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**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

**Monty Python – Comedy Icons – Analysis of Their Work  
and Influence on Comedy**

**Denisa Kavinová**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, srpen 2022*

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Denisa Kavinová

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# 1 Introduction

Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin – these six names can be meaningless to uninitiated. However, for the comedy world, this connection means one and only – the British surreal comedy troupe Monty Python. Their success and influence on comedy is often compared to the famous musical group Beatles and their influence on popular music.

The theoretical part of this thesis contains brief inceptions of comedy, definitions of significant elements that occur in the work of Monty Python, such as absurdity, irony, satire, surrealism, cynicism and sarcasm, which will be further discussed in the practical part of the thesis when analysing some of the work of this legendary comedy group. The second part of the theoretical segment, Monty Python as a group is presented with their collective work, in particular the television series and films, then its individual members separately.

The practical part of this thesis is divided into two segments. In the first part several works of the Monty Python group will be analysed. The analysis will focus on the one of the most famous feature films made by the group, *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), formally and thematically. As part of the analysis, this thesis will also look at probably the famous song that created one of the members of the group.

The second half of the practical part will look at the influence of Monty Python on comedy on a global scale. A special chapter will be devoted to artists whose work seems to have been influenced in some way by this legendary comedy group. Monty Python's influence on society will be also discussed.

## 2 THEORETICAL PART

### 2.1 Inceptions of Comedy

Thesaurus lists the following synonyms for a better understanding of the meaning of the word comedy: farce, fun, humour, satire, sitcom, burlesque and many others. Words of opposite meaning are listed as sadness, tragedy, and seriousness.<sup>1</sup>

Comedy is a type of theatre drama or other art form whose main aim is to entertain. The opposite of comedy is tragedy.

The origins of comedy date back to the fourth century BC in Ancient Greece. It is probably related to the Festivities called Dionysia, a vegetation ritual celebrating the Greek god of fruitfulness, vegetation, wine and ecstasy, Dionysus. In earlier years, the celebrations were wild and ecstatic, and often became the subject of artistic renditions. Dionysus originally appeared as a bearded man, but later more often as a slender young man.<sup>2</sup>

According to the classical conception, which persists to the present day, comedy is primarily concerned with human as a social being and that its function is corrective. The purpose of comedy is, through the comedian, to hold up an imaginary mirror to society, reflecting its vices and follies, in the hope that society will correct these vices.<sup>3</sup>

The most famous dramatists of Greek comedy were Aristophanes, born 450 BC<sup>4</sup>, and Menander, born 342 BC.<sup>5</sup> In their works, they poked fun at politicians, philosophers, and their fellow artists. In addition to providing a general insight with a comic touch into Greek society, the plays also provide details of how the Greek government, legal system, political institutions, religious practices, education, and warfare functioned in the Hellenistic world. Furthermore, the plays also reveal what a sense of humour the Greeks once had. All modern theatre is based on the common foundations of Greek comedy and Greek tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> COMEDY Synonyms: 45 Synonyms & Antonyms for COMEDY, Philip Lief Group, 2013, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/comedy>

<sup>2</sup> Dionysus summary, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Dionysus>  
<sup>3</sup> Comedy, Cyrus Henry Hoy, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/art/comedy>

<sup>4</sup> Aristophanes, Oliver Taplin, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristophanes>

<sup>5</sup> Menander, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Menander-Greek-dramatist>

<sup>6</sup> Ancient Greek Comedy – World History Encyclopedia, Mark Cartwright, 2013, [https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek\\_Comedy/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek_Comedy/)



## 2.2 Pythonesque features of comedy

The following subchapters introduce typical elements that appear in Monty Python's work. Some elements will be accompanied by illustrative examples.

### 2.2.1 Absurdity

It is a noun derived from the adjective *absurd*. The origin of this word goes back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. It comes from Late Latin, in the nominative form '*absurditas*', which means incongruity, silly or senseless.<sup>7</sup>

According to thesaurus, the dictionary of synonyms, a noun *absurdity* can be also understood like a craziness, an idiocy, a farce, an insanity, a folly, a silliness, a foolishness, as well as a stupidity.<sup>8</sup>

The absurdity can be also perceived as a funny issue, therefore those who are good at thinking about absurdities have a great precondition for writing comedies.

The very famous absurd American black comedy adventure film was directed by Monty Python member Terry Gilliam himself in 1998. It was adapted from American author and journalist Hunter Stockton Thompson's 1971 novel of the same name, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. The two main characters, played by Johnny Depp and Benicio del Toro, travel across America to Las Vegas. Depp plays the character of the author of the novel himself under the fictional name of Raoul Duke (incidentally, Thompson himself plays one of the supporting characters in the film) and del Toro plays his attorney, Oscar Zeta Acosta. The pair travel through the desert in a rental car, they are equipped with all sorts of bizarre drugs that cause them hallucination, so their original journalistic purpose for the trip turns into an exploration of Las Vegas under the influence of psychoactive substances. The film depicts two groups of Americans, each seeking artificially induced happiness in a world full of glitz, but neither group acknowledges the other. And this is where it gets to the spirit of the author's writing – the drunk suddenly wakes up to all the false politeness and hypocrisy of society and does not know

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<sup>7</sup> Absurdity, [https://www.etymonline.com/word/absurdity#etymonline\\_v\\_92](https://www.etymonline.com/word/absurdity#etymonline_v_92)

<sup>8</sup> ABSURDITY Synonyms: 29 Synonyms & Antonyms for ABSURDITY, Philip Lief, 2013, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/absurdity>

whether to laugh or vomit in its face. Despite mixed reviews from critics, the film has become a cult classic among fans.<sup>910</sup>

In addition to the work of Monty Python, elements of absurdity appear in many other great comedic works, such as the 2006 madcap comedy from American director Mike Judge called *Idiocracy*, which features a savage critique of American corporatisation. The main character is an average American guy Joe Bauers, portrayed by actor Luke Wilson. Joe is chosen by the US Army to take part in a special apparatus and is supposed to wake up after a year. However, the experiment somehow goes wrong and Joe wakes up in the year 2505 to a very absurd world in which he appears to be the smartest man in the world.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.2 Irony

The following list of some antonyms given by the thesaurus can clarify the correct understanding of the concepts of irony. These expressions are seriousness, praise, approval, respect, compliment, consideration, flattery, or deference. In other words, irony can be compared to humour, wit, paradox, banter, satire, burlesque, twist, as well as to contempt.<sup>12</sup>

Irony is a way of expressing an idea, the result of which is intended to have the opposite meaning, with humorous intent. When defining irony in literature, it is a style of writing in which there is a noticeable and deliberately humorous difference between what is said and the intended meaning.<sup>13</sup>

When irony is used with the intention of creating a comedic effect using a literary technique or rhetorical device, we speak of comic irony. It may be based on the ironic statements of the characters or narrators or on the situation presented in the work. According to students of rhetoric, irony is divided into three categories.

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<sup>9</sup> Terry Gilliam, *Dreams: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, <http://www.smart.co.uk/dreams/flfact.htm>

<sup>10</sup> *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* is a bleary indictment of society's ills, Noel Murray, 2013, <https://www.avclub.com/fear-and-loathing-in-las-vegas-is-a-bleary-indictment-o-1798237243>

<sup>11</sup> *Idiocracy: a disturbingly prophetic look at the future of America – and our era of stupidity*, The Guardian, Luke Buckmaster, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jul/19/idiocracy-a-disturbingly-prophetic-look-at-the-future-of-america-and-our-era-of-stupidity>

<sup>12</sup> *Irony*, Thesaurus.com Online Dictionary, Philip Lief Group, 2013, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/irony>

<sup>13</sup> *Irony*, Cambridge English Online Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/irony>

The first category is **verbal irony**. This form of irony occurs when a speaker says something but means the opposite. An example of verbal irony would be the very first sentence of the first chapter of English author Jane Austen's most famous novel, *The Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."<sup>14</sup> However, these words are ironic because the reader further discovers that the women in the plot of the story are primarily concerned with finding well-to-do single men so that they can marry well. To sum up, verbal irony is characterised by the contrast of words.

By the difference between what the reader or observer knows and what the character knows, we understand **dramatic irony**. This can be noticed in the tragic but also in the comic effect.

To illustrate the dramatic effect, people can imagine a scene from Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. The characters in the play behave and act as if Juliet is dead, but the reader or viewer knows that she is not dead.

