« 17 » My description here of the parallactic gaps is a way of saying that *were* we to resolve the mystery of consciousness and produce a viable theory about the ways in which we may become aware of our experiencing, then we would be on the road to reducing the gap between what is rationally explicable and what is irreducibly mystical. One way to reduce the inevitable sense of "loneliness" mentioned by von Glasersfeld of radical constructivists within their idiosyncratic construction systems would be to elaborate the social experiences of humour so that there are more opportunities to co-construct fellow travellers – but without cultivating the illusion of "sharing experience."

« 18 » I believe that the relevance of the area of whimsy, humour, amusement and play offers a good opportunity for creating some initial basis of the work of bridging apparently incompatible domains of human experiencing, precisely because they put us in front of these parallactic gaps. As Slavoj Žižek observes, quoting Kojin Karatani:

" Kant's stance is thus 'to see things neither from his own viewpoint, nor from the viewpoint of others, but to face the reality that is exposed through difference (parallax)'. " (Žižek 2006: 20)

and he continues,

" the Kantian 'transcendental' stands, rather, for their irreducible gap 'as such': the 'transcendental' points to something in this gap, a new dimension which cannot be reduced to either of the two positive terms between which the gap is gaping. " (ibid: 21)

Vincent Kenny is the Director of the Accademia Costruttivista di Terapia Sistemica in Rome. Current activities involve applying psychology and philosophy to three areas where people find themselves in difficulties: (a) interpersonal difficulties with others (known as "psychotherapy"); (b) conflicts in organisational communications in networks of conversations (known as "organisational consulting"); and (c) problems of professional tennis players who run into difficulties of self-interruption in the international tennis tournaments of the ATP/WTA circuits around the world (known as "tennis psychology").

Towards a Delightful Critique of Pure Reason

Theo Hug
University of Innsbruck, Austria
theo.hug/at/uibk.ac.at

> **Upshot** · Ackermann's target article strikes a chord by thinking together oblique and rational aspects of knowing in constructivism. Her target article points out uses of humor and various ways of making sense of our experience that have been underestimated in constructivist discourse. While I can agree on the main lines of her argument, I want to argue for further differentiation and clarification with respect to some historic and systematic aspects.

« 1 » In her target article on "Amusement, Delight, and Whimsy," Edith Ackermann points out uses of humor and various ways of making sense of our experience that have been underestimated in constructivist discourse, especially in view of tendencies of reduction to hands-on, making stuff, building, or rationalist lopsidedness. In doing so, she refers to a conversation with the late Ernst von Glasersfeld on "the epistemological status of oblique forms of ideation, which resist linguistic or empirical scrutiny" (§32). The subtitle of her target article, "Humor has its reasons that Reason cannot ignore," makes a good reading in terms of nominalization. On the one hand, the noun-based phrasing or nominal style contrasts with her critical take on philosophical nominalism. On the other hand, it encapsulates the whole argument, or in other words: it boils down her way of reasoning to an essence. Moreover, the subtitle reads like an invitation to variegate it playfully, for example, in the sense of "Why reasoning actors should not ignore humor," "How witty agents argue conclusively with humor about reasoning," or "Questioning humorless rationalist reasoning" in the sense of questioning both humorless reasoning of rationalists and editing out the role of humor and also emotions in theories of reasoning and rationality. While sharing a basic appreciation with the author for our friend Ernst's way of living his theory, I want to highlight some additional aspects of the theme.

« 2 » From a historical perspective, philosophy always was a critique of reason and rationality to a large extent. Thus, a number of ways and modes of criticizing can be distinguished, among them Confucius's (551–479 BC) way of speaking for wisdom, Isocrates's (436–338 BC) objections against sophistic reasoning and his plea for a rhetoric integrating reason, feeling, and imagination, Jacques Rousseau's scepticism about benefits from scientific developments, Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of dynamics of fragmentation of knowledge and alienation in academia, Jean-François Lyotard's *The Differend* (1989), Jacques Rancière's critique of rationality of *Disagreement* (1999) and his plea for philosophy as praxis, and so forth. In this context, issues of humor and also amusement, delight, and whimsy have been discussed on a number of occasions, too. This pertains to both critique from within, for example, when Lyotard (1989) emphasizes the role of feelings in situations when one is not able to bring forward something, and critique from outside as, for example, the many versions of the story of Thales and the Thracian woman[1] show (Blumenberg 2015).

