

## **Humorous**

*The word humor takes us back to the mediaeval psychological notion, of a fixed disposition. The humors were the components of our personality. The most sparkling of those components was what we now call humor or sense of humor, the disposition that alerts us to the incongruous in human behavior, and empowers us to appreciate it.*

### *Examples*

1 To have a sense of humor is normally taken to mean, to have a sense for the double meanings in things, to know how to read between the lines. So a man goes into a bar and is refused entry, by the bouncer, because he isn't wearing a tie. The man says give me a minute. He goes to his car and gets his jumper cable, which he then ties around his neck. He returns to the bouncer, who says, well Okay, I'll let you in, but mind you don't start something. A person with a sense of humor will light on the word start. A person without a sense of humor, even provided he knows the language, will not see the double meaning.

2 Why is having a sense of humor considered a valuable human trait? Is it because the communication through humor establishes an intimate contact between the humorist and the humored? Is there a cult-wink at work in cases like the above joke? And if so, why do we privilege the ability to read a double entendre into words? Is language not at its best a uni-referential tool, for orienting ourselves in our world, and passing on clear references to our community?