

# Comedians role in society

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In his 2004 book, *Status Anxiety*, Alain de Botton argues that humorists “convey with impunity messages that might be dangerous or impossible to state directly.” It has become increasingly difficult for a one to attack specific societal issues without having others reprimand them for doing so. For this reason, humorists have incorporated ways of denouncing these societal issues using comical approaches. Humorists serve a vital function in society that allows them to speak the truth or target certain corporations, ideas, or beliefs that, if expressed explicitly, would not be deemed “acceptable in society,” but it has only served to promote self reflection in people, rather than actually cause large or significant change in society’s behavior. Satire is one specific kind of humor that uses irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Satirical pieces can range from a light hearted subject, to a very serious matter. Some of them, like *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift, can even reach extreme levels of absurdity. Swift in this satirical pamphlet attacked his subjects through an insane proposal, with the purpose of helping Ireland, to eating babies. The real targets that Swift was aiming to criticize was the Irish masses and their values, the wealthy, and tyrannical England. Other satires, like *Advice to Youth* by Mark Twain, can be more comical while at the same time calling out certain aspects of today’s society.

In this piece, Mark Twain gives what most would not call “good advice,” but his goal was to ridicule people in today’s society specifically adults, who give children advice which they themselves do not follow, for example not lying. Both satirical pieces, although different in style, focus on denouncing aspects

of society, which otherwise stated, would normally not be accepted. Another way which humorists speak the truth about society and its issues is through television shows. Television shows like Saturday Night Live, are used as an entertaining and funny way of pointing out societal issues. Saturday Night Live, mainly targets politicians by imitating them and making fun of the way they act or do things in government.

They also perform skits that make fun of society in general, specifically stereotypes and how humans are very critical of one another. They also make fun of celebrities and some of the outrageous things they do. Although this show slanders many different faults in our society, they do so in a way that most people do not find necessarily offensive or out of line. The issue with the role of humorists in society, is that although they are able to criticize beliefs, government, society, religion, and other particulars that are commonly attacked, without getting in trouble for doing so, they are not necessarily effective. There have been endless accounts of humorist works, even those which I have mentioned earlier, which aim at a goal of change, but unfortunately fail to cause any significant adjustment in the behavior of people.

Although they do promote self reflection and realization, they do not go as far as causing immediate modification in society, which puts in to question whether they are truly vital to society or not. In all, without the existence of humorists and their ability to successfully criticize society for its faulty behaviors, without having anyone reprimand them for doing so, serves a vital job in the self reflection and realization of society, rather than true change in society. Ultimately, to achieve true change in society, there must

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be progress, and progress cannot be achieved without a change in character of the people in today's society.