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Humor and Enlightenment, Part II: The Theory Applied

Abstract

Part I of this article advanced a new theory of humor, the Enlightenment Theory, while contrasting it with other main theories, including the Incongruity, Repression/Relief/Release, and Superiority Theories. The Enlightenment Theory does not contradict these other theories but rather subsumes them. As argued, each of the other theories cannot account for all the aspects of humor explained by the Enlightenment Theory. Part II shows how the Enlightenment Theory meets challenging issues in humor theory where other theories falter, including failed humor, motivation for humor, tickling, laughing gas, and sadistic humor. Also mentioned are the Enlightenment Theory's application to literary and musical humor and the relationship of wit to humor.

Key Words

enlightenment humor, failed humor, humor aesthetics, humor philosophy, humor theory, incongruity theory, laughing gas mirth, literary humor, malicious humor, musical humor, relief theory, superiority theory, tickling humor, humor wit, Zen humor

1. Introduction

In Part I we summarized the main humor theories that are current and showed how a proposed Enlightenment Theory was more comprehensive. We premised the argument on a broad definition of humor, namely, "any communications, acts, circumstances, or their consequences that elicit mirth," a definition virtually tantamount to "anything that causes mirth." The purpose of such a broad definition is twofold: First, it lends *simplicity* and, second, it extends the gauntlet of challenges to the Enlightenment Theory and extant theories because humor theory must not only address cerebral and artistic humor such as wit and jokes but also the least cerebral causes of mirth, including physical pranks, tickling, and laughing gas. So perhaps one way to prove the Enlightenment Theory's virtues is to show how it applies to many kinds of humor. Thus, this Part II presents brief sketches showing how the Enlightenment Theory accommodates challenges met or unmet by the other main theories.

2. Failed humor

For example, what about the jest that doesn't elicit mirth? Such failed humor challenges the Enlightenment Theory but also confirms it. As mentioned in Part I, Section 5, cognition, particularly understanding the real or fictional world of the wit or joke, must precede laughter, so intended humor fails if there is no or too much cognition. "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear/Of him that hears it, never in the tongue/Of him that makes it." (Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V, Scene II) Anyone who doesn't get the joke is obviously not enlightened

by it, but neither is someone who groans in disappointment because the joke is too corny or obvious, as in: *Question:* "What kind of tea is hard to swallow?" *Answer:* "Reality."

The first such person fails to perceive the incongruity or its significance, while the second person understands the humor but gets no revelation from it. Often the difference between humor that makes millions laugh and that which merely evokes a few smiles is its effectiveness at achieving enlightenment.

The botched joke is also failed humor. Assuming the amateur poorly telling a joke uses the same words as the professional comedian, why should the amateur achieve stares while the professional arouses laughs? The prime difference is joke-telling artistry: the timing, nuances, tone of voice, gestures, etc., and the Enlightenment Theory explains why artistry makes a difference. Just as the insightful, clever, and artful philosopher, Zen master, or Yoga guru provokes enlightenment in students, in contrast to teachers using rote techniques, the artful humorist is more likely to make listeners laugh. Moreover, as explained below in relation to wit, artistry itself can be enlightening.

Though the Enlightenment Theory explains failed humor resulting from lack of cognition, obviousness, poor joke telling, and the like, the other theories don't fare as well. For instance, the Superiority Theory offers no reason why a joke that creates a feeling of superiority might fail to cause laughter. Many verbal incongruities will not cause laughs, but why? Jesus' chiasmus, "So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16) is not funny, while Johnson's and Lincoln's book reviews are. Similarly, many verbal thrusts that help the speaker evade social repression will not cause laughter, but why? And why does a poorly told joke yield blank stares though it boasts mockery and incongruity and vents repressed desires? Why something isn't funny is just as revealing as why something else is.

3. Motivation for creating humor

Another advantage of the Enlightenment Theory is that it can explain motivation for jokes and pranks, while some other theories cannot.

The Superiority Theory explains humorous ridicule because both humorist and listener may glory in their superiority over the hapless object of the jest, even if, as Hobbes notes, the object may be the humorist's former self, as with self-deprecating humor.^[1] Similarly, the Superiority Theory explains motivation for practical jokes that humiliate others, but this theory hardly explains why someone would make a silly face or funny noise since the creator of humor, assumedly craving superiority, is certainly not motivated to look foolish.^[2] (With a silly face or funny noise it is even hard to argue that the humor deprecates one's former self.)

