

BRAIN TICKLING

S u m m a r y

Both humour and laughter have drawn human attention for centuries. The first part of this paper presents a review of different views and theories which support the view that laughter is not only a simple reaction to a amusing event. Only about 20% of human laughter can be linked with humour, while the remaining 80% occur because of tickling, nervousness, as an effect of drugs, when we play or simply because somebody else is laughing. Laughter, thanks to its structure and physiology, plays a very important role in creating social interactions.

In the second part of the paper three major theories concerning humour have been described: superiority theories stating that humour is a social activity based on malice, hostility and aggression, relief theories which perceive humour as a release of tension, and incongruity theories, where humour is the result of the resolution of incongruity. Finally, a review of recent studies on this subject is presented, with a special stress on the way humour is processed in the brain.