An example of the comic effect of dramatic irony can be seen in another of Shakespeare's plays, *Cymbeline*. The character Imogen mistakes the decapitated body she found for that of her lover Posthumus. Despite the fact that the audience immediately knows that Imogen is wrong, she repeatedly states that she could never have mistaken Posthumus' body with anybody's, which results in comic irony.

**Situational irony**, the third type of comic irony, occurs when a character's intentions are suddenly at odds with the outcome of his or her actions. This type of comic irony often depicts vanity or ambitiousness. It is plentifully found in the plots of many television comedies. Situational irony is not infrequently encountered, for example, in American sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Simpsons* and *South Park*, where the plot usually involves characters devising an elaborate plot outline that commonly goes awry with humorous effect.<sup>15</sup>

Situational irony also includes other subtypes, for example cosmic and historical irony. **Cosmic irony** occurs when the negative outcome of a situation, plan, or action results from the intent of a so-called "high power" rather than a human being. Circumstances resulting from the

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<sup>14</sup> The Project Gutenberg eBook of *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen, Project Gutenberg, Anonymous Volunteers and David Widger, 2021, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1342/1342-h/1342-h.htm#link2HCH0001->

<sup>15</sup> What is Comic Irony?, Language Humanities, J.E. Holloway, 2022, <https://www.languagehumanities.org/what-is-comic-irony.htm>

actions of this power can be attributed to God, the Universe, or even fate. Hence the well-known phrase 'irony of fate'.<sup>16</sup>

Another subtype of situational irony is **historical irony**, which arises when we look back on specific actions, situations or statements. A character finds himself or herself in an unexpected situation in which he or she acts differently than if it had not occurred. This perspective can be tragic on the one hand, but amusing or ironic on the other if the reader or observer finds humour in it. Either way, this situation usually leaves the reader or observer with a sense of shock. This type of irony can be encountered in both the fictional and the real world.<sup>17</sup>

Two very famous cases of the last century can serve as an illustrative example. When the four young men performed their fifteen songs at Decca Records singing audition at Decca studios in West Hampstead, North London, in early 1962, the then very famous record producer Mike Smith said he would not sign Peter Best (originally the group's drummer, on August 18 of that year, he was replaced by Ringo Star<sup>18</sup>), John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison because in his opinion they were nothing special and guitar groups were on the decline.<sup>19</sup> However, after performing at another audition on January 24 of that year, the young men had already signed a management contract with Brian Epstein and Beatlemania could begin. Given the circumstances, every person on planet Earth today sees the irony in this case.<sup>20</sup>

For the second example of historical irony, one must go back to 1963, specifically to 22 November. In Dallas, Texas, an assassination attempt was made on US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy during his campaign for the 1964 presidential election. Just before the shooting, Idanel "Nellie" Brill Connally, wife of Texas Governor John Connally, while riding in a limousine through the city streets with the President and his wife, apparently wanted to point out the high turnout of his supporters and declared toward him that he could not say that Dallas did not love him. It turned out that not quite everyone in Dallas would have agreed with her assertion.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> What is cosmic irony?, Angie Bates, 28 July 2022, <https://www.languagehumanities.org/what-is-cosmic-irony.htm>

<sup>17</sup> What is Historical Irony? Definition and Examples for Screenwriters, Brent Dunham, 5 April 2020, <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-historical-irony-definition-and-examples/>

<sup>18</sup> About, <https://www.ringostarr.com/about>

<sup>19</sup> 13 Thought Provoking Examples of Irony in History, <https://literarydevices.net/13-thought-provoking-examples-of-irony-in-history/>

<sup>20</sup> What Happened on January 24, 1962, <https://www.onthisday.com/date/1962/january/24>

<sup>21</sup> 13 Thought Provoking Examples of Irony in History, <https://literarydevices.net/13-thought-provoking-examples-of-irony-in-history/>

### 2.2.3 Satire

Satire is a type of art form that is used primarily in the literary and dramatic genre. Its aim is to use humour, sarcasm, exaggeration, parody or irony to ridicule individual human vices, shortcomings and stupidity. It is the art of mocking someone or something, of provoking laughter with the intention of embarrassing, humiliating or discrediting the person or thing in question. Satire can appear in many forms and situations. Whether in a song or in a preaching, in a painting or in a political debate. It can therefore appear in any cultural, artistic or entertainment work. In other words, wherever a joke is used to criticise something silly or malicious. Sometimes satire is created to encourage social change.

As far as literary works are concerned, satire is divided into direct and indirect. In the case of direct satire, the narrator speaks directly to the reader. On the other hand, in indirect satire, the author's intention is realised within the narrative and its story.<sup>22</sup>

There are three main types of satire, with each type fulfilling a different role. They are named after three Roman authors, associated with their works.

The first type is **Horatian satire**, which is good-tempered, overtly and gentle comic. The main goal of light Horatian satire is to make fun of a person or situation in an entertaining way.

An example of this type of satire is the fantastic travelogue novel *Gulliver's Travels* by the English writer Jonathan Swift, which was written in the first half of the eighteenth century. Gulliver is a fictional narrator character through whom the author pokes fun at travellers, the English government as well as human nature.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, **Juvenalian satire** is characterised by its bitterness and darkness. It expresses anger and indignation at the state of the world and its aim is to speak the truth to power.<sup>24</sup> This type of satire is named after the Roman poet Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, called Juvenal, who was born around 60 AD, during the reign of Emperor Nero. He wrote five books

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<sup>22</sup> Satire, Encyclopedia Britannica, Robert C. Elliott, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/art/satire>

<sup>23</sup> What Is Satire? How to Use Satire in Literature, Pop Culture, and Politics—Plus Tips on Using Satire in Writing, MasterClass, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-satire-how-to-use-satire-in-literature-pop-culture-and-politics-plus-tips-on-using-satire-in-writing#1sNxgQ8FiKkvrQzCj2JxLw>

<sup>24</sup> What Is Satire? How to Use Satire in Literature, Pop Culture, and Politics—Plus Tips on Using Satire in Writing, MasterClass, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-satire-how-to-use-satire-in-literature-pop-culture-and-politics-plus-tips-on-using-satire-in-writing#1sNxgQ8FiKkvrQzCj2JxLw>

consisting of sixteen satires against the powerful and wealthy members of the upper class, against noble women, and against Greeks, Orientals and Egyptians who brought destructive elements of Hellenistic and Oriental culture to Rome. In these satirical verses he most often pilloried the perversity, callousness and injustice of the social structure of Rome in the second half of the first century AD.<sup>25</sup>

Again, the often-cited example of this type of satire was written by Jonathan Swift. The full title of the satirical essay in question, published in 1729, is *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick*. The essay appears to be an economic proposal for dealing with the then impoverished state of Ireland. And this is where rational reasoning mixes with the unthinkable conclusion. The problem at that time was caused by English landlords who owned vast tracts of land in Ireland but reinvested a small part of their profits in the Irish economy. However, when readers begin to find out what Jonathan Swift believes the plan is - to sell Irish children for slaughter and for food to English landlords – they quickly realise that this is irony and satire. In this case, it is an angry essay about their Irish tenants, and the pointless bureaucracy that plagues normal people.<sup>26</sup>

A notable work that is considered Juvenile satire is the famous novel *Animal Farm*, written by George Orwell in 1945. The novel alludes to communism and the Stalin-era Soviet Union. It is also an example of allegorical satire, which means that the reader is aware of the deeper political meaning here, but it can also be read as a simple story about animals and their life on a farm and who rebel against their human farmer.<sup>27</sup>

Speaking about a modern work with elements of Juvenile satire, the world-famous controversial TV show from American creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone comes to mind. The satirical animated series for adults is called none other than *South Park* and has been airing since 1997. It describes the lives of the four main characters attending fourth grade at an elementary school in the fictional backwater town of South Park in Colorado, USA. The show portrays almost all social institutions as incompetent and touches on sensitive topics that are

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<sup>25</sup> Satiry, <https://www.cbdb.cz/kniha-98776-satiry>

<sup>26</sup> What is Satire?, Oregon State University, Evan Gottlieb, <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-satire>

<sup>27</sup> What Is Satire? How to Use Satire in Literature, Pop Culture, and Politics—Plus Tips on Using Satire in Writing, MasterClass, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-satire-how-to-use-satire-in-literature-pop-culture-and-politics-plus-tips-on-using-satire-in-writing#1sNxgQ8FiKkvrQzCj2JxLw>

considered taboo by society, such as abortion, religion, the Pope, or criminal justice. Celebrities and public figures are often parodied and the creators are not afraid of vulgarities.<sup>28</sup>