Moreover, whenever the humor is innocuous and devoid of ridicule or other trace of superiority, the Superiority Theory does not persuasively explain motivation.

Likewise, the Repression Theory explains the motive for creating humor that relieves tension whenever one needs to "break the ice." The joke teller, like someone starting a

speech, is motivated to relieve his own tension and relax the audience. Also, the Repression Theory explains the motive for malicious humor as a means of expressing feelings that are otherwise socially unacceptable. But under the Repression Theory, what is the motive for humor when the situation is quite relaxed without ice to break or repressed desire to vent?

In discussing wit, Freud posits that "[T]he motive for the production of harmless wit is usually the ambitious impulse to display one's spirit or to 'show off.'" [3] Of course, even this motive still doesn't explain why harmless wit can evoke laughter.

The Incongruity Theory, though explaining why some things are funny, seemingly does not explain motivation for humor. That is, why create or reveal a literary or behavioral incongruity?

The Enlightenment Theory, however, explains motivation for generating humor, whether resulting in ridicule, relief of tension, or expression of repressed desire. This Theory posits that the humorist is motivated to enlighten others by the social rewards he or she receives as the bearer of enlightenment, the bringer of light. This notion clearly applies to paid professional comedians, but it also applies to unpaid humorists whose cleverness or crudity is rewarded with popularity.

Yet this notion of reward goes deeper than the ordinary social rewards for creating humor. According to Enlightenment doctrines, the goal of everyone's life is enlightenment and the enlightenment of others, which parallels the religious zealot's aim of saving himself and saving others. As the Buddha said, "The greatest gift is to give people your enlightenment, to share it." The joke teller achieves this goal via humor and is rewarded for his or her humor, as acknowledged by the laughter evoked.

4. Victims of humor

The Enlightenment Theory explains the humorist's motive for creating humor, but can it also explain the reactions of humor's victims, the butts of verbal and practical jokes? Here the Superiority Theory initially seems superior. Laughter is enjoyed by the jester and his audience who revel in their superiority over the victim, but under the Superiority Theory the victim has little reason to laugh. This explanation seems persuasive, yet the Superiority Theory does not explain the occasional victim who does laugh. If such a victim revels in the incident, it is not because he or she feels "superior" to another; logically, one can't feel superior to oneself. Though Hobbes applies Superiority to laughter at one's own former infirmities, this exception does not save the Superiority Theory, at least Hobbes' version, in relation to the laughing victim ridiculed because of current infirmities.

A rudimentary Incongruity Theory does not explain why a victim won't laugh at a joke whose incongruity makes others laugh, for a ripe incongruity should make everyone laugh. The Repression Theory accounts for the joke that makes a victim laugh by relieving his or her anxiety and for the objectionable joke that makes the victim cringe by enhancing anxiety.

However, the Enlightenment Theory also has its challenges in relation to victims. Why doesn't a joke that makes everyone laugh except the victim not also enlighten the victim and make him or her laugh, too?

Sometimes the victim does laugh, if very susceptible to humor, that is, if open to enlightenment, especially when the joke is not too humiliating, as when Socrates cheerfully stood during the performance of Aristophanes' "The Clouds," which satirized him. Occasionally even the victim of a practical joke will laugh at the time or later.

But victims are more often annoyed or angered. As discussed above in relation to failed humor, the victim may not laugh because he or she is already well aware of the incongruity, or conversely because he or she doesn't understand the jest, a result not usually applicable to practical jokes, which victims typically understand. No one soaked or tripped can miss the attempt at humor.

Moreover, physiologically, the shock at being soaked or tripped might completely neutralize any feeling of enlightenment, as would humiliation from verbal ridicule. After all, semantically and spiritually, enlightenment is an opposite of humiliation, one connoting elevation and the other debasement.^[4] The humiliated victim is not enlightened in the sense of being relieved of the emotional burdens of Earthly existence; instead, the opposite is true. Such victim is often debased and reduced to false "ego" consciousness because he more keenly feels his own separateness and isolation, the opposite of wholeness and unity that characterize enlightenment.

