

Editorial

Lydia Amir*

The contributors to this issue of the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* come from various places, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark, Canada/Australia, and Lithuania. They also come from diverse walks of life, which may explain the variety of their interests in humor: A retired Reverend spans his career to exemplify the use of humor in Christian ministry, a philosopher and former stand-up comedian formulates, maybe for the first time, the ethical obligation of the audience of joke-telling; a former curator of Karen Blixen's museum analyses the humor of her (or Isak Dinesen's) tales, yet another scholar uses his knowledge of German to find the real source of a quotation attributed to Ewald Hecker from the Darwin-Hecker hypothesis about laughter and tickling. Finally, a review of a socio-semiotic analysis of humor, a new book by Arthur Asa Berger (*Humor, Psyche, and Society*), is given by a linguist.

We begin with "Humor in Church," where Reverend Peter Chave challenges the reputation of the Church for seriousness by affirming that Christianity stands for a holistic view of life, which includes humor. The question of how to incorporate humor in Sunday worship is addressed through examples he gives of his career as a minister. If used in moderation, he concludes, humor has an important place not only in church life but also in a holistic vision of life in general.

In "Owed to a Gricean Earn: Live Comedy and the Ethics of the Appropriately Appreciative Audience," Steven Gimbel shifts the emphasis from the moral responsibility of comic performers to the obligations of the audience. After the punch line, it is the audience who wields the power to reward, punish, or ignore the joke-teller. Gimbel explores the nature of the relationship that holds between the joke-teller, be she a friend or a professional comedian, and explains how the ethical obligation depends upon the context of the joking.

In "Karen Blixen's Humor," Ivan Z. Sørensen notes that the Danish writer, known by the pseudonym Isak Dinesen, wished to be perceived as a humorist; however, critics ignored this aspect of her work. Using the Danish philosophers Harald Høffding and Søren Kierkegaard, and the former's differentiation between small and great humor, Sørensen shows how the humor in her tales is a combination of both, of fun, oblique angles and norm-breaking views but also of an overall view of life.

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In the fourth and last article, “What Did Hecker Say about Laughter? Funny You Should Ask,” Karl Pfeifer inquires into the real origin of the quotation attributed to Ewald Hecker. Hecker is famous because of this quotation, which led to the view known as the Darwin-Hecker hypothesis, namely that laughter induced by tickling and humor share common underlying mechanisms. Pfeifer probes Hecker’s writings to find out what he actually wrote and where he wrote it.

We close this issue with Julija Korostenskiene’s review of *Humor, Psyche, and Society: A Socio-Semiotic Analysis*, Arthur Asa Berger’s new book.

I hope you will enjoy this issue.

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