**Menippean satire** occurs in intellectually humorous works that are varied in content. It displays unusual knowledge and comic discussions on philosophical topics. In other words, this form of satire is indirect and unrealistic. It is usually composed of loosely organised narratives that include a series of dialogues where different opinions are mixed. The founder of this genre was the Greek philosopher Menippes, who lived in the third century BC, whose work unfortunately has not survived. However, his style of writing was followed by the Roman writer Varro, who was active two centuries later.<sup>29</sup><sup>30</sup> A picaresque story called *The Satyricon*, written in the first century BC by the Roman patrician Petronius, is also in the spirit of Menippean satire. It is written in verse and prose, and contains long digressions in which the author comments on topics that have nothing to do with the plot.<sup>31</sup>

One of the best examples of Menippean satire in literature is probably the fantasy novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, written by the mathematician and logician, the English writer Lewis Carroll. With a strong sense of humour and in a good-natured spirit, the novel mocks the intellectualism of the upper classes.<sup>32</sup>

The American late-night comedy television show *Saturday Night Live* is set in the spirit of Menippean satire. It was first broadcast live from NBC's famous studio 8H at Rockefeller Center in New York. The show is full of topical humour reflecting current issues and sharp commentary on politics. It is a unique variety show and often the most famous music stars are invited to perform innovative viral shows.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, satire can be a powerful weapon when used appropriately and effectively. The author should aim satire at a higher and more powerful target than himself in any case, otherwise it can only be seen as cruelty or bullying. For satire to be effective, the author must present it in a way that makes it recognizable to the reader or viewer. The author must always run the risk

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<sup>28</sup> South Park | Characters & Description | Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica | Britannica [online]. Copyright © Rawpixel.com [cit. 15.08.2022]. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/South-Park-television-series>

<sup>29</sup> Menippean satire, Oxford Reference,

2022, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100150176>

<sup>30</sup> Menippean satire, Collins English Online Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,

2010, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/menippean-satire>

<sup>31</sup> Menippean satire, Encyclopedia Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Menippean-satire>

<sup>32</sup> Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Encyclopedia Britannica, Cathe Lowne, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alices-Adventures-in-Wonderland>

<sup>33</sup> Saturday Night Live - About the Show, NBC.com, <https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/about>

of his satire being read “straight” or superficially, as was the case, for example, with David Fincher’s 1999 film adaptation of the novel by the Ukrainian-born American postmodern writer Charles Michael Palahniuk<sup>34</sup>, *Fight Club*. Although this film satirises consumerism and toxic masculinity, many viewers were unlikely to find satire in it, as real underground “fight clubs” soon began to emerge, which would not have happened if people had correctly understood the point of the film, which was to mock the very type of masculine trait mentioned.<sup>35</sup>

#### **2.2.4 Sarcasm**

If a person uses words, often in a humorous way, that mean the opposite of what he or she really meant to say, we say he or she is being sarcastic. These words can be caustic. Sarcasm is used when the aim is to offend someone, to show irritation, or to be funny. It is sometimes characterised by extreme disproportion of the comment to the situation, or also with a touch of irony.<sup>36</sup>

#### **2.2.5 Cynicism**

Originally, the term cynicism had a different meaning than it does today. In the times of ancient Greece there was one movement in the philosophical schools called the Cynics. They claimed allegiance to the line of Socrates. This group was rather unconventional and anti-theoretical. They were interested in the ethics of a way of life which they characterised as a “shortcut to virtue”. However, none of the many Cynics texts have survived, so the evidence concerning the Cynics is limited to aphorisms and ancient legends. Their values and principles were and are therefore learned through their lives and life stories.<sup>37</sup>

They viewed the world as a vanity, rejected all contemporary values and longed to return to a life based on minimal requirements. According to the Cynics and their teachings, the meaning of life was to live in harmony with nature, requiring only the basic essentials for the

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<sup>34</sup> Chuck Palahniuk Bio, Joshua Chaplinsky, <https://www.chuckpalahniuk.net/chuck>

<sup>35</sup> What is Satire?, Oregon State University, Evan Gottlieb, <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-satire>

<sup>36</sup> Sarcasm Definition & Meaning, Britannica Dictionary, <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/sarcasm>

<sup>37</sup> Cynics, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Julie Piering, <https://iep.utm.edu/cynics/>



existence of the individual. In other words, to give up preferences for health, wealth, fame and power, in short, to live a life of ease.<sup>38</sup>

This phenomenon appeared in the next few stages of Western civilization and was usually the cause of political or economic injustice, fervour for a religion, or an over-developing urban civilization (Dudley, 1937, p. XIII-XVI).

For a better understanding of today's meaning of the word cynicism, the thesaurus offers a list of these synonyms: bitterness, doubt, sarcasm, distrust, pessimism, and also misanthropy. The following terms are listed here as antonyms: belief, confidence, trust, certainty, and faith.<sup>39</sup>

Contemporary cynics tend to distrust the sincerity or good intentions of other people, and therefore tend to defend themselves against the outside world in the form of scoff and sarcasm.<sup>40</sup>

*„There is a difference between a theatre joke and a social joke. The latter would be too weak on the scene and would not have any effect. The first one would be too strong in real life and would be offensive. The cynicism, so disgraceful, so inconvenient in society, is excellent on the stage.“<sup>41</sup> (Diderot)*

## 2.2.6 Breaking the Fourth Wall

The term 'breaking the fourth wall' comes from theatre, film, as well as television, in most cases from a comedy background, and is used when a character speaks or looks towards the audience with the intention of admitting his or her fictionality. It means, therefore, in a figurative sense, that the character breaks through an imaginary wall between him and the audience. It separates the story from the real world.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cynicism, The Basics of Philosophy, Mastin L., [https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch\\_cynicism.html](https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_cynicism.html)

<sup>39</sup> Cynicism, Thesaurus.com Online Dictionary, Philip Lief Group, 2013, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/cynicism>

<sup>40</sup> Cynicism, The Basics of Philosophy, Mastin L., [https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch\\_cynicism.html](https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_cynicism.html)

<sup>41</sup> Original version: *„Il y a une différence entre les blagues théâtrales et les blagues sociales. Ce dernier serait trop faible sur scène et n'aurait aucun effet. L'autre serait trop dur et offensant dans le monde. Le cynisme qui est si répugnant et inconfortable dans la société est excellent sur la scène.“* Diderot, D. *Oeuvres complètes de Diderot, revues sur les éditions originales... Étude sur Diderot et le mouvement philosophique au XVIIIe siècle.* 1875

<sup>42</sup> Breaking The Fourth Wall: How To Do It & When To Do It, Matt, <https://filmlifestyle.com/breaking-the-fourth-wall/>

## 3 Monty Python

### 3.1 Pre-Python Times - The Frost Report

Among the writers of the satirical comedy show *The Frost Report* were also the names of all five then British members of the future comedy group Monty Python. In other words, in addition to the recognized Frank Muir and Denis Nordon, also Eric Idle, Graham Chapman, Michael Palin, Terry Jones and John Cleese contributed their art.

It first appeared on television screens on 10 March 1966. David Frost used illustrative sketches to cover a different topic each week. The first episode featured Ronnie Barker, Nicolas Smith, Ronnie Corbett, Nicky Henson and John Cleese appeared in the first episode. The latter three made their first ever television appearance.

In the first four weeks of broadcasting, the topics of authority, holidays, sin and elections were addressed. The most eternal sketch comes from the fifth week of broadcasting. The script was written by Marty Feldman and John Law and was based on the topic of Class. Cleese, Barker and Corbett performed the upper, middle and lower social classes here.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2 Inception of this comedy troupe

It all started in May 1969 at the Light of Kashmir tandoori restaurant in Hampstead, where the group of six young comedians agreed to work together. They had one thing in common – they wanted to overturn the conventions of traditional comedy. Their aggressive, disrespectful, and ironic approach seemed borderless, reflecting the revolutionary times of the late 1960s in their first television series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, the first sketch of which aired for the first time on October 5, 1969 at 10:55 p.m.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The Frost Report – BBC 100, <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/march/the-frost-report/>

<sup>44</sup> The Pythons, James Gent, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/python\\_The\\_Pythons/14](http://www.montypython.com/python_The_Pythons/14).