5. Tickling

Because of our broad definition of humor, mainly based on acts and circumstances eliciting mirth, tickling clearly falls within the definition. After all, if humor includes not only the cerebral machinations of jokes and wit but also slapstick and physical pranks, tickling occupies the same realm as physically induced mirth. In fact, tickling's mock attack often involves more artistry than the rudimentary physical prank or funny face. As Arthur Koestler observed, "The harmless game of tickling . . . has been the stumbling block which made the theorists of the comic give up, or their theories break down."^[5] However, the Enlightenment theory comprehends the hysterics caused by tickling, a laughter caused without mockery; the Repression and Incongruity Theories also help comprehend tickling.

A common assumption is that the touching associated with tickling evokes a primitive, automatic laughing response, perhaps genetically programmed. But that notion is usually false since the same light touching by a snake or spider would cause most people to recoil in horror, especially when caught by surprise. The fun arises when the tickled person discovers that the touching is by a benign creature such as a friend, relative, or pet animal.^[6] We see this from our own experience, since almost everyone has tickled somebody who is asleep, perhaps with a feather or blade of grass. When the tickled person has not fully awakened, the response is typically one of annoyance, as if reacting to a buzzing insect, and only when that person becomes fully aware of the benign cause might he or she start laughing. Laughter in response to

tickling, therefore, confirms the notion that cognition precedes laughter.

Hence the incongruity behind the laughs is that between the benign cause and the hardwired instinctual reaction to a strange or threatening creature. The Repression Theory then supplies the energetic release for the laughter, whereby the tickled person jumps the chasm between revulsion and relief.^[7]

The Enlightenment approach to tickling notes the incongruity and displacement of energy from annoyance to amusement, yet it also posits that the tickled person is being enlightened, that is, reminded that the universe is not always a hostile place inhabited by pests and predators but a joyful one whose current threat is lurking pranksters.

6. Laughing gas

Because smiles and laughs can arise without humor, for example, in the form of feigned or nervous laughter, many theorists have separated humor from its physical reactions and assigned different origins to each. Some theorists have even ascribed different origins to smiles and laughs.^[8]

However, what about laughter not feigned nor induced by artistically created humor, such as mirthful laughs evoked by laughing gas, drugs, and medications? A common assumption is that substance-induced mirth is not a species of humor but merely physically induced laughter. But humor theory is hardly about laughter. Rather it is about "mirth," especially since not all laughter is the result of humor, for instance, nervous or courtesy laughter, and since laughter is only one of several expressions of mirth, including smirks, smiles, and chuckles. So laughing gas laughs are induced by humor because under our humor definition (Part I, Section 2) administering or ingesting such substances are "acts eliciting mirth." Moreover, like tickling, substance-induced mirth is a shipwreck shoal for humor theories, though arguably Enlightenment has the strongest explanation.

The Superiority Theory does not explain all such laughter since no one is necessarily mocked or ridiculed, and the Incongruity Theory is not necessarily helpful since often no obvious incongruity confronts the intoxicated individual, except perhaps in feeling that the world is not the serious place it's said to be. The Repression Theory might sometimes apply since the ingested substance may arguably release tension and anxiety in the form of laughter. But the Enlightenment Theory offers an explanation, namely, that the substance-induced "high" replicates a state of enlightenment in which anxiety is banished and the person is restored to that original lightness of being enjoyed in a world without contradictions. As Sir Humphry Davy, English chemist and laughing gas pioneer, wrote in 1800, laughing gas produced giddiness, intense pleasure, and "sublime emotions connected with highly vivid ideas" in an atmosphere where he was "occupied only by ideal existence."^[9] This is similar to the enlightenment felt by someone high on drugs who laughs at how everyone around him or her is awkward, uptight, mechanical, and "straight," when the world is really "groovy," "smooth," "loose," and "cool."

Enlightenment proves its worth particularly in relation to laughing gas for which Superiority is not apparent, Repression is weak, and even Incongruity struggles. Assuming nitrous oxide produces laughs from the same brain region stimulated by jokes, while engendering euphoria, "sublime emotions," and "vivid ideas," then only Enlightenment clearly applies to this inartistic, direct cause of mirth.

