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ECHO AND PRETENCE
IN COMMUNICATIVE IRONY[1]

Summary: In the article we present a model of communicative irony formulated within the framework of speech act theory. We claim that acts of verbal irony are special cases of phenomena that John L. Austin referred to as "etiolations of language". After discussing the concept of communicative irony understood in the spirit of Mitchell S. Green's expressive communication model, we propose to develop the Austinian idea of etiolation and show how cases of etiolative use of language parasitize the mechanisms of its serious or ordinary applications. In particular, we argue that echoing and overt pretence are two etiolation techniques that allow the sender to express a negative attitude towards contextually available mental or linguistic representations. We also show that the proposed model allows the explanation of verbal forms of communicative irony.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to describe the function of two mechanisms in ironic utterances or, more broadly, ironic acts of intentional communication (Green, 2017): echo and pretence. The first of these is highlighted by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, who propose the echoic theory of irony (Sperber, 1984; Wilson, 2006; Wilson, Sperber, 2012). Meanwhile, according to Herbert H. Clark and Richard J. Gerrig (Clark, Gerrig, 1984), the second of these mechanisms plays a key role in the functioning of ironic utterances. The theory of irony as pretence formulated by these researchers, with overt pretence being involved (Dynel, 2014, p. 621), i.e. with the intention that it be recognized by the recipient (Clark, Gerrig, 1984, p. 122), functions in literature as one of the main competitors of the model proposed by the authors of the relevance theory (Clark, Gerrig, 1984; Sperber, 1984; Wilson, Sperber, 2012).

In this article, however, we assume that the above-mentioned approaches—i.e. the echoic model of irony and the model of irony as overt pretence—are complementary to each other, not competitive. In our opinion, echoing and overt imitation are two communication techniques used in language applications that John L. Austin called parasitic and classified as cases of etiolations of language (Austin, 1975, pp. 22). We also assume that utterances considered in the literature as exemplary cases of verbal irony (Sperber, 1984; Wilson, 2006; Wilson, Sperber, 2012) or, more broadly, communicative irony (Green, 2017) have an expressive function. The ironic speaker expresses a negative attitude—distance, mockery, contempt, etc.—to the object of her irony determined by means of one of the language etiolation techniques. In other words, she creates an ironic effect that consists of presenting in an unfavourable light—e.g. ridicule, trivialisation, etc.—some contextually available thoughts, statements, opinions, hopes, fears or other propositional attitudes. In our opinion, verbal and non-verbal acts of intentional communication that meet the above characteristics do not create a homogeneous class due to the mechanisms used in them: some of them are echoic, others are associated with pretence and parody, and others use a combination of both techniques. These types of acts, however, have a common property: the mech-

anisms of linguistic etiolation used in them simultaneously serve to determine the object of irony and express an ironic attitude towards it. In other words, the two communication activities at stake—the indication of the object of irony and expression of an attitude towards it—are not really different in the sense in which reference and predication understood as aspects of the propositional act in John R. Searle (1969) are independent and realistically different. Echoing and explicit pretence are techniques that enable the performance of communicative acts or, more specifically, acts of expressive communication (Green, 2007, 2017; Bar-On, 2013), in which we simultaneously point to a certain object and express our attitude towards it. Although the two mechanisms involved—that is, indication and expression—can be distinguished conceptually, they are only abstract aspects of one whole.

It is worth emphasizing that one of the reasons for writing this article is the desire to develop the ideas on irony formulated by Professor Jerzy Pelc. In the paper *O użyciu wyrażeń* [On Using Expressions] we read:

> Ironic and anti-ironic expressions are explicit or implicit. Irony is the actual rebuke hidden under a transparent veil of alleged praise, anti-irony is the opposite—under the guise of a negative rating it contains a positive. Thus, for example, the word "beautiful" is used ironically, when in fact it means—quite strictly speaking—the same as "ugly" and the word "terrible" is then anti-irony, when it actually means "nice" or "pretty". (Pelc, 1971, p. 180)

Professor Pelc proposes a variant of the theory of irony as a stylistic trope. We argue against this theory, rejecting, among other things, its idea of ironic meaning replacing literal meaning. Pelc, however, uses the category of "rebuke hidden under a transparent veil of alleged praise", which we use to describe one of the etiolation techniques used to evoke and present the object of irony in an unfavourable light.

