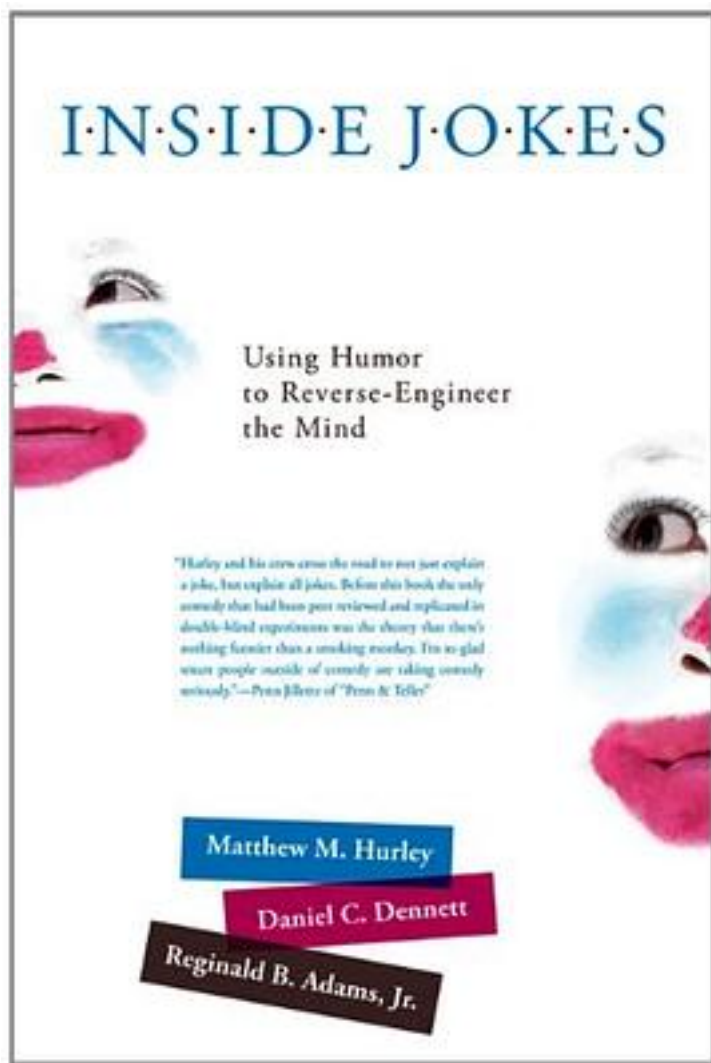


Inside Jokes



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Some things are funny—jokes, puns, sitcoms, Charlie Chaplin, The Far Side, Malvolio with his yellow garters crossed—but why? Why does humor exist in the first place? Why do we spend so much of our time passing on amusing anecdotes, making wisecracks, watching The Simpsons? In *Inside Jokes*, Matthew Hurley, Daniel Dennett, and Reginald Adams offer an evolutionary and cognitive perspective. Humor, they propose, evolved out of a computational problem that arose when our long-ago ancestors were furnished with open-ended thinking. Mother Nature—aka natural selection—cannot just order the brain to find and fix all our time-pressured misleaps and near-misses. She has to bribe the brain with pleasure. So we find them funny. This wired-in source of pleasure has been tickled relentlessly by humorists over the centuries, and we have become addicted to the endogenous mind candy that is humor.

Hurley, Dennett, and Adams describe the evolutionary reasons for humor and for laughter. They examine why humor is pleasurable and desirable, often sharable, surprising, playful, nonsensical, and insightful. They give an "inside," mechanistic account of the cognitive and emotional apparatus that provides the humor experience, and they use it to explain the wide variety of things that are found to be humorous. They also provide a preliminary sketch of an emotional and computational model of humor, arguing that (Star Trek's Data to the contrary) any truly intelligent computational agent could not be engineered without humor.

作者介绍:

Matthew M. Hurley is researching emotions and creativity under Douglas R. Hofstadter at the Center for Research on Concepts and Cognition at Indiana University.

Daniel C. Dennett is University Professor and Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University. He is the author of *Sweet Dreams: Philosophical Obstacles to a Science of Consciousness* (MIT Press, 2005, 2006) and other books.

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目录:

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