7. Wit and cleverness

A commonsense notion, often true, is that wittier or cleverer jests are funnier, but wit is only one tool amongst many to elicit humor. A scatological jest with little wit more likely elicits a belly laugh than a clever parlor joke, and some humor boasts no cleverness or human agency but merely the *deus ex machina* which generates slips, falls, and other mishaps. So what are wit's virtues?[10]

The first is aesthetic. Unlike the crude sexual or scatological joke, or the mechanical slip and fall, the clever pun, quip, or chiasmus is a work of artistry, sometimes sophisticated, as is the wit in Oscar Wilde's plays. As comedy writers attest, creating a good joke involves careful word selection, the right order of expression, perfect timing, perfect nuance in telling, and, in a comedy routine, the right placement in relation to earlier jokes. The same is true of wit.[11] Creating a witty jest is like writing poetry, and jokes intersect verse in formats like the limerick. Furthermore, ingenious incongruities are objects of aesthetic appreciation.[12]

Second, cleverness can manifest the most pungent incongruities, those that happenstance and other sources of humor can rarely reveal. Cleverness can be used to artfully juxtapose people, things, and situations as could never be realized except in the imagination. The techniques of wit construction, such as reversal, condensation, displacement, and brevity, are all the soul of verbal humor.[13] "I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy."
(Dorothy Parker)

But it's not merely cleverness that draws laughs. Though wit inspires admiration, laughs are mostly generated by the artfully contrived incongruities and the enlightenment revealed by such incongruities. As with the Churchill quip on reincarnating as his wife's second husband (Part I, Section 3), we admire the spontaneity and cleverness of the response that *inter alia* compliments her and their marriage, but we also laugh at the enlightening aspect of his wit, that true contentment arises from enjoying what we already have. This quip also avoided an answer that might have offended his wife or named someone controversial or inappropriate.

Wit has another way of achieving enlightenment: Wit, itself, can foment laughter when we are enlightened by the artful expression of even an ordinary thought. For instance, while meaning to express, "Alcohol has given me much pleasure without seriously damaging my health," Churchill said, "I have taken more out of alcohol than alcohol has taken out of me." This chiasmus is amusing while the underlying thought is boring. Artfully combining incongruous thoughts may be amusing because artfulness itself is often enlightening. As expressed by Falstaff, "I am not only witty in myself, but the

cause that wit is in other men." (*Henry IV*, Part 2, Act 1, Scene 2) That artfulness is enlightening helps explain amusement from rhymes, limericks, chiasmi, and alliteration whenever incongruities are accentuated by the aesthetic order imposed by the device.^[14] Such humor is also achieved by contrasting the aesthetic order with disparate thoughts expressed.

Also, wit's spontaneity and temporality enhances the effect, for incongruity delayed is incongruity diminished, which is also true for other forms of humor.^[15] For instance, Oscar Wilde boasted he could spontaneously talk on "any subject," so a listener suggested Queen Victoria, to which Wilde instantly replied, "The Queen is not a subject."

The converse of wit is the naïveté of unintentional humor from children, the examination of which also supports the Enlightenment Theory.^[16] We laugh when a child reciting the Lord's Prayer says, "Our Father which art in heaven, Harold be thy name." An Einstein anecdote also amuses: His parents were worried because Albert was a late talker. At last at supper one night he broke his silence, saying, "The soup is too hot," to which his relieved parents asked why he hadn't spoken before. Albert replied, "Because up to now everything was in order." Such children's remarks promote enlightenment because they show fresh, undistorted, or unexpected precocious views of the world. We don't laugh because the child's remark releases anxiety or expresses a repressed desire, nor are we merely reveling in our own superiority. We laugh because of the enlightening incongruities expressed in children's remarks, incongruities between children's fresh, naïve perceptions and our more jaded ones. Similarly, a child does not laugh at a funny face because of superiority or anxiety release but rather revels in new expression of an old reality.

8. Literary and musical humor

Humor in literary formats—not just jokes or quips but humorous descriptions, incidents, attitudes, situations, and the like—in a novel or short story, should enlighten just like everyday humor. The element of "incongruity" also remains in literary humor. However, though the analysis of "enlightenment" and "incongruity" does not change in relation to literary humor, the Repression and Superiority Theories struggle to explain such humor. The Repression Theory stumbles because funny events depicted in the literary work generally do not relieve anxiety or the writer's or readers' repressed desires, though its advocates may tenuously argue that the reader may identify with the fictional characters' motives and situations. The Superiority Theory flounders because, when literary humor does not rely on ridicule or depiction of weaknesses, there are nobody else's infirmities to revel in.