This article consists of several parts. In section 2, we begin with a determination of conceptual issues. We explain (2.1) why in our considerations we use, after Mitchell S. Green (2017), the phrase "communicative irony" and not "verbal irony" and, consequently, the term "ironic act of intentional communication" instead of the shorter "ironic utterance"; we also explain (2.2.) the idea of language etiolation—including the difference between parasitic and serious uses of language—by juxtaposing it (2.3.) with the dominant paradigm in which phenomena excluded by Austin from the sphere of serious uses of language are described and explained

using the category of conversational implicature. Then, in section 3, we present short reconstructions of the echoing theory of irony (3.1) and the theory of irony as pretence (3.2). Section 4 is devoted to discussing ironic acts of communication that employ various techniques of language etiolation. In section 5, we summarize the results of these considerations and set the direction for further research on irony understood as a form of linguistic etiolation.

2. Conceptual Issues

2.1. Communicative Irony and Verbal Irony

Communicative irony—both verbal and non-verbal—is one of the three main types of irony (Green, 2017). The other two types are dramatic irony and situational irony. We shall call dramatic irony a situation in which an observer, e.g. in a theatre audience, has information relevant to the main character of the play, but the observed person is not aware of it, and as a result makes the wrong choice. Situational irony is closely related to the phenomenon of absurdity. Absurdity is defined as the property of a phenomenon that perversely thwarts a certain non-moral norm. As Green notes in *Irony as Expression (of a Sense of the Absurd)* (2017), there is a specific kind of absurdity associated with glaring failure to meet certain accepted expectations, norms, standards and other psychological attitudes of the speaker. An example of such a violation is the detention of the president of the organization Mothers Against Drunk Driving while under the influence of alcohol. Every driver who drives a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol breaks a non-moral norm—a legal norm—but the president of the above-mentioned organization breaks it in a particularly glaring way. The point is that it does not meet a certain additional expectation that people should behave in accordance with the values and norms that they officially and loudly promote, i.e. they should strengthen their message with a personal example.

In the work mentioned above, Green proposes an original approach to communicative irony as an expression of the sense of absurdity. In his opinion, the ironist externalizes his sense of absurdity caused by the ironic situation, creating a communicative act that is an example of situational irony. In the case of communicative irony, therefore, says Green, there are two ironic situations, the second being created by the ironist and embodying or expressing his sense of absurdity caused by the first. In

other words, communicative irony is used to create situational irony: we can do this by expressing our sense of absurdity through reducing the situation in which the sender finds herself to situational irony. For example, imagine a situation where Anna and Piotr are celebrating their wedding anniversary. On this occasion, they go for a romantic dinner at a restaurant. Anna orders pumpkin soup, but the waiter bringing the order to the table pours hot soup on Anna's elegant dress. To express an ironic attitude to the event—which creates situational irony, because the waiter should, because of his profession, be especially careful that his dishes do not end up on the customers' clothes—Anna can react in several ways. For example, she can make eye contact with the waiter, smile wryly and raise her thumb. She can also do the same, except that instead of putting her thumb up she says the following words:

(1) Nice job!

We say, after Green, that in both cases Anna expresses her sense of absurdity related to the unfulfilled expectation that every person going to a restaurant has, i.e. that the waiter will serve the soup without pouring it on the customer. Both communicative behaviours can be described as ironic, but the first of them is made without using words, which is why we cannot classify it as verbal irony. This means that the name "verbal irony" is not broad enough for this group of phenomena. In connection with the above, Green proposes changing this term to "communicative irony". Thanks to such a procedure, we can expand the scope of irony to include communicative behaviours that instead of words involve, for example, gestures or facial expressions. Another argument in favour of using the term proposed by Green is the fact that some artistic works, such as photographs or paintings, may be ironic.

