

Editor's Introduction

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This issue presents theoretical and empirical research of various disciplines (education, philosophy, linguistics, and biology) from various countries (Poland, Nigeria, and the USA), as well as a commemoration of ISHS much loved and esteemed member, Larry Ventis, who lost his life earlier this year battling the corona virus. As usual, a book review concludes the issue.

Paweł Ochwat investigates the role of humor in teaching and educational processes. He shows that humor may be useful in both school and academic settings based on surveys performed in 2016-2017 in the school and academic communities. Among other factors, the researchers examined how humor was used by teachers of secondary schools and academic lecturers in the teaching and educational processes. His analysis concerns the frequency of the use of humor in the teaching and educational processes and its appreciation and understanding by students. Two analyses were performed, separately for teaching and educational activities.

In "Parrhesia, Humor, and Resistance," Chris Kramer takes seriously former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass' response to systematic violence and oppression. He claims that direct argumentation is *not* the ideal mode of resistance to oppression. Aesthetics and logic, playfulness and seriousness, emotion, even anger, and reason are preferable. Douglass provides examples of humorous, sincere parrhesia, oscillating between the lexicon of the dominant sphere and the critical reflection from a trickster on the margins, which Kramer analyses with the help of Michel Foucault's conception of *parrhesia*: courageous truth-telling in the face of powerful people or institutions. He generalizes Douglass's claim by arguing that the humorous parrhesiastes offers a mode of resistance which can subvert oppressive power structures that perpetuate injustice, revealing the fact that humor can be integral in courageous truth-telling.

In "Beyond Joking: A Pragmatic (De)construction of 'Nigerian Realities' in Selected Humour-Evoking Facebook Memes," Temitope Michael Ajayi investigates how the shared linguistic, cultural, situational, experiential and national presuppositions among Nigerians help in teasing out some of the existential phenomena that characterize the country, as projected through humor-evoking memes on Facebook. He concludes that humorous memes do more than instantiating jokes in the Nigerian context: Findings reveal display of materialism and elevated status, gender and stereotyping, marital infidelity, electricity and (un)employment

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problems, religiosity and spiritualization of issues, and exorbitant spending on festivities/ceremonies are some of the social realities found within the Nigerian space as evident in the memes.

Former biologist and independent scholar, John Charles Simon, offers in “Laughter Redefined” an outsider’s view of some of the factors inhibiting progress in finding a scientific theory of laughter’s proximate and ultimate causes. He then advances the Mutual Vulnerability Theory of Laughter, which meets all the criteria he sets for such a theory. On this view, laughter evolved as one of a suite of conscious, nonverbal, vocal communications; and laughter’s most comprehensive and parsimonious definition is a vocal affirmation of mutual vulnerability (“I’d like to remind you that we share some degree of vulnerability.”) This theory answers 26 common questions theories of laughter should answer and is falsifiable through 17 predictions it offers. Simon concludes that until falsified, the Mutual Vulnerability Theory of Laughter should be provisionally accepted as the best working explanation and serve as a roadmap for future inquiries into the remarkable behavior that laughter is.

Earlier this year, we lost to Covid-19 a valuable member of the ISHS, an estimated and much loved colleague, and a personal friend of mine, who enabled the philosophy of humor project I initiated in 2001, when he invited me to be a visiting scholar at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. “In Memoria” is dedicated to Larry Ventis.

Steven Gimbel’s review of my 2019 book, *Philosophy, Humor, and the Human Condition: Taking Ridicule Seriously* concludes this issue of *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal*.

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