« 3 » Von Glasersfeld referred to constructivism not as something new but rather as a collection of ideas that have not been taken up widely in the European history of thought. Occasionally, he described himself as a kind of "collector of rags," some of which he kept and put together in a coherent way (Glasersfeld 1994: 39). Although he clearly distinguished between oblique and rational forms of knowing (Glasersfeld 1997), a search for traces in the history of philosophy of all continents regarding alternative conceptualizations of interrelations of various forms of knowing might open up viable options for further development of constructivism.

---

1 | In Plato's dialog *Theaetetus* version Socrates describes the role of a philosopher ironically: "Why, take the case of Thales, Theodorus. While he was studying the stars and looking upwards, he fell into a pit, and a neat, witty Thracian servant girl jeered at him, they say, because he was so eager to know the things in the sky that he could not see what was there before him at his very feet. The same jest applies to all who pass their lives in philosophy" (Plato 1921: 174a).

« 4 » As to oblique ways of knowing, Ackermann refers to the art of "possibilizing" (Abstract) as a keyword. In my view, this refers not only to important aspects as discussed by means of the emblems of the craftsman, the trickster, and the poet. It also refers to a conceptual terminal (*Umschlagplatz*), both within constructivist discourse and beyond. Especially in the field of education, similar arguments play a crucial role in basic approaches referring to constructivism. Usually it is the term "didactics of enabling" (*Ermöglichungsdidaktik*) that is used in related contexts with respect to the cognitive autonomy of learners and educators, as well as to fictions of control of educational processes (Reich 2008). Nevertheless, too often it remains unclear in the context of educational studies *how* relations of rational and a-rational dimensions interact, collude, and merge in models and practices of "possibilizing" or "enabling." Accordingly, there remains a need for clarification in the fields of tension of educational processes, educational studies, and educational "science as an art" (Feyerabend 1984).

« 5 » Moreover, oblique ways of knowing have not only occupied educators and constructivist thinkers. In my view, Ackermann's argument is relevant in a more general sense, too. On the one hand, it seems to be obvious that there are certain limits – limits of "purposing" (*Verzweckung*), so to say – to endeavors of successfully instrumentalizing playfulness and the art of "possibilizing." On the other hand, various forms of more or less "pure" reason seem to serve as bearers of hopes throughout history no matter what the effects and impacts of reasoning without humor were. It is precisely tendencies to a "rationalism of disposition" (*Verfügungsrationalismus*) that is being problematized at this point. I am not referring to *one* special version of rationalism beside other versions here. Rationalism of disposition refers to all forms of exaltation and superelevation of special forms of rationality. All forms of rationalism become a problem if they go along with a tendency to absolutization of determination of points of departure, assessment, means, purpose, and procedures of intentional fabrication of behavior or societal relationships, including ascription of authority. It is the mode of ignoring humor and the mode of exaltation in terms of claim-

ing privileged framing competences and habitual foregrounding of selected perspectives for all kinds of problems that manifests as a problem consistently. This is one of the reasons why it is important to point up in differentiated and comprehensible ways why reasoning actors should not ignore humor, or in other words, why "humor has its reasons that reason cannot ignore."