Consideration of whether the model of communicative irony proposed by Green is adequate, we postpone to another occasion. For the purposes of this article, however, we accept two ideas that play a key role in it. First of all, we believe that for the reasons presented by Green, it is better to use the phrases "communicative irony" and "ironic act of intentional communication" instead of the terms "verbal irony" and "ironic utterance". Secondly, we assume that acts of ironizing are communicative, as they are cases of expressive communication in the sense of Green; according to him, expression consists not only in showing, but also in signalling an introspectively available mental state (Green, 2007; cf. Witek, 2019b; forthcoming).

A certain trait of the body or behaviour of the organism reveals or shows its internal state in the sense that it allows its recognition by competent observers. For example, my blush allows others to recognize my embarrassment, and my smile reveals my joy. In contrast to a blush—says Green—a smile additionally signals the disclosed mental state, and, therefore, has a communicative character. This does not mean that it is an act of "speaker meaning" in the sense of Grice (1989). There is a model of communication as signalling and a specific concept of signal as a physiological or behavioural feature of the body designed to convey true or false information about certain states of affairs (Green, 2007). The point is that the permanent disposition to smile in moments of joy was designed by natural selection and functions as a stable element of our behavioural phenotype due to its function of providing information about our internal state to others. Meanwhile, a blush is formed as a result of vasodilatation in response to a situation that may require escape. In other words, the mechanism that causes facial blushing was designed by natural selection, not so much because of the blush's ability to convey information about embarrassment, but because of the increase in the amount of oxygen delivered to the muscles.[2]

In summary, the act of expression in Green's sense is communicative, since it is a case of signalling. A signal is a physiological or behavioural feature of an organism that has been designed for its "ability to convey information" (Green, 2007, p. 49), including incorrect information. In particular, we shall say about the expressive signal that it is designed to convey information—true or false—about the introspectively available internal state of the signal creator. The design in question may be the result of either natural selection or current intentions behind the act of expression under consideration. Due to the latter eventuality, we can speak of irony that it is an act of expressive communication, and more precisely an act whose sender intends to express his attitude towards the object of irony by means of ironic expression.

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[2] According to Green (2007, p. 27), it cannot be ruled out that in the light of future research it will be necessary to consider blushing as a signalling event. In other words, whether the blush on the face is a case of expression or just a case of mere showing is an empirical issue. However, due to the need to illustrate the specific distinctions discussed here, we assume that a blush, unlike a smile, is not a signal.

2.2. Language Etiolation and Serious Uses of the Language

The proposed considerations are underpinned by the assumption that model examples of echoic and parodic utterances—including echoic and parodic forms of communicative irony—belong to a class of phenomena that Austin called "parasitic" or "etiolated" applications of language. We shall consider this last category more closely.

According to Austin, the aforementioned ways of using language—among which, admittedly, he does not mention irony—occur in "sea-changed" circumstances or situations of speech. "Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language" (Austin, 1975, p. 22).[3] The doctrine in question distinguishes serious and direct applications of language mechanisms from parasitic and, in a sense, instrumental applications. Situations of the first kind can be called communication in the ordinary mode, and situations of the second kind—communication in the etiolation mode.

To illustrate how communicative mechanisms work in the first of these modes, let's consider a situation in which, during an ordinary conversation, I am serious about the following words:

(2) Jan is a good friend.

