

# Targets of satire in the hitch hikers guide to the galaxy assignment

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Throughout Douglas Adams' *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* a number of satirical techniques are used to question and condemn often serious and controversial targets of satire. The vices and follies of Arthur Dent- the main character and representative of the human race throughout the novel- are exposed and ridiculed for the entirety of the story. Within the novel, politics, in particular bureaucracy is a target of satire, especially so regarding the unpleasant race of the Bosons.

Skillfully, Douglas Adams manages to address religion in an inoffensive manner using horn-tail satire, highlighting the inconsistencies and faults in religious ideas, and existential questions. With his targets of satire Adams manages not only to entertain, but to enlighten the reader; allowing them to identify a the trivial side of many serious issues and aiding them in thinking from an atypical perspective through the medium that is *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy*. A recurring theme arising in the *Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* is the saturating of the human races follies and vices.

Arthur Dent, a dull, self-centered being, is cleverly used to represent the whole human race, ridiculed for their narrow minded train of thought relative to the universe. Mound Just have to program it to say What? And I don't understand and Where's the tea? - who'd know the difference? "(Adams, 1978, p. 150). Zapped states this referring to a replacement artificial brain for Arthur. This quote uses the knaves and fools satirical technique to ridicule a clueless character. Further, the novel also ridicules humanities relative technological advancement. " What do you mean you've never been to Alpha Centaur'?

Oh, for heaven's sake, mankind, it's only four light years away, you know. I'm sorry, but if you can't be bothered to take an interest in local affairs, that's your own lookout. " (Adams 1979, page 31). By understating the difficulty of space exploration and, this quote from the *Vigor*, -before demolishing the earth- mocks humanity's achievement in this area. As the human race tends to arrogantly proclaim itself the centre of the universe, this quote allows the reader to question the superiority of man and ponder the possibility of far more intelligent and technologically advanced life forms.

Another example where humanity is ridiculed occurs when the " *Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* " states mice were the most intelligent beings on earth. (Adams, 1979, p. 124) " They spent a lot of their time in laboratories running complex experiments on man. In this instance situational irony is used to mock the human race, stating that whilst the humans felt intelligent experimenting on mice, they were in fact the ones being experimented on. Douglas Adams uses the human race and its self-awarded superiority as a target for satire; belittling it and enabling the reader to re-evaluate its position in the universe.

Religion and existential concepts are often satirized along the course of the story. Both the notion of religion and God & the many failed attempts of man to answer existential questions are ridiculed. With the introduction to the *Babel fish*, the *Hitch hikers guide* informs the travelers of the defeat of God by logic regarding the *Babel fish*. " It could not have evolved by chance. It proves you exist, and so therefore, by your own arguments, you don't.

Dear," says God, " I hadn't thought of that," and promptly vanishes in a puff

of logic. " (Adams, 1979 p. ) This section uses travesty to ridicule religious concept, enabling the reader to see the humor without taking offense. Man's many unfortunately failed attempts over centuries to find the meaning of life are also satirized in the novel. " The answer of the great question of life, the universe and everything" " Is.. " " Forty-two. " (Adams, 1979, p. 135) This quote and the section preceding, ridicule man's desire to find an objective answer for the very subjective question of life, the universe and everything whilst allowing the reader to identify the story of this in real life.

By saturating religious and existential concepts, Adams is successful in conveying his views of god and existence in light hearted humor. Also belittled by Douglas Adams satire is politics. Douglas Adams directly satirized the Imperial Galactic government, alluding to politics in general. Though Zapped Feebler, is the president of the Imperial galactic government, he is not described to have any qualities Justifying his position " Zapped Feebler, adventurer, ex- hippy, good timer, (crook? Quite possible), manic self-publicist, terribly bad at arsenal relationships, often thought to be completely out to lunch" (Adams, 1979 p. 3). In describing Zapped Feebler, this quote outlines many features possessed by real corrupt politicians and faults of the political system and the irony in many leadership positions. Adams is very overt in furthering this notion when he writes " the president is very much a figure head" " His Job is not to wield power, but to draw attention away from it". (Adams 1979 p 34) Zapped further states, " If there's anything more important than my ego around here, I want it caught and shot now. " (Adams, 979 p. 78)- Solidifying his egotistical image and enabling the reader to question his suitability for presidency.

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The Vigor race is another medium through which Adams satirized politics, in this instance bureaucracy. The Bosons are described as one of the most unpleasant races in the galaxy who “ wouldn’t even lift a finger to save their own grandmothers.... ” “ Without orders signed in triplicate, lost found, queried, subjected to public enquiry, lost again, and finally buried in soft peat” (Adams, IPPP. 45). The quote uses hyperbole to ridicule bureaucracy for its mindless and unsympathetic processes in an extreme and exaggerated manner.

Adam uses hyperbole and irony to target the Bosons and Zapped Feebler and in turn satirized elements of politics. Over the course of the Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams uses many satirical techniques to convey his opinions through humor. Dam’s comedy allows the reader to look at his targets of satire in a non-conforming and alternative to usual way. He exposes human vices and follies through the clueless and self-centered main character Arthur Dent, and highlights human arrogance by allowing humans to be decided.

Adams’ views on religion surface as he uses travesty to mock religion, and questions the questioning of existential concepts. Finally, Douglas Adams brings to light and ridicules the superficiality of the political system and bureaucracy, allowing the reader to liken this to worldly politics effectively and with humor. The Hitch hikers guide to the galaxy is effective in bringing to light faults and inconsistencies in Douglas Dam’s targets of satire, resulting in a not only entertaining, but thought inducing text for the reader.