### 3.3 Common work

#### 3.3.1 Flying Circus

Monty Python's Flying Circus is a television series with a unique structure full of sketches on various themes. It is the first ever artistic venture involving all members of the comedy group. The forty-five episodes were divided into four series, with the first, second and third series consisting of thirteen episodes each, and the last series being a six-part series. Each episode lasted on average between half and three-quarters of an hour and contained several sketches.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the best known and most popular sketches among fans include Dead Parrot, which will be analysed later in the practical part of this thesis, and Hell's Grannies both from the eight episode, as well as the Ministry of Silly Walks from the first episode of the second season, The Spanish Inquisition from the second and eponymous episode of the same series, and from the third series The Man Who Speaks in Anagrams, the first sketch of the fourth episode, can be mentioned. The fourth series includes another famous sketch, Man Who Finishes Other People's Sentences, which was aired in the sixth and the final episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Monty Python often teased various BBC-produced television programmes and documentaries.<sup>46</sup>

The visuals of the series, especially the specific transitions, were handled by Terry Gilliam with his surreal low-budget animations. The series is known for its absurd situations, apt jokes and sketches, most of the time without a punchline (Besley, 217, p. 18).

The BBC gave the Pythons enormous creative freedom in their work on the series, but set the broadcast time to late in the evening, which meant that the BBC regional stations could choose not to broadcast the series, as the evening broadcast time was subject to their own schedules. This deprived the series of viewership in, for example, the Midlands or the North East. The ninth episode was already broadcast at an earlier time, 9:45 p.m., and the viewing figures doubled to four million viewers (Besley, 217, p. 18).

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<sup>45</sup> List of Monty Python's Flying Circus Episodes, [https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/List\\_of\\_Monty\\_Python%27s\\_Flying\\_Circus\\_episodes](https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Monty_Python%27s_Flying_Circus_episodes)

<sup>46</sup> List of Monty Python's Flying Circus Episodes, [https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/List\\_of\\_Monty\\_Python%27s\\_Flying\\_Circus\\_episodes](https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Monty_Python%27s_Flying_Circus_episodes)

Throughout the four seasons of this sketch show, viewers are guided by the **title characters** - It's Man played by Michael Palin, a serious announcer played by John Cleese, and Terry Jones as the Nude organist (Besley, 217, p. 16-17).

It's Man, a slick former TV presenter, was determined to introduce all the episodes of the first three series of *The Flying Circus*, despite his life as a scruffy with bulging eyes and in rags. But the viewer never knew in advance what was coming, because It's Man could say nothing more than "It's...". In the third series, It's Man performs his own sketch. As a talk show host, he comes into the studio, introduced by a voice as "It's Man in his usual torn rags", however decently dressed, his starry guests, Ringo Starr from The Beatles and Lulu Kennedy-Cairns, walk off in annoyance. Despite the It's Man forcibly pulling them back on the stage, the show ends (Besley, 217, p. 16).

John Cleese announces the show like a serious BBC representative in a tuxedo, sitting at his desk, especially in unusual places like a field or a zoo. Cleese's character as the show's guide has become so well-known and iconic that his "And now for something completely different..." announcement has been shortened to a simply "And now..." since the third series, as seasoned viewers were immediately able to complete the announcement with unanimity (Besley, 217, p. 17).

Terry Jones has also appeared as a presenter in the form of the Nude organist in various unusual places. This figure with wildly coiffed hair wore only a collar and bow tie. His role was to play a chord and then grinned at the camera (Besley, 217, p. 17).

### 3.3.2 Films

For the title of their first feature-length film, the Pythons used one of the most established catchphrases "***And now for something completely different***", that was John Cleese uttering as the character of a serious BBC announcer, in a series Monty Python's *Flying Circus* already airing at the time in England.

The film consists of the best sketches and Terry Gilliam's animations of the first and second seasons of the series. It was made for an American audience that had not yet seen the series. Although the target audience was different, the film made more money in England than in America. There are well-known sketches such as How not to be seen, Nudge Nudge, the

Funniest Joke in the World, the Dead Parrot, and also a musical sketch the Lumberjack Song. Among Gilliam's animations, which form the so-called transitions between sketches here, are for example Conrad Poohs & His Dancing Teeth or Killer Cars. The selection of sketches for the film was devolved to Victor Lownes, who financed half of it. The film was directed by Ian MacNaughton, who also directed Monty Python's Flying Circus. Filming began in the autumn of 1970 and the film was first broadcasted the following year.<sup>47</sup>

Their first feature film with a main character and storyline (almost the truth) was already directed by the Pythons themselves, specifically directed by Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. Monty Python chose, among other topics, mythic heroism as their main themes to mock, and decided to make the story of King Arthur, who sets out with his retinue to find the Holy Grail. The film is thus titled *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and had its world premiere in Los Angeles on 14 March 1975.<sup>48</sup>

Immediately after the promotion of their first non-sketch film, the public began to wonder what theme the Pythons would use for their next film. They were very keen on the idea of making a biblical comedy, but all of them were immediately aware that it was also taboo to mock Jesus or the Bible itself. But to make fun of the bigoted people around him, that was the aim. The result was the *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, this time directed by Terry Jones himself. Terry Gilliam went more into his own field and took over the set design.<sup>49</sup>

The filming was to be done with the support of EMI, but a few days before filming was due to start, the company's boss, Sir Bernard Delfont, who had apparently finally read the script, declared that the film was too blasphemous and would therefore not be financed by his company.<sup>50</sup> George Harrison, a member of the Beatles and a big Monty Python fan, immediately reacted to the situation. He set up his own company, Handmade Films, and even mortgaged his own house to finance the film.<sup>51</sup> As a thankyou for his favour, the filmmakers

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<sup>47</sup> Monty Python's And Now For Something Completely Different..., David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20And%20Now%20For%20Something%20Completely%20Different%20\(1971\)/18](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20And%20Now%20For%20Something%20Completely%20Different%20(1971)/18)

<sup>48</sup> Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) – Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python%20and%20the%20Holy%20Grail%20\(1975\)/15](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python%20and%20the%20Holy%20Grail%20(1975)/15)

<sup>49</sup> Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979) Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20\(1979\)/14](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20(1979)/14)

<sup>50</sup> Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979) Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20\(1979\)/14](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20(1979)/14)

<sup>51</sup> George Harrison and „Handmade Films“ – CultureSonar, Eoghan Lyng, 2020, <https://www.culturesonar.com/george-harrison-and-handmade-films/>

cast him in a cameo. The filming took place in Tunisia, where it was possible to use locations and sets from the recently filmed miniseries *Jesus of Nazareth* by Franco Zeffirelli.<sup>52</sup>

On 17 August 1979, on the day of the scheduled premiere, protests were held in several places, including New York and London, and the film was even banned in some countries, such as Ireland and Norway. Sweden responded with ads saying “Life of Brian is so funny that it was banned in Norway”.<sup>53</sup> Ironically, the film could not even be shown in two towns in County of Surrey, which did not even have cinemas at the time. Despite all this, Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* is now regarded as one of the best comedies of all time and as a masterpiece of the group.<sup>54</sup>

The group’s fourth and last film is *Monty Python’s Meaning of Life*, which premiered in 1983 and was again directed by Terry Jones. The film consists of seven parts, each describing a particular stage of life, such as childbirth, education, or death. The main film is preceded by a short film by Terry Gilliam called *The Crimson Permanent Assurance*, which tells the saga of accountants who sail the high seas of international finance in their office building as their ship and, like pirates, ravage multinational corporations.<sup>55</sup>

The film’s main connecting device is a shot of an aquarium with six fish located in a restaurant, played by members of the group. The fish are arguing amongst themselves about the meaning of life while they watch their fellow fish just being served to the diners at the table. The fish also occasionally address complaints to the filmmakers, which could be seen as an indirect breaking the fourth wall (as discussed in chapter 2.2.6).<sup>56</sup>

### 3.3 Members

In the following subsections, all Monty Python members will be shortly introduced. The first two posts are dedicated to members who are deceased at the time of writing this thesis.

