

# Humour

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# The term „humour“

- from lat. humor / umor, -oris - fluid/humidity
- Ancient and medieval medicine theory of temperaments
- Humorism, or humoralism, was a system of medicine detailing the makeup and workings of the human body
- bodily fluids affect human personality traits and behaviors

humor	season	Element	organ	qualities	Character	Temperament/ characteristics
blood	spring	air	heart	Warm and moist	sanguine	Courageous, hopeful, playful
Yellow bile	Summer	fire	liver	Warm and dry	choleric	ambitious, restless, leader-like
Black bile	autumn	earth	spleen	Cold and dry	Phlegmatic	despondent, quiet, analytical, serious
phlegm	winter	water	brain	Cold and moist	melancholic	calm, thoughtful, patient, peaceful

**Excess of yellow bile were thought to produce aggression, and excess anger reciprocally gave rise to liver derangement and imbalances in the humors, too much blood corresponded to the sanguin type that was considered to be full of joy, hopeful, playful – and so on**

# What happened with the word...?

- Word went to France, then to England (16th century), changed meaning: humour in the sense of mood, temper good/bad humour – excess of certain juices
- 17th century: Ben Johnson (critic & dramatist) transfers the word to the domain of comic - „humours“ - people out of their balance, conspicuously, comic

# humor as a characteristic of personality

- 18th century:

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see Bischofberger, Iren (editor): „Das kann ja heiter werden/Humor und Lachen in der Pflege“/2. Aufl.Bern 2008, S.29ff



# and today?

*„humour is the capacity to meet everyday's difficulties and accidents with serenity for not taking it too much tragical and for being able to laugh at oneself.“* (german definition from the dictionary for foreign words, 1982:316)

*„humour is if you laugh anyway“*

# Humor and it's „use“

- emotion
- cognitive phenomenon
- mind-set

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To spread humour in my working place (change and lighten the atmosphere)

To release conflicts with the help of humour, to cope with hierarchies

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# actual discussion: humor as a characteristic of personality

## **Willibald Ruch (1998): 4 domains for the characteristics of humour**

- cheerfulness: gleefully, foolish, funny
- reason: dry, snarky, comical
- nonsense: absurd, frivolous, bizarre
- crabbiness: sharp, sneering, cynical



# Related to humour, expressions of humour

Related:

derision, irony, comic, parody, sarcasm, self-mockery, mock, joke, cynicism

Written forms:

anecdote, aphorism, ironical comment, limerick, satire, comical lyric

Verbal forms:

Running Gag, joke, quick-wittedness, dry humour, dirty joke

Forms of behaviour:

**foolishness, chuzpe, suffisance**

theatre:

**comedy, droll story, burlesque, cabaret,  
hullabaloo, omedy, farce, grotesqueness,  
slapstic, sitcom**

performer:

**clown, fool, comedian, jester, harlekin, cabaret  
artist, fool**

Visual forms:

**Cartoon, comic, caricature**

# Events and forms related to special situations:

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# Regional and social forms:

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# Laughter as physiological aspect of humour

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# „Laughing is the best medicine“ (popular saying)

The healing effect of laughing:

- reduces the production of stress hormones  
Adrenalin and Cortisol
- Strengthens the immun defense
- Activates breathing
- Liberates hormones of happiness
- Relaxes the facial muscles
- Activates the cardiovascular-system
- Liberates the upper respiratory system



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**„He who laughs last laughs best“  
(proverb)**

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**„Laughter is the nicest way to show  
the dents to your adversary“  
(popular wisdom)**

Laugh can be a bitter medicine as well, humor has a lot of facets, it can involve outlets of frustration and aggression, e.g. cynicism, sarcasm, black humor, derision, but it can also be a coping strategy for tense situations

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# Humour in the care

## Humor in special functions

see Vera Robinson

- **comunicative function** — it can build up trust between nurses/doctors and patients/those in need of care – e.g. with the help of a wink or a playful remark in a first contact, can release strain, stress
- **social function** — can have an equilibrating influence in the strong hierarchies of nursing homes/hospitals (but it can also strengthen hierarchies and express them in a dismissive way)
- **psycological function** — can be an outlet for anger, fear, rage, stress, tension, in case of illness, can relax unsuring situations, (e.g. clowns in children's hospital - a boy that did not talk to anybody anymore got playful and responsive with the help of a clown)



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# Humor in therapy

- Develop a distance to the own disabilities, to re-discover the inner child and a playful being, to accept and discover the own non-rational sides and unperfection, to be more playful in the world
- Exercises to overcome the own shame (see Albert Ellis/ founder of the rational-emotive therapy (RET) shall overcome idealnormative, „One-has-to-thinking“

