

LAUGHTER

Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone. Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Strange, when you come to think of it, that of all the countless folk who have lived before our time on this planet, not one is known in history or in legend as having died of laughter. Sir Max Beerbohn

The world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel. Horace Walpole

Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of Humor itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no Humor in heaven. Mark Twain

A humorous sample: If you want to get a reputation as a wise man, agree with everybody. Sholom Aleichem

Aryn and Bolu were having their weekly session with their superior, Xylon. They were natives of a far distant planet. Its technology allowed them to travel through space at practically infinite speeds. They were part of a small cadre of space explorers who sought out worlds that seemed to have intelligent life and were apparently civilized. This endeavour had turned out to be very successful. It led to the creation of a rather formidable interplanetary organization known as the Inter-Galaxy Communion (I.G.C.) with extraordinarily destructive technologies. Using these means it policed all the known planets, ensuring that not one of them ever posed a threat to any others. Aryn, Bolu and Xylon were in the employ of the I.G.C.

Aryn started by relating his and Bolu's latest discovery to Xylon. "As you know, during our myriad visits to a whole host of planets, we explored the prevalent psychological traits in each and determined whether there had been major changes since our last visit. Initially, these qualities were more or less the same in just about all these planets. Hate, love, greed, ambition, hunger for power, false pride, generosity, mercy, violence, intelligence, cooperation, psychosis and neurosis are some samples of what we found. Fortunately, by using advanced chemical and psychological techniques, we were able to subjugate the negative characteristics and enhance the positive ones. It resulted in benevolent planetary societies that cooperated with each other, especially economically and militarily. The latter development was a key factor that led to the establishment of the I.G.C.

Despite all the success, there is one planet that remains an enigma. Every effort we have expended to alter the behaviour of its citizenry has proved fruitless. They call themselves humans. Their planet is the third one from their sun. By using coercion, we have forced its populace to behave. We have rendered all their weapons ineffective. Yet they continue to behave as they always have. Even when bombs, revolvers, cannons, knives, or any other artifice that can be used to harm or kill are no longer available, they are able and continue to inflict pain, suffering and death, using their skills in the martial arts. They represent a real

challenge that we cannot ignore because sooner or later, they will overcome our impositions, travel into space and cause all sorts of irreversible damage.”

Xylon then interjected. “Are there any other critical personality traits they possess that you have not mentioned”?

Bolu responded. “Since you asked, I will try to provide you with an answer that you may be able to appreciate but that we do not and cannot. We were loath to bring this up because we are completely at a loss to understand it. They have a characteristic that is unevenly shared by all of them. However it is unique. No other species in our galaxy is imbued with it. They call it `a sense of humour`. Other terms they use are, funny, comedy farce, slapstick, amusing, satire, irony, hilarious, droll, witty, joke, grin, laughter and others that we cannot recall. It seems that when they are confronted with something they find amusing, funny or hilarious they often exhibit an anatomical and or a physiological response. They distort their faces in a manner that supposedly indicates that they are amused or pleased. It is referred to as a grin. If what they perceive is something they think is very comical, they frequently make loud sounds that they call laughter, but in reality are not pleasant to our sense of hearing. The only positive slant that we can give is they seem to be able to poke fun and laugh at themselves. They often appear to be self-deprecating. We are at a loss both by their behaviour and this strange phenomenon they call laughter.”

The atmosphere that permeated the room and that emanated from the three of them was decidedly gloomy. Finally, Xylon spoke.

“You are right. Something must be done. I wonder if there is a link between their objectionable behaviour and this incomprehensible singularity called laughter. Is laughter the cause of their war-like attitude or is this way of behaving responsible for laughter? What if we become imbued with laughter? Will it change us into war-like beings? We must learn everything we can about it, especially if laughter turns out to be as dangerous as it might be. I strongly recommend that we embark on lines of research. Let us isolate two groups. With the first, by using our advanced techniques, let us eliminate their propensity to laugh. Will that change their tendency to be violent? With the second, let us eliminate their proclivity for violence. Will they stop laughing?”

The experiments were carried out. Much to the chagrin of Aryn, Bou and Xylon, the results showed that nothing had changed. The I.G.C. found itself in a conundrum. The only solution appeared to be the elimination of the human race. This was totally against its credo.

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