By uttering sentence (2), I refer to Jan and attribute to him the property of being a good friend. In other words, I am using words to build a linguistic representation of a state of affairs, that is, as Austin puts it, I perform a "locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense" (1975, p. 109); creating

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[3] In the PWN online encyclopaedia, etiolation is defined as "changes in appearance—habit and colouring of plants, caused by a shortage or lack of light". In other words, the etiolation of a plant is caused by the fact that the typical mechanisms of its physiology function in an unusual environment, i.e. an environment in which there is a shortage or lack of light. Similarly, the etiolation of a certain utterance is a consequence of the fact that the typical mechanisms governing the use of spoken words and the grammatical structure used—and possibly other elements of the language, e.g. prosodic aspects—operate in an unusual environment, which Austin calls "non-serious" (Austin, 1975, p. 22).

such a meaningful locution, I use mechanisms in which "demonstrative conventions" and "descriptive conventions" play the main role (Austin, 1975, p. 122; Witek, 2011, p. 31). It is also worth adding that due to the grammatical mode of sentence (2) and the focus accent applied during its utterance, the considered locution has some illocutionary potential. For example, after meeting the conditions set out in the relevant procedure, more on which in the next section—it may establish a case of either classifying or ranking, or giving an example (instancing). The first eventuality would be if the focus were on the word "friend" and the second if it were on the word "Jan". Both illocutionary forces—i.e. classifying and ranking—fall under the family of speech acts that Austin called "verdictives" (Austin, 1975, pp. 153–155) or "general assertions" (Austin, 1961, p. 187), i.e. in each of them I take responsibility for the truth of the linguistic representation that I created from the words of the English language in accordance with the rules of its grammar and semantics. Let us assume that the illocutionary potential of sentence (2) belongs, along with its reference and sense, to the full locutionary meaning of the speech act under consideration.[4]

Suppose additionally that when uttering sentence (2), I behave in accordance with the requirements of a certain procedure, which establishes the conditions for the proper execution of illocutionary acts of a particular type, i.e. their felicity conditions; thus, I actualize a certain element of the illocutionary potential of the considered locution, i.e. I perform a certain illocutionary act.[5] The force of this act should be defined by reference to its conventional effect understood as a change in normative rela-

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[4] According to Austin (1975, p. 93), sense and reference are elements of the rhetic meaning of a statement, and its illocutionary potential is part of its phatic meaning, with the phatic and rhetic meanings of a given statement creating its full locutionary meaning; a thorough discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this article. It is worth turning here to the works of Maciej Witek (2015a; 2015b; 2011, pp. 43–51 and 402–404) and comparing them with Jerzy Szymura's idea of intra-language meaning (Szymura, 1982, pp. 174–187), which can be identified with an aspect of the phatic meaning in Austin's sense.

[5] I can also perform two illocutionary acts at the same time: direct, the force of which falls within the set illocutionary potential of the sentence I uttered, and indirect, where the force goes beyond this potential.

tions between relevant participants in social life.[6] What's more, in most cases I perform—or at least intend to perform—a specific perlocutionary act characteristic of the currently performed illocutionary act: by classifying Jan as a true friend, I usually want to convince my interlocutor that he can consider Jan a true friend, and giving the example of Jan as a true friend I usually want to convince the interlocutor that there are true friends. The perlocutions listed in the previous sentence are normally connected[7] with the acts, respectively, of classification and giving an example. It can be assumed, therefore, that the illocutionary potential of a given statement is associated with its perlocutionary potential, which can be presented as a class of its possible standard perlocutionary effects.

In summary, an utterance formulated in ordinary communication has two types of consequences. First, it creates a linguistic representation of a certain state of affairs, which representation can be attributed to the locutionary meaning of the utterance including its reference, sense, illocutionary potential and perlocutionary potential. Secondly, it takes effect as a felicitous illocution of a certain type, i.e. it changes the sphere of obligations and rights of conversation participants and possibly other people in a characteristic way. Both effects—locutionary and illocutionary—appear as a result of the mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode, which are semantic and pragmatic in nature.[8] Usually, a speech act formulated in the ordinary communication mode also produces a third type effect, i.e. a perlocutionary effect. The performance of a perlocutionary

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[6] In other words, we adopt a normative approach to illocutionary interaction (Sbisà, 2007; 2009; 2013; Green, 2009; Witek, 2015c; 2019a).