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<sup>52</sup> Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* (1979) Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20\(1979\)/14](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20(1979)/14)

<sup>53</sup> *Life of Brian: The most blasphemous film ever?* – BBC Culture, Nicholas Barber, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190822-life-of-brian-the-most-blasphemous-film-ever>

<sup>54</sup> Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* (1979) Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20\(1979\)/14](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20Life%20of%20Brian%20(1979)/14)

<sup>55</sup> Monty Python’s *The Meaning of Life* (1983) – Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20The%20Meaning%20of%20Life%20\(1983\)/17](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20The%20Meaning%20of%20Life%20(1983)/17)

<sup>56</sup> Monty Python’s *The Meaning of Life* (1983) – Films, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/film\\_Monty%20Python's%20The%20Meaning%20of%20Life%20\(1983\)/17](http://www.montypython.com/film_Monty%20Python's%20The%20Meaning%20of%20Life%20(1983)/17)

Lastly, the only significant supporting actress who was an integral part of many of the group's performances will be presented.

### 3.3.1 Graham Chapman

Graham Chapman, in full Graham Arthur Chapman, was born on 8 January 1941 in Leicester, England into the family of a Chief Inspector of Police. He grew up in Leicestershire, where he visited a grammar school and also began with acting. The fact of his father's job position mentioned above has probably provided Graham with inspiration for his later portrayals of many roles of officials, police constables or persons of authority in some comedy sketches. For example, the role of the Colonel, a veteran British Army officer, which he portrayed in the television series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969), or, later as well in a film *And now for something completely different* (1971), is thought to be his trademark role.<sup>57</sup>

Graham started with medicine studies at Emmanuel College, where he joined as a member the prestigious *Cambridge Footlights Dramatic Club*. There he met John Cleese. After his graduation in 1962 he joined the 1963 Footlights revue named *A Clump of Plinths*, which was touring the whole world as *Jumping Circus*. He completed his studies at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and graduated successfully. He earned an M.D. (Medical Doctor) but only practiced for a few years. He soon realised what fulfilled him in life and what he wanted to pursue. His dream was to entertain people, he wanted to perform comedy.<sup>58</sup>

However, Graham used his medical education even though he did not continue to work as a doctor. Along with John Cleese and others, he wrote for the British television comedy series called *Doctor in the House*.<sup>59</sup> It is also worth mentioning that when *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979) was filmed in Tunisia, Graham opened a makeshift surgery for the cast and crew. There he had various necessary medications, such as drugs for dehydration, food poisoning, or other medications that could help with the ailments during the filming in the Tunisian environment.

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<sup>57</sup> Colonel, Monty Python Wiki Fandom, <https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/Colonel>

<sup>58</sup> Graham Chapman, Biography, Monty Python & Facts, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Graham-Chapman>

<sup>59</sup> Comedy classic – Doctor in the House – written by John Cleese and Graham Chapman, Liberal Burlblings, <https://paulwalternewbury.wordpress.com/2011/08/25/comedy-classic-doctor-in-the-house-written-by-john-cleese-and-graham-chapman/>

In 1969, he came out as a homosexual to his friends and Monty Python colleagues and introduced them to his partner David Sherlock, with whom he would spend the rest of his life. In 1972, he co-founded *Gay News*, the first independent gay magazine of its time. That same year, he came out for the first time on television.<sup>60</sup>

He made no secret of the fact that he had a drinking problem. Although he quit for good in 1977, he was later diagnosed with throat cancer in 1988, which soon spread to his spine. Soon after, in 1989, Graham Chapman died at the age of just 48.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3.2 Terry Jones

Born on 1 February 1942 in Colwyn Bay, Wales, Terrence Graham Parry Jones was a very active young man. He joined the Army Cadet Corps and also amongst other things became captain of the rugby team.

He studied English literature at Oxford University, where he joined *The Oxford Revue Group* with fellow student Michael Palin. In 1966, young Terry joined the BBC as a comedy script consultant (Besley, 2017, p. 10-11).

His enthusiasm and passion obviously led to him having probably the widest scope of activity amongst his colleagues in Monty Python. He was a director, a writer and a performer as well.<sup>62</sup> But despite Terry's love for comedy since childhood, he had not starred in Monty Python as much. This was probably caused by his headmaster's view of actors as "homosexuals and communists".

His two most iconic and famous roles in the Monty Python films were the character of Mr. Creosote in *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* (1983), and also the character of Brian's mother in *Life of Brian* (1979).

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<sup>60</sup> Queer Portraits in History - Graham Chapman, Queer Portraits in History, <https://www.queerportraits.com/bio/chapman>

<sup>61</sup> Graham Chapman, Biography, Monty Python & Facts, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Graham-Chapman>

<sup>62</sup> Monty Python Official Site – Pythons, Monty Python Official Site, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/python\\_Terry\\_Jones/20](http://www.montypython.com/python_Terry_Jones/20)



This proud Welsh, who was considered the driving force behind Monty Python, passed away on 21 January 2020 from dementia-related circumstances.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.3.3 John Cleese

John Marwood Cleese, known for his dark British humour, was born in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, England, on 27 October 1939. An interesting fact is that his ancestors had the surname “Cheese” a long time ago. Although the children in his neighbourhood did not know it, he earned this derisive nickname (Cleese, 2014, p.9).

Cleese studied law at Cambridge University and he also joined *Cambridge Footlights*, where he met Graham Chapman and they wrote and performed together. Later, it turned out that as a creative duo, it worked very well for them. Although Cleese was planning a future as a solicitor, he preferred to take a chance of writing for BBC Radio.

His later work on the pun-filled radio sketch show “*I’m Sorry, I’ll Read That Again*” led him to write and perform on David Frost’s *The Frost Report*, where he met Michael Palin, Terry Jones and Eric Idle, some of his future Monty Python colleagues.

His bravura portrayal of anger, as well as his madcap physical comedy, have earned him a place as an icon of British humour.<sup>64</sup> His silly walk which has become a legend, in one of the most popular TV sketches, is proof of that (Besley, 2017, p 28).

Cleese is known to have turned down a number of prestigious awards. In 1996, he did refuse a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire<sup>65</sup>), saying that rather than being knighted, it would be a greater honour for him if a lemur were named after him.<sup>66</sup> And this is exactly what happened. His wish was granted. In 2005, Urs Thallmann and Thomas Geismann, both from the Institute of Anthropology at the University of Zurich, named a new species of woolly lemur, or avahi, as *Avahi cleesei*. They did so in recognition of his promotion of lemur conservation issues in film, interviews and documentaries. This species of lemur is found in the

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<sup>63</sup> Terry Jones biography, Cardinal Fang's Python Site, [http://www.cardinalfang.net/biographies/jones\\_biog.html](http://www.cardinalfang.net/biographies/jones_biog.html)

<sup>64</sup> John Cleese, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/python\\_John\\_Cleese/15](http://www.montypython.com/python_John_Cleese/15)

<sup>65</sup> What does CBE stand for?, November 20, 2009, <https://www.abbreviations.com/CBE>

<sup>66</sup> Actor and explorer Michael Palin receives his knighthood, Rory Tingle, 12 June 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7132829/Actor-explorer-Michael-Palin-receives-knighthood.html>

Tsingy de Bemaraha region of Madagascar.<sup>67</sup> According to Urs Thalmann, the Avahi cleesei shares a common physical feature with its namesake, namely long legs. Woolly lemurs do not actually walk, but move by means of silly leaps.<sup>68</sup> Cleese even turned down an offer from Paddy Ashdown for a peerage in 1999.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.3.4 Michael Palin

Michael Edward Palin was born on 5 May 1943 in Broomhill, Sheffield, located in South Yorkshire in Northern England, U. K. As a young child, attending Birkdale Preparatory School in his native city, he experienced his hand at performing in front of an audience. He portrayed the role of Martha Cratchit in the play based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, when he was only five years old. Unfortunately, little Palin fell off the stage and, even as a boy, etched himself on the audience's memory as a comedian.

He started working in the publicity department of Edgar Allen & Co. Steelmakers and joined the *Brightside and Carbrook Co-Operative Society Players* theatre company at that time. He came to the attention of audiences when he won the Best Performing Gent Award at the Co-Op Drama Festival in Bradford.

In 1962 he went to the Brasenose College, Oxford University and started there with History studies. His first comedy venture was a cabaret performance at the Oxford University Psychology Society Christmas party, which he wrote and performed with his colleague Robert Hewison. During this performance, another Oxford University student, Terry Jones, noticed Palin and decided to start writing together with him and Hewison.

Palin wrote and starred in the university production of *Hang Down Your Head and Die* in 1964. This musical revue about the death penalty then moved to a comedy theatre in London's West End. He performed with Terry Jones in the university revue *The Oxford Line* at the Edinburgh Festival and collaborated with him in his theatrical documentary *The Love Show*.

