



**Philosophical Culture
of Laughter and the
Psychology of Humor**

PHILOSOPHICAL CULTURE OF LAUGHTER AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMOR

CULTURA FILOSÓFICA DE LA RISA Y LA PSICOLOGÍA DEL HUMOR

ABSTRACT

The study of the phenomenon of laughter opens up opportunities in understanding the phenomenon of culture, since humor is an important element of culture, reflects the characteristics of national consciousness and attitude, is a means of regulating and preserving social values. The phenomenon of humor in Russian psychology is not fully disclosed, so it is important to turn to philosophy, cultural studies, in terms of which several areas of the study of the comic are of interest for psychology: the comic as deviation from the norm and the destruction of the sign system; distinguishing physiological laughter and social (cultural)laughter; the proportion of emotions and intellect in the comic.

The aim of the research is to reveal the lines of research in philosophy, culturology, sociology, which reflect the problems of human existence, the use of the comic in activity and education.

The analysis makes it possible to assert that the phenomenon of the comic is essential to study in all its manifestations in wholeness and unity: the physiological laughter and the comic laughter, the unity of emotion and intellect in understanding and creating the comic. It has been revealed that humor possesses a powerful potential, allowing the individual not to easily accept the norms and laws of society, but show some flexibility in the interpretation of these norms. To gain a better insight into the comic, it is necessary to take into account the emotional and cognitive component to fit. The results of the research can be useful for educational purposes in the development of programs for the development of creativity and the reduction of stress, the formation of a cultural identity of children and adolescents.

KEYWORDS: the comic, culture, humor, satire, irony, witticism, norms, emotions, cognitions, sign system

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RESUMEN

El estudio del fenómeno de la risa abre oportunidades para comprender el fenómeno de la cultura, ya que el humor es un elemento importante de la cultura, refleja las características de la conciencia y la actitud nacional, es un medio para regular y preservar los valores sociales. El fenómeno del humor en la psicología rusa no se revela por completo, por lo que es importante recurrir a la filosofía, estudios culturales, en términos de que varias áreas del estudio del cómic son de interés para la psicología: el cómic como desviación de la norma y la destrucción del sistema de signos; distinguiendo la risa fisiológica y la risa social (cultural); la proporción de emociones e intelecto en el cómic.

El objetivo de la investigación es revelar las líneas de investigación en filosofía, culturología, sociología, que reflejan los problemas de la existencia humana, el uso del cómic en la actividad y la educación.

El análisis hace posible afirmar que el fenómeno de lo cómico es esencial para estudiar en todas sus manifestaciones en la totalidad y la unidad: la risa fisiológica y la risa cómica, la unidad de la emoción y el intelecto en la comprensión y creación del cómic. Se ha revelado que el humor posee un potencial poderoso, que permite al individuo no aceptar fácilmente las normas y leyes de la sociedad, pero muestra cierta flexibilidad en la interpretación de estas normas. Para obtener una mejor comprensión del cómic, es necesario tener en cuenta el componente emocional y cognitivo. Los resultados de la investigación pueden ser útiles con fines educativos en el desarrollo de programas para el desarrollo de la creatividad y la reducción del estrés, la formación de una identidad cultural de niños y adolescentes.

Palabras clave: the comic, cultura, humor, sátira, ironía, witticism, normas, emociones, cogniciones, sistema de signos

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INTRODUCTION

The issues connected with the investigation of the comic are of etern discussed in russian studies on philosophy, linguistics, sociology: the works by Musiichuk [1], Sychev [2], Kulinich[3], Ryumina[4], Latyshev [5], Karasev[6]. Philosophy of comic and laughter, linguoculturology and humor, sociology of political humor, aesthetics of laughter, cognitive mechanisms of humor in the comic structure, the phenomenon of humor in social and information interaction, and the laughing culture of students as a creative and ontological phenomenon are studied. It is emphasized that laughter is born and exists in the zone of contact: of personalities and social groups, cultures and epochs.

