

Humour Is A Funny Thing

By John Joyce

Everyone has an opinion on humour, and think they have a sense of humour and say they like a good laugh. I recently read one of those modified research articles published by renowned university people saying that laughing is even more of a remedy to body's problems than we once thought. I can picture a bunch of legally obese SUV driving university researchers procuring a fat government grant along with two conferences trips before printing these findings. Now, my Irish Grandmother sitting around a turf fire once said the same thing. Shouldn't courses be given on humour?

Since I have an English accent, people tend to discuss soccer and English humour in my presence. I care little about soccer but I find the subject of humour intriguing. Just like sports, humour follows national boundaries. It is easy money to make fun of other nationalities and a revelation to discover that a nationality actually has a sense of humour. For example... well maybe I had better not go there! By eaves dropping in the European airport waiting areas, and exclusive airline lounges (the latter of which I am persona non grata due to policy a policy change in credit cards) I have come up with the following information bytes:

England believes its humour is the best in not only Europe but also the world. Most of the world outside Europe watches Faulty Towers reruns and says fine. When non English fortyish European business people meet in Brussels or anywhere in the EU except England and the subject of English humour comes up, they gesticulate with either one or two hands 'non', or 'Bitte müssen Sie scherzen', or 'amici dovete scherzare' or even 'es usted serio'. The only humour they find with England is its warm beer, cooking and spelling and on some rainy days, they do not find that funny and are lobbying for next year's meeting to be in the Canary Islands or Barcelona but not Manchester. These European business people that hold these tenets are quite serious and are not trying to be funny which I suppose makes them humorous in their own way. The Germans are delighted to be included in any discussion on humour and point out that the Swiss borrow German humour. The Swiss say, "pardon me" Of course some of these Europeans don't know that 'pardon' is not said by posh people in Manchester!

I wonder if travel induces the cognition of humour? A year or so ago my Chicago bound flight was diverted to a small airport due to high winds. In the non-European airport waiting area (there was no exclusive airline there or even a place open to buy food) a Russian (he was a medical student and I am sure

played chess) said that in Russia it helped to have a sense of humour, as there were so many daily problems. So what he was saying is humour helps alleviate daily problems.

Sometimes we witness *send in the clown syndrome*, when humour is used to cover up a mistake or mistakes. As we know, it does not always work. Did you ever go into the wrong office while looking for your dentist? Was there an embarrassing silence or did someone say something funny? Was that humour? The corporate world does not encourage humour but sometimes, use it as an icebreaker. Maybe the odd dry little chuckle, but no more. It makes sense that the workplace including the class room are in appropriate places for humour.

Humour is a funny thing. It even has its own memory since we gladly recall funny situations years later and are pleased to relive them. Telling a joke requires memory and was once considered an attribute but now is associated with the company's Christmas party when the owner's son tried again to enamour himself. Being witty and quick responding is an admirable trait and encourages a smile and frequently famous people are quoted if they quip anything funny

Do you receive many of those e-mail jokes? Do you like them? Are those funny get-well cards funny? Do you like them? What about April Fool's jokes? Do you like them?

"Humour is a universal language" Joel Goodman

"I used to think that everything was just being funny but now I don't know. I mean, how can you tell?" Andy Warhol

"Humour is a funny thing don't you think?" John Joyce

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