

Sympathetic Humour and Postmodern Irony in our times. Soothing the Soul vs. sharpening our Rhetorics

Abstract of Course

Ancient cultural models viewed laughter as a source of purification due to its close connection with the comic, in opposition to the tragic, and with the banal or sadness of everyday life (pandemics included!). During the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the science of the comic, with its philosophical, aesthetic and anthropological resources, had to face the challenge of being regarded with suspicion by theology, whose adepts failed, for the most part, to grasp its essence, force and significance. The sinuous history of the integration of smile, even in its angelic form, constitutes a topic of great relevance in present-day circumstances, when cheap irony and public derision has almost entirely replaced the profound, redemptive effects of quality humour. Classical philosophy, patristics and modern thought converge to mark a symbolic trajectory for the sympathetic smile in each of us. A scholarly foray into the area of nowadays laughter which we propose may turn into a life lesson, regarding the universality of this phenomenon: each man, each nation has its specifics in the area of comicology and we should all enrich ourselves with the experiences of others.

As the only human activity that generates more cerebral energy than it consumes, laughter acts as a corrective to the cerebral cortical flow. Positive laughter can charge our energetic “batteries” and help our mental circuits to regenerate. And our ways of academic speaking can improve by adapting such consecrated humorous and ironical techniques.