The theories of the comic that unify sciences and highlight different levels of the ridiculous - from the linguistic game to global philosophical constructions - are widely studied in philosophy and, cultural studies, sociology, but serious psychological researches that reveal the phenomenology of humor, age-related features of understanding and creation of comic products are insufficiently carried out. Shcherbakova's research, aimed at studying intellectual mechanisms of humor, is of interest [6]; Artemyeva's study of dialectical actions in understanding of humor by children [8]; normative behavior of children [9].

In foreign science, via comic stories, scholars Ersoy and Turkkan [10] bring the problems with which children face in society to light. Cornelio-Mari [11] emphasizes that cultures, in which children live, exerts an important influence on their interpretation of social problems. Goel and Dolan [12] study the mechanisms of regulation by children of affective experiences of humor under the influence of social norms.

Kellner and Benedek [13], Nusbaum et al.[14] actively studied the effect of humor on cog-

nitive (intellectual) development of children. The use of humor in education, for improving creativity of students, was studied in the works by Boyle and Stack [15]. The work with comic texts containing humor, according to Teske et al. [16], furthers the development of creativity of younger schoolchildren, creates a positive attitude of mind.

METHODS

The methodological basis of the study were:

- Bakhtin's position [17] on laughter culture; Likhachev's studies [18] concerning the laughing world, Karasev's philosophy of laughter [5], the studies of social functions of humor and laughter by Dmitriev [19], of cognitive mechanisms of the structures of the comic by Musiychuk [1].

- basic points of cultural-historical theory of mental ontogenesis by Vygotsky [20].

DISCUSSION

PHYSIOLOGICAL LAUGHING– COMIC LAUGHING: NATURE AND CULTURE

The predominant in the works of scientists is the idea of distinguishing two kinds of laughing: physiological laughing (laughing of the body) and social laughing (laughing of the mind), which are in opposition "nature - culture". The function of "laughter of the flesh" is no more than the expression of elation, while the actual comic attitude to the world is realized in "laughing of the mind" (Karasev). According to Sychev [2], laughter is closely connected with the biological nature of man (vulgar and causeless bodily joy, gluttony, drunkenness, debauchery), is opposed to cultural (civilized, purposeful, honed and reasonable) laughter.

The distinction of the comic, according to E. Aubouin, comes about the course of the unconscious – the conscious, the purposeless – the purposeful, that one can also regard it as a specific kind of dichotomy of nature - culture [21]. Ryumina [4] differentiates the three aspects of laughter: the manifestation of human physiology, the manifestation of his psychic life, and as a phenomenon of culture. The pre-cultural, "psychophysical laughter" is connected with bodily comfort, the comic is viewed as the phenomenon of culture. Sychev [2] also speaks of the division of laughter in

the line of "nature – culture": the laughter of the body and the laughter of the mind. The funny is the phenomenon of psychophysiological order, and the comic, according to Borev [22], has an aesthetic nature and social character.

PHYSIOLOGICAL (NATURAL) LAUGHTER

L.V. Karasev [6] refers silly, low, laughter, the laughter with joy, vital laughter, the laughter of satiety and pleasure to "the laughter of the flesh" or "the laughter of the body". But the bodily laughter stands for nothing but the memory about vital energy, about the enthusiasm of reproducing and playing body. Physiological laughter is externally causeless, while the presence of an object, i.e., something ridiculous which people laugh at, is inherent incultural (social) laughter [4]. Physiological laughter, according to Latyshev [5], can be caused with tickling and the impact of chemical substances: alcohol, narcotics, etc., and also one can refer hysterical laughter, the laughter of psychically unbalanced people to it.

M.A. Kulinich [4] refers a rather wide circle of phenomena to the laughable: chance coincidences, absurd external situations, a clown trick, a funny trick of an absent-minded person, a witty aphorism, an unexpected discovery of inner emptiness and insignificance of a person - anything that can arouse a corresponding language reaction.

