some of the things that cult members believe are so extreme that you can only conclude that they are insane. In Vernon Howell's ("David Koresh's") *Branch Davidian* cult, Howell told his followers that he was the son of God, and that he had to sexually take all of the women and girls in the cult and impregnate them, in order to produce the "Grandchildren of God", and the other male members actually believed it and handed over the women. Even more extreme, cults like the *Branch Davidians*, the *People's Temple*, *Heaven's Gate*, and the *Solar Temple* actually convinced their members that they should commit suicide. And they did it. Now that is undeniably nuts.

Some people want to know the truth, and some people just want to believe in fairy tales. Cult members choose to believe in fairy tales.

[They like to think that truth is identical to belief.](#)

They like to imagine that their believing that something is true will make it so.

They like to imagine that they are so powerful that their believing something will change the world.

They like to imagine that they have magical powers — that their chants, incantations, beliefs, and prayers will really have some physical effect on the world.

They don't. Believing that the world is flat does not make it so.

They also like to imagine that their beliefs are very important; that it will ruin God's whole day if they don't believe what God needs them to believe, or that the world won't get saved if they don't keep the faith. That's just a bit grandiose and egotistical.

Not all cult members are the same, of course. Some may be just a little deluded or a little confused, or "*going to wise up eventually*", or maybe even "*just visiting*".

But some cult members are pretty crazy, and they really want the con, the big illusion or delusion. Some people don't get seduced or conned by the phony guru — they are eager to join the cult. It's love at first sight, because they love the black and white thinking, and the absolute declarations that "*We are right and everybody else is wrong. We have the Truth and you don't, so there!*" They will make remarks like, "*This is just what I've always been looking for, all of my life. I've never felt so at home before.*" They love the grand feeling of being special, of being important, of being one of God's Chosen Children, and of being on a big mission to save the world. They love the spiritual make-believe, and they don't want to be bothered with mere reality or mundane, ordinary existence.

They tend to become very angry if you tell them the truth and try to convince them that the whole routine is all a big fat hoax. Watch for the [*Ad Hominems*](#) and [*Personal Attacks On Critics*](#): "*Oh yeh? Well you're just stupid and evil and an atheist and don't know anything. You're working for the forces of Evil, trying to defeat us in our great quest.*"

As Jeffrey Schaler said in his essay *Cult Busting*, "*One way of testing the cult nature of a group is by challenging the ideology binding the group together. ... The stronger the evidence challenging the truthfulness of the group ideology, the more likely members of the cult are to ... lash out in a more or less predictable fashion...*"

Or they react with fear, like, "*Oh my God! If the Guru is a phony, then what will I do with my life? Who will tell me what to do? Where will I go? How will I get to Heaven? No, that can't be true. The Guru is a genuine saint.*"

Or: "*I refuse to believe that I wasted twelve years of my life in a cult, practicing false teachings and worshipping a phony guru. You are wrong.*"

Especially watch for the religious fanatics and true believers who yammer endlessly about "universal brotherhood" or "unconditional love", and then explode in anger and hatefully lash out at you if you dare to criticize their beliefs, their leader, or their organization:

"We are promoting World Peace. We offer Unconditional Love and Acceptance to all. We are bringing in the Age of Aquarius. Oh, by the way, don't fuck with us, or else you can end up dead, physically dead."

Often, those crazy true believers form the innermost circle of sycophants who surround a phony guru and act as his lieutenants, keeping the rest of the troops in line. In cults like the People's Temple and Synanon, such crazy true believers

formed armed goon squads who would beat up and even kill people whom the leader didn't like, as well as anybody else who dared to criticize the leader.

In extreme cases, the true-believer followers put up with incredible amounts of hardships, deprivation, suffering, and abuse, often at the hands of the leader, and they still won't leave. When you see a leader or his goons beating a follower, and the follower still won't leave the group, but just says something like, "[Master is just trying to teach me to be more spiritual](#)," then you know it's time for you to get the heck out of Transylvania before sundown.

When you are investigating a group, just look around and ask yourself how many of the members appear to be less than sane, and how many appear to be mentally healthy and relatively "normal." Any church can have a few neurotics, that is to be expected, but cults collect more than their fair share of the fruits and nuts...

43. Create a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt, and dependency.

Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer lists this item as one of [the five essential criteria](#) for an effective *thought reform* or brain-washing program.

Cults create feelings of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt and dependency in their victims in a variety of ways:

- Telling newcomers that their thinking is defective, and their morality is hopelessly flawed. "You are selfish. Everything you do is just for yourself. You have been defeated by sin, and your thinking is corrupted."
- Not allowing new inductees to do anything without permission from a superior.
- Taking control of members' money, credit cards, and bank accounts, and only doling out tiny amounts of spare change to members. They never get enough money to be able to leave.
- Using double-binds to trap members in failure — no matter what they do, it will be wrong.
- Telling members that they are powerless over sin, or Satan, or drugs and alcohol, or whatever the cult's bogeyman is.
- Having mentors, elders, "sponsors", or "uplines" who constantly order the newcomers around. Members must constantly seek the approval of their mentor in everything they say, think, and do.
- Making members publicly or privately confess all of their sins and failures.
- Public confession sessions or self-criticism sessions.

- Group punishment — no matter how good one member's behavior is, he can still be punished for someone else's behavior.
- Telling members that everything is their own fault — that they created their own miserable reality. Even if Daddy was a junkie and Mommy a prostitute, the child still chose his own reality, and is responsible for it.
- --Which leads to: *Super-human standards of perfection*. The cult demands such lofty standards of morality and perfection that no one can measure up — no one is good enough.
- The leader or the elders randomly attack members for the most trivial of offenses. Nobody knows when the next attack will come, or what will set the leader off.
- [Phobia induction](#) — the cult implants fears in members, particularly fears about what will happen to them if they disobey the leader or leave the cult.

44. Dispensed existence

The cult decides who is worthy, and who deserves to live.

This item is one of Dr. Robert J. Lifton's [eight essential elements of a brainwashing program](#), and one of [Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer's five required conditions](#) for a "thought reform" program.

The totalist environment draws a sharp line between those whose right to existence can be recognized, and those who possess no such right. In thought reform, as in Chinese Communist practice generally, the world is divided into the "people" (defined as "the working class, the peasant class, the petite bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie"), and the "reactionaries" or "lackies of imperialism" (defined as "the landlord class, the bureaucratic capitalist class, and the KMT reactionaries and their henchmen").

Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China, by Robert Jay Lifton, M.D.; W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963, page 433.

- The cult decides whether people are good or bad, and the cult defines what "good" and "bad" mean.
- The cult decides whether people deserve to live or not.
- The cult decides whether people deserve to go to Heaven or not.
- The cult decides what the truth is.
- The cult has an elitist world view, and declares that only cult members are "good enough", however the cult defines "good".
- The cult dispenses conditional love and conditional approval, often while simultaneously bragging that it offers newcomers "unconditional love" and "complete acceptance". The conditional approval depends on obedience and conformity to the cult's rules.

- And of course the cult practices shunning and ostracism of those who leave — "deserters" who have committed "the ultimate sin" — leaving — which the phony guru will call something like "betraying the cause". Splitters are declared to be evil immoral people (who have no right to live).

45. Ideology Over Experience, Observation, and Logic

This item is one of [Dr. Lifton's 8](#) and [Prof. Singer's 5](#) Criteria for Brainwashing or Mind Control — "Doctrine over person", and "Implement group doctrine over personal beliefs".

Individual members' past experience and values are invalid if they conflict with the new cult morality. Members are told to believe what the leader tells them, rather than trust their own common sense, their own thinking, and their own experiences. Members are told that the leader sees another, higher, reality which they cannot see. Doubts about the leader or his teachings are considered a sure sign of moral failure in the follower.

That behavior is reinforced by the standard cult attitude that [newcomers cannot think right](#) — that newcomers suffer from mental, moral, or spiritual shortcomings that prevent them from seeing clearly or exercising good judgement, so of course the cult is right about everything and the newcomer is wrong.

Cult members also exhibit misplaced faith — like having faith in the leader's interpretation of the "Word of God", rather than in the "Word of God" itself, or in their own understanding of those scriptures, or in the general opinions of most other priests, ministers, and theologians. Rather than trust and follow their own feelings and thinking, cult members play follow-the-leader. Cult members even ignore their own experiences — they ignore what they see happening with their own eyes — whenever those experiences conflict with the leader's proclamations and doctrines. It is as if the members are voluntarily wearing blinders.

"I think an ideology comes out of feelings and it tends to be non-thinking. A philosophy, on the other hand, can have a structured thought base. One would hope that a philosophy, which is always a work in progress, is influenced by facts. So there is a constant interplay between *what do I think* and *why do I think it...*

"Now, if you gather more facts and have more experience, especially with things that have gone wrong — those are especially good learning tools — then you reshape your philosophy, because the facts tell you you've got to. It doesn't change what you wish for. I mean, it's okay to wish for something that's, you know, outside of

your fact realm. But it's not okay to confuse all that...

"Ideology is a lot easier, because you don't have to know anything or search for anything. You already know the answer to everything. It's not penetrable by facts. It's absolutism."

Former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill, quoted in *The Price of Loyalty*, by Ron Suskind, page 292.

46. Keep them unaware that there is an agenda to change them

This is one of Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer's [Five Essential Conditions](#) for a brainwashing program: Keep them unaware that there is an agenda to change them, and unaware of how they are being changed, step by step.

47. Thought-Stopping Language. Thought-terminating clichés and slogans.

The cult has lots of slogans and thought-stopping clichés, and the cult has its own language with plenty of redefined words. This is one of [Dr. Robert J. Lifton's eight criteria](#) for a "thought reform", or "brainwashing" program.

Slogans are handy because they can condense whole pages of dogma into snappy one-liners which are easy to remember and easy to repeat.

Slogans are effective tools for stopping thought. When a simplistic slogan is the answer, there just isn't much more to be said on the subject. Alcoholics Anonymous uses slogans like

- "Utilize, don't analyze",
- "Stop Your Stinkin' Thinkin'",
- "You have a thinking problem, not a drinking problem", and
- "Your best thinking got you here"

to stop people from thinking. Those kinds of slogans are also known as "thought-stopping clichés."

Dr. Robert J. Lifton, the author of the classic study of Chinese Communist brainwashing, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China*, said that thought-terminating clichés constrict, rather than expand, human understanding. When the cult controls language, it also controls

what people can think, because words are the tools we use for thought. And such jargon has the advantage (to the cult) that non-members simply cannot comprehend what cult members are really talking about. This further isolates the cult members, and makes them feel that nobody but another cult member really understands.

Slogans can also codify ideas which don't work well in other formats: For example, Hitler's "Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer!" sound bite (translation: "One people, one empire, one leader!") wouldn't have the same zing if it were a long essay, especially because it is actually an irrational emotional appeal to the people to abandon democracy and embrace a fascist dictatorship. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that the average voter could not handle any idea that took more than two sentences to express, and for best results, the idea should be expressed in six words or less. Hence all of his short slogans.

All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be. But if, as in propaganda for sticking out a war, the aim is to influence a whole people, we must avoid excessive intellectual demands on our public, and too much caution cannot be exerted in this direction.

The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it takes into consideration the emotions of the masses, the more effective it will be. ...

It is a mistake to make propaganda many-sided, like scientific instruction, for instance.

The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan.

Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler, pages 180-181.

48. Mystical Manipulation

This is one of [Dr. Robert J. Lifton's eight criteria](#) for a "thought reform", or "brainwashing" program.

- Potential converts are convinced that there is a higher purpose within the special group.
- Everyone is manipulating everyone else, under the belief that it advances the "ultimate purpose". Experiences are engineered to appear to be spontaneous, when, in fact, they are contrived to have a deliberate effect. People mistakenly attribute their experiences to spiritual causes when, in fact, they

are concocted by human beings. See [Lowell Streiker's description of emotional religious conversion experiences here](#).

- Mystical manipulation is the perception of coincidental or inevitable events as spiritual signs. Recruits are taught that such signs reveal the greatness of the group.
- Members even occasionally degenerate into [Giggly Wonderfulness](#).

49. The guru or the group demands ultra-loyalty and total commitment.

You can't just be a member of the group — your loyalty to the group must be total. You must obey orders without question. You must devote the rest of your life to the cult. They say that you must be willing to go to any length and make any sacrifice to achieve the group's goals. You must be willing to give the group everything you have, and to work for the group tirelessly, for free.

They call members who are not obsessed with the cult, and who try to live balanced lives with outside interests, "weak hands", "wimps" and "fair-weather friends". And they say the same thing about members who are not as extreme and radical as they are. Here is where the hard-core true believers love to repeat slogans like *"If you aren't part of the solution, then you are part of the problem"*, and *"Those who aren't with us are against us"*.

The Oxford Group accused anyone who wasn't totally dedicated to all of the practices of the cult — especially, to following the dictates of the cult's leaders — *"not maximum"*.

And of course the group exhibits extreme possessiveness — they don't want to ever let you leave. In their opinion, you must stay committed to the group forever.

50. Demands for Total Faith and Total Trust

The guru demands that you have complete and total faith in him, and believe his statements without question. The cult also demands complete agreement with the leaders, and suppresses any dissent.

Cults demand absolute trust. Anything less is considered a gross imperfection, disobedience, the sign of Satan or the enemy, and is often a punishable offense.

Take Back Your Life; Recovering from Cults and Abusive Relationships, Janja Lalich and Madeline Tobias, page 167.



[Continue to questions 51 to 60...](#)



The Cult Test

Questions 51 to 60

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

51. Members Get No Respect. They Get Abused.

The cult has no respect for its members, on either the physical, mental, or spiritual planes. The cult demands total loyalty from its members, but the cult has no loyalty to its members. Cult members may be subjected to physical, mental, and/or sexual abuse.

Cults are marked by the callous, cruel, and insensitive treatment of their members. The cult feels no obligation to tell its members the truth. The cult has no respect for the members' minds, opinions, integrity, or feelings. The cult often subjects members to psychological abuse and mental torture. There may be sexual exploitation and abuse. There may be physical abuse, beatings, or other torture.

The group is considered more important than the lives of the individual members. The rank and file members are considered expendable; the guru and his cult are not.

Cults often use members like just so much slave labor. Some cults coldly discard members when they have no further use for them.