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<sup>67</sup> New primates discovered in 2005, Rylands, A. B. and Mittermeier, 2006, [http://www.primatesg.org/new\\_primates\\_discovered\\_2005](http://www.primatesg.org/new_primates_discovered_2005)

<sup>68</sup> Lemur named after Monty Python star, 9 November 2005, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg18825252-400-lemur-named-after-monty-python-star/>

<sup>69</sup> Knighthoods, CBEs, OBEs and MBEs: 11 people who have said no over the years, 1 January 2022, <https://news.sky.com/story/knighthoods-cbes-obes-and-mbes-11-people-who-have-said-no-over-the-years-11593840>

After his studies, he became one of the presenters of the comedy pop show *Now!* For the British independent *Television Wales and the West*.<sup>70</sup>

Even though Palin appears to be an innocent man, he had a tremendous ability to play subversive characters, such as gangsters or unctuous presenters. He was always able to inhabit the role very well. Some of his well-known characters in Monty Python include the transvestite lumberjack, a pet shop owner who sells dead parrots, the leader of the knights who say “Ni!”, and as Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, who has an apparent speech impediment that makes everyone around him laugh.<sup>72</sup>

As Monty Python celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, Michael Palin received his knighthood from the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, during a ceremony at Buckingham Palace on 12 June. He received a distinction declaring him a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George for his services to travel, culture and geography. He thus became the first sketch star to be awarded this honour. However, Sir Michael Palin admitted that the honour was awarded to him for his later work<sup>73</sup> during his new career as a travel writer and travel documentarian. With his expedition he travelled to both the North and South Poles, the Sahara Desert in Africa, the Himalayas and also Eastern Europe (Hall, 217, p. 127).

### 3.3.5 Eric Idle

Eric Idle was born on 29 March 1943 in South Shields located in Durham County in Northern England, U. K.

As president of *The Cambridge Footlights Dramatic Club*, which was founded in 1883, Idle changed the established rules with the intention of enabling women to join.

In 1968, along with Michael Palin, Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam, he began writing and starring in *Do Not Adjust Your Set*, a television hit for children. The show was such a success

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<sup>70</sup> ‘Hang Down Your Head and Die’ at Myfair, The New York Times, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/10/19/archives/hang-down-your-head-and-die-at-mayfair.html>

<sup>71</sup> Biography, <https://www.themichaelpalin.com/biography/>

<sup>72</sup> Michael Palin, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/python\\_Michael\\_Palin/16](http://www.montypython.com/python_Michael_Palin/16)

<sup>73</sup> Actor and explorer Michael Palin receives his knighthood, Rory Tingle, 12 June 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7132829/Actor-explorer-Michael-Palin-receives-knighthood.html>

that it won *The Priz Jeunesse* in Munich, which subsequently led to the successful launch of the television series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969).<sup>74</sup>

Idle's musical talents have reflected and enriched the Monty Python work in every way – in television series or shows, films, books and the music itself.<sup>75</sup> The success of the song “*Always look on the bright side of life*” he wrote and sang as a fellow crucifixion victim at the very end of the *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979) attempting to cheer Brian up, brought a big joy to him (Morgan, 2019, p. 266).

His Famous Monty Python film roles include brave Sir Robin, a knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), who is “Not-Quite-so-Brave-as-Sir-Lancelot” (Hall, 2017, p. 50), as well as the character of confused revolutionist Stan, who wants to be Loretta, because he as a man has right to be a woman, in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979).<sup>76</sup>

### 3.3.6 Terry Gilliam

Terry Gilliam was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. His full name is Terrence Vance Gilliam. He is the only American among the Monty Pythons, but he eventually had his citizenship changed to British.

He graduated with a degree in political science from Occidental College in Los Angeles, where he became editor of the humour magazine *Fang*. While working on the editorial staff of the national humour magazine *Help!*, he met John Cleese. After *Help!* Magazine folded in 1966, Gilliam emigrated to England and began working on animated films for television series.<sup>77</sup>

He contributed his skills in directing, script writing and occasionally acting to the Monty Python group. Together with Terry Jones, he directed the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). It was in this film that Gilliam also plays one of his most iconic roles, that of Patsy,

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<sup>74</sup> My Life, <https://ericidle.com/my-life/>

<sup>75</sup> Eric Idle, David Morgan, 2014, [http://www.montypython.com/python\\_Eric\\_Idle/17](http://www.montypython.com/python_Eric_Idle/17)

<sup>76</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>77</sup> Terry Gilliam, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Terry-Gilliam>

King Arthur's assistant, where by tapping two halves of coconut against itself, simulates the clapping sound of horse hooves.<sup>78</sup>

His main role in Monty Python, however, was creating the animations that formed a sort of transition between the sketches. His surreal animations gave the series a style that was unprecedented in television up to that time.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.3.7 “Seventh Python”

Arguably the most prominent and fan-favourite of the group of supporting actors who have appeared in sketches, films and on stage alongside the six comedians is Carol Cleveland. Although the group had not the slightest problem portraying female characters, whenever a character needed to be played by a real woman, the Monty Pythons were happy to cast Carol, who always brought the right attitude to the shows she performed in. According to the Pythons, she always handled her role with ease, playing everything in harmony with the others and being able to tune in to their note without having to be told at length how to act. She was able to cope with everything that was thrown at her and it was always a great success, at least the Pythons were completely satisfied.<sup>80</sup>

This British comedy actress was born on 13 January 1942 in London.<sup>81</sup> She soon moved to America with her mother and stepfather, thus acquiring dual citizenship. She attended high school in southern California, where she became a member of *The Entertainers Club*. In 1960 she returned to London and a year later began studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Her side career and hobby was working in modelling and she even became one of the first London Playboy Bunny's. It is no surprise then that Carol played mostly the bosomy, sexy girl roles in Monty Python.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, 1975 [film]. Direction Terry GILLIAM and Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>79</sup> Terry Gilliam, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Terry-Gilliam>

<sup>80</sup> Carol Cleveland's PomPoms Up! Book, Kim „Howard“ Johnosn, 1999, <https://www.carolcleveland.com/python.htm>

<sup>81</sup> Carol Cleveland, [https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/Carol\\_Cleveland](https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/Carol_Cleveland)

<sup>82</sup> Carol Cleveland's Bio Page, <https://www.carolcleveland.com/biog.htm>

## **4 PRACTICAL PART**

### **4.1 Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979) – Film Analysis**

#### **4.1.1 Summary**

The film tells the story of Brian Cohen (Graham Chapman), who was born in a stable adjacent to the stable where Jesus Christ was born, which at first confused the three wise men who came to praise the future King of the Jews.

Brian grows up to be an idealistic young man who opposes the ongoing Roman occupation of Judea. He falls in love with a young rebel named Judith (Sue Jones-Davies). His desire for this attractive woman and his hatred of the Romans, compounded by his mother's confession that he is actually half Roman, awakens in him the desire to join the People's Front of Judea, one of the many independence movements that spend more time fighting each other than the Romans.

From the People's Front of Judea, Brian is given a task to prove himself, and that is to write a message to the palace of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Michael Palin). He is caught by a Roman officer, however, who is more concerned about Brian's poor grammar than the actual content of the message. After correcting Brian, he orders him to write the inscription a hundred times in a row, presumably for the sake of memorization. The next morning, Brian is expelled by the Romans. He takes part in a failed attempt to kidnap Pilate's wife, but is captured by the palace guards. He manages to escape when the guards have a fit of laughter at Pilate's speech impediment. He tries to hide among the prophets in the square and repeats fragments of Jesus' sermons. When the Romans leave, Brian stops repeating the sermon and leaves, but is pursued by his listeners who demand more information. They follow him into the mountains and proclaim him the Messiah. Upon awakening, he finds a crowd of people standing outside his house. Brian speaks to them in an attempt to open their eyes and tells them to think about themselves, but they repeat his words as dogma.

The People's Front of Judea takes advantage of Brian's celebrity status and has him minister to the crowd of followers who want to be miraculously cured. But he sneaks out the back and is captured by the Romans and sentenced to be crucified. In celebration of Passover, Pilate offers clemency to the prisoner who is chosen by the crowd. Judith appears and shouts Brian's name, the crowd echoes her, and Pilate agrees. The crucified people take advantage of

this and claim to be Brian, so the wrong man is released. Other opportunities to free Brian always go wrong for some reason, so he remains condemned to a slow and painful death.