« 6 » As to re-thinking relations of oblique and rational aspects of knowing in constructivism, integrative perspectives have been formulated at least on an abstract level, for example, by Siegfried Schmidt, who considers dimensions of experience, knowledge, emotion, body, and culture in his conceptualization of perception and cognition as follows:

❝ The rather one-sided observer concept of traditional radical constructivism can be replaced by a more complex one. That is to say, the constructivists' concentration on brain and cognition should be deliberately extended to action, emotion, language, communication, and culture in order to respect not only biological but also socio-cultural acting conditions of human observers. This extension can be legitimated by the fact that observers are, by necessity, enmeshed in social communities and their respective cultural conditions. ❞ (Schmidt 2011: 4f)

« 7 » In view of the complex tasks of bridging mindful and playful ways of constructing, rationality and sagacity, emotion and cognition, and humor and reason, as well as designing appropriate forms, further differentiations and inspiring conceptualizations are needed. To my mind, among other points, the following points of contact should turn out to be useful in this context:

▪ The interplay between emotion and cognition has been studied particularly in terms of affect-logical[2] dynamics (see Ciompi 1997). Considering correspond-

ing differentiations seems worthwhile in the context of clarification of relations of oblique and rational aspects of knowing, too, especially if various cultural scopes of senses (Surana 2009) are kept in mind.

▪ Furthermore, taking heed of relations of media and the senses can allow for enhanced perspectives. Already in the early days of media theory, Marshall McLuhan (1964) argued the counterintuitive claim that (im)balance or (dis)equilibrium of the senses is constitutive of rationality, intelligence, or even consciousness itself. Today's role of medial forms and digital media in almost all areas of life suggests a closer look at related dynamics of (im)balancing and a differentiated analysis of media dynamics as relevant for learning, knowing, perception, communication, and management of proximity. Much could be accomplished in developing concepts and practices for education and learning, both inside and outside schools, as an engaging in educating and also training of the senses in medialized worlds (Friesen & Hug 2011).[3]

▪ As to the notion of "a creative person's uses of the unexpected as a lever to engender new ways of thinking (envision alternatives)" (§5), further lessons for learning and the practice of design can be learned from constructivist design theory (Krippendorff 2006).

▪ With regard to incommensurable frameworks and forms of rationality, Wolfgang Welsch has argued for a concept of transversal reason (Welsch 1995). Ba-

2 | For a brief explanation of the concept of "affect-logic," see http://www.ciompi.com/en/affect-logic.html. The concept was introduced in the early 1980s. It refers to interactive dynamics between feeling and thinking or emotion and cognition in a sense that affective elements show up in all cognitive processes, and elements of logic (in a broad sense) show up in all emotional dynamics or affects.

3 | Currently, terms like "mediation," "medialization," "mediatization," "mediazation," "mediology," etc. are used in parallel, sometimes with some degree of overlapping meanings or even synonymously. Depending on research interests and (inter-)disciplinary contexts, various aspects of the importance of media and media dynamics as related to respective fields of study are being foregrounded, all too often waiving thoughtful differentiation or conceptual clarification. Here, in contrast to widespread uses of the term "medialization" in the sense of changing developments of culture, everyday life, or human identity in view of media as technical institutions, the term "medialization" is used in the sense of media anthropological and epistemological dimensions of changing media systems and media societies.

415

sic ideas of transversal thinking can be helpful in the context of bridging rationality and sagacity if they are liberated from unnecessary purity requirements (Hug & Perger 2000).

« 8 » Successful dealing with the gap of rationality and sagacity in the multiple sense of acting, thinking and doing everyday business remains a kind of tightrope walk. In corresponding balancing acts, it seems to be wise to distinguish between arts of living –inspired by constructivist ideas – and academic constructivist discourse. Like all -isms, constructivism is not immune against ideological tendencies. But in contrast to truth-oriented -isms, abandonment of claims of privileged access to critique or to reality[4] for undogmatic analysis of relations of different modes of construction and world-making. Insofar as we are aiming at bridging the gap of rationality and sagacity, we should be aware of the long history of endeavors of clarification of rational and a-rational dimensions in science (Duerr 1981). On the one hand, Ackermann's exploration of "some of the controversies surrounding the evocative power of the *imaginal* and other oblique forms of knowing" (Abstract) can be read as a focussed analysis by means of emblems of the craftsman, the trickster, and the poet. On the other hand, it points way beyond, towards a delightful critique of pure reason and no less than a need for "Rethinking the enlightenment" (Elkana 2011).