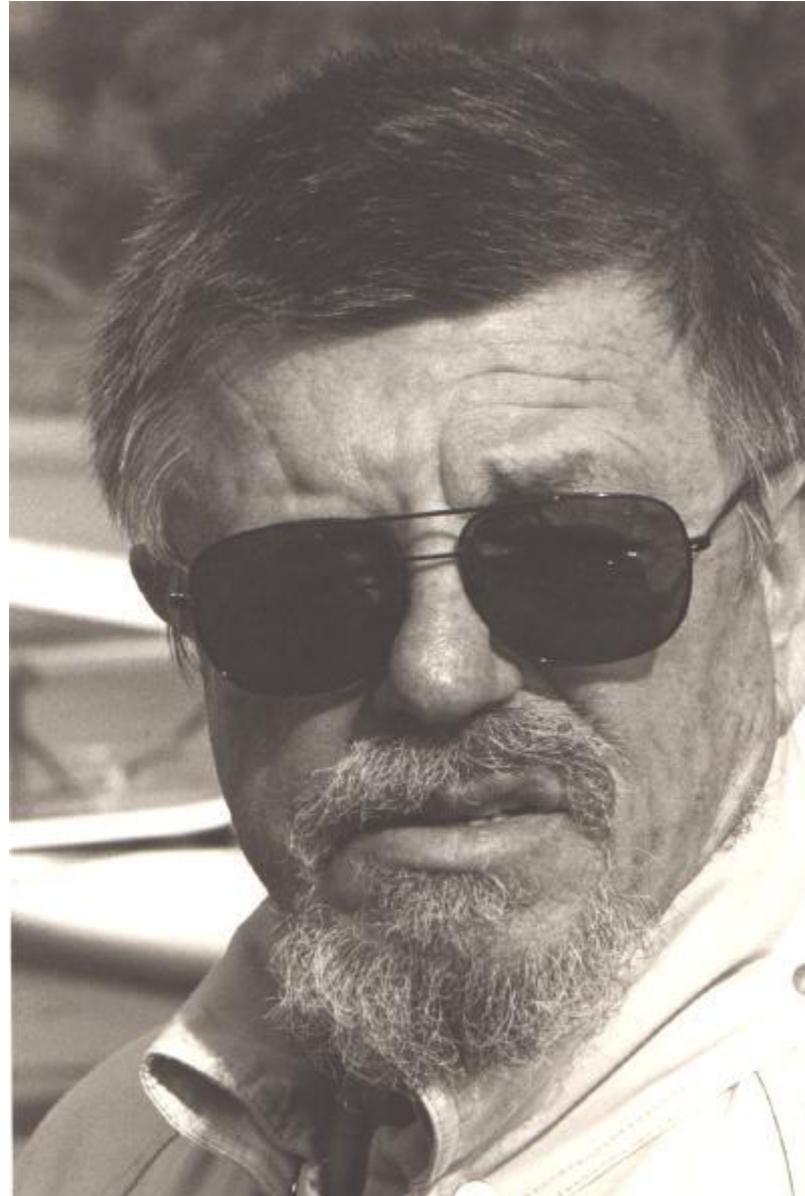
- The Hari Krishnas closed down ashrams which were not profitable enough to suit the leaders, and the residents who had given their lives to the cult were just booted out onto the streets.
- The Rajneeshees sent old school busses all over the USA, collecting homeless people and vagabonds to use as voters in the next election, in an attempt to take over the county government in eastern Oregon. After the election (and failure to win anything), the now-superfluous poor people were just dumped out onto the highways of Oregon.
- [One correspondent reports](#): "One of my friends gets to work with families who are thrown out by the Church of Scientology after their life savings are drained and all possible money from loans are wrung out of them."

52. Inconsistency. Contradictory Messages.

Cults say things like: *"We offer you unconditional love and acceptance. We are ushering in a new age of enlightenment and world peace. Oh, and by the way, don't fuck with us, or else you can end up dead, physically dead..."*

Cults occasionally feature things like:

- Lying, cheating, and deceiving for Jesus (or for Krishna, or for Jim Jones, or for the newcomers' own good).
- Prostitution to promote "Christianity" — Happy Hookers for Jesus.
- Committing violent acts against enemies in the name of Peace and Love.
- Beating children for Jesus or for Krishna.
- Instructions to practice *"Rigorous honesty"* accompanied by instructions to *"Fake It Until You Make It"* and *"Act As If."*
- Bombing abortion clinics and killing doctors who perform abortions in order to **"protect human life"**.
- Teachings like, *"You must learn to revere and love all life, and hold it sacred,"* accompanied by teachings like *"Only the people who practice our religion are going to Heaven."*
- And: [It's All A Bait-And-Switch Con Game.](#)



Charles "Chuck" Dederich, the leader of the "new drug and alcohol rehabilitation program" called Synanon
"Don't mess with us — you can get killed dead, physically dead."

"Yes, I do want an ear in a glass of alcohol, I really do."
"Nonviolence was just a position we took. We change positions all of the time."

(Photo by Charlie Downs)

The actual value system of a cult is often the antithesis of the system that it advertises to the public.

Rick Ross gave us an amusing example of inconsistency in Scientology when he posted the story of Lisa Marie Presley (the daughter of Elvis) claiming that Scientology had saved her from drugs and alcohol:

Presley touts drug cure

Typical of many Scientologist celebrities Lisa Marie Presley often uses exposure to promote her religion.

In recent interviews she has touted the supposed salvation Scientology provided from her drug problems.

She says her bout with "cocaine, sedatives, pot and drinking" climaxed at 18, but was resolved when she sought help from the controversial church.

Presley said, "I woke up one day, drove myself to the Church of Scientology and said, 'Somebody help me right now'," reports *Teen Hollywood*.

But here is the rub.

Lisa Marie was raised within Scientology by her mother Priscilla who is an ardent adherent.

So what went wrong in this Scientology household that produced such addictive behavior and drug lust in the teenager?

Lisa Marie doesn't discuss this.

Cult News, May 18, 2003

53. Hierarchical, Authoritarian Power Structure, and Social Castes

The cult features an Undemocratic reality, Control-oriented leadership, and Superdemocracy or Pseudo-democracy. The cult has social castes, arranged in a hierarchical structure. The cult has Royalty — The children of the guru are often the princes and princesses of the new kingdom. The inner circle of courtiers is blessed above others, and gets special privileges.

Such cults sometimes have pseudo-democracy, where anyone can express his or her opinion on any subject, and people can vote on anything, but somehow the elections don't really matter and nothing really changes. All real power is concentrated in the hands of the leaders, who consider such elections to be simply "advice", or "an expression of the popular opinion", but not binding.

54. Front groups, masquerading recruiters, hidden promoters, and disguised propagandists.

Cults often use front groups to further their goals. Scientology and the Moonies (Unification Church) are notorious for having dozens or hundreds of front groups that claim to have no connection to the parent church.

[Steve Hassan reported](#) that when he was recruited for the Moonies' *Unification Church*, he didn't even know that he was joining the Church. He thought he was joining a secular organization that was doing social activism work for the improvement of society. He said that he was in the Church for three months before he learned that he was actually in the Unification Church.

Scientology even has a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program that uses Scientology mind-control techniques to get people, it says, off of drugs and alcohol. The rehab program front is called *Narconon*, which is similar enough to *Al-Anon*, and *Narcotics Anonymous* to confuse a lot of people. In some cities, like Bowden, Georgia, and Clearwater, Florida, Narconon has represented itself as a successful drug and alcohol rehab program, and tried to get the city courts to sentence all drunk drivers, public drunks, and drug offenders to the Narconon program, as well as soliciting the local governments for funding and grants for "rehabilitating" addicts. Of course the Narconon leaders do not bother to tell the city council or the judges that the "rehabilitation" program actually consists of Scientology mind control training.

Time Magazine reported on some of Scientology's front organizations:

HealthMed, a chain of clinics run by Scientologists, promotes a grueling and excessive system of saunas, exercise and vitamins designed by Hubbard to purify the body. Experts denounce the regime as quackery and potentially harmful, yet HealthMed solicits unions and public agencies for contracts. The chain is plugged heavily in a new book, *Diet for a Poisoned Planet*, by journalist David Steinman, who concludes that scores of common foods (among them: peanuts, bluefish, peaches and cottage cheese) are dangerous.

Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop labeled the book "trash," and the Food and Drug Administration issued a paper in October that claims Steinman distorts his facts. "HealthMed is a gateway to Scientology, and Steinman's book is a sorting mechanism," says physician William Jarvis, who is head of the National Council Against Health Fraud. Steinman, who describes Hubbard favorably as a "researcher," denies any ties to the church and contends, "HealthMed has no affiliation that I know of with

Scientology."

Time Magazine special report on Scientology, [*The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power*](#), Time Magazine May 6, 1991, page 50.

Hubbard's purification treatments are the mainstay of Narconon, a Scientology-run chain of 33 alcohol and drug rehabilitation centers — some in prisons under the name "Criminon" — in 12 countries. Narconon, a classic vehicle for drawing addicts into the cult, now plans to open what it calls the world's largest treatment center, a 1,400-bed facility on an Indian reservation near Newkirk, Okla. (pop. 2,400. At a 1989 ceremony in Newkirk, the Association for Better Living and Education presented Narconon a check for \$200,000 and a study praising its work. The association turned out to be part of Scientology itself. Today the town is battling to keep out the cult, which has fought back through such tactics as sending private detectives to snoop on the mayor and the local newspaper publisher.

Time Magazine special report on Scientology, [*The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power*](#), Time Magazine May 6, 1991, page 50.

One front, the Way to Happiness Foundation, has distributed to children in thousands of the nation's public schools more than 3.5 million copies of a booklet Hubbard wrote on morality. The church calls the scheme "the largest dissemination project in Scientology history." Applied Scholastics is the name of still another front, which is attempting to install a Hubbard tutorial program in public schools, primarily those populated by minorities. The group also plans a 1,000 acre campus, where it will train educators to teach various Hubbard methods. The disingenuously named Citizens Commission on Human Rights is a Scientology group at war with psychiatry, its primary competitor. The commission typically issues reports aimed at discrediting particular psychiatrists and the field in general. The CCHR is also behind an all-out war against Eli Lilly, the maker of Prozac, the nation's top-selling antidepressant drug. Despite scant evidence, the group's members — who call themselves "psychbusters" — claim that Prozac drives people to murder or suicide. Through mass mailings, appearances on talk shows and heavy lobbying, CCHR has hurt drug sales and helped spark dozens of lawsuits against Lilly.

Time Magazine special report on Scientology, [*The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power*](#), Time Magazine May 6, 1991, page 50.

And, [true to form](#), the "Church of Scientology" sued Time-Warner for publishing the magazine article. The judge dismissed the case, saying, among other things, that "no reasonable jury could find that these statements were published with malice." Meaning: Time Magazine just reported the truth, and that isn't publishing "with malice".¹

55. Belief equals truth

The cult members like to think that truth is identical to belief — specifically, identical to their beliefs. They like to imagine that things are true because they believe them to be true.

When you tell such believers some true facts that they don't like, they often answer, "*But what we believe is...*" or "*But what our church says is...*", as if that somehow changed things.

They like to imagine that their believing that something is true will make it so —

- As if their believing that the world is flat could really make it so.
- As if their imagining that God is a certain way will force God to be that way.
- As if their believing in faith healing will really make it work.
(The converse is, of course, that if you don't believe in their faith healing, you will make it fail — so you are an evil, harmful, person for not believing and not "keeping the faith".)

Some people want to know the truth, and some people just want to go on a big ego trip and believe in fairy tales. Cult members choose to believe in fairy tales and fantasies —

- They like to imagine that they have magical powers — that their chants, incantations, beliefs, and prayers will really have some physical effect on the world.
- They like to imagine that they are so powerful that their merely believing something will change the world.
- They also like to imagine that their beliefs are very important —
 - That it will ruin God's whole day if they don't believe what God wants them to believe. (And they are sure that they know what God wants them to believe.)
 - Or that the world won't get saved if they don't keep the faith.

That's just a bit grandiose and egotistical. —Which, in turn, reveals why they like to imagine that their beliefs control reality. Their magical fantasy world is just a big fat vain ego trip where they can feel important and powerful.

56. Use of double-binds

The group uses traps where you are damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

The classic old example of a double bind was witch trials. Women who were suspected of being witches were dunked in a river:

- If she sank and drowned, that meant that she was innocent.
- If she floated and lived, it was because the Devil was holding her up, and she must now be executed by burning at the stake or hanging.

Likewise, if she confessed under torture to being a witch, then that proved that she was one.

If she didn't confess, then that proved that she was a deceitful lying witch who wouldn't tell the truth.

Damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

Willa Appel recorded the following story of a double bind:

A form of the double bind frequently exists in the relationship cult members have with their leader. Robert Perez, for example, in discussing a typical experience in his cult, unwittingly described the classic double bind. Patterson Brown, the leader of Christ Brotherhood, had mowed the lawn one day. He had been unable, however, to cut a narrow strip of grass that sloped precipitously and was riddled with pot holes. To help out, Robert took a scythe and cut down the tall grass. At that point the Guru became furious, screaming, "You know you should leave it alone! You know that if I didn't cut that, I didn't cut that for a reason. If you only knew what it was like to be a child, you'd know that it's fun to play in the weeds." Needless to say, Robert was taken aback. Criticized for helping, he knew that he would also have been criticized for not helping. "It was the kind of thing that in another frame of mind with him, a week down the line, he'd say, 'How come nobody's done that? Do I have to do everything around here?'"

Cults in America; Programmed for Paradise, Willa Appel, page 103.

Such double binds induce a feeling of powerlessness in their victims, which helps a cult to maintain control over its members. Willa Appel continued:

Christ Brotherhood members never knew what to expect. Each morning they half anticipated to be told to get out and never come back. The unpredictability of their leader, as Robert expressed it, "made you completely paranoid about what you were doing and what you weren't

doing. You'd do one thing and then he'd just flip-flop the other way. You never knew if he was going to turn around and yell at you or praise you." Unfortunately, the erratic nature of Christ Brotherhood's leader could not be easily dismissed by his followers because they depended upon him and his opinions to validate their own lives. "What Patterson said was how you felt about yourself."

Cults in America; Programmed for Paradise, Willa Appel, page 103.

57. The leader is not held accountable for his actions.

The leader answers to no one. He doesn't stand for (real) re-election. There is no *functional* Council of Elders or Board of Directors or Board of Trustees that can discipline him or replace him if he fails to perform his duties properly. Nobody even has the authority to define just what his duties are, for that matter.

This rule can apply to the leadership in general, in organizations where several people jointly share power.

58. Everybody else needs the guru to boss him around, but nobody bosses the guru around.

This needs no explanation.

59. The guru criticizes everybody else, but nobody criticizes the guru.

Criticizing the leader would conflict with [Cult Rule Number One](#) — *The Guru Is Always Right*.

60. Dispensed truth and social definition of reality

The cult and its leaders are the source of all Truth, Wisdom, and Knowledge. The leader proclaims the new doctrine, the new revelation. The cult defines reality and declares what the truth really is and what *good* and *bad* are.

Any outsiders who espouse a different 'truth' are attacked as evil or stupid, or just ignored.

"Oh Lord, Grant that we may always be right,
For you know that we will never change our minds."



[Continue to questions 61 to 70...](#)

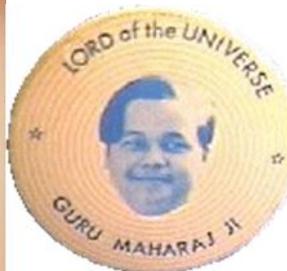
The Cult Test

Questions 61 to 70

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

61. The Guru Is Extra-Special.

The guru is the Messiah, or is God. The guru is the only one in the world who knows the new Truth. The guru deserves the best of everything. The guru deserves all of the money, all of the women, and all of the drugs, because he is extra-special.



"The Lord of the Universe", Guru Maharaj Ji
"The 14-year-old Perfect Master"



And the Rajneeshees raved that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was actually God Himself returning to Earth in Poona, India — "Bhagwan" is actually a title that means "embodiment of God" — and they bowed and swooned in ecstasy when he did his daily "drive-by", riding very slowly past them in one of his many Rolls Royces...



Rajneesh's teachings included, "sex is fun, materialism is good and Jesus was a madman," and the claim that he was "the world's greatest lover." Materialism was so good that he had to spend millions of dollars just to build a huge garage to house all of his Rolls Royces. (By 1985, he had 93 of them.)