[7] Among the perlocutionary effects of a given illocution, one can actually indicate those that connect with it in a standard or conventional way, and those that are associated with the specificity of a particular statement and the sender's immediate goals. Austin seems to mean the first kind of effects—which can be called interactive perlocutionary effects (Witek, 2011, p. 55)—when he writes that "many illocutionary acts invite by convention a response or sequel" (Austin, 1975, p. 117). For example, an order invites, by convention, its execution. The order can also be issued with a perlocutionary intention of upsetting the recipient. However, we will say that the execution of the order is, and the annoyance of the recipient is not, a standard perlocutionary effect of the order.

[8] "Semantic and pragmatic", because mechanisms responsible for the pragmatic interpretation of linguistic underdeterminacy can be included within Austin's theory of speech acts (Witek, 2015b).

act consists in "producing certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (1975, p. 101). Although the mechanisms responsible are psychological, not semantic or pragmatic, usually at least one of the possible perlocutionary effects of the illocution under consideration connects to it in a characteristic way, as the performance of a specific action by the recipient connects with the appropriate command of the sender, specific expectations of the recipient towards the sender with the promise made by the latter, or convincing the recipient to a certain view with the sender's argument. What's more, usually the main intention accompanying the formulation of an illocution of a certain type is the intention to produce a perlocutionary effect characteristic of it: normally, I argue my point to convince an interlocutor to accept it, I issue a command to get the hearer to perform a certain action, etc. Let's assume that these and similar regularities—the foreseeable meaning and force as well as the standard perlocutionary consequences of utterances—are manifestations of the mechanisms of ordinary communication.

Consider, however, the situation in which, when talking about Jan's disloyalty, I speak sentence (2) with facial expressions and a tone of voice suggestive of parody, mockery or contempt. Using these hints, I signal the change of the normal communication mode to the etiolation mode, in which I begin to use the mechanisms of the normal communication mode to achieve goals other than those that usually accompany their operation. More specifically, by saying sentence (2) in the etiolation mode, I construct, with the help of words belonging to the English language, a certain object—a locution understood as a linguistic representation of a certain state of affairs—which has its grammatically and semantically determined properties, including certain illocutionary and perlocutionary potentials. These properties, however, are used for another purpose, for example to evoke and ridicule a certain situation, act of speech, opinion or position. Namely, I can use a locution based on sentence (2) in order to openly pretend, parody or present a caricatured image of a speech act whose force would be within the illocutionary potential of the locution; at the same time, parodying would serve to ridicule the parodied situation, its participants or the illocutionary act formulated therein. By saying sentence (2) with mockery in my voice, I can also evoke the opinion we shared until recently about the exceptional loyalty of Jan, while expressing distance and some contempt for that opinion; in other words, the meaning of my utterance of sentence (2)—that is, its sense and refer-

ence—establishes a content for the truthfulness of which I do not take responsibility, but which is an echo of the thoughts shared so far, and an integral aspect of the act of recalling is the negative attitude to the content of the opinion or expectation thus evoked.

However, there is a problem with the use of the original Austinian etiolation category in theoretical considerations. The point being that Austin only gives a negative description of the concept in question. In other words, it includes in its scope all those uses of language that do not fit into the class of phenomena of the ordinary communicative mode. No wonder, since Austin indicates cases of language etiolation only to exclude them from the research field described in the first lectures by means of the category "performative utterances" (Austin, 1975, p. 22), and in later ones using terms such as "locutionary act", "illocutionary act", and "perlocutionary act". Austin is not, therefore, interested in the general characteristics of parasitic uses of language. Moreover, the majority of etiolation cases he considers are phenomena whose communicative nature is doubtful or at least unclear. This refers to the use of language in acting, creating literary fiction or poetry, quoting and reciting (Austin, 1975, p. 92), as well as telling jokes (Austin, 1975, p. 104).

It seems, however, that the category of linguistic etiolation can be further specified to the extent that it can be used in considering the diversity of forms of intentional communication, including communicative irony. To this end, consider the following section of *How to Do Things With Words*, which appears after discussing the distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts.

> To take this farther [considerations on the use of language—J.M., M.W], let us be quite clear that the expression "use of language" can cover other matters even more diverse than the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. For example, we may speak of the "use of language" for something, e.g. for joking; and we may use "in" in a way different from the illocutionary "in", as when we say "in saying 'p' I was joking" or "acting a part" or "writing poetry"; or again we may speak of "a poetical use of language" as distinct from "the use of language in poetry". These references to "use of language" have nothing to do with the illocutionary act. For example, if I say "Go and catch a falling star", it may be quite clear what both the meaning and the force of my utterance is, but still wholly unresolved which of these other kinds of things I may be doing. There are parasitic uses of language, which are "not serious", not the "full normal use". The normal conditions of reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocu-

> tionary act, no attempt to make you do anything, as Walt Whitman does
> not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar. (Austin, 1975, p. 104).

It is worth paying attention to the three ideas expressed in the passage quoted above. First of all, utterances formulated in the language etiolation mode should be described as uses of language that serve something (the "use of language" for something); in other words, the considered utterances are accompanied by the intention to achieve specific goals or effects, which we will call etiolative. Secondly, the etiolative effect of a given utterance should be clearly distinguished from its possible illocutionary and perlocutionary effects consistent with the potentials constituting elements of its locutionary meaning. For example, the real purpose of the poetic utterance of the phrase "go and catch a falling star" deviates from the one that can be reconciled with its quite clear illocutionary and perlocutionary potentials. Similarly, the purpose of the ironic utterance of sentence (2) is not to take responsibility for the accuracy of the opinion that Jan is an example of a good friend, which would be an illocutionary effect of this utterance understood as giving an example; nor is it the belief of the audience that there are true friends, which would be a standard perlocutionary effect of the locution being considered. The intended effect is the ironic effect of ridiculing the possible statement or thought that Jan is a true friend. Thirdly, utterances formulated in the etiolation mode do not so much disable normal mode mechanisms as parasitize them. The parasite does not block the host metabolism, but uses it for its own purposes. For example, by saying sentence (2) with the intention of irony, I use ordinary mode mechanisms to construct a linguistic representation of a certain state of affairs, and more specifically to determine the reference, sense and illocutionary potential of my words. The representation constructed in this way, equipped with such and no other semantic properties, however, serves the purpose of achieving goals other than those which would be natural for it in the ordinary communication mode.

In short, the utterance formulated in the etiolation mode (i) serves to induce an etiolative effect, which (ii) should be distinguished from the effects falling within the illocutionary and perlocutionary potentials belonging to its locutionary meaning, while in realizing this purpose (iii) the sender uses parasitically at least some of the normal mode mechanisms. These ideas will help us in section 4 to cover cases of communicative irony.

2.3. Strong and Weak Violation of Ordinary Communication Mechanisms

In our opinion, the category of etiolation makes it possible to accurately explain communicative irony. By adopting this point of view, we move away from taking irony as a stylistic trope (Grice, 1989; Pelc, 1971; Attardo, 2000). Proponents of this approach say that the ironic utterance is a case of figurative use of language. They also believe, after Grice (1989), that it has an inferred ironic meaning (Attardo, 2000, p. 813) communicated at the level of conversational implicature (Garmendia, 2011, p. 48; Garmendia, Korta, 2007, pp. 196–197) or constituting its literal paraphrase (Pelc, 1971, p. 180). We can, therefore, assume that on the basis of the irony as a stylistic trope model, the following two ideas are openly accepted. First, the ironic utterance is a blatant, explicit and authentic breach of conversational maxims, e.g., the quality maxim (Grice, 1989) or the appropriateness maxim (Attardo, 2000, p. 823; Witek, 2016, p. 113). Secondly, this utterance has an inferred ironic meaning understood as its conversational implicature.