The film ends with fellow sufferer Mr. Frisbee III singing an invigorating song advising him to always look on the bright side of life.<sup>83</sup>

## 4.1.2 Topics and Motifs

### 4.1.2.1 Bible

Without a doubt, the most important theme addressed in this film directed by Terry Jones is the Bible. The film certainly does not mock the Bible or Jesus, as one might expect from a film by six comedians. It is therefore not a parody of the Bible, but rather a religious satire. The life of Jesus of Nazareth, however, functions in part as a subtext and framework for the life story of Brian Cohen, who was born on the same day as his neighbour, with whom he is mistaken for by the three wise men in the very opening scene. The figure of Jesus Christ appears twice in the film, and always reverently – the first time at the very beginning of the film, in the manger as a newborn baby, and the second time during his famous Sermon on the Mount – as a depiction of two important passages from the New Testament. In relation to the figure of Jesus and the scenes with him, there is no hint of absurdity, cynicism, or irony.

When Brian grows up, his mother (Terry Jones) admits that in addition to being Jewish, he is also half Roman, in her words ‘the bastard of a Roman centurion’. This may be based on the general Jewish view of Jesus expressed by the Greek philosopher Celsus in his book *The True Word*, written in the second half of the second century AD, in which he writes that a Roman soldier named Pantera was his biological father. Jesus also appears with the designation “Yeshu ben Pantera” in medieval Jewish writings.<sup>84</sup>

In the film, we meet another character from the Gospels, Pontius Pilate, whose character the filmmakers were not so restrained about in the form of mockery and joking. They portrayed the Roman prefect of the province of Judea as a character who suffers from rhotacism.

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<sup>83</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>84</sup> „Jesus, son of Pantera“, Robin Helweg-Larsen, November 6 2011, <https://robinhl.com/2011/11/06/jesus-son-of-pantera/>

#### **4.1.2.2 Religion**

The comedians seem to have taken religion and the resulting hypocrisy, and probably some Hollywood Bible films, as the butt of their satirical barbs. The targets of ridicule are religious fanatics who seem to refuse to think for themselves, not trying to make up their own minds and perspectives in life, and have a sort of need to submit to authority. This may simply be an allusion to how easily influenced the human mind is. In other words, people may seem inclined to believe in something that is extraordinary and marvellous.

#### **4.1.2.3 Politics**

There are several anti-imperialist groups in the film, namely the People's Front of Judea (PFJ), the Judean People's Front (JPF), the Campaign for Free Galilei (CFG), and also a single-member group, the Judean Popular People's Front (JPPF), all of which have a common enemy – the Romans. Most of the time, however, they fight among themselves and plot various plans to destroy each other. They also confuse very similar acronyms of their movements, which often leads to quarrels between members of the same movement. These fictional groups are a reference to the real existence of many Palestinian organisations and parties fighting for the liberation of Palestine at the time the film was made. Examples include the followings: Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinian's Peoples Party (PPP), Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command (PFLP-GC), Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), and the last two groups with no less distinct acronyms, Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party (RPCP).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Palestinian Organizations and Parties, <http://www.mideastweb.org/palestinianparties.htm>



## 4.2 *Always look on the bright side of life* – an analysis of the song against the backdrop of the last scene from the film *Monty Python's Life of Brian*

The last scene of the film *Monty Python's Life of Brian* is the crucifixion scene. Brian and 139 others fellow crucifixion convicts suspended on the cross waiting to die. At this point, one of the fellow crucifees, Mr. Frisbee III, who is in close proximity, decides to cheer the sad Brian up. He asks him if he knows what is being said. Namely, that some things in life are bad and can naturally put him in a bad mood but that he knows the cure. All Brian has to do is to whistle and things will turn out for the best. Brian does not understand how this situation can be reversed when his destiny is already clearly set. Apparently, he thinks that Mr. Frisbee III is just talking nonsense and considers any whistle blowing to be absurd. Mr. Frisbee III, however, begins to sing.<sup>86</sup> The cheerful and catchy melody of the song, which is in the key of G major<sup>87</sup>, is accompanied by words of encouragement and advice, how to view life:

*“Always look on the bright side of life.*

*Always look on the light side of life.”<sup>88</sup>*

The two phrases of this chorus are accompanied by a cheerful whistle at the end. This is followed by a stanza in which Mr. Frisbee III reminds Brian, with a slightly undertone of irony, what is actually the most important in life:

*“If life seems jolly rotten*

*There's something you've forgotten*

*And that's to laugh and smile and dance and sing.*

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<sup>86</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>87</sup> Always Look On The Bright Side of Life by Monty Python Chords and Melody, <https://www.hooktheory.com/theorytab/view/monty-python/always-look-on-the-bright-side-of-life>

<sup>88</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

*When you're feeling in the dumps*

*Don't be silly chumps*

*Just purse your lips and whistle – that's the thing.”<sup>89</sup>*

One must not forget to be optimistic even in the most difficult moment of one's life. It may seem absurd, but even in the last moments of life one must not forget to laugh, smile, dance and sing, because this will cheer him up in every situation. When Mr. Frisbee III sings this stanza, the viewer can see other crucifees looking at each other in confusion. However, the singer does not lose hope of encouraging everyone and the words of the chorus follow again:

*“Always look on the bright side of life.”<sup>90</sup>*

After the first part of the chorus, the singer screams “Come on!” and the others join in, singing the second part of the chorus with a smile on their faces and they are whistling, too:

*“Always look on the right side of life.”<sup>91</sup>*

In this part of the chorus, looking back at the words of the first chorus, the perceiver sees how the songwriter Eric Idle has played with the use of homophonic words ‘bright, light, and right’. It could be said that one should always look at life not only from the better side, but also from the lighter side and definitely from the right side, the real side.

And since death is the last thing that awaits man in life, he should end it in style, forgetting with humour all the bad things, because it is the last chance to pay tribute to life, a gift from God.

*“For life is quite absurd*

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<sup>89</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>90</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>91</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

*And death's the final word*

*You must always face the curtain with a bow.*

*Forget about your sin – give the audience a grin*

*Enjoy it – it's your last chance anyhow.”<sup>92</sup>*

After the first four verses of this stanza, the fellow crucifees seem to realise the gravity of the situation, in other words that there is no time for any lamentation over their lives, and also that Mr. Frisbee III is right in everything he has sung so far, so they join him in unison in the last verse.

A chorus follows in which Mr. Frisbee III and now the other fellow crucifees point out that not only life, but also death, should be looked on the bright side:

*“So always look on the bright side of death...”<sup>93</sup>*

A whistle follows and the camera directs its shot to members of The Judean People's Front Crack Suicide Squad, who have committed mass suicide in front of the crosses. The song seems to be so catchy that even they join in, and even if they are not able to sing, at least they move their feet to the rhythm of the music.

*...just before you draw your terminal breath.”<sup>94</sup>*

Before the analysis of the next stanza, let me digress slightly to lighten the situation, and refer to the eulogy which was delivered by John Cleese in honour of Graham Chapman. Cleese uttered that the night before the memorial service he heard Graham whisper in his ear that he understood that he was proud to be the first person in history to say 'shit' on British television,

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<sup>92</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>93</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>94</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

and further demanded that he be the first person at a British memorial service to say another swear word.<sup>95</sup>

Personally, I hope I will not be the first to include this incriminated word, occurring in the first verse of the following stanza, in a bachelor's thesis:

*"Life's a piece of shit*

*When you look at it"*<sup>96</sup>

Brian finally smiles. "Hooray!", must be saying a surely pleased Mr. Frisbee III to himself, as Brian seems to have taken his words of irony, but the truth to heart. The singer continues with the second part of the stanza in which he expresses his comparative theses of life and death:

*"Life's a laugh and death's a joke, it's true.*

*You'll see it's all a show*

*Keep 'em laughing as you go*

*Just remember that the last laugh is on you."*<sup>97</sup>

The following words of the chorus are already sung with enthusiasm by almost all of the present in the scene, and those who can, kick their feet to the rhythm. The end of each verse is still accompanied by whistling.