From his commune in rural eastern Oregon, his people launched the only germ warfare attack on the USA since the Revolutionary War (when the British deliberately infected Gen. George Washington's troops with smallpox). The Rajneeshees infected the salad bars of several restaurants in The Dalles, Oregon, with salmonella just before election day, in an attempt to make everyone but their own people too sick to vote, so that the Rajneeshees could take over the county government. Rajneesh finally fled back to India to avoid prosecution on a number of charges.

Bhagwan Rajneesh had a cute stunt: He claimed that his nose was so sensitive that no one could come into his presence wearing perfume or scents of any kind, lest his sensitive nose be offended. People who wanted to hear one of his lectures, or have a darshan with him, had to line up and submit to the "sniff test", where one of Bhagwan's lieutenants would sniff and examine the people who hoped to come into the Bhagwan's presence. Even just having bathed with a perfumed soap that day, or having used a perfumed shampoo, was cause for rejection. Notice how that made people accustomed to submitting themselves to humiliating treatment, while promoting the idea that the Bhagwan was extra-special.

It just goes on and on. In cult after cult, the leader is just the greatest thing, and is so extra-special:

"Ultimately you cannot admire the guru, you must worship him." (== Paul Brunton, *My Father's Guru*)

Likewise, in cults, the guru is worshipped more than the principles or doctrines that the cult espouses. Principles and doctrines fade into [a vague, flexible, shifting morality](#) that the guru can change on a whim.

Cult leaders often impose very strict rules on their followers, while breaking those same rules themselves. Both the *EST* leader Werner Erhard and the People's Temple leader Jim Jones felt entitled to control and prohibit the sexual activities of their followers, while they enjoyed lives of unlimited non-stop sexual indulgence themselves. Jim Jones even considered *everybody* in the cult — women, men, and children — to be fair game for his bedtime recreations, while he accused others of

being sinful and disgusting, even if they only had sex with their husbands and wives.

The cult leader is basically antinomian — meaning that he declares that the rules do not apply to him. Often, the excuse is that the guru has already "made the grade", and doesn't need to follow such rules any more. The rules are just for those spiritual students who have not been "saved" or "enlightened" yet — which means everybody but the guru.

At least one phony guru who teaches yoga has actually stopped practicing yoga himself and is turning into a fat slob. He declares that he doesn't need to do yoga any more — he "has arrived spiritually" — he just teaches yoga to the youngsters.

If you have any doubts about whether the cult worships the guru, just ask a member, "***What are the 10 biggest mistakes that the guru made in setting up the organization and formulating its doctrines?***" True believers will give you a look of horror and insist that the guru has never made any mistakes... "**The very idea is unthinkable.**"

62. Flexible, shifting morality

The leader or his group defines and redefines the standards of morality. Previously illegal or immoral activities become okay because the leader or the group says that they are okay.

In *Synanon*, which was supposed to be a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, the leader Chuck Dederich relapsed and returned to drinking (he was a recovering alcoholic, a former member of Alcoholics Anonymous). So Dederich suddenly announced that alcohol was now okay for special ceremonial occasions. It wasn't very long before every day was a special occasion, and visitors noticed that a lot of the Synanon members seemed a bit tipsy, and were even walking around Synanon with beer cans in their hands.²

Cult members may become criminals. Previously law-abiding people sometimes become willing to commit serious crimes for the cult, all the while rationalizing their actions by saying,

- "It's okay because the Guru says that it's okay."

- "We're doing it for God."
- "We're doing it for the greater good."
- "The end justifies the means."
- "We are only doing it to them for their own good."

Such rationalizations lead to abdication of personal responsibility for sins or crimes — cult members say,

"The group made me do it, or the Guru made me do it. So it isn't my fault."

In the Hari Krishnas, members were taught that cheating and short-changing people to get more money for the cult was perfectly okay and quite moral, because it's all God's money anyway, and they were just getting more of it for God.

In David Berg's "*Children of God*" cult, the women were taught that working as a prostitute to get money for the cult was okay, and even "spiritual". Their husbands were instructed to work as pimps, hawking their wives.

In Scientology, members learned that it was okay to break into U.S. Government offices and steal files on people, to get information that could later be used to blackmail opponents of Scientology. Several Scientology members, including the Founder's wife, went to prison for years for that.

In addition, the cult often has a *Double Standard* — one set of rules for the Guru, and another set of rules for everybody else. Likewise, a cult has one set of rules for cult members, and another set of rules for outsiders.

63. Separatism

- The cult has a separate reality, a separate language, and a separate value system.
- The cult has its own culture.
- The cult occasionally has its own interpretation of history, or its own interpretation of the Bible or some other religion's holy book.
- Cult members learn to value other cult members more than outsiders.
- Cult members tend to associate with each other more than with any non-members.
- Sometimes cult members physically separate themselves from society and isolate themselves in their own compound, temple, or commune.
- Cult members learn to value only the cult's teachings. Outsiders' beliefs and moral standards are considered irrelevant.
- As the cult develops its own separate idea of reality, it exhibits a loss of common sense.

A corollary to cults' claims of having [The Only Way](#) is the belief that "the other people" do not have *The Way*. "They" are all misguided and missing the boat, and "they" won't be going to Heaven, or they won't achieve Enlightenment, or they won't get whatever the declared goal of the cult happens to be. Thus the cult encourages an isolationist "us versus them" mindset, which is the heart of separatism.

64. Inability to tolerate criticism

Cults react strongly to even mild criticism. Cults have an overactive "circle the wagons" *us-versus-them* defensive mentality. When criticized, they often engage in *ad hominem* attacks on the speaker, rather than challenging the truthfulness of his statements, which are often correct.

When it comes to fighting back viciously when criticized, few if any cults are worse than Scientology. Scientology is notorious for attacking, suing, and harassing anyone who criticizes Scientology. Their official policy is to sue critics into bankruptcy by filing hundreds or thousands of lawsuits against the critics, who will not even be able to pay for the legal expenses of defending themselves. (The name of the anti-cult organization "Cult Awareness Network" became the property of the Church of Scientology that way.) But they go even further, hiring private detectives to investigate and harass critics, practicing terrorist tactics against critics and their families, and even framing people for crimes that they didn't commit.

John Atack, who wrote an excellent book on Scientology, [A Piece Of Blue Sky](#), said of Scientology,

Another tenet of Hubbard's "scripture" is that all opponents of Scientology are criminals with undisclosed crimes. It should be a matter of some amazement to scientologists given this prediction that I have managed to criticise Scientology for twelve years without spending any time in prison or being charged with any crime. In that time, however, scientologists have been convicted in several countries.

The phobic attitude towards critics and the refusal of dialogue characterize totalist groups or destructive cults. Scientologists are taught that anyone who seeks to dissuade them from Scientology is "suppressive". If the criticism cannot be silenced, then the scientologist should cease all communication with the critic, or "disconnect". Any criticism of Scientology is held to stem from undisclosed "overts" or moral transgressions. The critic is asked "what are your crimes?" This can be upsetting to the mystified parent of a raging scientologist.

Scientology: Religion or Intelligence Agency? The view from the lion's den, A paper by Jon Atack, delivered at the Dialog Centre International conference in Berlin, October 1995.

Scientists framed the freelance writer [Paulette Cooper](#) for conspiring to bomb the Scientology headquarters because they didn't like what she had written about Scientology in her book "*The Scandal of Scientology*".

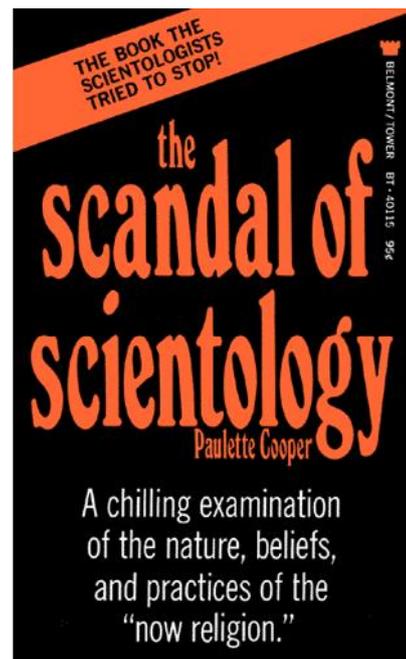
In May, 1973, Paulette Cooper was indicted by a grand jury on two counts of making bomb threats against the Church of Scientology, and of committing perjury by denying the accusations. There were threatening letters on her stationery and with her fingerprints on them.

But then in 1977 the FBI raided the Scientology headquarters in several cities because Scientologists had been stealing many thousands of documents and records from several U.S. Government agencies (getting information on other people). That is when the FBI found proof that the Scientologists had faked the evidence against Ms. Cooper. It turned out that agents for Scientology had stolen some sheets of her stationery which she had touched, and then typed the threats against Scientology on the fingerprinted paper.

It also turned out that her lover, a man with whom she had shared her intimate personal secrets as well as her bed, was actually a Scientology spy who had participated in the frame-up, a spy who Xeroxed off her personal diaries while she was at work. He had even reported to the Scientology headquarters that she was depressed and contemplating suicide, and commented, "[Wouldn't](#)



Paulette Cooper



that be a wonderful thing for Scientology!"

Paulette Cooper said of Scientology spies: "Scientology sits on the stuff for years before revealing it. Jerry was gone for about 5 years before pages of my teenage diary he had photocopied started being sent anonymously to others."

We are slowly and carefully teaching the unholy a lesson. It is as follows: We are not a law enforcement agency. BUT we will become interested in the crimes of people who seek to stop us. If you oppose Scientology we promptly look up — and find and expose — your crimes. If you leave us alone we will leave you alone.

It's very simple. Even a fool can grasp that.

And don't underrate our ability to carry it out.

— L. Ron Hubbard (the founder and leader of Scientology)



Lafayette Ronald
"L. Ron" Hubbard

65. A Charismatic Leader

The group has, and depends on, a charismatic leader or leaders. The group is personality-driven, and everything revolves around the leader.

Note that the leader may now be dead. Cults do not suddenly stop being cults just because the leader dies. All of these cult leaders are now dead, and yet, all of those cults still have some true believers who maintain that it is or was the greatest thing:

- Scientology found Lafayette Ronald Hubbard
- The Universal Church ("Moonies") founder Sun Myung Moon

- ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) founder Swami Prabhupada
- The People's Temple founder Rev. Jim Jones
- The Branch Davidians leader "David Koresh" (real name Vernon Howell)
- The Solar Temple founders Luc Jouret and Di Mambro
- Heaven's Gate founders Marshall Herff Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Trousdale Nettles
- Alcoholics Anonymous founders William Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith

66. Calls to Obliterate Self

The cult constantly demands that members abandon *self*, *selfishness*, *self-seeking*, *self-centeredness*, and *ego*. The cult declares that self and ego are very bad, and must be eliminated. The cult demands that members sacrifice themselves for the greater good.

For a detailed analysis of this item, see the discussion of demands for self-renunciation made by "*A Course In Miracles*", in the file on [The Heresy of the 12 Steps](#).

67. Don't Trust Your Own Mind.

Members are taught that they cannot trust their own minds, that their thinking is somehow flawed. Almost invariably, a cult's answer to that problem is that the cult members must let the cult leader or cult elders do their thinking for them.

- Members are told that they have not prayed or chanted or meditated enough, or done enough yoga, or gotten enough "therapy" to straighten out their thinking.
- Dissenting members are advised to seek a consensus in all matters. One fundamentalist Christian cult taught, "*In the abundance of counselors there is safety. He who trusts his own mind is a fool.*"
- Likewise, the *Love Family* cult told members who tried to think critically, "*What's inside your mind is lies. We are your mind. The group is your mind.*"¹
- The Moonies tell their members that Satan has corrupted their minds, so they cannot trust their thinking, and they especially cannot trust any thoughts that are critical of Rev. Sun Myung Moon or his Unification Church.
- Scientology teaches its members that their minds are crippled by memories of past injuries, and that they must purchase hundreds of thousands of dollars of Scientology "auditing" therapy in order to recover.

- The Oxford Group taught that people had been defeated by sin, and that their thinking was corrupted by sin. The cult leader [Frank Buchman](#) demanded that people surrender their minds and their lives to his cult and let him do their thinking for them.
- Recovery cults declare that people's minds have been corrupted by drugs or alcohol, and that they too must surrender control of their thinking to someone else and let someone else run their lives, because their thinking is "alcoholic" or "addictive".

68. Don't Feel Your Own Feelings.

Just as members are told that they cannot trust their own thinking, members are taught that they cannot trust their own feelings.

- They are told that they are just being selfish and self-pitying if they feel that they are being exploited or treated unfairly.
- They are told that their feelings are wrong or evil if they feel that there is something about the cult that isn't quite right, and any resistance to cult indoctrination is opposition to "The Good". They are told that any doubts or suspicions about the cult are weaknesses and wrong thoughts. That is often framed as "The Devil is trying to turn you away from the Light." Or, "Your selfish desires die hard. They won't let go of you easily." Frank Buchman's cult used the slogan, "Don't forget that a hooked fish jumps, kicks, and runs."
- They are told that their desires for a normal life outside of the cult are immoral and selfish (sometimes, desires put there by Satan).
- And they are told that they are selfish for wanting to make a decent living and have a normal, comfortable home and good food.
- Many cults tell their members that they should only feel *Eternal Bliss* or some such thing.
- And of course many cults tell their members that their sexual desires are evil and impure.
- They are even told that desiring to have a normal marital relationship with a spouse is selfish and wrong, and is a diversion from "The True Work".

It isn't just religious cults that teach people not to feel their feelings. The Nazis did the same thing. The Nazi teachings declared that a superior member of the *Übermenschen* does not show pain, and feels no sentimentality while killing *Untermenschen*, and takes joy only in those things which advance the Nazi cause. They produced hard, cold, unfeeling monsters who could kill a thousand people without flinching from the task. Heinrich Himmler bragged to his S.S. officers:

Most of you know what it means to see a hundred corpses lying together, five hundred, or a thousand. To have gone through this and yet — apart from a few exceptions, examples of human weakness — to have remained

decent fellows, this is what has made us hard.

Heinrich Himmler, in a speech to SS Group Leaders, October of 1943

69. The group takes over the individual's decision-making process.

The group takes over the individual's decision-making process, and plans and runs his whole life for him. The cult reduces the individual to dependence upon the cult for all important decisions, and even for minor ones. It is common for members of cults to even have to ask permission to go visit their own family, or to go to a parent's funeral.

Many cults reduce their members to such helplessness that they are incapable of making the simplest of decisions without asking their mentor or leader for guidance. In one of his anti-cult books, Steve Hassan advised parents to watch out for hesitation on the part of their children when they ask the children to come home for a visit. An answer like

"I'm not sure, let me see, let me think about it for a while,"

really means

"Give me time to ask my mentor for permission to visit my old family."

70. You Owe The Group.

You owe everything to the group. The group says that it made you what you are, and gave you everything that you have, so now you are obligated to the group.

The third item in the Scientology "Code of Honor" is:

3. Never desert a group to which you owe your support.

— Meaning: after Scientology has taken all of your money, and all of your free labor, you still owe L. Ron Hubbard your life. And to that end, members of the *Sea Org* — the sea-going branch of the organization — would sign *Billion-Year Contracts*, swearing to serve L. Ron Hubbard in all future reincarnations for the next billion years.

Similarly, many other cults will claim that their practices like chanting or meditation gave you sanity and enlightenment, so you owe the group for that. Pseudo-Christian groups will claim that they saved you from Satan, so you owe them.