However, it seems that the above-mentioned ideas do not give a full picture of the model of irony as a stylistic trope. In our opinion, it contains a third, somewhat unspoken idea. It states that irony understood as a trope is an ornament that makes the utterance more attractive and, as such, does not lead us beyond the ordinary mode of communication. The purpose of irony understood as a stylistic device is, among other things, to communicate some content with a certain illocutionary force; "among other things" because proponents of the discussed model admit that ironic utterances also express the sender's assessment of, or attitude towards, the communicated state of affairs (see Grice, 1989, p. 53; Attardo, 2000, p. 817; Pelc, 1971, p. 180). From the point of view of the discussed model, the ironist uttering sentence (2) classifies or gives the example of Jan as a person who is not a real friend—and these acts are made at the level of conversational implicature—and expresses his negative attitude to the fact communicated in this way. The category of conversational implicature therefore allows us to describe cases of ironizing as communicative acts that have the ironic meaning of the speaker, i.e. ironic force and ironic content. In short, this category allows ironic and non-verbal acts to be placed in the field of communicative phenomena understood as acts of speaker meaning in Grice's sense, which are ultimately governed by ordinary mode mechanisms.

Due to the above-mentioned circumstance, we can assume that the model of irony as a stylistic trope presents cases of irony as a form of weak violation of the mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode: although these mechanisms are excluded or suspended at the level of what is said—or more precisely, at the level of what is made as if to say (Grice, 1989; Garmendia, 2011)—they act at the level of conversational implicature. Meanwhile, from the point of view of the model of parasitic applications of language, cases of communicative irony are examples of a strong violation of the mechanisms of the ordinary mode. The ironic message formulated in the etiolation mode, as such, does not necessarily imply any conversational force or content. Of course, it may carry a certain implicature, e.g. the ironist uttering sentence (2) may indicate that Jan is not a true friend. However, we believe that this fact should not be considered as a necessary manifestation of the nature of irony; the essence of ironizing resides in indicating the object of irony by expressing a negative assessment of it, with the mechanisms of this indication and expression parasitizing the mechanisms of the ordinary mode.

We return to the above observations in section 4, where we use them to discuss specific examples of communicative irony and argue that these examples are cases of etiolation. Meanwhile, in section 3, we offer a brief discussion of two popular models of irony that seem to depict phenomena of interest to us as messages formulated outside the realm of the ordinary mode.

3. Echo Theory and Pretence Theory

The echoing model of irony and the model of irony as overt pretence—or shorter, the echo theory and the pretence theory—pose an alternative to the model of irony as a stylistic trope, which has its sources in classical rhetoric and is developed in the works of Herbert P. Grice (1989), Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish (1979, pp. 68–69) and Salvatore Attardo (2000). The cited authors present cases of ironizing as utterances whose literal meaning is replaced by figurative meaning communicated using mechanisms of conversational implicature (Grice, 1989), conversational impliciture (Bach, 1994; cf. Witek, 2011, p. 266) or inferred meaning (Attardo, 2000). Let us add that from our point of view these mechanisms should be considered as manifestations of the normal mode of communication.

Within the irony as a stylistic trope model, irony is considered as an indirect speech act that we recognize when a speaker overtly and ostentatiously breaks Grice's maxim of quality: "don't say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence". This maxim can be generalized, as a result of which we get the phrase "be sincere" (Levinson, 1983, p. 103). Proponents of the irony as trope model also assume that the mechanism explaining the phenomenon of irony is meaning-substitution or meaning-inversion, which leads to the replacement of literal meaning with implied meaning. However, this theory has many problems (see the discussion in Wilson, Sperber, 2012 and Green, 2017), the common source of which seems to be the fact that two key elements of the irony as trope model—i.e. the idea of explicit violation of the principle of sincerity and the concept of meaning-substitution—are used to explain other supposedly indirect speech acts, such as metaphor. This, in turn, makes it difficult to understand cases of irony as phenomena different from other stylistic tropes.