Theo Hug is a professor at the Institute of Psychosocial Intervention and Communication Studies at the University of Innsbruck, and coordinator of the Innsbruck Media Studies research group. His areas of interest include media education and media literacy, theory of knowledge and micro-learning, and methodology and philosophy of science. Homepage: http://hug-web.at/

4 | Processes of communicative stabilization of assumptions of reality (*Wirklichkeitsannahmen*) should not be mixed up with implicit or explicit claims of access to reality as such as, for example, argued in the context of anti-relativist and anti-constructivist conceptualizations (Boghossian 2006).

Humor as a Humble Way to Access the Complexity of Knowledge Construction

Anna Chronaki
University of Thessaly, Greece
chronaki/at/uth.gr

Chronis Kynigos
Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece • kynigos/at/ppp.uoa.gr

> Upshot · Ackermann tackles "humor" as an agentive participant in the process of knowledge construction. Performing her thesis in her writing, she give a reflective account of how oblique ways of knowing have always been present in debates concerning epistemology, albeit not given equal status as rational ones. As such, her endeavors in this text are geared towards lifting up the position of "humor" to a much deserved higher level in educational and learning practices. Consequently, our endeavors in this commentary are targeted towards a little more in this direction by focusing on how "humor" becomes a way of accessing the process of knowledge construction and of unraveling its significance.

« 1 » In her target article "Amusement, delight, and whimsy: Humor has its reasons that reason cannot ignore" Edith Ackermann writes passionately about an alternative perspective in embracing constructivism – a perspective that takes attention away from an individual learner's mind working on its own on pre-determined paths of knowing and employs rationality as the main way of being able to construct knowledge. Instead, Ackerman invites us to approach rational and irrational, mindful and mindless, thinking and playing, logic and emotion, sense and nonsense as the two sides of the same coin. For this task, she applies "humor" as both wit and whimsy and brings forward the qualities of openness, pleasure and joy that elevate the necessary energies released by a creative innovator. Quite provocatively, and yet convincingly, Ackermann echoes how Jacques Ranciere (1991) delves into intellec-

tual emancipation in his well-known book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* when she insists that "knowing gets in the way" (§8) and that "the more we know the more likely we are to act mindlessly" (§8). However, her aim, in the context of this text, is not to practice philosophy, but, more, to aggravate, inflate and challenge what "traditional" constructionism might take for granted about cognition, cognitive adaptation and cognitive growth as the most essential human acts. As she denotes in the very last line before drawing her concluding remarks:

“At the cost of caricaturing, let me put it this way: fellow constructivists sometimes seem to ignore that, once launched, a human artifact takes on a life on its own, thus transcending both the author's intentions and any singular act of interpretation.”(§31)

It is this particular statement that becomes a gesture of an epistemological stance that urges us to shift from an individual perspective of the learner as a sole constructor of knowledge and to turn towards denoting the ultimate importance of recognizing the unexpected, the non-knowable, the not-yet-known or the surprising effect of any attempt to do, make, construct and create. Humor, as an archetype of body-language related to the unconscious, seems to have been always tightly situated in such complex processes. Its recognition requires that we take a careful, deep and respectful look at how participants experience the context in which they enact.

« 2 » Humor has also been reported in a recent study contacted by the first author (Chronaki & Matos 2013) as an essential element of how teachers appropriate technology whilst they become involved in identity-work re-crafting mathematical subjectivities. Specifically, during the last phase of a three-month intensive training course for teachers' professional development in technology-based teaching and learning, a small team of mathematics teacher trainees and their tutors discussed – as a way of collective reflection – the significance of the particular course for themselves as practitioners. Their focus soon shifted to the kind of "changes" they had experienced. When asked about how they experienced "change," one teacher said in a kind of humorous way: