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On Laughter and Its Community Functions in Social Life and Art. Considerations From an Anthropological and Pedagogical Perspective

Abstract

The aim of the study which adopts an anthropological and pedagogical perspective is to reflect on the community functions of art that uses comedy eliciting laughter. The subject of interest is therefore comedy-related laughter perceived as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The article examines various forms of comedy that cause laughter, and discusses their conditions and transformations. Selected examples from the field of art (literature, theater, film, visual arts) are used for exemplification. The considerations presented in the text arose from the questions about the reasons for the marginal interest in comedy and laughter, including in its community functions, in the theory of aesthetic education and in the contemporary discourse of art pedagogy.

Keywords: art, community, comedy, laughter, education.

Wokół śmiechu i jego funkcji wspólnotowych w życiu społecznym i w sztuce. Rozważania z perspektywy antropologiczno-pedagogicznej

Abstrakt

Celem opracowania, w którym przyjęta została perspektywa antropologiczno-pedagogiczna, jest namysł nad wspólnotowymi funkcjami sztuki posługującej się komizmem, skłaniającym do śmiechu. Przedmiotem zainteresowania jest zatem śmiech związany z komizmem jako zjawiskiem społeczno-kulturowym. W artykule poddawane są oglądowi różne formy komizmu wywołujące śmiech, ukazane zostały także ich uwarunkowania i przemiany. Wybrane przykłady z obszaru sztuki (literackie, teatralne, filmowe, plastyczne) posłużyły egzemplifikacji wyводу. Przedstawione w tekście

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rozważania zrodziły się z pytania o powody marginalnego zainteresowania komizmem i śmiechem, w tym w funkcji wspólnotowej – w teorii wychowania estetycznego i we współczesnym dyskursie pedagogiki sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka, wspólnota, komizm, śmiech, edukacja.

Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning; it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint; that is why in great literature (which at the same time deals with universal problems) laughter has the same rights as seriousness; certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.

Bachtin (1975: 137)

Introduction

The considerations presented in the text arose from the question of the reasons for the marginal interest in comedy and laughter, also in its community function, in the theory of aesthetic education and in the contemporary discourse of art education. Pedagogical sciences generally deal with serious problems, especially the transmission and acquisition of knowledge and preparation for work, while it is less common for treatises and reflections to deal with lighter topics such as laughter and comedy. With regard to the latter, Maria Dudzikowa's work *Osobliwości śmiechu uczniowskiego* [*Peculiarities of Students' Laughter*], represents an exception – an indication of the presence of humor within the walls of the school, a remarkable analysis of social relationships in the school classroom, created through the prism of laughter (Dudzikowa 1996). Laughter as a method of working with students is sometimes used in play pedagogy, as it is a natural form of expression that is inextricably linked to play. The themes of laughter and humor also appear in works on therapeutic topics (Desgagnes 2008, Wojtaszak 2014), also in relation to school and student therapy. In the classroom, the student is under constant pressure, while laughter, which allows a view of reality from a certain distance, restores mental balance, relieves stress and fulfills cathartic functions.

Kazimierz Żygulski explains the cathartic function of comedy and the need for collective laughter as follows:

The emergence of a laughter community eliminates the accumulated tensions, frictions and dissatisfaction that inevitably arise in social life at every organizational level and in all forms. [...] Comedy has a cleansing effect, while it is entertaining, it combines this effect with satisfaction, mental relaxation – even if only for a short time (Żygulski 1985).

Laughter in humanistic thinking

Laughter, understood as a physiological process that regulates the effects of tension in the body, can be viewed psychologically as a defense mechanism. As considered in this study, it is also an essential element of human communication in anthropology and sociology. In fact, as humans have evolved as social beings, laughter, a physiological activity, has evolved into a communicative expression in the field of cultural functioning and thus represents an intellectual way of interacting with the environment. Laughter is a specific phenomenon of human nature, which belongs to the body as an activity, but at the same time relates to symbolic reality; laughter is expressed by those who understand the meaning of words or certain behaviors.

