

Researcher identifies just 8 patterns as the cause of all humor

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Evolutionary theorist Alastair Clarke has today published details of eight patterns he claims to be the basis of all the humour that has ever been imagined or expressed, regardless of civilization, culture or personal taste.

Clarke has stated before that [humour](#) is based on the surprise recognition of patterns but this is the first time he has identified the precise nature of the patterns involved, addressing the deceptively simple unit and context relationships at their foundation. His research goes on to demonstrate the universality of the theory by showing how these few basic patterns are recognized in more than a hundred different types of humour.

Clarke explains: "One of the most beautiful things about the theory is that, while denying all previous theories, it also unites them for the first time. For decades researchers have concentrated on limited areas of humour and have each argued for causality based on their specific interest. Now that we have [pattern recognition theory](#), all previous explanations are accommodated by a single overarching concept present in all of them.

"The eight patterns divide into two main categories. The first four are patterns of fidelity, by which we recognize the repetition of units within the same context, and the second four are patterns of magnitude, by which we recognize the same unit repeated in multiple contexts.

"What this all means is that the basic faculty of pattern recognition equips us to compare multiple units for their appropriateness within a certain context, effectively selecting the best tool for the job, and then to apply our chosen unit to as wide a range of contexts as possible, effectively discovering the largest number of jobs that tool is good for.

"Basically humour is all about [information processing](#), accelerating faculties that enable us to

analyse and then manipulate incoming data."

Clarke lists the patterns that are active in humour as positive repetition, division, completion, translation, applicative and qualitative recontextualization, opposition and scale.

"Some are more intuitive than others," he admits.

"The most basic, positive repetition, simply means that the unit is repeated in a similar form with the same purpose. As with all patterns, the repeated unit can be composed of any information available to the human brain, whether an entity, action or property. Then there's opposition, in which we take the unit and turn it against itself, such as can be seen in a mirror image or if we turn an arrow back to point in the other direction, producing a pattern of symmetry. However, while all the patterns are relatively simple in structure the activity of some forms of translation and recontextualization can seem counter-intuitive at first sight.

"In instances of humour these patterns may be recognized individually or in any possible combination of the eight. Most instances are founded on one or two, although theoretically there is no limit to the number of patterns a person has recognized when they find something funny. Pattern recognition remains a subjective matter, just like any other perception."

Details of the patterns and how they relate to more than a hundred forms of humour are published today in 'The Eight Patterns Of Humour', which is also available as a free eBook from the publisher's website at www.pyrrhichouse.co.uk/eightpatterns for a period of 30 days.

"The patterns reflect vitally important cognitive frameworks. Those of fidelity provide us with a basic arithmetical toolkit, while those of magnitude provide everything required to develop syntactical systems. Pattern recognition is in many ways pattern cognition, since the promotion of patterns

through the reward systems associated with humour has massively accelerated humankind's ability to order and manipulate multiple units for multiple uses. Put like that, there are few better ways to express human ingenuity and adaptability."

This publication is one of several within a series regarding Clarke's Pattern Recognition Theory Of Humour, which posits the fundamental role humour has played in the development of the intellectual and perceptual capacities of the species.

The theory is based on extensive observation and analysis. "While countless thousands of instances were informally considered over the years, ten thousand specific instances were analysed in a single document known as 'The Humour Ten Thousand'."

Source: Pyrrhic House

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