

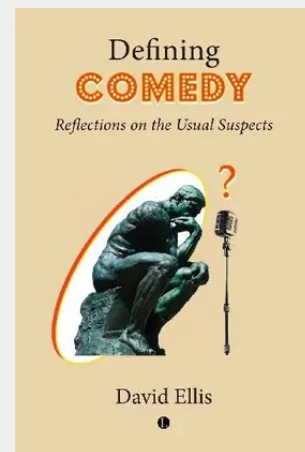
Ellis

Defining Comedy

Reflections on the Usual Suspects

Treats the attempts at general theories of comedy by philosophers, psychologists and authors and why they have failed. From the time of Plato and Aristotle, philosophers and psychologists, along with experts from the social sciences and linguistics, have made vain attempts to formulate a general theory of comedy. Passing in review all the usual suspects, including Hobbes, Kant and Bergson, as well as several recent theorists of comedy from America, and while not of course forgetting Freud as well as authors such as Stendhal and Baudelaire, David Ellis suggests that, although comedy is undoubtedly an important topic, with profound implications for both social and private life, there have been better ways to pass one's time than in a fruitless search for an overarching explanation of what it is and how it works. Written in a jargon-free, entertaining style, with illustrations from both famous comic writers and present-day performers in Britain and America, this is a book that can be read with pleasure by all with an interest in comedy, whether they are specialists in the matter or not.

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