The topic of comedy and laughter has been examined countless times over the centuries in the context of emotions, audience attitudes, the mechanisms that lead to laughter, and its effects. The themes of laughter and the comedy that is inextricably linked to it have appeared in humanistic thought since ancient times. The positions of the thinkers are as interesting as they are diverse. Plato, for example, recognized the destructive nature of laughter and expelled from his state the comedians who provoked laughter. Aristotle, on the other hand, who valued humor as a social virtue, believed that laughter belonged only to people and only characterized them, which is why he gave it an important status. The continued importance of the topic is demonstrated by the fact that later thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer, Henry Bergson and many others commented on it. Schopenhauer, for example, believed that laughter was a reaction to the incompatibility between a concrete object and an abstract concept related to it but distinct from it. Bergson (1995) described laughter as a reaction to the discrepancy that arises between intentional human actions and independent behavior of a mechanical nature. He also saw laughter as a means of breaking down barriers between people. In the 20th century, Mikhail Bakhtin and Helmuth Plessner, among others, dealt with the problem of laughter. In interesting reflections on medieval and Renaissance culture, Bakhtin (1975) linked laughter to popular culture/carnival as a contrast to the oppressive feudal culture. Plessner (2004) wrote about laughter in the context of two extreme forms of human existence: laughter and crying. The theme also appears in the reflections of Polish thinkers, including Leszek Kołakowski, who argues that laughter is generally associated with a feeling of joy, so he points to its relaxing effect in extreme situations, but also observes malicious or mocking laughter which hurts. The laughter encoded in art is also the subject of consideration in the field of recent philosophical aesthetics, in Poland, among others, in the thought of Bohdan Dziemiński (1967). Embedded in important categories such as comedy, which is intended to amuse and convey a feeling of cheerfulness, it meets the playful nature of humans. Even through a superficial examination, it is clear that the topic of laughter is viewed from different perspectives, is not clear-cut, and also causes a lot of controversy. However, most positions associate laughter with a positive effect and indicate that it relieves mental tension, relaxes, performs cathartic functions, and integrates the community.

The comic sister of tragedy

Comedy – both in the world and in art – is a phenomenon that has always been present. Its first links with art are found in ancient forms of community of people revealed, for example, during merry feasts, associated with processions, dancing, singing, playing.

Laughter has been anchored in comedy since antiquity. The ancient Greeks noted that tragedy must always be accompanied by its comic sister. But while tragedy was in its essence unchanging and eternal, the face of comedy was not fixed once and for all, but it constantly changes its meaning. The great Greek tragedies are constantly shown on the stages of theaters, their problems are universal and still relevant, but the same cannot be said about comedies. Very few of the classical comedies have survived to this day, especially the works of Aristophanes, the father of comedy in ancient Athens. The few attempts in recent years to stage Aristophanes' comedies on the Polish stage have not met with particular interest among audiences. A more interesting attempt was a modernized version of *The Birds* performed in Lublin in 2005; it was about solving the problem of fanaticism. The performance was enriched choreographically and musically. Mixed in it were:

organ, jazzy trumpet and country bagpipes (Lubusz goat). Bach, DJ and folk wedding song. [...] Precisely composed choreography – especially group choreography – and clowning. Dancing-like dances and elements of acrobatics. Realistic and symbolic gestures. The aesthetics of kitsch and the aesthetics of today's street: coats, suits and bird feathers on the hat. Greek songs reconstructed from two-thousand-year-old papyri and their hip-hop remixes (Wichowska 2006).

This gave the performance a contemporary setting that appealed more easily to today's audiences. This is because the criteria for comedy vary depending on the situation and era; while they point to enduring features that have always been present in people's lives, they also largely reflect sociocultural changes.

Laughter in art primarily reflects reactions to various anomalies in human nature. The characters they embody are funny people. The clumsiness they commit, their strange habits and behaviors, and the situations they find themselves in become the subject of laughter. The characteristics of a fool, a hypocrite, a miser, an envious person provide a pretext for specific – through laughter – stigmatization.

The universality of these qualities, the appearance of similar vices over the millennia, their exploitation through art, including comic art, makes one believe that comedy is essentially a legitimate attitude, a reaction, an answer to the weaknesses of human nature is. It is a transhistorical, eternal phenomenon (Żygulski 1985: 268).

Thus, we have in art a constant procession of laughter-inducing lunatics, people stricken with stupidity, greed, malice, etc., and the educational function is to train the ability to interpret them contextually.

