

Contents

Preface ix

PART I. THE POSITIVE THESIS

1. Laughter as Superiority 3
*Hobbes and Bergson • The Normative Foundation
Laughter as a Signal*
2. The Elements of Laughter 16
Sociability • Surprise • Playfulness
3. The One Necessary Thing 29
*Incongruity and Wordplay
Relief and Exuberant Laughter • Innocent Laughter
The Absurd and Postmodernism • Self-Deprecatory Humor*

PART II. THE NORMATIVE THESIS

4. Objections to the Normative Thesis 49
*The Paradox of Satire • Excessive Laughter
The Hobbesian Paradox • Vicious Laughter*
5. Comic Virtues and Vices 60
*The Rose-Wreath Crown • The Gay Science
Comic Norms*
6. The Social Virtues 87
*Integrity • Moderation
Fortitude • Temperance*
7. The Charismatic Virtues 108
Grace • Taste • Learning
8. Machine Law 119
Risible Law • Kreimer v. Morristown • The Sick Chickens Case
9. Machine Scholarship 129
*Analytical Philosophy • Zombies as Machine Men
Machine Political Theory • Baby Selling*

CONTENTS

10. Machine Art and Machine Cities 143
Machine Art • Machine Cities

PART III. THE EXPERIENCE OF LAUGHTER

11. The Battle of the Norms 155
Judgment Errors • Large Numbers
Perverse Norms and Factual Errors • Uncertainty
12. Resistance to Laughter 164
Vanity • Acedia • The Cynic
The Faustian Bargain • The Puritan
13. The Sociability Thesis 178
Signaling Trustworthiness
A Communitarian Perspective
14. Conclusion 191
Life Considered as a Fine Art
The Dream of a Unified Field

Notes 201

Bibliography 219

Index 235