HUMOR AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Cultural laughter, the laughter of "the mind", as Karasev thinks [6], is connected with comic evaluation. According to Stolovich [23], the comic is self-disclosure of phenomena and people, the exposure of their true value sense, a contradiction and contrast between the phenomenon and its individual sides with negative value potential and genuine values being common to all mankind.

In the philosophical tradition it is considered that the comic is satirical and humorous and is in three main forms, which are called humor, satire and irony. Hartmann, studying various forms of the comic, speaks about its two subdivisions: hearty (humor) and heartless (satire) cheerfulness [22]. Stolovich [23] also distinguishes two basic forms of the comic: "satiric comicality" and "humo-

rous comicality". Latysh [5] argues that it is impossible to draw boundaries between these concepts: at the best, one can distinguish borderline areas. In Borev's judgement [22], satire and humor are marginal poles of a wide spectrum of various forms of the comic. The intermediate form of the comic is irony. Pure states of humor, satire and irony in real life occur rarely. This is due, first of all, to the fact that the character of laughter is determined by the intentions of the subject, which are difficult for an outside observer to appreciate.

Latyshev [5], singling out sarcasm as another independent form of the comic, believes that it is, but not satire, a marginal pole of all possible forms of the comic.

Ridkozubova [24] subdivides the culture of laughter into irony, caricature, parody, satire and humor, defining the culture of laughter as a cultural and psychological phenomenon, in which the person's ability to comic evaluation of reality is expressed. Ryumina [4] differentiates the following "subcategories" of the comic: humor, wit, irony, satire, parody, caricature, grotesque.

Hence, in philosophical studies one distinguishes humor, satire, irony, sarcasm, wit in the structure of cultural laughter.

LAUGHTER – SOCIAL AND MORAL NORMS

In philosophy, cultural studies, and sociology the comic is often regarded as a divergence from the norm. The discrepancy between the objective features of the object and the existing idea of the norm in consciousness of a man is the fundamental premise of the comic. The dual aspect of the perception of the world and human life has existed already at the earliest stages of the development of culture. In the folklore of the primitive peoples alongside with serious cults, there were also the cults of laughing that ridiculed the ribaldries of the deity. The folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has been explored by Bakhtin [17], who believes that all the laughter forms underwent rethinking, complication, deepening and became the basic forms of expression of the people's attitude, the popular culture (carnival). The carnival temporarily relieved a person of the prevailing truth and existed system, abolished all hierarchical relations, privileges, norms and prohibitions [17]. By means of a timely joke, the laughing

cooled the things down, created by “prohibitive social norms” [19]. In an implicit and explicit form in this “monkey business” there is a critic of the existing world, the existing social relations, social injustice are exposed. The comic appears as a deviation from the social and moral norms. Often this laugh was directed at the laughing themselves [17]. The laughing laughed at himself, at his misadventures and failures [18]. The variance with the norm gave rise to an external comicality (the disturbances of the physiological type of random situations), the variance with the ideal - the value-generalizing comicality, the comicality of internal inferiority, insignificance. The laughing a priori has the ideas of the due, with which the reality with all its imperfections is compared [25]. The social functions of humor in interpersonal communication have been studied by Ziv [26], Bowker [27], Akhmetzyanova [28].

LAUGHTER AS A SIGN SYSTEM

Laughter, according to Likhachev [18], violates and destroys the entire sign system, existing in the world of culture. The sense of the Old Russian parodies consisted in destroying the meaning and ordering of the signs, making them senseless, giving them an unexpectedly irregular meaning, creating a disordered world, a world without a system, an absurd world. The purpose of the parody was the destruction of the sign system of this society and the creation of an absurd world in all respects – the world of “anticulture”, via special intonation, facial expressions, gestures, behavior, conventional clothing and makeup. These signs were used to give the work another meaning, which was absent in the parodied object-the laughing meaning.

