

Editorial

The *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* welcomes Dianna Niebylski (University of Illinois Chicago) as its Associate Editor.

The present issue holds five articles and three book reviews. The first two articles argue for the need for new epistemologies and/or theories of humor. Riella Morhayim's article, "Towards a Theory of Philosophical Humor Competence," begins by noting that, within the field of philosophy, humor as a tool of inquiry has been underappreciated, or at least undertheorized. While she credits several philosophers historically associated with theories of humor for implicitly considering its epistemological and analytical uses and shows how more recent philosophies of humor have expanded the possibilities for understanding humor's role in philosophical inquiry, she argues for the need to conceive of philosophical humor competence as an epistemic capacity. In the final sections of her article, Morhayim outlines the set of capabilities needed to acquire such competence.

Ron Aharoni of the Technion–Israel Institute of Technology likewise argues for the need for a new theory of humor, though his immediate aim is to account for the comic achievement of Gary Larson, the celebrated creator of *The Far Side*. In "Humor Mechanisms in Gary Larson's Cartoons," Aharoni first challenges humor theory's privileging of verbal jokes, insisting that situations and images can be just as capable of generating comic pleasure. This emphasis is especially apt for Larson's single-panel cartoons, whose humor often depends on visual scenarios, absurd juxtapositions, and the viewer's reconstruction of an implied context. Aharoni contends that existing philosophical, psychoanalytic, sociological, and linguistic accounts illuminate only a limited range of comic phenomena and therefore fall short as comprehensive theories. He then outlines a theory developed more fully in his earlier work. For Aharoni, humor results when a conventional connection between a sign, action, or situation—what he calls its "carrier"—and its expected meaning is disrupted. Causality, intention, responsibility, motivation, conventional meaning, or background assumptions may be detached from the carrier, enabling it to acquire an unanticipated meaning. Rather than simply staging a collision between two meanings, as many incongruity theories propose, Aharoni locates the comic mechanism in the loosening of the relation between meaning and the form that ordinarily conveys it. The remainder of the article applies this framework to a range of Larson cartoons.

In “Humor and Grice’s Cooperative Principle: A Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Comedy Skits by Nigerian Comic Layi Wasabi,” Aishat Lare Hussein and Temitope Michael Ajayi, of the Department of Linguistics and African Languages at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, combine Ruskin and Attardo’s humor theories with British philosopher H. Paul Grice’s Cooperative Principle to explain the rapidly growing popularity of Nigerian comedian, actor, and digital content creator Layi Wasabi. According to the authors, Wasabi, whose birth name is Isaac Olayiwola, has gained fame both in his native Nigeria and among African diasporic communities by combining humor with social critique. In his comedy videos, Wasabi deliberately violates Grice’s four conversational maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—to satirize Nigeria’s socioeconomic and legal institutions. Aware that much of the humor derives from Wasabi’s vocal delivery, the authors include web addresses for the videos discussed alongside their reprints of the skits.

The next article examines the mixture of black humor and whimsy in short stories by Surrealist writer and artist Leonora Carrington, who is currently the subject of multiple museum exhibitions. After a short tour of Carrington’s life as a series of escapes and close calls, in “Whimsy, Misanthropy, Mythology: Leonora Carrington’s Black Humor,” Patrick O’Connor of Oberlin College discusses several of Carrington’s early short stories considering André Breton’s theory of black humor. Borrowing from Hegel the notion of humor as “a revolt of the mind” and from Freud the idea of humor as “the ego’s victorious assertion of its own invulnerability,” Breton’s definition of humour noir involves elements of the absurd, the ironic, and the macabre. Above all, black humor must be devoid of sentimentality and whimsy (“fantaisie”), that is, surprising, unsystematic, willful narrative interruptions. O’Connor acknowledges that Carrington’s surrealist humor was blackly misanthropic, but it included the whimsy that Breton scorned. Turning then to later stories by the artist, the author proceeds to show that during her long exile in Mexico, Carrington’s fictions became less misanthropic and less whimsical, perhaps because of her growing interest in mythology generally and in pre-Hispanic myths particularly.

The final article in this issue is Part II of “Spontaneous Laughter, Simulated Laughter, and Laughter Therapies/Yoga: A Scoping Review,” by Ronald A. Berk, one of the world’s pioneers of laughter research in the medical field. Part I of this comprehensive, eight-part study appeared in the previous issue of this journal (13). Part II, comprising four sections, evaluates both the quantity and quality of research on the effects of spontaneous laughter and laughter

therapies. While previous studies, including Berk's own, have amassed ample evidence of laughter's psychological benefits, Berk begins Part II by summarizing the known potential physiological risks of spontaneous laughter. These include asthma attacks, cardiac and esophageal ruptures, and abdominal hernias. The major aim of this installment, however, is not to dwell on the benefits or risks of spontaneous laughter, but to argue for standardized methods of research into the effects of spontaneous laughter and, especially, laughter therapies. Without further standardization, Berk notes, the results of such studies will remain inconclusive. He concludes with a series of recommendations for improving research on laughter therapies.

Taken together, these articles demonstrate humor's capacity to operate simultaneously as an epistemic resource, an aesthetic strategy, a vehicle of social critique and a subject of medical inquiry.

Three book reviews are included in this issue:

Raymone Barfield's *The Seventh Sentence* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2023), reviewed by Dustin Peone of Mercer University, USA.

Steve Stern's. *A Fool's Kabbalah* (Melville House, 2025), reviewed by Peter Chave, Minister of the United Reformed Church, England.

Thomas Wilk's and Steve Gimbel's *In On the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy* (Volume 4 of *Studies in Philosophy of Humor*. Ed. Lydia Amir. De Gruyter, 2024), reviewed by Giorgio Baruchello of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Akureyri, Iceland.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

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