Comedy underestimated in the theory of aesthetic education

Laughter in art triggers the commonality of experience, unites the participants of the collective thanks to specific communication codes, helps to understand reality, therefore has important pedagogical functions and should also be present in the theory of aesthetic education. However, there are basically no references to comedy in this theory; the topic of laughter is rather ignored. Although Stefan Szuman, a pioneer of aesthetic education in Poland, writes:

Life can also become the subject of a funny comedy if the artist in their work conveys to viewers and listeners an image of reality that can amuse them and cheer them up, with his quirky and carefree manner and the humor that radiates from it (Szuman 2008: 252),

but he only assigns educational value to so-called serious art:

True art deals with serious matters, because it is a matter of being. It looks for a "human being" – in a human being. It is not there to amuse and entertain anyone (Szuman 2008: 246).

In accordance with the above statement, he devotes a lot of space to tragedy and avoids art with a comic touch or such elements.

Similarly, Irena Wojnar, the creator of the theory of aesthetic education, defines art through its function in the following way:

Art is the sublimation of life through the transmission of values that are concretized through great works of art, spiritual values humanistic in nature, ensuring the continuity and identity of culture, expressing the "human human being," being "the measure of all things," sensitive, noble, capable of heroic deeds (Wojnar 1984: 22).

Wojnar's concept of education through art is more interested in the problems of tragic humanism than in comedy and learning through laughter and play. When she writes about the great Greek playwrights, she consistently mentions Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, but does not mention the ancient comedian Aristophanes. Even when she writes about Polish Romantics, she includes Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Norwid, but no longer mentions Fredro. Because according to Wojnar, art should sublimate and elevate people primarily through understanding the dramatic or even tragic content. That is why she only occasionally mentions joy-giving art, for example when she talks about the Middle Ages:

An important element of social life was a folk festival, combined with ceremonies organized by primitive and ancient societies, a festival – as a community of experiences, which manifest the joy of life (Wojnar 1984: 93).

Here she is referring to a simple form of playful laughter, free from intellectual and sublimating aspirations.

Thus, laughter, or more precisely comic or satirical works that evoke it, combined with simpler, playful behavior, found no place in classical education through art and no significant pedagogical potential was directly perceived in them. And yet: "laughter too can sometimes be a teaching when you make fun of vices, not people," wrote Ignacy Krasicki in *V. Book of Monachomachia* (1985). The criteria for comedy and ridicule are of course given, changeable, but what is unchangeable is human nature, in which laughter is an encoded element, as is the need for this form of expression in the context of social functioning, i.e. the need for community. Regardless of the omission of the function of comedy in the theory of aesthetic education, introduction to the laughter community occurs in the process of socialization from the child's earliest years.

Bringing laughter into communities through the socialization process

In ancient China, it was believed that a child gained its soul when it smiled for the first time – only then was it given a name. This metaphor points to the importance of laughter in the acquisition of human qualities. Laughter, which fulfills important communicative and integrative functions and builds a culture of social interaction, is also important for the personal development of the individual, as it is one of the child's first reactions to external stimuli and represents an element of the formation of their personality. The different phases of child development are linked to the development of humor and the ability to express oneself through laughter. From the first years of life onwards, the ability to participate in laughter communities also develops. Of course, this ability does not develop spontaneously, but is an important part of the socialization process in which the child is taught to correct their behavior and respond with laughter in accordance with accepted social norms. The function of the educational environment is to point out what is not acceptable to laugh at or what is inappropriate. Education is therefore directly related to social rules and norms, such as the prohibition of laughing at the old, the disabled and the sick, or the prohibition of laughter that causes suffering to others.

A the child grows [writes Żygulski], as they master language and understand the world around them, laughter becomes more and more a cultural response defined by the nature of the nurturing environment (Żygulski 1985: 201).

The earliest childhood community of laughter is limited to the immediate family; the intervention has the character of an internalization of intergenerational transmission. As the child grows, the laughter communities expand to include friend circles. The school as a peer environment plays an important role in the various manifestations and mechanisms of community comedy. The space for the formation of laughter communities is now also the media, which exerts an in-

creasing influence on the formation of a sense of humor and the entry of people, including young people, into certain community circles. Laughter communities also differ according to social roles. Each of these roles and the area in which they are performed (family, social, professional, etc.) determine different behaviors. Everyone also has a different laughing convention. It is therefore clear that the environments in which a child lives differ in terms of the norms and behavior patterns conveyed. However, laughter in its various forms fulfills integrative functions, uniting and characterizing both small and large social groups.