Similarly, musical humor, for example, in Haydn's *Farewell Symphony* or the fourth movement of his *The Joke Quartet*, a Victor Borge performance, or a funny musical portrait, is hard to explain via Repression or Superiority unless the depiction involves ridicule. Yet, again, the incongruity and enlightenment are apparent: They come from the composer's uncanny, almost synesthetic ability to paint a portrait or make

a statement using only musical sounds.

9. Sadistic laughter

Another thorny problem for humor theory is sadistic laughter, though malice is often an ingredient of humor. Plato elucidates the mixture of pleasure and pain that lies in the malice of amusement (*Philebus* 50a), and Aristotle describes jokes as a "kind of abuse." (*Nicomachaen Ethics* IV, 8) Though a joke or prank with a victim may still satisfy the requirements of the Incongruity, Repression, Superiority, and Enlightenment Theories, what about the malevolent laugh, smile, or smirk of an evil person who has captured his or her prey? Here superiority clearly reigns, and there is a macabre enlightenment, though no obvious incongruity or repression prevails. But delve further and all the elements are there. Relief from repression or anxiety comes from the realization of triumph, often after strenuous struggle, even one conducted via cunning, not force. The smile may also represent expression of a repressed desire. The incongruity is the victim once strong but now humbled, like someone who gets a pie in the face. And the enlightenment is the realization that in a universe where every human is relatively small, short-lived, and insignificant, one can still also be godlike, even in small triumphs, and that any creature once strong can be humbled.

Jokes, verbal and practical, are often cruel, based on sadistic, sexist, and racist concepts, but cruelty doesn't interfere with Enlightenment. Indeed, cruelty in the form of mockery or malicious prank is sometimes a key to enlightenment because enlightenment, which depends on incongruity and the meeting of contradictions, transcends good and evil, is beyond judgment of right and wrong, and unifies both the "perfect world" and the world of suffering.^[17] After all, in the realm of enlightenment, where every imaginable act, circumstance, or consequence is possible, there is no permanent death or suffering but rather an endless cycle of being and non-being in which life and death are part of one continuum.^[18]

10. Pain and laughter

Suffering, including physical pain, can be a path to enlightenment. As the Buddha said, "I teach suffering, its origin, cessation and path. That's all I teach." So under the Enlightenment Theory, shouldn't pain be compatible with laughter, even though laughter isn't a typical reaction to someone else's pain? A common assumption is that pain negates humor because we don't often laugh when someone in view is seriously hurt, albeit in funny circumstances. However, we don't withhold laughter because enlightenment is antithetic to pain or because pain negates humor but because our concern for the injured or our reaction to blood and gore submerges mirth, or because it is socially inappropriate to laugh.

Nevertheless, once there is psychosocial distance between us and the injured person, laughter emerges. As an example, we laugh at animated cartoon characters who are crushed or burnt, especially since they usually recover.^[19] More relevant, while viewing painful but hilarious accidents on a TV comedy show the audience is freed from the social obligation to show concern for suffering, and the laughs are

exuberant.[20] Also, insensitive people indulging in schadenfreude can still laugh in the midst of others' suffering. As Bergson commented, "Humor demands something like a momentary anaesthesia of the heart." [21] ("Tragedy is a joke we haven't yet figured out." (Garrison Keillor))

Though Incongruity (see Part I, Section 3) and Superiority help explain laughter at others' pratfalls and injuries, the Enlightenment Theory acknowledges the role of suffering in achieving enlightenment and the mirth engendered by an unpredictable universe that allows bizarre circumstances, twisted fates, hubris, and cocksure carelessness to cause painful injuries.

11. Humorous environment

Though humor can emerge from adversity and anxiety, it thrives most where expected, in an atmosphere of wit or frivolity. What is offensive or unnoticed in ordinary life may draw laughs at a comedy club or lighthearted gathering. At a comedy venue with no holds barred, all social opposites— young and old, black and white, male and female, gay and straight—are fair game.

The Superiority Theory does not explain this phenomenon since the same remarks in different venues should elicit the same glory at someone else's infirmity. Why should the same incongruity fuel laughs at a party but fall dead at work? Correspondingly, under the Repression Theory, expressing a repressed desire or alleviating anxiety at work should usually achieve more laughter, more release, than at a party, but it typically doesn't.