In Synanon, even though William Olin was a healthy non-addict and a successful architect who had joined Synanon because he had believed in it as a utopian social movement, and even though Olin had given Synanon his life savings and had

worked for Synanon for free for ten years, when Olin discussed the problems with Synanon and [announced that he was leaving](#), the cult claimed that Synanon had given him everything, and that he was "just a sour, ungrateful asshole."



[Continue to questions 71 to 80...](#)



Footnotes:

- [1](#)) Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change*, 1978, page 157.
- [2](#)) William F. Olin, *Escape From Utopia: My Ten Years in Synanon*, 1980.



The Cult Test

Questions 71 to 80

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

71. We Have The Panacea.

The cult claims to have *A Guaranteed Ticket To Heaven*, or *A Simple Formula for Happiness and Enlightenment*, or *a Simple Never-fails Cure-All* for whatever ails you. Just chant or meditate or pray all of the time, they say, or just follow their 'simple' program, and you will find happiness.

The cult characteristic "[Sacred Science](#)" and "[Unquestionable Dogma](#)" kicks in here, so the panacea is also considered unquestionably true, and "cannot fail".

For every complicated problem there is a simple and wrong solution.
== H. L. Mencken

Scientology claims that it has a fool-proof new technology for fixing your mind and restoring you to sanity and clarity, and giving you great mind-powers. (And all they want in return is your life savings, your credit cards, your house, and all of the money that you can borrow for the rest of your life.)

There is a way to handle every part of life with Scientology, and a way to exist that is far beyond any dream that you could ever dream. All of my dreams keep becoming realities and that's very exciting!

Kelly Preston on Scientology

<http://www.scientology-kills.org/celebrities/preston.htm>

The Hari Krishnas claim that by chanting their chants you will gain spirituality and wisdom. The Nichiren Shoshu / Saka Gakai Buddhists claim pretty much the same

thing too. And with TM® it's Transcendental Meditation that is the sure-fire solution that will fix your mind and your life.

Likewise, the Heaven's Gate cult claimed that it had the one and only guaranteed sure-fire method of getting to Heaven — commit suicide, and then hitch a ride on an invisible flying saucer that was hiding behind a comet.

Crazy Christian cults claim that confessing all of your sins and repenting will cure everything.

72. Progressive Indoctrination and Progressive Commitments

The cult starts off by asking for only small commitments from newcomers, to avoid scaring the newcomers away. But the list of things that are required of new members keeps growing, and becoming more expensive and all-encompassing.

Steve Hassan wrote of his experiences in the Moonies' Unification Church, where some pretty girls started off asking him to just attend a workshop for an evening, and then they asked him to attend a seminar for a weekend, and then a week-long seminar, and then a four-month-long one, and then they finally ended up demanding his whole life.

Likewise, Scientology starts beginners off with small, inexpensive commitments: just buy a book for \$10, or take a course for \$75. But after you start their training process, everything becomes progressively more expensive, until the last courses cost from \$8000 to \$77,000 each, and you have to take many of them.

Willa Appel described how cult indoctrination progressively changed members' minds:

Banishing thought strips away another layer of the personality, another hunk of the individual's mode of operation developed in response to long-term interaction with the "real" world. The granting and withholding of approval comes to replace the complex evaluation system that serves as the basis for behavior and determines action. Subjects become more willing to act on command from an external authority and less able to act independently.

"Each time they'd ask me to do something more," David Wallace said of the Divine Light Mission, "I'd sort of swallow my pride and try it. Witnessing and soliciting are things I always felt queasy about. But you do it. You eventually lose your gut feelings. You're given directions and you follow them even though you know they're wrong. Like the special charitable projects, when you knew all the money was going for new toys for the Guru.

You know it's wrong, but you do it anyway."

Cults in America; Programmed for Paradise, Willa Appel, page 90.

73. Magical, Mystical, Unexplainable Workings

The cult claims that its panacea features mysterious, magical, unexplainable effects. Do the cult's program, and you will get wonderful results, they say, in a miraculous way that cannot be entirely explained.

For example, the "Nichiren Shoshu / Sokka Gakkei" sect proclaims:

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha teaches that inside each one of us a universal truth known as the Buddha nature. Basing our lives on this Buddha nature enables us to enjoy absolute happiness and to act with boundless compassion. Such a state of happiness is called enlightenment. It's simply waking up to the true nature of life, realising that all things are connected, and that there is such a close relationship between each of us and our surroundings that when we change ourselves, we change the world.

In the 13th Century, a Japanese priest called Nichiren (1222—1282) realised that the message of the Lotus Sutra was summed up by its title, NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO, which can be translated as the teaching of the lotus flower of the wonderful law. Nichiren declared that all of the benefits of the wisdom contained in the Lotus Sutra can be realized by chanting this title NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO. ... The goal of chanting NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO is to manifest the enlightenment of the Buddha in our own lives.

What is NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO?, <http://members.freezone.co.uk/sunspark/nmhrk/whatis.htm>

It is true that the Lotus Sutra is a beautiful teaching, but it is absurd to proclaim that all of the benefits of reading and following Buddha's teachings can be obtained merely by chanting the name of the book. How is that supposed to work, anyway?

And did Buddha ever say that you could just chant "NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO"? (*No.*) Buddha was quite specific about following an eight-fold path, and living right and practicing right livelihood and being truthful, not just sitting on your ass and chanting a one-liner forever.

74. Trance-Inducing Practices

In some cults, members spend too much time on mind-numbing trance-inducing practices like prolonged meditation, chanting, praying, or voodoo dancing.

Hypnosis, repetition, monotony, and rhythm are often used to numb the thought processes of new recruits.

75. New Identity — Redefinition of Self — Revision of Personal History

You must adopt a new identity — getting a new self-concept — a new ego. You must redefine yourself and your life in cult terms.

[Dr. Edgar H. Schein](#), in his book on [brainwashing and thought control](#), listed "*give the victims new identities*" as a critical part of the process of "*changing*" peoples' minds.

As the new member brings his thinking into conformity with the cult's thinking, and absorbs the values of the cult, he will redefine himself with cult terms and cult concepts, and also reinterpret his memories of his previous life in cult terms. Essentially, he will build himself a new ego which is "good cult member", and he will see himself and the world through the eyes of a cult member. This is a standard part of the conversion process — any conversion process, cult religion or otherwise. Dr. Schein called this "*New Identification*", and included it as one of his [five steps of mind control](#).

Andrew Meacham discussed this in his book *Selling Serenity*:

In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman link political indoctrination and aspects of psychotherapy with religious conversion. In extreme cases, they write, an individual "switches worlds,"¹² joins a religious community, and through socialization, discovers the "plausibility structures" that make the new world coherent, fully tangible and fully believable.

As an individual blends into the religious community, or an equally potent community espousing a kind of political or therapeutic transformation, he redefines his past in terms of the new present. The formula for reinterpretation of the past is, "Then I *thought*... now I *know*."¹³ Moreover, Berger and Luckmann write:

Prealternation biography is typically nihilated *in toto* by subsuming it under a negative category occupying a strategic position in the new legitimizing apparatus. "When I was still living a life of sin," "When I was still caught in bourgeois consciousness," "When I was still motivated by these unconscious neurotic needs." The biographical rupture is thus identified with a cognitive separation of darkness and light.¹⁴

¹² Berger, P.L. & Luckmann, T. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 157.

13 Ibid., 160.

14 Ibid.

Selling Serenity, Life Among The Recovery Stars, Andrew Meacham, page 118.

In his book of praise of [Dr. Frank Buchman's Oxford Group cult](#), Vic Kitchen described his conversion:

... The Oxford Group, however, has the most natural way of introducing one to the supernatural and, in their skillful hands, God's miracle of changing lives seemed no more *unnatural* than the many natural or physical phenomena we are accustomed to observe.

With this change — but not before — could I see the reason for my former failures. It was as if I had stepped all at once from the ordinary world of three dimensions into a fourth-dimensional sphere. ...

In ordinary terms, therefore, I can only say that I had been unable to see light because I stood in my own way. I had, as you may remember, suspected that there might be some supra-sensible kind of spiritual light, just as there were ultra-violet rays of sunlight and invisible beams of knowledge which flow into our minds. I now found that this was so....

I seemed, in other words, to reach a "critical point" in sensibility. On the one side was self and social-consciousness and moral blindness. On the other side stood God-consciousness and moral vision. And I passed from one to the other as suddenly and definitely as water brought to a critical point passes into steam.

[I Was A Pagan](#), V. C. "Vic" Kitchen, pages 41-43.

Vic Kitchen went on to compare his old self and his new *Oxford Group* self:

IN MY OLD LIFE	IN MY NEW LIFE
<p><i>I most liked:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Myself.• Liquor, tobacco and almost every other stimulant, narcotic, and form of self-indulgence. <i>[That was a typical Oxford Group exaggeration. Mr. Kitchen was a semi-respectable citizen in his former life,</i>	<p><i>I most like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God.• Time alone with God.• The fellowship of the living Jesus Christ.• The stimulation of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God's guidance.

not a dope fiend. He just had a drinking problem.]

- Anything which gave me pleasure, possessions, power, position and applause, or pumped up my self-esteem.
- To be left largely to myself.
- My wife — because of the comforting and complimentary way she treated me.

- My wife — because of the things God now enables us to do for each other.
- Communion with others who are trying to lead the same kind of Christ-centered life, and the witnessing to all of what Christ has come to mean to me.

I hated most:

- Poverty (for myself).
- Prohibition.
- Work.
- People who disapproved or tried to interfere with me.
- Any betrayal of my inner thoughts or emotions.

I hate most:

- Sin.
- Self, because "I" is the middle letter of SIN.
- Sins that separate me from God.
- Sins that separate me from people.
- Anything that falls short of God's plan for me.

[*I Was A Pagan*](#), V. C. "Vic" Kitchen, pages 89-90.

The *Oxford Group* even made Vic Kitchen *hate himself*? How sad.

(By that brain-damaged *Oxford Group* logic — "'I' is the middle letter of SIN' — he should also hate *Saints* and *Salvation*, because "S" is the first letter of SIN.)

As newcomers become indoctrinated believers in their cult, they will come to feel that they are now different people:

- I am a Sanyasin. (ISKCON, the Hari Krishnas, and also the Rajneeshees)
- I am a Clear, or I am an Operating Thetan. (Scientology)
- I am a Yogi. (3HO)

- I am a real Christian. (many cults)
- I am a Born-Again Christian. (many cults)
- I am a Buddhist. (Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism)
- I am one of The Chosen. (many cults)
- I am one of The Saved. (many cults)
- I am one of The Changed. (Frank Buchman's Oxford Group)
- I am one of the select 144,000 who will be taken up in the Rapture. (Jehovah's Witnesses)
- I am a member of the Away Team. (Heaven's Gate cult)
- I am a Gratefully Recovering Alcoholic. (A.A.)

As the new member changes his own thinking to make it conform with the cult's thinking, he will reinterpret his memories of his previous life in cult terms, viewing them through the tinted or distorting lenses of his new value system. He will often decide that former friends are now enemies because they do not approve of the cult or share his new values. In extreme cases, converts denounce their parents and other family members as "servants of Satan", or some such thing.

The same thing even happens in political conversions. Imagine the historical case where a German Communist converted to being a Nazi. He believed one thing, and yammered the slogans and buzzwords of the Communists, and saw himself as a good Communist, and *was* a good Communist, until he suddenly "saw the light" and converted to being a good Nazi, yammering a new set of beliefs and slogans, and he then saw himself as a loyal, patriotic, Nazi. He simply shrugged off his previous years of being a Communist as "youthful foolishness."

Adolf Hitler met one such young man, who confessed to Hitler that he had been a Communist before joining the Nazi Party. Hitler said, "So, before you were a Communist, but now you are mine...", and the young man answered, "Yes, my Führer!" Hitler smiled and walked on.

Perhaps you remember Patty Hearst, the daughter of the Hearst Publishing heir, William Randolph Hearst III. She was kidnapped, tortured, and brain-washed by the terrorist Symbionese Liberation Army until she believed everything they said. She became "Tania" the revolutionary. And then she denounced her father on the radio for being a rich creep who had never cared about the poor people, and then she went and robbed banks for that radical "liberation army". She had just reinterpreted her memories, knowledge, and self in that cult army's terms, and built herself a new ego, going from being "a soft, spoiled, selfish rich kid" to being "a dedicated heroic revolutionary", and then she went and acted out her new beliefs. (Incidentally, Patty Hearst was a textbook example of the Stockholm Syndrome, where a prisoner comes to identify with her captor, and converts to his beliefs, and sympathizes with his problems. I think that the government was very wrong to have prosecuted her and put her in prison for her activities after she got "converted".)

76. Membership Rivalry

Members vie with one another for the guru's attention, and for status within the group. Everyone is trying to become part of the favored inner circle. The leader plays the members off against each other in order to maintain his hold over the cult.

77. True Believers

The committed members of a cult are *true believers*, as described by Eric Hoffer in his priceless little book, *The True Believer*, where he described the psychology of mass movements, which is what successful popular cults are. (See Hoffer's descriptions of [*hatred as a unifying force*](#) and [*effective cult doctrines*](#).) Hoffer also said:

The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim all excellence for his nation, his religion, his race, or his holy cause.

A man is likely to mind his business when it is worth minding. When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people's business.

[*The True Believer*](#), Eric Hoffer

Such true believers are characterized by an intense desire to believe in some great cause or some grandiose dogma, often with little or no rational or logical reason to believe such things. Such people are driven by *a desire to believe* more than by actual belief in something. They don't really believe, they just want to believe. (And often, [they fear that something terrible will happen to them](#), like that they will go to Hell forever, if they don't believe, so they *really want to believe*.)

"You can't convince a believer of anything; for their belief is not based on evidence, it's based on a deep-seated need to believe."

== Carl Sagan

The phony prophet Arthur Bell set up a cult called Mankind United back in 1934. When he began to get into legal trouble for defrauding his followers, he made outrageous claims to divert attention:

The debonair cult leader was ready with new revelations. He told the [state legislative] committee that he could go into a trance and be whisked anywhere in the world. "Once I went to sleep in San Francisco and woke up aboard a British merchant vessel in the middle of the Atlantic," he explained.

Such public pronouncements by Bell did not scandalize his followers. The wily leader knew what he was about. The cult was now more than seven years old. The dilettantes and curious had deserted. Too, **the peculiar law unique to all cult movements was fast at work: the more money, time and effort a cultist devotes to his Cause, the less concerned he is with the tenets and beliefs of the Cause.** Bell's followers, by now, were so immersed in their dream and its fulfillment that he could have announced he was the Devil Incarnate and they'd have accepted it blandly.

God Is A Millionaire, Richard Mathison, page 199.

William F. Olin wrote about how the more aware and thoughtful people in Synanon worried that it might turn into a fanatical cult of true believers (which it did):

After a break for aerobics, the Stew wrapped up the subject of religion with an examination of its possible dangers. Guy Endore was quoted from his book, *Synanon*, as warning against the eventuality of our zeal turning into "that horror of horrors, religious fanaticism." I couldn't agree with him more, offering my own thoughts on what I called the "true believer syndrome," where followers become automatons with numbed minds. They cannot distinguish symbols from the things symbolized — words become realities, the menu becomes the meal — and their only compass is a blind loyalty. In such a mental state, emotions can be so inflamed and polarized that the box of reason itself is flipped and nice people form lynch mobs. Impassioned self-righteousness does not allow for opposition — loyal or otherwise. Non-believers are infidels, dropouts are heretics, and critics are persecutors and, literally, damned enemies, while thugs and murderers who wear the right uniform become canonized as saints and martyrs. Too often in our history, holy causes have justified every conceivable excess in the name of all that's good — from Inquisition tortures and witchburnings to kamikaze attacks and Nazi ovens.