Making the word senseless was often used in one of the national Russian forms of laughter- buffoonery [18]. Buffoonery destroyed the meanings of words, distorted their external side, using the wrong etymology, the words were similar in pronouncing. Rhyme united different meanings with superficial resemblance, made the phenomena silly, by making the similar different, depriving the phenomena of individuality, removing the seriousness of the narrated story. In order to destroy the sign system and cause the comic effect, a certain system of phenomena or concepts, that is, the system of words [29], meanings [6], was deliberately constructed. By

destroying humor, something one's own was built: the world of disturbed relations, the world of absurdity, logically not justified relations, the world being free from conventions [18].

EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONSTITUENTS OF THE COMIC

Emotional Constituent of the Comic

Bergson believes [30] that comic does not exist out of a person, laughter is the strongest emotion that has a pronounced “social significance”. The comic is based on a particular sensuous-emotional state, which is initially manifested as a physiological reaction. Sychev [2] believes that laughter as an emotional state is opposed by fear. Fear and laughter can be interpreted as specific types of reaction to physical, moral and social evil.

By the nature of the emotions caused by that or other kind of the comic, laughter is subdivided into: cruel, acrid, tormenting, contemptuous, affecting, fond, sarcastic, tragicomic, refined, crude, healthy, sick. One also distinguishes the types of laughter depending on the level of consciousness of the laughing. Laughter is conscious when a person completely controls the process of perceiving the comic and his emotions about what is going on at present [30]. Comic criticism is emotional: laughter becomes laughter, only when it is connected with a gamut of diverse feelings - from well-disposed reproach to wrathful unmasking [22].

Humor reflects a positive attitude towards man, subject. Humor implies that something positive and attractive stands for the ridiculous, for the flaws that cause laughing. One laughs with humor at the shortcomings of the beloved. In humor, laughter combines with kindly feelings for that it is directed to [1, 31].

Satire is directed towards the negative features of the ridiculed. The purpose of the comic, expressed in the form of satire, is in the struggle with the old and the obsolete [3]. However, the comic does not require heart anesthesia of short duration, the strong emotions (pity, sympathy, etc.) kill laughter. The object of laughable cannot be a crime or misfortune [32], it should not cause sympathy: people's grief, suffering, troubles turn laughter into an ethical unacceptable act.

COGNITIVE ASPECT OF THE COMIC

Wit is defined, first of all, as a mental, cognitive characteristic, manifested in ingenuity by creating ridiculous or caustic expressions, subtlety of the mind. The basic aspect of wit is cognitive. Wit is characterized by a semantic surprise, drawing remote concepts according to the essential characteristics together.

The cognitive aspect of the concept of "wit" is singled out by Churmayeva [33], Luk [34], emphasizing that witisism contains a semantic surprise, a quick reaction of thought to the words of the interlocutor or to the situation.

Wit does not fully enter into the sphere of the ridiculous: its main characteristic feature is the elegance and refinement of speech, the subtle taste, the ability to connect heterogeneous notions and situations in an exact and actual expression[32].

According to Morreall J [35], the theory of excellence is focused on the sense and emotional side of laughter (on emotions included into laughter), the theory of discrepancy is on the cognitive side (on the objects or ideas that cause laughter), the theory of relief - on the physical side of laughter (on the physical form of laughter, as well as its biological function).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of philosophical, cultural and sociological studies conducted by the scholars make it possible to claim that laughter cannot be only the laughter of the mind or the laughter of the body. The investigation of laughter must take into account the existence of various tendencies in the comic (corporeal and rational), the possibility of their intersections, coincidences, mutual influences.

Humor has a powerful potential, allowing the individual not just to adopt the norms and laws of society, but demonstrate some flexibility in the treatment of these norms. Psychologically, laughter allows to relieve a person of the responsibility to behave according to the existing norms in the society [36].

The process of cognition, based on humor, proceeds through the resolution of contradictions and is mediated by intellectual activity. To understand the phenomenon of the comic, with the aim of education it is necessary to take into account the emotional and cogniti-

ve component of the comic. And if humor is primarily conditioned by emotional, mental characteristics of man, wit – by intellectual distinctions, intellectual activity. Since the ability is formed and developed in the ontogenesis of the sense of humor of a particular person, the level of his development will reflect the psychological and age, social, cultural and moral characteristics of man.

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