Yet the Enlightenment Theory implies that humor flourishes where nourished. Just as enlightenment is best achieved under the guidance of a philosopher, priest, rabbi, guru, master, or sage at a school, monastery, ashram, or other place dedicated to enlightenment, enlightenment from humor is best accomplished in an atmosphere where mirth already prevails. If higher logic is the touchstone of humor, where that logic rules, humor should also thrive. *Student*: "Master, how many years of study with you to attain enlightenment?" *Zen Master*: "Ten." *Student*: "Suppose I study twice as hard?" *Zen Master*: "Then twenty."

That humor thrives where cultivated comports with the facts that play and criticism are frequent ingredients of intentional humor and that humor abounds where play and criticism are encouraged. Though play is not an aspect of accidental or unintentional humor, it is essential for intentional humor.[22] Similarly, criticism in the Bergsonian sense of social correction is an aspect of most humor other than harmless wit. Moreover, both play and critical thought are aspects of enlightenment, for enlightenment is best attained where the established reality is challenged but in a playful atmosphere. The philosophical or spiritual master is often a stern social critic but also one who may rather frisk with sinners than sit with sages. (Matt. 9:10-13, 11:19)

12. Conclusion

We have proposed that humor's aim is enlightenment and

have defined enlightenment in relation to certain doctrines that are neither obscure nor arbitrary. They are preeminent doctrines of philosophical and spiritual traditions established thousands of years ago that are complemented by modern science, particularly quantum physics.[23] This concept of enlightenment has its reflection in Western philosophy in the writings of Plato (*The Republic*), Hegel (*Phenomenology of Mind*), and others. Is it therefore strange that humor's purpose is enlightenment, the end all of striving?

The Enlightenment Theory has numerous advantages. It acknowledges or complements other theories. It explains phenomena that some other theories cannot, such as the full range of physical reactions to humor. And it doesn't fail where other theories falter, for example, the Superiority Theory in relation to "harmless wit" and even the Incongruity Theory which struggles with laughing gas. Additionally, it doesn't divorce laughter, wit, and humor; rather, it unites all kinds of humor, including mockery and harmless wit, and humor created artistically or accidentally, intentionally or unintentionally.

The Enlightenment Theory is the common, connecting aspect of the other humor theories, including release of repression and anxiety, juxtaposition of incongruous concepts, superiority, play, and social criticism, since all these purposes serve enlightenment. This theory may dispel the oft-expressed pessimism about finding a comprehensive humor theory because, arguably, Enlightenment is, in Kuhnian terms, a higher level theory subsuming lower level ones without substantially changing them.

It is Incongruity, more than Repression and Superiority, that points the way to Enlightenment. Incongruity in humor, a necessary condition for all or almost all humor, may sometimes provide more conceptual distance, a greater leap of the imagination, than that of metaphor and metonym, and thus humor may vault over existential boundaries and discontinuities.[24] The absurd logic and juxtapositions of humor, the wild and zany "bisociations," are precisely the means of transcending ordinary thought in much the same manner as Zen Koans.

Unlike the Enlightenment Theory, the Incongruity, Repression, and Superiority Theories lack transcendent qualities and limit the true importance of humor. Only when examined aesthetically and evaluated transcendentally does humor reveal its vital secrets and existential importance.

This unifying Enlightenment Theory is consistent with the source of all jokes, The Cosmic Joke in which God (or The Universe) created mankind in black and white, male and female, young and old, left and right, Jew and Gentile, gay and straight, with all their foibles and eccentricities, having first let man and woman live in paradise before tasting fruit from the Tree of Knowledge.[25] Laughter likely prevailed in that joyful paradise, that enlightened existence beyond good and evil, only to be suppressed once the world was divided into opposites. As Adam may have grumbled to God, "My wife and I were happy for 200 years—then we met."

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Endnotes

[1] Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature* (1650), chap. IX, sec. 13.

[2] Compare the Solomon "humility theory" of humor in Robert Solomon, "Are the Three Stooges Funny? Soitarily!," in *Aesthetics in Perspective*, ed. Kathleen Higgins (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996), pp. 604-10.

[3] Freud, "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious," p. 730.

[4] See, e.g., Christie Davies, "Humor Theory and the Fear of Being Laughed At," *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*, 22, 1-2 (2009), 49-62. Much has been written about "gelotophobia" (fear of being laughed at) but not much about "gelatophobia."

[5] Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1975), p. 79.