*"Always look on the bright side of life.*

*Always look on the right side of life."*<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Graham Chapman's Eulogy by John Cleese, jester0000, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkxCHybM6Ek>

<sup>96</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>97</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>98</sup> *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

Mr. Frisbee III encourages all the crucifees with the words “C’mon boys, cheer up!”. A smiling Brian resolves to sing and the song, nearing its end, goes into a higher key. They are all singing now a two-verse chorus with triple repetition, yet already sung only by crucifees. Mr. Frisbee III switches from singing to spoken words:

*“Worse things happen at sea, you know.*

*I mean – what have you got to lose?*

*You know, you come from nothing – you’re going to back to nothing.*

*What have you lost? Nothing!*

*Nothing will come from nothing.*

*You know, what they say?<sup>99</sup>*

With the words in the first verse, Mr. Frisbee III suggests to Brian that he can be glad for his current situation, because it could have been even worse. The next four verses seem to be more philosophical with a slight hint of the positive side of nihilism. This may be a reference to the teachings of the Cynics of ancient Greece, who believed that the meaning of life was to abandon all conventional values and live a life in harmony with nature, requiring only the basic necessities for an individual’s existence (as discussed in the chapter 2.2.5). Mr. Frisbee III encourages Brian again and demands his grin:

*“Cheer up, ya old bugga. C’mon, give us a grin!*

*There ya are, see*

*It’s the end of the film*

*Incidentally this record’s available in the foyer<sup>100</sup>*

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<sup>99</sup> *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

<sup>100</sup> *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

In the last two verses of this stanza, we can see a demonstrative example of a typically Pythonesque breaking the fourth wall (as discussed in the chapter 2.2.6). Mr. Frisbee III has been talking to Brian up to this point, but all of the sudden he begins to speak to the audience, informing them of the availability of this record in the foyer. So, this is an example of a direct breaking the fourth wall.

Mr. Frisbee III, or perhaps from this point as Eric Idle himself, explains his digression and so-called breaking the fourth wall in the following words:

*“Some of us got to live as well, you know*

*Who do you think pays for all this rubbish*

*They’re not gonna make their money back, you know*

*I told them, I said to him, Bernie, I said they’ll never make their money back.”<sup>101</sup>*

The song ended and the credits disappeared. A viewer who has just finished the film must have very mixed feelings about the unexpected ending. On the one hand, the perceiver is warmed by a feeling of happiness at the encouraging, cheerful, and so true song, and also by the fact that after the so-called breaking the fourth wall it is obvious that no one really died after all, but on the other hand he or she must be accompanied by a feeling of shock and indignation that someone is so visibly forcing him or her to spend more money on records in the foyer. But it can be assumed that most of the audience immediately rushed into the foyer and a long queue formed.

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<sup>101</sup> *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, 1979 [film]. Direction Terry JONES. GB, Warner Bros.

### 4.3 Monty Python's Influence on Comedy

The comedians of Monty Python have shown the comedy world that when it comes to playing a female role, there is no need to cast a woman at all. A pretty dress, stuffed breasts, a glamorous make-up and lo and behold, there is a woman. Actually, that makes the situation even funnier.

The Pythons also broke the unwritten rule that comedians perform in pairs at most. For example, the TV sketch series *The State*, which began airing in 1993, features eleven comedians.<sup>102</sup>

The members of this comedy group also proved to us through their work that neither the punchline nor the ending is important, because an astute viewer can deduce the conclusion. There is also the possibility of explaining it in such a way, that the Pythons wanted to stimulate the viewer's imagination.

In the Monty Python's Flying Circus sketches, we encounter characters who have come from another sketch and thus accompany the viewer to the next sketch. This transition technique can be seen in the sketch series *Mr. Show* from 1995-1998, co-created by the duo of comedians David Cross and Bob Odenkirk.<sup>103</sup>

One of the most interesting Pythonesque features of comedy is undoubtedly the so-called breaking the fourth wall, when a character speaks to the audience. In the Monty Python world, such a typical interrupting character is The Colonel played by Graham Chapman, who, all of the sudden, appears in a sketch and asks for the scene to end because "it's too silly". This kind of audience interaction can be seen in contemporary comedy, for example, by the character of Deadpool.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *The State* (TV Series 1993-2009), IMDb, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0130421/>

<sup>103</sup> *Mr. Show with Bob and David* (TV Series 1995-1998), IMDb, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112084/><https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112084/>

<sup>104</sup> 31 Times Deadpool Broke The 4th Wall, Next Of Ken, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmlc9apqeAc&ab\\_channel=NextofKen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmlc9apqeAc&ab_channel=NextofKen)

### 4.3 Artists inspired by Monty Python

Many artists have been inspired by the spirit of Pythonesque humour. Worthy of mention is the British comic duo Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry, both from Cambridge University, who combined slapstick with clever puns in their sketch show, such as in their famous sketch “Your Name, sir?”<sup>105</sup>. Their duo was called A Bit Of Fry And Laurie and formed in 1989.<sup>106</sup>

### 4.4 Monty Python’s Influence on society

The comedy group Monty Python influenced not only the world of comedy, but also the world at large, especially society and not only the interested public.

According to *The Independent*, Idle’s song ‘*Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*’ became the most played song at funerals in 2014. In doing so, it dethroned Frank Sinatra’s ‘*I Did It My Way*’ which had held the top spot on the chart for ten years. This highlights the fact that people want to make the farewell to their loved ones more enjoyable with a happy and heartening song.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> 114: A Bit of Fry and Laurie - Your name, sir? (Complete), onestepcloser06, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LopIroSjsU&t=2s>

<sup>106</sup> A Bit of Fry and Laurie, Apple TV, <https://tv.apple.com/us/show/a-bit-of-fry-and-laurie/umc.cmc.6q899ous7yssbu7nijapb6ed>

<sup>107</sup> Monty Python's 'Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life' named most popular funeral song, The Independent, Antonia Molloy, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/monty-python-s-always-look-on-the-bright-side-of-life-named-most-popular-funeral-song-9875462.html>



## 5 Conclusion

Monty Python is without doubt one of the best known British comedy groups and the aim of this thesis was to introduce the group and its work, analyse it and show its impact on the comedy genre.

The first part briefly describes comedy as a type of theatre, its origin and history. In order to amuse the audience comedy uses various means of expression. This thesis chooses those used by the Monty Pythons to create their specific humour and describes closely the absurdity, irony, satire, sarcasm, cynicism and breaking the fourth wall.

The main focus is on the comedy troupe itself and its members. Firstly, it depicts the beginning of their cooperation and the iconic TV series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* that was broadcasted on the BBC since the 5th October 1969 and also description of their feature movies.

Further, the group members are introduced - Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin and the Seventh Python – Carol Cleveland - can't be missed. The thesis follows their course of life, education and their work before or outside the Monty Python.

One of the aims of the practical part of this bachelor thesis was to analyse the work of Monty Python group. I decided to analyse one of the group's feature films the *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, directed by Terry Jones. The movie was assessed from the political and religious point of view.

I also analysed one of the most famous songs, *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*, written by group member Eric Idle, which closes the film. The analysis of the selected works was made on the basis of my own watching and listening of the above mentioned on television or on the Internet.

The last part shows the group's influence on comedy, other comedians and society.

The thesis couldn't embrace the whole breadth of Monty Python's work and impact. It shows and depicts a sample of their activity and outlines its variety.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, a big Monty Python fan, who taught me that life should always be looked on the bright side.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the British surreal comedy troupe Monty Python and its influence on the world of comedy. The aim is to describe this troupe and its members, to define various genres (from their famous works), and to analyse in depth several of their pieces and the impact they had on modern comedy. The theoretical part deals with the definitions of genres related to Monty Python and focuses on the lives of individual members from this British group. In the practical part, several of their famous works, such as Life of Brian or the famous song Always Look on the Bright Side of Life are analysed and the final segment describes how Monty Python influenced not only the world of comedy but also the society in general.

## **RESUMÉE**

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na britskou surrealistickou komediální skupinu Monty Python, analýzu vybraných děl a vliv skupiny na světovou komedii. Cílem je popsat tuto skupinu a její členy, na základě jejich slavných děl definovat různé prvky, které se v nich objevují, a podrobně analyzovat několik jejich děl a jejich vliv na moderní komedii. Teoretická část se zabývá definicemi různých rysů a prvků souvisejících s dílem skupiny Monty Python a zaměřuje se na jednotlivé členy jako na osobnosti. V praktické části je rozebráno několik jejich slavných děl, jako je film Život Briana nebo píseň Always Look on the Bright Side of Life. Závěrečná část popisuje, jak Monty Python ovlivnili nejen svět komedie, ale i společnost obecně.

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