Cultural researchers say that precisely:

the process of human socialization and later life in society is associated with participation in typical laughter communities. Such participation is an important part of overall participation in collective life, in culture. Whoever, in one or another phase of life, does not belong to a laughing community, is always – at least in a certain sense – alienated, their behavior, regardless of the reasons, is viewed by the collective in which they live and act as one that deviates from the norm, often stigmatized (Żygulski 1985: 196).

Bogdan Dziemidok further argues that laughter and the form of comedy that gives rise to it are directly related to the views of the social group from which they originate and fulfill their communal function. He also believes that social differentiation overlaps with differentiation in understanding the sources of laughter. Educational activities that take laughter into account should be located precisely here, including education through art.

Differentiation of comic content

Laughter accompanies people in all roles in which they find themselves in; it is their lifelong need. Of course, it varies depending on the individual, intensity and form of expression: one person laughs at a meaningless joke, another at a sublime content dressed up in intellectual structure. The willingness to laugh and the need for it is universal, but the sense of humor itself or the reaction to comic content varies, depending on, among other things, social status or education. Comic content is created on different “floors” of artistic creativity, from coarse skits to sublime works that require knowledge of specific expressive codes. Leszek Kołakowski writes:

We laugh when we watch films with Laurel and Hardy. It's a good-natured laugh filled with compassion for the poor fellows who absolutely can't walk through a door or move a plate without causing a disaster. Partly similar is sadistic laughter, a vicious and sometimes criminal enjoyment of defeat or the torment of a vanquished enemy. Can these two genres be combined into one genre when they are so emotionally different (Kołakowski 2000: 82).

It is necessary to remember not only the positive function of laughter: cognitive-cathartic (liberating, purifying and leading to the acquisition of truth), but also the existence of a destructive-punitive function (which serves to encourage violence against weaker people or those who deviate from the social norm). The latter should be within the narrow circle of interests and pedagogical efforts to ensure correct attitudes and behavior.

It seems that the reception of comedy does not need to be taught to understand itself, however, this is a false statement. The task of the school is not only to introduce, for example, into the canon of cultural texts as carriers of comic content, the ability to read the type of tricks used, but, above all, to instill in students a critical attitude towards the received content and confront them with their own value system, also with regard to aesthetic evaluation. Art appears here as a very good preventative tool as well as for correcting the wrong, destructive actions of the laughter communities that have already been acquired.

Laughter and comedy in school programs

The child's first training in understanding the role of laughter and comedy in art occurs in preschool age. Little by little, they learn to decipher humor, for example in children's books (an inexhaustible source of comedy are the poems of Jan Brzechwa) or in cartoons. However, the aim is not to simply assimilate the language of comedy, but rather to place it in a larger educational context. An interesting example of educational activities with children that use comic content, stimulate laughter and at the same time lead to mature conclusions are the proposals of the Wrocław School of the Future. As part of educational projects, selected paintings by Pieter Bruegel are used, which make children laugh at first contact and lead to important reflections at the end. They appear in the children's accounts as an attempt to

look at ourselves in a distorting mirror to recognize the manifestations of stupidity – including our own – the thoughtless destruction of forest and water environments, the waging of wars (Łukaszewicz 2021: 168).

Among other things Hieronymus Bosch's "Ship of Fools" was also used in this way, where crew and passengers drank, sang, celebrated and argued and did not care about the fate of the ship. It is a vision of a world in complete decay, in which rules and order no longer apply. Bosch's painting, presented within the framework of the NATURAmY Environmental Education Salon project with the participation of children, became the basis for artistic (ceramic) and theatrical workshops. It provided a specifically artistic way for children to discuss the fools creating today's world:

First, each person writes on 150 plates a few words that we would like to see disappear from the vocabulary of 20th century civilization (bombs, wars, noise, etc.); then we paint a dramatic picture of the mountain of unrest of our century and "lock up" the perpetrators – the world of adults.

The final part begins with putting on clown hats and “sailing” to the place where we once again look at the painting by Master Bosch and as a sign of our resistance to the various manifestations of the stupidity of the adult world – we break the ship-plates (Łukaszewicz 2021: 168).

Through educational activities, the children’s initial simple laughter at the fools on the ship becomes a warning about the end of our world, which must be protected.

In the following stages of schooling, students distinguish between basic, verbal, situational or character comedy. When reading *Don Quixote*, for example, you will not only find many examples of the above-mentioned forms of comedy, but also interesting references to the philosophy of life and practical knowledge of human nature. In high school, attention is paid to aspects of comedy that encourage deeper reflection, such as irony, grotesqueness or satire, which are tools for criticizing the phenomena described.