Escape From Utopia, William F. Olin, pages 210-211.

In Frank Buchman's Oxford Group cult, [Peter Howard](#) was a good example of a true believer. First, Howard was a street-fighting thug for Sir Oswald Mosley's

New Party, which morphed into The British Union of Fascists. Then, when Peter Howard switched obsessions, from radical politics to radical religion, he joined Dr. Frank Buchman's Oxford Group, and [Howard soon wrote a whole book of praise of Frank Buchman](#), talking about how wonderful Frank Buchman was, declaring that Frank Buchman couldn't possibly be a fraud or a charlatan, *before Peter Howard had ever met Frank Buchman*. Peter Howard just wanted to believe, so he did. Howard didn't let a little thing like lack of any actual personal knowledge or experience with Frank Buchman get in the way of Howard's worshipping of his new favorite hero.

Peter Howard was also quick to attack "enemies" of the Oxford Group. Howard didn't hesitate to [call other people liars](#) for telling the truth about Frank Buchman and his cult, and at the same time, Howard didn't hesitate to tell lies for benefit of his newly-adopted cult. Peter Howard complained bitterly about all of the criticism that Frank Buchman and his organization received, and declared that such criticism came from the "[morally defeated](#)".

Sir Herbert Spencer wrote about true believers way back in 1866. Here, he was describing people who stubbornly cling to the idea of divine creation of individual species, in spite of all evidence to the contrary:

Is it supposed that a new organism, when specially created, is created out of nothing?

...

Is it supposed that the matter of which the new organism consists, is not created for the occasion, but is taken out of its pre-existing forms and arranged into a new form? If so, we are met by the question — how is the re-arrangement effected?

...

And thus it is with all attempted ways of representing the process. The old Hebrew idea that God takes clay and moulds a new creature, as a potter might throw a vessel, is probably too grossly anthropomorphic to be accepted by any modern defender of the special-creation doctrine. But having abandoned this crude belief, what belief is he prepared to substitute? If a new organism is not thus produced, then in what way is a new organism produced? Or rather — in what way can a new organism be conceived to be produced? We will not ask for the ascertained mode, but will be content with a mode that can be consistently imagined. No such mode, however, is assignable. Those who entertain the proposition that each kind of organism results from divine interposition, do so because they refrain from translating words into thoughts. **The case is one of those where men do not really believe, but rather believe they believe.** For belief, properly so called, implies a mental representation of the thing believed; and no such mental representation is here possible.

Principles of Biology, Herbert Spencer, Volume 1, pages 336-337, London, 1864-1867.

True believers in cults have just such mental problems. They do not really believe in something as much as they *believe that they believe*. Or they even just *wish that they believed*. (And then they often wish that they believed even more strongly, with fewer doubts).

They insist that they believe without question, but they will not and can not calmly, rationally, discuss the pros and cons of their beliefs, because that could cast doubts on their "faith". They just won't (and can't) allow any evidence to cast doubts on their beliefs, because if they do, their unexamined (and indefensible) belief structure could well fall apart. So they become dogmatic fanatics who will not tolerate any dissent, or any questioning of their beliefs, or any discussion of other ideas. And they are rarely open-minded to the idea that their beliefs may be less than 100% true.

The religious fanatic, for instance, wants to believe that he has a guaranteed ticket to Heaven, no matter whether he really does or not. He also wants to believe that he has all of the true answers to everything in life — he cannot bear to think that he might be wrong — so he often simply refuses to question his own beliefs:

- *"I'm right because I'm right, so there."*
- *"My beliefs are all true and correct because I believe in the Word Of God, and anybody who disagrees with me doesn't believe in the Word Of God, so they are obviously wrong."*
- *"Our beliefs are correct because our Master has brought us the one and only true New Dispensation."*
- *"We Scientologists are right, and everybody else is wrong, because we have superior minds that have been made clear by LRH technology. (And I know that I didn't waste the \$100,000 that I gave to Scientology.) Everybody who disagrees with us is just evil and [A Suppressive Person](#)."*

And, unfortunately, true believers do not really want to know the truth, in spite of their claims that they have *"The Truth"*. They just want to continue to believe what they think they believe. Their attitude is, *"I won't allow my opinions to be changed by mere facts"*, and *"[I don't need facts to believe](#)"*.

78. Scapegoating and Excommunication

Some cults specialize in scapegoating — periodically picking out one member and blaming him for all of the cult's problems, and kicking him out of the cult. Such terrorism helps to keep the other members in line. It is also a good way to get rid of those who were wavering, and doubting the cult and its leader — the cult can claim that the outcast was bad and had to be banished, rather than admitting that the deserter came to the conclusion that the cult was all wrong about everything.

Some cults routinely practice culling and expulsion of the doubters and the less than fully committed members. I have personally listened to Yogi Bhajan giving a lecture at the 3HO compound in Espanola, New Mexico, where Bhajan bragged that if people weren't completely complying with his commands, he would just "back the truck up to their house", and they would be gone — evicted.

Many cults practice shunning and ostracism of those who leave the cult. Cults just cannot tolerate people leaving voluntarily. There is a great danger that those who have come to their senses and quit the cult will also lead others out by talking some sense to them, so cults viciously denounce those who leave, and instruct the remaining members to have no contact with those who have left. The Jehovah's Witnesses call deserters and exiles "people who have been disfellowshipped", and contact with such people is forbidden. Scientology calls them "suppressive persons", and again, contact with them is forbidden. The Moonies won't allow contact with splitters, either.

[Synanon thugs](#) went so far as to attack the dropout Phil Ritter from behind in the dark of night, cracking his skull with a baseball bat and nearly killing him.

And the Goon Squad called "*The Angels*", from [Jim Jones' People's Temple](#), murdered the dropout Jeanne Mills and her husband and daughter after she published the book *Six Years with God* that told what was happening inside the cult.

It may occur to you that there is an apparent contradiction here: Some cults routinely excommunicate doubters and slackers and keep their remaining members in line by threatening to expell them, while some other cults don't want to ever let anybody leave, not under any conditions, not for any reason.

Part of the answer is, "It's a matter of who strikes first."

- A cult member who comes to his senses and says, "This is a crazy cult and the leader is a liar and I'm leaving" is a great threat to the cult because he may well instill doubts in other members. He may cause some other members to wake up and smell the coffee, and quit too.
- On the other hand, if the cult leader attacks first, and says, "Joe is lazy and immoral and unspiritual and we must kick him out before he contaminates others with his evil", then

anything that Joe says after that is just some sour grapes,
and not so much of a threat.

79. Promised Powers or Knowledge

The sect holds out the promise of obtaining powers or absolute knowledge by the observance of the rules.

- Cults often declare that members can achieve Wisdom or Enlightenment through their practices. Some say that you will eventually be able to access the Akashic Records, which contain all of the knowledge of mankind. Others say that you will learn the Secrets of the Ancient Ones, or the Secrets of the Ascended Masters. Often, those alleged 'Secrets' include promises of occult or magical powers.
- Many cults promise happiness and "Eternal Bliss" if you just do their practices long enough.
- Others promise mental clarity if you meditate or chant enough.
- Many cults promise a guaranteed ticket to Heaven. The Heaven's Gate Cult actually promised that their members would get a free ride to Heaven on a flying saucer.
- Cults sometimes make really extremely grandiose promises. Scientology, for instance, says that when you have finally taken all of their courses of auditing and been changed into an uppermost-level Operating Thetan (OT-VIII), you will not only have great mental powers and clarity, but you will be immortal because you will have absolute mind-over-matter powers.
(Thus there is no excuse for dying — people who do that are just being lazy and unethical. Funny that the leader of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, died of a stroke.)
(So they make an exception in his case: He didn't really 'die'; he is just conducting advanced research in a higher dimension, they say.)
- Commercial cults, like Amway, hold out the promise of wealth, freedom, financial security, and a lavish, luxurious lifestyle. Wealth and the ability to live however and wherever you wish is definitely a power.

80. It's a con. You don't get the promised goodies.

As you might have guessed, Scientology won't really give you immortality, not even if you give them all of your money, and your house, and your credit cards, and then recruit some more paying members for the cult.

And you don't get the promised benefits from any of the other cults, either. You just get used and abused and taken (and then, often, when your money is gone and you become disillusioned, discarded).

You never see the promised miracles. You never get the promised peace of mind, or clarity, or happiness. People who were supposedly magically cured of cancer die anyway. You never get the promised mental powers. The laws of physics still refuse to bend to your will, and gravity still keeps you from flying or levitating. And you still age. Neither the clock nor the Grim Reaper has any respect for your alleged spiritual powers.

It's a con. You don't get the promised goodies.



[Continue to questions 81 to 90...](#)



The Cult Test

Questions 81 to 90

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

81. Hypocrisy

The cult doesn't practice what it preaches. The cult leader and high-ranking members break their own rules.

Cult members, including the leader, hypocritically project their own sins and crimes onto people outside of the cult:

- "*They* are dishonest."
- "*They* are unspiritual."
- "*They* have a hidden agenda."
- "*They* are narrow-minded and intolerant."
- "*They* are a bunch of bigots."
- "*They* don't care about the future of the world."
- "*They* are incompetent."
- "*They* are trying to eliminate the competition."
- "*They* are only in it for the money."
- "*They* have an evil leader."
- "*They* are immoral."
- "*They* are ambitious and greedy."
- "*They* are not doing the Will of God."
- "*They* are not real Christians."
- "*They* do not have a reasonable interpretation of the Bible."
- "*They* lie."
- "*They* are in denial."
- "*They* have strange, illogical beliefs."
- "*They* are acting crazy."
- "*Their* lives don't make any sense."
- "*They* are hypocritical."
- **And above all:** "We are not a cult — all of those other groups are. We work very hard to make sure that our group doesn't turn into a cult like them."

One Oxford Group member, [T. Willard Hunter](#), did [quite a twisty song and dance](#) as he tried to explain away Frank Buchman's habit of grossly exaggerating his successes, and even outright lying:

I expect also that Frank was confident the Almighty would not be too severe if he should occasionally exercise a salesman's license for enthusiasm and stretch a point. Surely he would be forgiven under the rubric of the Congressional cloak rooms where gentlemen agree there are times when one must "rise above principle."

World Changing Through Life Changing: The Story of Frank Buchman and Moral Re-Armament; A Thesis for the Degree of Master of Sacred Theology at Andover Newton Theological School, [T. Willard Hunter](#), 1977, page 172.

Rise above principle? Since when are ordained ministers supposed to "rise above principle" and not be truthful? It looks more like "sink into dishonesty".

82. Lying. Denial of the truth. Reversal of reality. Rationalization and Denial.

A cult is an assemblage of people who don't want to know the truth. They often claim that they do; they may talk about "Seeking the Truth", or "Seeking to Understand the Word of the Lord", or even "having the Truth", but they actually do not want to hear the truth. They just want their own beliefs and superstitions confirmed.

Cults:

- reject the truth,
- deny the truth,
- won't hear the truth,
- don't tell the truth,
- ignore the truth,
- dislike the truth,
- abhor the truth,
- avoid honest, intelligent discussions of the truth,
- and even lie about telling the truth.

Men, in order to do evil, must first believe that what they are doing is good.

== Alexander Solzhenitsyn

NIDA, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, [declares in an article on treating drug addiction](#):

"Importantly, addiction causes distortions in thinking such as denial, minimization, and projection."

The funny thing is, so does membership in a cult, even a "recovery" cult.

If a group is classified as a religion, then leaders of that group have considerable freedom, within the group at least, to set their own moral codes and to adjudicate between right and wrong. Potentially, any methods of persuasion, short of those which involve actual, legally provable physical coercion, may be considered reasonable within the ethical codes of a self-originated belief system. A sincere believer may feel that, in religious matters, the end justifies the means, and therefore various deceptive and devious practices may, in the mind of a believer, be justified as skillful means, crazy wisdom, or heavenly deception.

The Culture of Cults.htm

<http://www.fwbo-files.com/CofC.htm>

["Heavenly Deception"](#) is the term that Moonies use for lying to non-members and deceiving them. The Moonies believe that they are justified in lying to people because all of those non-members are evil and serving Satan anyway. So deception, in order to fool people into serving the Lord, is okay.

What I found is that the definitions of truth and lies are different in Scientology than how we dimwitted non-Scientologists would interpret them. What is good for Scientology is considered truth and any criticisms equal lies.

MELISSA TUOMI, "Scientology is whack", *Fourth Estate*, Volume 37, Issue 28 | April 27th, 2006

<http://www.uwgb.edu/4e/2006/04/27/042706opinionThrowDown.asp>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rnrs/message/5537>

When the actor Paul Haggis quit Scientology, citing the San Diego chapter's support of the anti-homosexual California Proposition 8, a defender of Scientology commented:

I am always stunned in view of the obvious brainwashing that must have happened to some internet posters (or rather the traveling circus of "commenters" when it comes to stirring up anti-Scientology resentment). Scientology has never been and is not against homosexuals and supports their rights just as anyone else's. Given that, the big question is: why did Haggis bother to make such show-down out of his choice to sever his ties to the Church of Scientology (after several years of inactivity, as he admits)? Guesses, anyone?

== From Louanne

<http://www.movieline.com/2009/10/paul-haggis-renounces-scientology.php?page=all>

There, Louanne also resorts to [attacking the critic and casting aspersions on his motives](#), which is yet another standard cult characteristic.

And notice Louanne's declaration that *critics* of Scientology are all "brainwashed". That is *projection*.

Cult leaders often practice what psychologists call [projection](#) — just accuse 'the enemy' of committing whatever crimes and sins the cult leader is actually committing. That's another aspect of *reversal of reality*.

Another Scientology reversal of reality is, their "Road to Total Freedom" is really a route to total slavery, where you have given Scientology all of your money, your house, your credit cards, your life savings, your bank account, and everything that you can borrow, and now you work for Scientology for free. (Ostensibly, in trade for more "auditing".)

Cults are quick to deny the truth whenever they are the subject of valid criticism. Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, the daughter of cult leader David Berg and authoress of "*The Children of God: The Inside Story*", gave us a good example of such denial and reversal of reality. She talked about the time that Bob Rogers, a news producer for the NBC television network, wanted to expose the extremely loose sexual practices of *The Children of God* (COG) cult, which included "Flirty Fishing" prostitution to get the cult more money and members:

When asked if there was immorality going on within the COG, Hosea [David Berg's son and Deborah's brother] flatly denied it. Rogers countered Hosea's statements with interviews he had filmed in America of female ex-members who gave eyewitness accounts. The stark contrast between Hosea's denial and the witnesses' testimony was incredible. But why would Hosea lie? To him it was not lying. All cult members are taught instinctively to lie; the COG is not unlike other cults in that matter. One is taught that it is okay to "cover" the truth because "other people wouldn't understand our beliefs." Therefore, when Mr. Rogers asked Hosea about immorality, Hosea flatly denied it. Hosea did not believe it was "immorality." Hosea's thoughts: "To the public it may appear as immorality, but to us it is the freedom of God's spirit, which they know nothing of."

The final documentary for "Chronolog" showed Hosea to be an outright, bold-faced liar. And he was.