# Exercises to overcome the own shame (used in humourtherapy)

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# therapeutic humorprocess

- *level 1* – not being able to laugh
- *Level 2* – being able to laugh at the others
- *Level 3* – being able to laugh at myself
- *level 4* – to allow others to laugh at me
- *Level 5* – to laugh at myself together with others

sense for humour gets expressed in situations that get more and more challenging

nach Hirsch, R.D. „Humor in der Psychotherapie mit alten Menschen“ in

„Hirsch/Bruder/Radebold (Hrsg.): Heiterkeit und Humor im Alter“, Kassel 2001

# **Techniques to create humour**

- mirroring
- deformation
- exaggeration
- understatement
- Humorous affirmation
- Eye-contact
- Bodyhumor



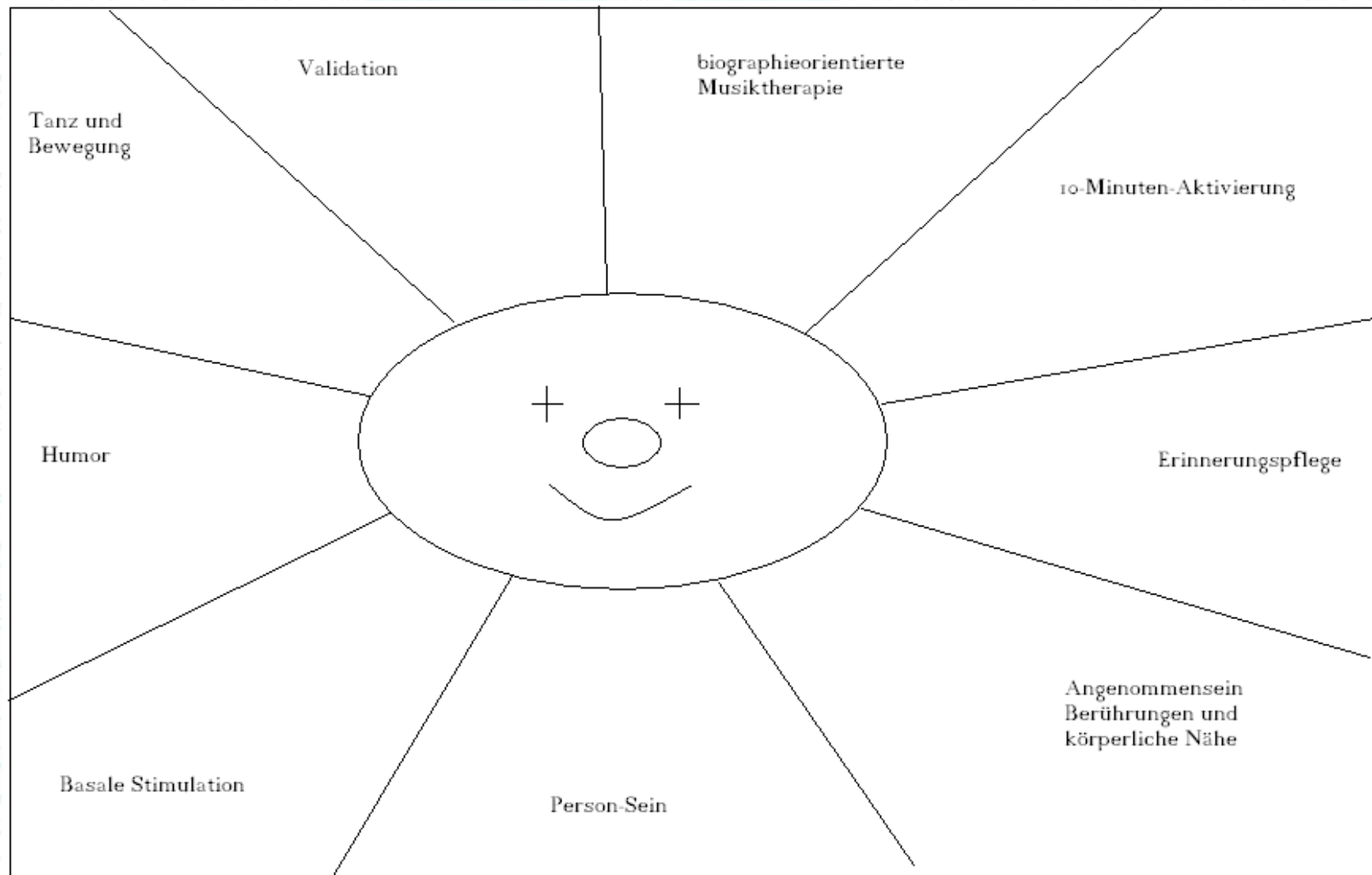
# Techniques to create humour

- Play emotions
- Put together contrasts, contradictory, contra-associating
- Absurd, Nonsense

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# Humour with elderly and/or people suffering from dementia

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# Open, warm eyecontact

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# bodycontact

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# Mirroring of movements and emotions

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**To address to sense organs**

# Use of music

And german humor...?

German humor is if you don't laugh anyway...