[6] Compare Robert R. Provine, "Laughing, Tickling, and the Evolution of Speech and Self," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13, 6 (2004), 215-18. Darwin viewed tickling's convulsions and laughter as reflex actions to an unexpected touching, at least to the extent the precise point to be touched must not be known. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1873), pp. 201-202. As Darwin noted, "a young child, if tickled by a strange man, would scream from fear." *Ibid.*, p. 201. See also Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, pp. 79-81.

[7] Freud, "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, A. A. Brill, trans. (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 734-35 on "Laughter as a Discharge."

[8] See, e.g., P.G. Devereux and Kathi L. Heffner, "Psychophysiological Approaches to the Study of Laughter: Towards an Integration with Positive Psychology," in *Oxford Handbook of Methods in Positive Psychology*, eds. Anthony D. Ong and Manfred H. M. van Dulmen (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007), pp. 233-49; ref. on p. 236.

[9] Humphry Davy, *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical; Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide, or Dephlogisticated Nitrous*

Air, and its Respiration (London: J. Johnson, 1800), pp. 462, 491.

[10] By "wit" we mean "the keen perception and cleverly apt expression of those connections between ideas that awaken amusement and pleasure." www.dictionary.com. "This man I thought had been a Lord among wits; but I find he is only a wit among Lords!" (Dr. Johnson on his unreliable patron Lord Chesterfield)

[11] See Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 1999), which addresses how and why jokes do or don't work.

[12] On aesthetic appreciation of incongruity, see Mike W. Martin, "Humor and Aesthetic Enjoyment of Incongruities," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 23, 1 (1983), 74-85.

[13] Freud, "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious," pp. 740-42, 748-50.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 714, offering a non-aesthetic explanation that attributes the pleasure from such literary devices to "the discovery of the familiar." "Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker." (Ogden Nash)

[15] See Ted Cohen "Humor," in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (3d ed.), eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 425-31, ref. on p. 425. "[T]he celebration of spontaneous and quick humor, the appreciation of wit has some resemblance to the appreciation of artistic improvisation...."

[16] "Unintentional humor from children" means unwitting humor generated by young children, mostly naïve yet sometimes precocious, but not corny playground jokes that children love such as "Why did the belt go to jail? Because he held up a pair of pants."

[17] Compare Berys Nigel Gaut, "Just Joking: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humor," *Philosophy and Literature*, 22, 1 (1998), 51-68, explaining *inter alia* the moralist's arguments that offensive jokes aren't funny; Tanya Rodriguez, "Numbing the Heart: Racist Jokes and the Aesthetic Effect," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 12 (2014).

[18] The Benthamite terminology appearing in Jeremy Bentham, "Of Human Actions in General," in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780), chap. VII.

[19] Lambert Deckers and Diane E. Carr, "Cartoons Varying in Low-Level Pain Ratings, Not Aggression Ratings, Correlate Positively with Funniness Ratings," *Motivation and Emotion*, 10, 3 (1986), 207-16.

[20] See, e.g., W. James Potter & Ron Warren, "Humor as Camouflage of Televised Violence," *Journal of Communication*, 48, 2 (1998), 40-57.

[21] *Laughter*, chap. I, sec. I. "Invented humour deploys various external and internal conventions in order to assure that its incongruities will not be anxiety-producing. . . . Indeed, these conventional markers . . . also call for a kind of

comic distance—an absence of empathy and moral concern for the characters in jokes and satires—that relieves us of worries and anxieties about what is happening to the beings that inhabit the joke worlds and other fictional environments of invented humour.” Noël Carroll, “Humour,” in *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2005), pp. 344-65; ref. on p. 350.

[22] On the Play Theory of humor, see, e.g., Brian Boyd, “Laughter and Literature: A Play Theory of Humor,” *Philosophy and Literature*, 28, 1 (2004), 1-22.

[23] Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (New York: William Morrow, 1979); Amit Goswami, *The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1993).

[24] On “conceptual distance” in metaphor and metonymy, see René Dirven, “Metonymy and Metaphor: Different Mental Strategies of Conceptualization,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, eds. René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), pp. 75-112; ref. on pp. 92-99.

[25] Compare the Adam and Eve rendition in Raymond Smullyan, “Planet Without Laughter,” in *This Book Needs No Title: A Budget of Living Paradoxes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), pp. 153-85; ref. on pp. 176-85. Note John Morreall, “The Comic Vision of Life,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 54, 2 (2014), 125-40.