The Children of God; The Inside Story, Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis, page 113.

Synanon gave us a good example of the reversal of reality: the cult-owned businesses had the Synanon members working 12 to 16 hours per day, seven days a week, for wages that ranged from \$2 to \$25 per week, while the cult leader Chuck Dederich, who lived in idle luxury at their expense, complained that he had to support all of their lazy asses.¹

The ideals publicly espoused by the cult are often the exact opposite of the real practices of the cult in private. For example, [Daniel Shaw wrote](#) of his experiences in SYDA — "Siddha Yoga", the cult of Swami Muktananda:

Social workers are taught early ... the clients' right to self-determination, respect and dignity for all, the innate worth of a human being, respect for uniqueness, and the facilitation of the realization of potential.

Religious cults are skillful in advertising the promotion of these values as the core of their philosophy. ... The bait of these messages is used to attract members.

Once membership is established, the messages are switched to ever-increasing demands for obedience, submission and dependence. The actual value system of a cult is often the antithesis of the system it advertises.

Traumatic Abuse in Cults; An Exploration of an Unfamiliar Social Problem, [Daniel Shaw, CSW](#).

83. Seeing Through Tinted Lenses

Like someone who sees the world through rose-colored glasses, cult members see everything through the filter of the cult's viewpoint. Jesus freaks judge people on

the basis of whether they are seekers, trying to get closer to the Lord. Communists see everything in terms of economics and class struggle. Recovery cults judge people on the basis of their drug and alcohol consumption or abstinence. Most all cults judge people on how well they parrot the cult's favorite dogma and slogans.

After Patty Hearst, the daughter of the Hearst Publishing heir, William Randolph Hearst III, was kidnapped, tortured, and brain-washed by the terrorist Symbionese Liberation Army, she saw her own father as just another rich Capitalist creep who had never cared about the poor people. She saw everything in terms of a revolutionary class struggle, and then she acted on those beliefs, and went out and robbed banks to get the SLA more guns and money.

Similarly, the Moonies see everything in terms of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church fighting against Satan, to reclaim the world for God.

Scientologists see everything in terms of mental malfunctions — they consider anyone who isn't performing up to their standards to be brain-damaged and insane (and in need of expensive Scientology therapy to restore their full potentiality). And if you dare to criticize Scientology, they see that as proof that you are mentally defective, and an "unethical" *Suppressive Person*, too.

Also see this discussion of the phenomenon of "apophenia", which is closely related to this issue: [a letter with the question here](#), and the Wikipedia page with the answer here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apophenia>

84. You can't make it without the group.

- Many cults use the Heaven's Gate rap: "You can't get into Heaven without us. Only our group is going to Heaven."
- The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only 144,000 people — all of them Witnesses — are going to get into Heaven. Members of other religions just won't make the cut.
- Many cults say: "You can't achieve purity, spirituality, or salvation without our group or church."
- Or, "You won't be taken up in The Rapture if you don't belong to our church."
- Or, "You won't survive Armageddon if you aren't in our group."
- Or, "You will never learn the Secrets of the Universe without our Master."
- Or, "You won't be able to attain mental clarity without our meditation, or our chanting program."
- Or, "You won't ever be able to become a 'Clear' or an 'Operating Thetan' without \$100,000 worth of Scientology 'auditing'."
- Or, "You won't be able to defeat the Devil without our help."

- Or, "You won't be able to achieve sanity without our psychotherapy."
- Or, "You won't be able to stay clean and sober without us."
- Or whatever...

85. Enemy-making and Devaluing the Outsider

This is the other side of the coin, "[We are special](#)". Cult members love other cult members, just because they are fellow cult members, and hate critics of the cult. Cult members are supposedly wonderful, moral, intelligent, and enlightened, while non-members are stupid, ignorant, immoral, and disgusting.

Amway very much devalues the outsiders. Amway promoters love to brag that the Diamonds (rich, high-ranking Amway members) vacation in Switzerland and go on buying trips — not shopping trips, *buying* trips — where they go to buy diamonds and jewelry, while the poor non-Amway people have to vacation in America and "squat in the woods".

A council of the Church of England wrote:

Freud has noticed another very important principle in the nature of the love energies in the crowd. In a very significant saying he suggests that in any crowd hate tends to heap up round the circumference. The love energies are focussed inward within the group itself; the forces of hatred are focussed outward toward those who do not belong to the group. We do not necessarily mean by this hatred in the ordinary literal sense; we can however notice this trait in an attitude of exclusiveness in the close-knit group towards those beyond its ranks. Religious groups of many kinds adopt the attitude towards those outside their ranks: "Either you are all out with us, or you are the outcast, the sinner, the person needing conversion, the person with whom we can have no co-operation, unless and until you change and become one of us." The closer the emotional bond within the group, the more this attitude of exclusiveness and non-co-operation develop toward other rival groups.

Moral Re-Armament: A study of the movement; Prepared by the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly, C.A.1129, Church of England, National Assembly, Social and Industrial Council, 1955, pages 24-25.

Those who oppose the cult's program are labeled *The Enemies Of The Good*.

An "*Us Versus Them*" mindset pervades the cult.

There is always a difference, *usually aggrieved*, between "us" and "them".

- "They" don't understand.
- "They" don't know.
- "They" are losers.

- "They" are poor.
- "They" are stupid.
- "They" don't have our guru's revelations.
- "They" don't have our Holy Teachings.
- "They" don't have our doctrines or our wisdom.
- "They" don't have our knowledge, science, or technology.
- "They" don't know what they are talking about.
- "They" have bad motives.
- "They" are not on God's side.
- "They" are all against us.
- "They" are secretly working for the forces of evil.
- "They" are unfair to us.
- "They" tell lies about us.
- "They" have robbed us and cheated us.
- "They" have oppressed us.
- "They" have hurt us and done all kinds of terrible things to us.
- "They" have ulterior motives.
- "They" are opposed to our good works.
- "They" have a hidden agenda.
- "They" are trying to poison people's minds with lies about us and turn people against us.
- "They" have always been trying to stop us from doing good things.
- "They" are evil.
- "They" are on Satan's side.

Those who leave a cult usually immediately become enemies and scapegoats and ostracised pariahs, and contact with them is usually forbidden. Defectors from the cult are viewed as very dangerous enemies because they may encourage more members to leave (by saying true and sensible things about the cult). Those who quit the cult become the ultimate outsiders.

The "Hari Krishna" (ISKCON) cult founder and leader gave us this example:

The conviction that Krishna is all in all is established when one hears the transcendental message from the undisturbed *acarya* with faith and love. One who has no faith in or love for Lord Krishna cannot be convinced of this simple truth. Those who are faithless are described in the *Bhagavad-gita* as *mudhas* — fools or asses. It is said that the *mudhas* deride the Personality of Godhead because they do not have complete knowledge from the undisturbed *acarya*. One who is disturbed by the whirlpool of material energy is not

qualified to become an *acarya*.

Sri Isopanisad, "His Divine Grace" A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, page 96.

There we see many cult characteristics and propaganda tricks packed into just one short paragraph:

1. *Devaluing the Outsider*: People who don't join Prabhupada's religion are fools and asses.
2. And those fools do not have complete knowledge of some esoteric other-worldly undisturbed state of mind. Implication: Prabhupada and his followers do have the knowledge. That's [*We Have The Panacea*](#), and also the claim that the cult has special secret knowledge.
3. And such fools are not qualified to become spiritually elevated beings — *acaryas*. Implication: those who follow Prabhupada are qualified. That's [*The Cult And Its Members Are Special*](#).
4. People who don't believe in the teachings of Prabhupada are "faithless", as if they couldn't have love for and faith in some other deity or religion. That is the propaganda trick of [*The Either/Or Technique — Bifurcation — the Excluded Middle*](#), as in, "Either you believe in my religion, or else you are an atheist."
5. Prabhupada used the tricks of [*Name-Calling*](#) and [*Ad Hominem*](#) too: People who won't believe in what he is selling are "fools", "asses", and "mudhas" who allegedly "deride the Personality of Godhead".
6. Also notice the switcheroo there: When people criticized Prabhupada for being a phony guru with false teachings, he said that they were attacking God — "deriding the Personality of Godhead". That's [*Framing The Argument*](#) in false terms.
7. Notice the propaganda trick of [*Use of the Passive Voice*](#): "*It is said that the mudhas...*" It is said by whom? And what does that unnamed person know?
8. And then we have plenty of grandiose language and vague, flowery phrases — [*Glittering Generalities*](#) — that leave the mind reeling and wishing for something solid to grab ahold of:
 - "The conviction that Krshna is all in all..."
 - "...the transcendental message..."
 - "...from the undisturbed *acarya* with faith and love."
 - "...this simple truth."
 - "...complete knowledge from the undisturbed *acarya*."

And that paragraph was just the first paragraph that caught my eye. That book is loaded with crazy illogical statements like,

All the material planets — upper, lower, and intermediate, including the sun, moon, and Venus — are scattered throughout the universe. These planets exist only during the lifetime of Brahma. ...

Those living beings who reside on higher planets like the sun and the moon, as well as those on Martyaloka, this earth planet, and also those who live on lower planets — all are merged into the waters of devastation during the night of Brahma.

Sri Isopanisad, "His Divine Grace" A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, page 104.

As you might have guessed, the sun and moon are not planets, and they aren't exactly "scattered throughout the universe". And nobody but Prabhupada has found living beings on the sun or moon. But those are minor details compared to the rest of Prabhupada's goofy cosmology — Prabhupada was the cult leader who taught his followers that the Earth is flat, and astronauts never went to the moon, and Prabhupada is the Earth's guru for the next 10,000 years.

Name-calling is one common way to devalue the outsider. Theosophists call outsiders "O.P.'s" — Ordinary Persons.²

Likewise, in an interview, ex-Scientologist Jesse Prince said,

... the world of Scientology itself is a world of hatred. Um, from my very beginning experience in Scientology, I — we learned to refer to people that were not Scientologists as being "raw meat", "wogs", which is a term that means "Worthy Oriental Gentleman" who doesn't have a clue about himself, spirituality or anything like that. So from the very inception, through association with Scientology,

you start to learn to put other people down.

Interview with Jesse Prince, on the Rick Ross website

In Dr. Frank Buchman's cult, "*The Oxford Group Movement*", [non-members were called "pagans"](#) and they were considered to be "unguided" — not controlled by God. Dr. Buchman even declared that those people who would not support his goal of [having a world run by fascist theocracies](#) were "public enemies":

The true patriot gives his life to bring his nation [under God's control](#). Those who oppose that control are public enemies. ...

World peace will only come through nations which have achieved God-control.

Frank Buchman, speaking at Ollerup, Denmark, Easter 1936,

Remaking the World: The Speeches of Frank Buchman, Frank Buchman, page 60.

A corollary to *Devaluing the Outsider* is the demonization of critics and opponents of the cult, and the rationalization of attacks on the cult's enemies. Allegedly, "they" are such terrible people that it is okay to do bad things to them.

"After all, they did it to us first, didn't they?"

[Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler actually rationalized the mass murder of the Jews on the grounds that "the Jews" had attacked Germany first.](#)

Scientology says that it is okay to attack those who oppose Scientology. Scientology declares that enemies of Scientology are "fair game", and that it is "ethical" to commit "overts" against them and "violate their dynamics". In practice this has led to everything from malicious litigation intended to bankrupt the target, to [framing Paulette Cooper for making bomb threats](#), to burglarizing U.S. Government offices and stealing thousands of government files on people who criticized Scientology or who might do so in the future.

Another important corollary to *Devaluing the Outsider* is the devaluation of any information that comes from people outside of the cult. Cult members often refuse to listen to or even consider any independent sources of information that criticize the cult or its leader or its doctrines or practices. The information is automatically considered invalid just because it comes from someone outside of the cult.

86. The group wants to own you.

The cult wants your life. Some cults want all of your money; some want all of your time; most all of them want all of your heart, mind, and soul.

One of the most obvious and visible problems here is "too many meetings". They want to occupy too much of your spare time — like all of it. They have meetings, and then they have classes or "Bible study" or "training", and perhaps also lots of prayer sessions or chanting or meditation sessions, and then they have assemblies and conventions, and then some more meetings, in an endless cycle. And somewhere in the midst of all of that you are also supposed to go out recruiting and/or fund-raising.

The cult also wants to control you. First, they want to control all of your time, and then they will try to control more and more parts of your life: your sex life, your diet, your choice of reading materials, your choice of jobs, your consumption of drugs and alcohol (both legal and illegal), and sometimes even what doctor-prescribed medications you may take.

87. Channelling or other occult, unchallengeable, sources of information.

The cult teaches that members should meditate or pray or hold séances in order to receive messages, information, and teachings from *The Beyond*, or from a higher plane, or from an Ascended Master, or [even from Jesus Christ](#) or [God](#).

A corollary to this is that the cult claims that only it and its practices can give you access that *Higher Reality*.

Another corollary is that the Guru and his inner circle are allegedly far better at making contact with "*The Beyond*" than you are. They can more clearly communicate with "*The Higher Planes*", or "*The Ascended Masters*" (or whatever) than you can, because they have supposedly purified the Doors of Perception, and you haven't. So, whenever their received messages differ from yours, [they are always right](#) and [you are always wrong](#).

Channelled information creates a closed system that is entirely self-referential. You can't argue with an Angel, or an Ascended Master, or a Saintly Spirit who isn't there. All criticism can be deflected by saying that you aren't pure enough, and you haven't done the exercises or practices long enough to have the visions, or hear the voices, and learn the "*Cosmic Truths*" for yourself.

That's a standard cult ploy. They say:

"You can't judge our program until you've tried it."

Just do our practices for a year, and you will see that it is all true."

If you do their program for a year, you will be so brainwashed that you will believe whatever they say.

See the web page on [The Heresy of the 12 Steps](#) for a longer discussion of channelling.

88. They Make You Dependent On The Group.

They make you dependent on the group, financially, emotionally, or socially (or in all of those ways).

- They tell you that you cannot make any major life decisions without their approval.
- Or, they take all of your money, and your checkbook and credit cards. That makes you financially dependent on the cult for food, clothing, medical care, everything, and makes leaving very difficult because you have no personal resources at all remaining.
- Or, they tell you that you cannot live outside of the group.
- Or, they teach you that you are not capable of managing your own life without their guidance.
- Or, they teach you that you cannot get to Heaven without their religion, or their Master, or their teachings.
- And they tell you that you cannot think for yourself.

Cults often encourage their members to regress psychologically — to return to childhood dependency on parents and unthinking obedience and childlike gullibility. Many cults call the leader "Father", and the leader calls his followers "my children".

Cults also make people dependent on the group by taking away all external means of support. Cults routinely confiscate members' bank accounts, credit cards, and any other assets which members may have, thus making leaving the cult very difficult. Often, members are pressured into quitting outside jobs, and just working for the cult (for very low wages, or for no wages at all). The members become dependent on the cult for everything from food and clothing to medical care. Often, the cult then gives members an allowance that is so small that members simply cannot afford to leave — they don't have enough money for a bus ticket or a motel room.

Scientology teaches people that they are basically insane — having been driven insane by memories of past injuries — and that only by getting a lot of expensive Scientology-style psychotherapy can people be restored to sanity.

The Moonies teach people that they have been defeated by Satan and his Evil Ways, and that only the Unification Church can save them from the Devil.