In more sophisticated literary forms, such as those by Mrozek or Gombrowicz, parody appears as a tool of satire, requiring an intertextual approach. In turn, the poetry of Bolesław Leśmian, Julian Tuwim or Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński contains the grotesque with its encoded worldview attitudes. Wisława Szymborska also plays the role of satirist, especially in the haiku she wrote towards the end of her life. The works of these artists require not only reading engagement, but also specific knowledge of styles and genres or literary means of expression. In school curricula, comedy content is encoded primarily in the canons of reading, knowledge of which becomes the basis for the formation of a common communication code, a code that also creates communities of laughter.

Community functions of laughter

Laughter is a universal phenomenon that occurs in all social groups around the world. Of course, there are clear geographical connections between comedy and laughter communities, expressed, for example, in regional or national communities. However, it should be noted that in the age of globalization, the spread of cultural patterns, their interpenetration to the most remote corners of the world, even comedy content (including that embodied in literary, theatrical, cinematic, fine art or musical works) creates different kinds of transnational laughter communities. An example is the classic film comedies with Charlie Chaplin. In Poland, laughter communities are centered around the comedies of Stanisław Bareja or even a single film, such as *Rejs* by Radosław Piwoński, around which fan clubs, discussion forums of enthusiasts, etc. are created.

At community events, art that inspires laughter works most often for small social groups that exist simultaneously, live in the same culture, and share the same values. However, there is also, and all too often, comedy that excludes people from the community and defends access to it, comedy that is aggressive towards strangers. One could say that this type of comedy is atavistic in nature, when

a community defends its boundaries (physical or just symbolic) against other groups of people who speak a different language, dress differently, follow foreign customs, or profess a different faith. The perception of strangers is often associated with socially functioning stereotypes that are used for comedy and usually lose their *raison d'être* when we get to know them better. Funny, laugh-inducing content is therefore used in a wide variety of areas and also serves the sometimes violent political and social struggle.

Laughter communities in popular culture and the decoding of content

Today's comedy is widely located in the spaces of popular culture, leading to a kind of global unification and circulation of cultural content. This is about the formation of cultural communities with an almost global reach. On the other hand, popular culture draws entirely on the resources of high culture.

The cultural environment in which the viewer of contemporary art operates consists of interconnected elements, copies, reproductions, mirages that overlap and disrupt each other. Parody and its sister irony are present today in literature, film, visual art, and even postmodern architecture. It enters into a multi-level and multi-layered discourse that takes into account tradition on the one hand and contemporary cultural texts that draw from both high culture and mass culture on the other.

The dictionary term for parody is a statement that imitates someone else's style in order to ridicule them. However, contemporaries tend to point to the ironic intertextuality of the parody or to a sophisticated intellectual play with the past. An example would be *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, where we find both plot lines and character types that allude to the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle; where the blind monk Jorge argues about the nature of laughter, a reflection of the writer Borges; there are also numerous references to artists and works that are known from art history, such as the works of Breugel or Bunuel. The problem of full reception here is undoubtedly the shared cultural horizon of broadcaster and viewer, because artists such as the writer Umberto Eco and the director Woody Allen appeal to the viewer's high level of competence. To a viewer with less cultural competence, the comic dimension of their work will be illegible, perhaps bizarre or mannered. Because parody is in fact an extremely elitist form of expression that requires a wide range of knowledge and works in the culture of social groups with a high level of general education.

The categories of comedy, including parody or grotesque as a special type of comedy, are of course assimilated to a certain extent by the student in the course of dealing with the canon of reading – their illustrations are the texts of Witkacy, Witold Gombrowicz or Sławomir Mrożek. Laughter can also occur during much simpler reading, such as Aleksander Fredro. However, these works do not always or even rarely reflect the students' actual experiences. The latter are conveyed to them, especially today, through texts from popular culture. They too become sources of laugh-

ter communities with broad appeal. Contemporary artists therefore use elements of popular culture, often resorting to parody, in the name of the so-called multi-level nature of the work. However, their aim is not to adapt to the viewer's taste or intellectual level, but rather to decipher the content for the more intellectually demanding. In this way, the content of a film, play or book reaches different laughter communities with different levels of preparation for the reception of artistic means of expression, becoming their building blocks and perpetuating the functioning of the environment.

