

Candidate F evidence

The Light Side to Dark Humour

"The comic and the tragic lie inseparably close, like light and shadow" - Socrates

Veiled contempt, political agenda and satire are the core of modern entertainment. In reality the mix of perceived intelligence perched on a new age social media soapbox is the cornerstone of our society. A stepping stone to popularity and fame, or merely a means of expressing frustration or emotion in a socially acceptable manner, dark humour is undeniably an art form.

Sigmund Freud even wrote a book – "Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious", focusing on the fundamentals behind our daily humour. I would hate to dissect the anatomy of a joke like he did (taking all the fun out of it!), but I cannot help but be intrigued by the notion that humour is not only a necessary coping mechanism but also a valuable weapon in life's arsenal that is intrinsic to our DNA. On average, it is said, a person will laugh seven times in a ten-minute conversation. Humour is the rope that binds us together, and is proof that we can communicate with each other without using language. Laughing is one of the simplest ways to convey our emotions. Stroke victims may be left unable to talk but they are still able to laugh and cry, able to communicate their basic feelings. The sound of laughter can be recognised worldwide. It defies the language barrier. It is a primitive display of fundamental emotions. Our laughter can be used as a shield, not for hiding behind out of cowardice, but one that, when used sensibly, protects us, nurtures us and prepares us for the future. Self-deprecating humour can be used as a defence mechanism, allowing us to thicken our skin, because when we learn to laugh at ourselves it may relieve the pain when someone else is laughing at us. While clean humour may be expectable in social situations, dark humour can be used as an extremely effective method of managing long-term stress. It is both our defence and our saviour.

Dark humour can deliver a message. It can be subtle, brutal and thought provoking, yet powerful in its honesty - forcing us to consider the taboo subjects, that we would rather shun than embrace. Within the medical world, people can be exposed to distressing situations daily, but despite this they still need to find an outlet for their bone-chilling emotions. Dark humour can allow them to deal with painful passing, stressful situations, and terrible trepidations in their workplace while still communicating normally with their co-workers. In fact, this use of humour is so mainstream that medical students are forced to undergo a training course, teaching them to manage the trauma they may encounter in their future profession. This process is commonly acknowledged as gallows humour, a way of ethically dealing with the horror of their chosen profession. However, "There is a subtle but essential difference between laughing at the dead and laughing at death" *1. Mocking the afflicted is not where the humour lies, but rather thumbing the nose at mortality. Though doctors are not alone in the world when needing to deal with death. A doctor's patient will need to discover a way of coming to terms with his or her ailment. While some may be offended if a person were to make a joke about their condition, others find it reassuring that they are comfortable around them, as well as their illness. In addition to this, people processing a death may suffer from high stress levels and prefer to exchange jokes, rather than talk seriously about it, as it will help desensitize themselves to the situation. Everybody needs a way to cope with the feelings people would not normally address, because if the subject is delivered as a punchline, perhaps it will lessen the blow. Abuse of dark humour could be overlooked, because jokes should be left as jokes. Right? There may be no ill intent, but harm could have been caused and should be addressed. Those adroit at its delivery can feel special, intelligent, even superior. They are a part of an elite few that understand the joke! It allows us to stop, if only for a minute, and shake off the stresses of the day and start fresh tomorrow.

Dark humour can make a change. It is fuelled by oppression, by the lack of power, by sadness and disappointment, by abandonment and humiliation. As a teenager growing up with the legacy of Global Warming, Brexit and the Trump Presidency I could go on and ponder the future of human-kind and whether or not we are prepared to deal with the

implications of our actions, but I've got homework to do. Sympathising with the aforementioned situations is simple as they are commonly publicised through social media, as a means of comedic relief. I truly believe I have been educated more about politics, through Instagram than by my family and teachers. This most likely is not my teachers' fault as there is no need for my physics teacher to randomly complain about Brexit. These issues, although serious, are often portrayed as a joke in the eyes of the internet, but this is not because the younger generation is inconsiderate, nihilistic or lazy. It is because they are trying to make sense of their inheritance.

In conclusion, what can I say? Jokes not drugs? The world without a way to take the edge off, would probably lead us all to a life of insanity. No matter what your method of relaxation is, everybody needs one, and everybody has one. Whether it is baking, reading or laughing, everyone has a way of making the bad seem a little better. Dark humour shields us from the worst aspects of our life, it allows us to share our deepest feelings in a way that would be acceptable in a casual, social gathering. To pacify the darkness in our life perhaps we need to embrace some of it, because if we can acknowledge it, we can strip it of its power. Don't let dark humour hide in the shadows, let it come into the light.

1003 words

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