Frank Buchman's Oxford Group cult taught people that they had all been "defeated by sin", and that their thinking was corrupted by sin, and that only Buchman's religion could "restore people to sanity".

89. Demands For Compliance With The Group

This item is pretty obvious. It is in the nature of cults to demand conformity and obedience, and to suppress dissent or independent thinking. And they are pretty extreme about it.

The early Mormon church demanded "Perfect Obedience" — meaning that the believers were expected to obey all orders from their Bishops and higher leaders without question, no matter how extreme the orders were. That even went as far as practicing polygamy on orders from above, and killing hundreds of innocent men, women, and children at Mountain Meadows, on orders.

Many other cults make the same demands for total obedience.

Most cults demand the usual list of things:

1. You must revere the leader.
2. You can't ever leave.
3. You must obey all of the rules.
4. You may not criticize the group or its leader or its beliefs, doctrines, policies, or dogma.
5. You must agree that the cult is right about everything.

And of course cults have some means or other to enforce compliance:

- Cults often start off with simple public criticism of nonconformists and other rule breakers.
- Synanon evolved a system of "contracts" where people were sentenced to any punishment that the group declared.
- And Scientology actually ran fortified and armed prison camps at Gillman Hot Springs and Hemet, California, where unfortunate Scientologists were imprisoned and tortured (given R.P.F. — Rehabilitation Project Force).

- Some cults, like Jim Jones' *People's Temple* resorted to [public beatings and whippings](#), even for the smallest of offenses. And of course they are infamous for shooting those who tried to leave.
- And the Synanon goon squad, "The Imperial Marines" degenerated into beating people too, as well as trying to kill splitters and a lawyer, Paul Morantz, who was suing them for it.

See the item [A System of Rewards and Punishments](#) for more on the subject.

90. Newcomers Need Fixing.

The cult claims that newcomers are flawed and in need of repair or rebuilding by the cult.

- Many cults claim that the newcomers aren't religious enough, or don't pray enough, or aren't devoted to the Lord enough, or haven't been reborn, or haven't been cleansed of sin...
- Other cults claim that newcomers need to fix their minds and bodies by chanting, meditation, yoga, or a new diet (or by all of them).

The founder-leader of the *Hari Krishna* cult (ISKCON) declared:

Chanting Hare Krsna is the easiest process by which to become purified, especially in this age, when people are so dull that they cannot easily understand spiritual knowledge. If one chants Hare Krsna, then his intelligence become purified, and he can understand spiritual things.

The Science of Self-Realization, "His Divine Grace" A. C. Swami Prabhupada, page 30.

That of course also smacks of [Newcomers can't think right](#) and [Trance-Inducing Practices](#). And [Magical, Mystical, Unexplainable Workings](#). Exactly how does chanting *Hari Krishna* "purify" one's intelligence?

- Scientology claims that its newcomers are mentally injured — basically, insane — and in need of much expensive Scientology-style psychotherapy — "auditing" — to fix their minds.
- In Amway, you need fixing because you aren't a millionaire. You are allegedly infected with all kinds of bad attitudes and beliefs that keep you from succeeding in life, but if you become [the abject faithful slave of your sponsor](#), he will teach you how to become a big success just like his upline Diamond is.
- In recovery cults, this item is self-evident. The whole premise of recovery cults is that you need fixing — that you need the group to control you and make you quit doing something, like drinking or drugging too much, or

eating too much, or having a ["wrong attitude" about your childhood or your spouse](#), or something.

Note that the claim that newcomers need fixing automatically places the old-timers in a position superior to the newcomers — the old-timers have been fixed, but the newcomers haven't. So the old-timers are inherently in a position where it is easy to control and command the newcomers, ostensibly because the old-timers have been healed, repaired, purified, or enlightened, and know "The Great Truth", while the newcomers do not.



[Continue to questions 91 to 100...](#)



Footnotes:

[1\)](#) See: William F. Olin, *Escape From Utopia*, for a very good, revealing story about the Synanon "recovery" cult.

[2\)](#) Richard Mathison, *God Is A Millionaire*, page 146.



The Cult Test

Questions 91 to 100

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

91. Use of the Cognitive Dissonance Technique.

In 1950, the psychologist Leon Festinger summarized his *cognitive dissonance* theory: "If you change a person's behavior, his thoughts and feelings will change to minimize the dissonance."

People's behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings are interconnected, and people want to keep them all in harmony. If you force a change in one, it will cause a change in the others. For example, if you force a change in behavior, it will cause a change in the associated attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs. If you change someone's beliefs, it can cause a corresponding change in their behavior.

Once there were intellectuals who thought the mind existed above the body, but that's been blown away by evidence. In fact, it's easiest to change the mind by changing behavior...

== David Brooks, "Pitching With Purpose", New York Times, 1 April 2008.

During the Korean War, American and other United Nations prisoners of war were subjected to Communist "brainwashing". One of the techniques that the brainwashers used was to demand that the prisoners all say whatever the guards and brainwashers wanted them to say, or else the whole group got nothing to eat. And they were always hungry, so the pressure to conform was great. So the prisoners recited:

- Communism is wonderful.
- America is terrible.
- America only benefits the rich, while the poor blacks die for them in foreign places like Korea...

- Communism is the wave of the future, and the most enlightened form of government...

After enough repetition, some of the prisoners started to really believe it. Some even defected, and refused repatriation at the end of the war. And that is an extreme example of the use of cognitive dissonance. Soldiers are extremely reluctant to betray their own country, or their fellow soldiers, by committing treason and going over to the enemy. In comparison, it is much easier to get someone to believe that a new church is a very good thing. So the "new churches" — cults — insist that new members recite the cult's dogma, a lot. And eventually the newcomers start saying, "Maybe there is something to this... Maybe they have a point... Maybe this is true."

How it works is: Since people don't want to think of themselves as habitual liars, constantly saying things that are not true, they will start to imagine that what they have been reciting *really is true*. Problem solved. Now there is no conflict. Now there is no internal pain. Imagining that they are telling the truth is the subconscious mind's answer to the problem. Now, instead of feeling pain, they feel noble, because they are doing great things, spreading new wisdom through the world.

It's really a very common brainwashing and mind-control technique:

"Makem' say it enough times, and they'll start to believe it."

"Makem' go through the motions enough times, and they'll start to think that such behavior is normal."

Similarly, making people do funny or silly or immoral things can have the same effect. While at first the newcomers may feel uncomfortable doing strange things, they will eventually come to believe that such activities are perfectly normal and very spiritual, too. "All of the smart, enlightened people do this." Thus the Hari Krishnas could come to believe that short-changing their donors and customers was "Holy, because it's all God's money anyway." And the Children of God could believe that prostitution was okay, and even honorable, because it brought more money and male members into the cult. "This is true Freedom of the Spirit."

92. Grandiose existence. Bombastic, Grandiose Claims.

"Our leader is the Messiah. Our leader is God reincarnated. Our leader is goodness personified, here to battle evil. We are a new order for a new age. We will save the world, defeat evil, bring world peace, end world hunger, usher in the Millenium, and establish God's Kingdom on Earth."

Cult members can't just be normal good people; they have to be moral titans, playing out grand heroic roles in an epic cosmic moral melodrama. Many members feel that their lives will be pointless and meaningless if they don't play such grand

roles in life — to live an ordinary life and be a normal good person is *"merely meaningless, pointless, existence"*.

The Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists, for example, claim that we will achieve world peace when one third of the people on Earth chant their chant. We get no explanation of how that is supposed to happen; it is just a given. So they claim that they are working for world peace by recruiting more members for their organization, getting more people chanting their chants.

Likewise, the Moonies claim to be bringing the world back to God, saving the world from Satan. They believe that to even get enough sleep is to be derelict in their holy duties. *"Sleep especially was viewed as an indulgence since God never slept in His efforts to save mankind."*¹

The Scientology founder Lafayette Ron Hubbard bragged about his new "Dianetics" brand of psychotherapy with this statement:

"...this new science of the mind or this new philosophy had a significance for mankind that was greater than the discovery of the wheel and equal in significance to the discovery of fire."

And the Scientologist Kelley Preston, John Travolta's wife, declared:

There is a way to handle every part of life with Scientology, and a way to exist that is far beyond any dream that you could ever dream. All of my dreams keep becoming realities and that's very exciting!

<http://www.scientology-kills.org/celebrities/preston.htm>

Millenaral cults see themselves as preparing humanity for the End Time, or acting as a modern Noah's Ark to preserve the lives of a just a small group of special Chosen people.

93. Black And White Thinking

Another aspect of irrationality is absolutism. That is, seeing issues in terms of absolute black and white:

- "You are either with us or you are against us."

- "You are either part of the solution, or part of the problem."
- "If you are not living in accordance with the Word of God, then you are following the dictates of Satan."
- "Either you are a fanatical true believer like us, or else you are an evil hard-boiled atheist."
- "If you are not a super-patriotic fascist John Bircher like us, then you are a godless Communist."
- "Absolutely *ALL* of our leader's teachings are correct. He never makes any mistakes."
- "Since we have the only True Teachings, straight from God, people who criticize our leader or our church are evil beings who are working for the forces of darkness. They are trying to keep us from saving the world. They are trying to keep us from getting into Heaven."
- "Either you are willing to commit your entire life to our cause or else you are a wimp, a weak hand, and a real loser."

The very word "rational" comes from "ratio", a fraction. Absolutists hate fractional and proportional terms. They love absolute words like "always", "never", "all", "and none". They dislike words like "usually", "seldom", "mostly", "generally", and "few", which admit to there often being a few exceptions to the rule. All of which means that absolute rules are not *always* right, and you might actually have to *think*, rather than just let some stereotypes and slogans and simplistic answers rattle around in your head. Fanatics will say, "Quit trying to confuse me," when you point out the exceptions to their absolute rules.

I find it amusing that William Randolph Hearst, who was possibly the most successful newspaper publisher in the history of the USA, said that it seemed that forcing the American people to think was the greatest torture to which you could subject them. So Hearst became a very rich man by publishing newspapers that didn't require people to think.



The following points are extreme cult characteristics, which only a few cults actually practice, but those are the cults that often end up appearing on TV, so a lot of people think these things are necessary practices of all real cults. They aren't. Remember, very, very few cults actually buy remote rural land and machine-guns, and hide in the boondocks...



94. The use of heavy-duty mind control and rapid conversion techniques

like:

- a. sleep deprivation;²
- b. malnutrition;³
- c. drugs;⁴
- d. guilt-induction, especially through guilt-inducing confession sessions or self-criticism sessions;
- e. inducing a sense of powerlessness and helplessness;
- f. indoctrination with "group training" or "group therapy" sessions which feature enforced conformity and group-think;
- g. "time and environment control" —
 - o being kept totally occupied, all of the time, day and night, with cult-oriented tasks, and
 - o seclusion, isolation from outside influences, isolation from outside sources of information, total immersion in the cult;
- h. mind-altering and thought-stopping techniques like prolonged praying, chanting, or meditation, or prolonged repetition of cult dogma, which, when used excessively, induce a state of high suggestibility;
- i. thought-stopping clichés, slogans, and deceptive euphemisms;
- j. bombastic redescription of the familiar — i.e. "loaded language":
 - o We aren't recruiting for the cult, we are "Bringing souls to God" or "helping others selflessly".
 - o We aren't raising money for the cult, we are "Practicing sankirtan" or "Serving the Lord".
 - o We aren't cheating strangers out of money; we are sharing an opportunity for them to Serve the Lord.
 - o He didn't leave the cult; he "went Tai-Tan" or "fell from Grace" or "is trapped in Samsara".
- k. sensory overload and information overload — forcing acceptance of complex new doctrines, goals and definitions to replace the recruit's old values by expecting the new recruit to assimilate masses of information quickly with little or no opportunity for critical examination;
- l. use of the cognitive dissonance technique: behavior, attitudes, beliefs and feelings are interconnected, and if you force a change in one (like behavior), it will force a change in the others (like beliefs, feelings, and attitudes);
- m. social definition of reality — the cult defines reality and what the truth really is and what *good* and *bad* are;
- n. avoidance of negativity and suppression of dissent — "Critical thought is disruptive" — accompanied by encouragement of giddy positivity: "It Works!";
- o. love bombing;

- p. instant community — the cult is your instant new family and instant new trusted friends;
- q. instant hierarchy — you suddenly have some "wonderful" new leaders;
- r. instant intimacy — you shouldn't keep any secrets from your new family or from your new trusted leaders;
- s. appeals to "holy" or "wise" authorities;
- t. personal testimonies of earlier converts;
- u. commitment by default;
- v. contrast identity — *us versus them* — "us good people act like this, and those bad people act like that";
- w. actionizing — putting faith into action — usually by proselytizing, recruiting and fund-raising.

A program like that is brainwashing, pure and simple.

(Please note that a good brainwashing and rapid-conversion program requires most of those things, especially the first 14. Just one or two of them, like sleep deprivation, or being kept busy all of the time, won't brainwash you.)

95. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who leaves the cult.

Cults routinely tell people that they will die or go insane or lose their spirituality or go to Hell if they quit the cult. See the Cult Test question [The Group Implants Phobias](#) for a longer description of such threats and induced phobias.

But some violent cults have gone much further and even killed people who tried to leave the cult. Rev. Jim Jones' People's Temple had a goon squad (called "[The Angels](#)") who beat up anyone who tried to leave, and who found and harassed and threatened those rare few who did succeed in getting out. In the end, they killed almost all of the people who tried to leave the commune in Guyana, along with California Congressman Leo J. Ryan and TV newsmen, and then forced everyone left to commit suicide by drinking cyanide, and shot those few people who refused...

Likewise, both Synanon and the Rajneeshees had heavily-armed goon squads, complete with assault rifles and automatic weapons, to enforce the rules and punish dissidents. Synanon had the *Imperial Marines*, some of whom were charged with the attempted murder of the lawyer Paul Morantz, who had won a case against them. And the Rajneeshees in Oregon had the best scheme of all: They declared their commune to be an incorporated town, so the goon squad became the official town police force.

96. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who criticizes the group.

- Scientology routinely sues its critics, and tries to bankrupt them, either by winning the case or by causing the critics immense, unaffordable, legal expenses. Scientology also has a history of threatening and harassing critics and reporters who print things that Scientology does not like.

Likewise, Scientology routinely smears critics, using whatever dirt they can get on someone. The Scientology founder and leader, L. Ron Hubbard, instructed his followers to attack critics any way that they could — to investigate them and discover any crimes or dirty secrets that could be used against the critics, and, "If you can't dig up any dirt, make something up."

- Synanon's goon squad attacked critics from behind, in the dark, smashing their heads with baseball bats, and then they put a large rattlesnake in the mailbox of the lawyer Paul Morantz who was suing them, and nearly killed the guy.
- Malcolm X was killed for disagreeing with the Black Muslim church leader Elija Muhammed's hatred of white people.
- The People's Temple goon squad would beat up any member who dared to disagree with or criticize the cult leader, Jim Jones.
- And finally, Jeanne Mills, her husband, and their young daughter were all murdered by People's Temple cult members shortly after she published a book, [*Six Years with God*](#), (1979,) that exposed the inner workings of the cult.

Jim Jones' *People's Temple* in Guyana and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's *Rajneeshpuram* in eastern Oregon did more than just threaten critics — they drugged them. After the mass suicide/massacre in Jonestown, investigators found enough Thorazine, Qualudes, and other tranquilizers and downers at Jonestown to keep the entire population whacked out for months. After Rajneesh ran from the law, investigators in Oregon discovered that some dissident members had been exiled to live in remote cabins at the furthest edges of the commune, far from the rest of the members, and kept quiet with drugs slipped into their food.