Education for communities of laughter – an update of the theory of aesthetic education

Comedy in art, which is educational (“to teach by entertaining”), which reduces psychological tensions, performs cathartic functions, also integrates the community, creating a common communication code and appealing to shared values. Thus, returning to the problem of using art as an educational platform for the formation of laughter communities, one should ask: what would be the place and function of laughter in an updated formula of education through art? After all, if art is to be a tool of education, we must understand its place and functions also in relation to what is comical, what triggers laughter.

Barbara Kwiatkowska-Tybulewicz, who looks for new ways of education within contemporary art, writes:

This is an open space in which there are undefined places that are created again and again through interactions with the work of art, the artist, another viewer and be expanded. Contemporary art makes people aware that not everything in the world is as it seems at first glance. It shows thought patterns, unfounded stereotypes, unperceived, instilled ways of thinking that shape the perception of reality. It teaches you to subject seemingly uncritical facts to criticism. It teaches to doubt, to consider, to question, to look for explanations and to be suspicious of the most trivial meanings (Kwiatkowska-Tybulewicz 2016: 267).

Modern art often uses irony, parody or the grotesque – specific means of expression for comedy. In this sense, it can be said that the old assumptions of the theory of aesthetic education should be supplemented or strengthened by the assumptions of critical pedagogy. Because laughter stimulates thinking about the world and provides the impetus for a change in attitude towards it (irony, for example, in this view will be an element of the method of achieving clarity in the assessment of a phenomenon and leading to its change). If, at the same time, we ask ourselves what kind of content is presented by art that appeals to comedy, we must note that, all too often, this content is precisely of a warning nature, evoking dystopian situations and images, showing a world in a state of danger and disintegration, a reality before disaster, in which laughter resounds like an alarm signal.

Art continues to create new communities, communities of creators and followers, but also requires the right tools to receive the specific code it uses, since familiarity with the means of expression influences the readability of the message. This is what the above-quoted reflections on parody in art indicate. Sophisticated art with comical features all too often requires interpretive support. It also requires a particularly open exchange of views. At this point it is worth remembering the concept of the aesthetic teacher of I. Wojnar, which would be relevant for understanding art with comic features and the creation of laughter communities through it:

Beyond the information sphere – writes Wojnar about the understanding of art – the way of feeling or interpreting certain works or phenomena is, after all, always true in some way, even if not always correct. True through the subjectivity of feeling, which requires verification precisely in a joint discussion, in confrontation with other ways of interpretation and assessment. The teacher's commentary is of course valuable and necessary for the student, but at the same time the student's commentary becomes no less valuable for the teacher. The discussion-based exchange of views and confrontation of different views and experiences becomes an important method of implementing various art classes based on contact with works of art. Each individual view enriches the interpretation, and indirectly enriches all co-participants in the discussion of experiencing. Thus, both the students and the teacher (Wojnar 1968: 142).

The aesthetic teacher should therefore not be a moralist who is convinced of the correctness of their positions and opinions, but a critical educator who offers the student freedom of expression, including within the community of laughter as a platform for discussion.

An important problem, and at the same time a pedagogical task, is to be able to distinguish and use the form of laughter, which can appear in different manifestations: from gentle and humorous to biting, mocking, malicious. It is about drawing educational attention to the importance of a community's discursive resources. Because laughter, especially when it is the glue of a community of evil, can also be a dangerous tool, an instrument of destruction. So, on the one hand, it stigmatizes stupidity in the name of defending what is noble and valuable; on the other hand, laughter communities sometimes act irrationally against what is noble and valuable. It was this very act of laughter, degrading order and harmony, that troubled Plato, banishing the comedians from his ideal state. There is certainly a need to counter malicious, mocking or rude laughter that occurs in public spaces. Because laughter, that powerful life force of human nature, also holds the potential for destruction. It is an important pedagogical task to work to eliminate communities that arise on the basis of malicious, contemptuous laughter and full of satisfaction at the harm and trouble inflicted on others.

One of the ways to ennoble laughter, to create a community platform for laughter based on erudition and the ability to examine critically, may be through art. The task of contemporary education through art would thus be to prepare audiences to

wisely, consciously both join and create communities of laughter, based on knowledge of the means of expression associated with comedy and the ability to read the codes of meaning that belong to them. The element of laughter, after all – present in the works of the most outstanding cultural artists, ancient and modern, writers, painters, musicians – according to the Greek word γέλιο (gélío) also means to radiate and illuminate.

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