Scientologists who leave the cult are smeared by using the confessions and revelations that they made during their "auditing" sessions (which is supposed to be confidential psychotherapy). The actor Paul Haggis criticized the way that Scientology treated Amy Scobee, a previous defector, in his letter of resignation from Scientology:

How dare you use private information in order to label someone an "adulteress?" You took Amy Scobee's most intimate admissions about her sexual life and passed them on to the press and then smeared them all over the pages [of] your newsletter! I do not know the woman, but no matter what she said or did, this is the woman who joined the Sea Org [sea-going organization] at 16! She ran the entire celebrity center network, and was a loyal senior executive of the church for what, 20 years? You want to rebut her accusations, do it, and do it in the strongest terms possible — but that kind of character assassination is unconscionable.

<http://www.movieline.com/2009/10/paul-haggis-renounces-scientology.php?page=all>

A British newspaper reporter described the harrassment that he received after publishing an article that was critical of Scientology:

[ED: Former chief reporter Paul Bracchi, who secretly infiltrated the cult, remembers how its followers relentlessly threatened and pursued him in revenge for criticising their deceptive and manipulative methods. Here Mr Bracchi, who now lives in London, tells the chilling story of how he was stalked and intimidated for months afterwards, even receiving a bullet in the post at *The Argus* headquarters in Hollingbury.]

The voice at the end of the line was trembling. "Is that Mr Bracchi?"

"Yes, it is," I replied. The caller could not have been more relieved. I was supposed to be dead. Someone had started a rumour that I had been killed in a fire.

The same people who had tried to obtain my ex-directory phone number, handed out pamphlets attacking me and dispatched an American private detective — an ex-Los Angeles police officer — to Britain to frighten and smear the source who had helped me expose their activities.

Almost daily threatening letters arrived by fax and post at *The Argus* where I used to work.

Messages were left on the answer machine at the home of the managing director. Strangers turned up in his village asking questions about him.

And the culprits behind this campaign of intimidation? Step forward the church of scientology.

Paul Bracchi, *Scientology is not a church or charity. It is, in fact, a cult*, **The Argus**, Thursday 24th May 2007

<http://www.theargus.co.uk/display.var.1422841.0.0.php>

And [Paulette Cooper](#) was even framed for bomb threats by Scientology after she published her book that criticized Scientology.

97. Appropriation of all of the members' worldly wealth.

Members "willingly" donate everything they own to the Church, in trade for a guaranteed ticket to Heaven. Just give your bank account to the church. Literally. You hand over your check book and your credit cards to the Church. (That has the side effect of making you totally dependent on the cult for food, clothing, medical care, everything, and makes leaving very difficult because you have no personal resources at all remaining.) That was the standard operating procedure in Rev. Jim Jones' People's Temple, and still is in Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church.

Scientology confiscates all of your worldly wealth in a clever round-about way: In order to be "cleared", you must take a whole lot of courses of "auditing" to "process your engrams." (Translation: Fix your mind by removing the harmful effects of memories of past injuries.) The first course costs only \$75, to get you started. But the subsequent courses are increasingly expensive. The cost of the higher-level courses ranges from \$8000 to \$77,000. To become a "***Clear***" costs \$128,560, even with discounts. For the upper levels you have to pay *at least* an additional \$250,000.

If you intend to take all of the courses, plan on selling your house and giving the money to Scientology. Literally. That's what Scientology leaders have conned gullible members into doing — mortgage their houses to the hilt and give the money to Scientology. They get members to borrow every penny that they can — to mortgage their entire future — and give it all to Scientology. (And then, after they have been sucked completely dry, Scientology discards them.)

I've already mentioned [the Moonies' racket](#) of pressuring members to buy expensive but worthless trinkets that are supposedly gifts that will comfort their poor deprived dead ancestors.

What was it P.T. Barnum said, about there being a sucker born every minute?...

98. Making cult members work long hours for free.

Do you want to sell books in the airport, or sell flowers on the street corner? Do you want to spend all day, every day, going door to door, begging for charitable contributions for "good causes" like "ending world hunger" or "getting kids off of drugs"? Maybe you would prefer slave labor in one of the many church-owned businesses? Or maybe pimping and prostitution are more your cup of tea, practicing "Flirty Fishing", being a "Happy Hooker for Jesus"?

99. Total immersion and total isolation.

Also known as *milieu control*.

This is one of [Dr. Lifton's 8 Criteria for Thought Reform](#) (brainwashing). This is the purposeful limitation of all forms of communication with the outside world — the control of human communication through control of the environment.

Cult members are usually surrounded by other cult members, and isolated from non-members. Often, members cannot easily communicate with non-members, even if they wish to.

And the cult doesn't just control communication between people; it also controls people's communication with themselves, in their own minds, especially through [control of the language](#).

Sometimes, cult members move into the cult's temple or center, or members go to a remote rural farm or commune or community, where members are always surrounded by other cult members. Hari Krishnas live together at the ashram, and often, so do the 3HO (Yogi Bhanjan's) people. The people of Synanon, the People's Temple, Charles Manson's family, the Branch Davidians, the Rajneeshees, Aum Shinrikyo, the Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate all lived together in some kind of group housing, where they all drove each other progressively crazier, and they all become more and more detached from ordinary reality and common sense until the situation totally blew up, usually in some spectacular manner like murder or mass suicide.

In the more hard-core cults, the members are not even allowed to communicate with nonmembers. Thus, no nonbeliever can plant a seed of doubt in a member's mind by saying negative things about the cult or the leader.

Cult members' access to information is often strictly controlled, to prevent the members from getting any negative information about the cult, or any conflicting or competing information. Miriam Williams, a member of the *Children of God* cult,

wrote that she felt funny when she looked at an outsider's library of books about religion:

The Family had been through a number of book burnings, and we were discouraged from reading anything, especially books such as these, that seemed to hold ancient wisdom.

Heaven's Harlots, My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult, Miriam Williams, page 148.

In the book *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief*, Lawrence Wright describes how one long-time Scientology member became disillusioned with the Church of Scientology and began questioning it:

...Haggis began an investigation into the church.

What is so striking about Haggis's investigation is that few prominent figures attached to the Church of Scientology have actually looked into the charges that have surrounded their institution for many years. The church discourages such examination, telling its members that negative articles are "entheta" and will only cause spiritual upset. In 1996, the church sent CDs to members to help them build their own websites, which would then link them to the Scientology site; included in the software was a filter that would block any sites containing material that vilified the church or revealed esoteric doctrines. Keywords that triggered the censorship were Xenu, OT III, and the names of prominent Scientology critics.

Although Haggis had never used such a filter, one already existed in his mind. During his thirty-four years in the church he had purposely avoided asking too many questions or reading materials that he knew would disparage his faith.

Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief, by Lawrence Wright, page 311.

Scientology has a policy called "disconnect" that requires Scientology followers to write letters to parents and relatives, former friends, and everyone else they know, informing them that they will no longer be communicating with them or their damaged minds unless they too join Scientology and get their heads "clear". That plays into the standard cult teaching — common to most cults — that [the only friends a cult member has are other cult members](#). And it will be true: After destroying all relationships and friendships with non-cult members, it will be true that the only friends the cult member has left are other cult members.

As part of their indoctrination, some Moonies perform a forty-day "condition", a self-sacrificing penance exercise, giving up friends and family for forty days, not seeing them or communicating with them in any way.

In the drug rehab program gone crazy, Synanon,

The Synanon experience began with inductees severing all ties with outsiders for three months, after which they lived in isolated settings and worked in Synanon-operated businesses, all designed to remove them from the influences in the general community that might rekindle their craving for heroin.

Cults; Faith, Healing, and Coercion, Marc Galanter, page 223.

The rationalization for the isolation was to protect people from bad influences that might trigger a relapse, but that isolation also kept people from getting any good or sane or common-sense influences that might have kept the organization from collectively going insane:

The group soon became increasingly self-sufficient by employing its members and monitoring them closely. By the mid-1970s members were drawn into sexually perverse acts, defectors from the group were harassed, and critics of the movement were subjected to violence. An initially enthusiastic public and professional community wondered how the group had gone awry.

Cults; Faith, Healing, and Coercion, Marc Galanter, page 223.

100. Mass suicide.

This one is spectacular, and TV news reporters seem to love it when it happens. But it is actually very rare. When we talk about cults and suicide, we automatically think of cults like Reverend Jim Jones' People's Temple at Jonestown, Heaven's Gate, David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, and The Order of The Solar Temple, but that's about it. Most authorities on cults estimate that there are a couple of thousand active cults in the USA, but most cults just busy themselves with robbing and brainwashing their followers, and getting a lot of grovelling worship of the leader, and they don't kill themselves. But when mass suicides do happen, it reveals just how crazy things can get, and just how powerful "brainwashing" can really be.



Jonestown AP photo



Jonestown



Footnotes:

1) Dr. Arthur J. Deikman reported in his book *The Wrong Way Home, Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society* (page 65), that some Moonies said that their idea of paradise was being able to sleep all they wanted to.

Likewise, Underwood and Underwood reported:

Sleep especially was viewed as an indulgence since God never slept in His efforts to save mankind. Sleep, more than food, thus came to represent the most sought-after "privilege" of a future life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The staff averaged three hours a night; newer family would average six. Recognized but unspoken was a state of constant exhaustion in all righteous children of God.

Hostage To Heaven, Barbara Underwood and Betty Underwood, (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1979), page 70.

2) See footnote 1 above.

3) The Hari Krishnas were routinely both sleep-deprived and malnourished. See Nori Muster's book *Betrayal of the Spirit*.

4) The Rajneeshees in Antelope Valley, Oregon, silenced several vocal dissidents by exiling them to remote cabins on the periphery of the ranch, and then keeping them too stoned to do anything by putting drugs in their food.



The Cult Test Questions

(To go back and forth between the questions and the answers for Alcoholics Anonymous, click on the numbers of the questions and answers.)

- [1. The Guru is always right.](#)
- [2. You are always wrong.](#)
- [3. No Exit.](#)
- [4. No Graduates.](#)
- [5. Cult-speak.](#)
- [6. Group-think, Suppression of Dissent, and Enforced Conformity in Thinking](#)
- [7. Irrationality.](#)
- [8. Suspension of disbelief.](#)
- [9. Denigration of competing sects, cults, religions, groups, or organizations.](#)
- [10. Personal attacks on critics.](#)
- [11. Insistence that the group is THE ONLY WAY.](#)
- [12. The group and its members are special.](#)
- [13. Induction of guilt, and the use of guilt to manipulate group members.](#)
- [14. Unquestionable Dogma, *Sacred Science*, and Infallible Ideology.](#)
- [15. Indoctrination of members.](#)
- [16. Appeals to "holy" or "wise" authorities.](#)
- [17. Instant Community.](#)
- [18. Instant Intimacy.](#)
- [19. Surrender To The Group.](#)
- [20. Giggly wonderfulness and starry-eyed faith.](#)
- [21. Personal testimonies of earlier converts.](#)
- [22. The group is self-absorbed.](#)
- [23. Dual Purposes, Hidden Agendas, and Ulterior Motives.](#)
- [24. Aggressive Recruiting.](#)
- [25. Deceptive Recruiting.](#)
- [26. No Humor.](#)
- [27. You Can't Tell The Truth.](#)
- [28. Cloning — You become a clone of the group leader or other elder group members.](#)
- [29. You must change your beliefs to conform to the group's beliefs.](#)
- [30. The End Justifies The Means.](#)
- [31. Dishonesty, Deceit, Denial, Falsification, and Rewriting History.](#)
- [32. Different Levels of Truth.](#)
- [33. Newcomers can't think right.](#)
- [34. The Group Implants Phobias.](#)
- [35. The Group is Money-Grubbing.](#)
- [36. Confession Sessions.](#)
- [37. A System of Punishments and Rewards.](#)
- [38. An Impossible Superhuman Model of Perfection.](#)
- [39. Mentoring.](#)
- [40. Intrusiveness.](#)
- [41. Disturbed Guru, Mentally Ill Leader.](#)
- [42. Disturbed Members, Mentally Ill Followers.](#)
- [43. Create a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt, and dependency.](#)
- [44. Dispensed existence](#)

- [45. Ideology Over Experience, Observation, and Logic](#)
- [46. Keep them unaware that there is an agenda to change them](#)
- [47. Thought-Stopping Language. Thought-terminating clichés and slogans.](#)
- [48. Mystical Manipulation](#)
- [49. The guru or the group demands ultra-loyalty and total commitment.](#)
- [50. Demands for Total Faith and Total Trust](#)
- [51. Members Get No Respect. They Get Abused.](#)
- [52. Inconsistency. Contradictory Messages](#)
- [53. Hierarchical, Authoritarian Power Structure, and Social Castes](#)
- [54. Front groups, masquerading recruiters, hidden promoters, and disguised propagandists](#)
- [55. Belief equals truth](#)
- [56. Use of double-binds](#)
- [57. The group leader is not held accountable for his actions.](#)
- [58. Everybody else needs the guru to boss him around, but nobody bosses the guru around.](#)
- [59. The guru criticizes everybody else, but nobody criticizes the guru.](#)
- [60. Dispensed truth and social definition of reality](#)
- [61. The Guru Is Extra-Special.](#)
- [62. Flexible, shifting morality](#)
- [63. Separatism](#)
- [64. Inability to tolerate criticism](#)
- [65. A Charismatic Leader](#)
- [66. Calls to Obliterate Self](#)
- [67. Don't Trust Your Own Mind.](#)
- [68. Don't Feel Your Own Feelings.](#)
- [69. The group takes over the individual's decision-making process.](#)
- [70. You Owe The Group.](#)
- [71. We Have The Panacea.](#)
- [72. Progressive Indoctrination and Progressive Commitments](#)
- [73. Magical, Mystical, Unexplainable Workings](#)
- [74. Trance-Inducing Practices](#)
- [75. New Identity — Redefinition of Self — Revision of Personal History](#)
- [76. Membership Rivalry](#)
- [77. True Believers](#)
- [78. Scapegoating and Excommunication](#)
- [79. Promised Powers or Knowledge](#)
- [80. It's a con. You don't get the promised goodies.](#)
- [81. Hypocrisy](#)
- [82. Lying. Denial of the truth. Reversal of reality. Rationalization and Denial.](#)
- [83. Seeing Through Tinted Lenses](#)
- [84. You can't make it without the group.](#)
- [85. Enemy-making and Devaluing the Outsider](#)
- [86. The group wants to own you.](#)
- [87. Channelling or other occult, unchallengeable, sources of information.](#)
- [88. They Make You Dependent On The Group.](#)
- [89. Demands For Compliance With The Group](#)
- [90. Newcomers Need Fixing.](#)
- [91. Use of the Cognitive Dissonance Technique.](#)
- [92. Grandiose existence. Bombastic, Grandiose Claims.](#)
- [93. Black And White Thinking](#)
- [94. The use of heavy-duty mind control and rapid conversion techniques.](#)
- [95. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who leaves the group.](#)
- [96. Threats of bodily harm or death to someone who criticizes the group.](#)
- [97. Appropriation of all of the members' worldly wealth.](#)
- [98. Making cult members work long hours for free.](#)
- [99. Total immersion and total isolation.](#)
- [100. Mass suicide.](#)
- [Bibliography](#)