We assume that a good theory with the purpose to explain a specific communication phenomenon—including communicative irony—should answer two basic questions: a question about its mechanism and a question about its function. The theory of irony as a stylistic trope presents meaning-inversion as the mechanism underlying acts of ironizing, but we do not find it a satisfactory explanation of the function of ironic acts. As Sperber (1984, pp. 130–136) observes, the meaning-inversion model of irony does not specify the reason why the speaker decides to express his thoughts non-literally thorough the mechanisms of implicature or impliciture. An attempt to answer the above question about the function of irony is made by the echoic theory (Sperber, 1984; Wilson, 2006; Wilson, Sperber, 2012) and the pretence theory (Clark & Gerrig, 1984). Both proposals present irony as an example of a strong violation of the mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode, while the theory of classical rhetoric and theories of Grice (1989), Bach and Harnisch (1979) and Attardo (2000)—as well as the approach proposed by Joanna Garmendia (2011)—treat irony as an example of a weak violation of these mechanisms (see Section 2.3 above).

Let us present below the main ideas of echoic theory and the theory of irony as overt pretence. It is worth noting, however, that our goal is not so much to reconstruct and evaluate the considered models, but to prepare a starting point for the considerations presented below in section 4.

3.1. Ironizing as Echoing

Imagine a situation where Anna and Kasia are talking about Marysia's birthday party, which took place two days ago. Unfortunately, Kasia could not go, so she asks Anna how it was at Marysia's party. Anna answers, using an ironic tone of voice:

(3) Great fun!

What has been echoed—and thus negatively assessed—is the general belief about what social gatherings organized for birthdays should look like, or Anna's earlier expectation of these birthday parties. Anna distances herself from the echoed thought.

Note that Anna decides to utter a sentence whose literal meaning is the reverse of her real opinion. Thereby, she runs the risk of a misunderstanding. However, she takes it in order to express her attitude to a thought, the content of which is similar to the meaning of the uttered sentence or its contextually enriched explicature. In the echoing theory, irony is not an indirect speech act. The ironist's utterance has a literal meaning which, in the context at stake, can be enriched and modified so as to yield a certain explicature. This last, however, does not constitute the content of what is communicated. What is communicated is the speaker's explicit attitude related to the echoed thought. The explicature of the uttered sentence is an interpretation of the speaker's thoughts, which in turn is an interpretation of another thought: either a thought attributed to someone else or a contextually available thought in the sense discussed below. In short, irony within the relevance theory is an interpretation of at least the second degree. The relationship that connects the cited content with the considered utterance is a certain expression of the dissociative attitude. The theory indicates two aspects of one mechanism of echoing: recalling the content of a certain contextually available thought and expressing the attitude of the speaker to the content thus recalled. Sperber and Wilson believe that by evoking a thought—i.e. activating it as an element of contextually available content while expressing our distance from it—we create a relevant stimulus.

The key idea of the echoing theory is that ironic utterances are significantly associated with the attributive use of representations. More pre-

cisely, the speaker of such an utterance ascribes to a specific person, type of person or people in general (Wilson, Sperber, 2012, p. 136) a certain thought, while expressing her dissociative attitude towards it because of its being "ludicrously false, underinformative, irrelevant" (ibid., p. 141) or "blatantly inadequate" (ibid., p. 130). Attributive use that aims to express a relation to an assigned thought is called echoic; echoic application, which involves expressing a sufficiently strong dissociative attitude to the recalled thought—appearing e.g. in the form of mockery, ridicule or contempt—is the ironic character of the utterances being considered.

Let us use the above approach to analyse two utterances:

(4) What beautiful weather!

(5) a. Yes,

   b. he's a good friend.

Let us assume that the author of utterance (4) is one of a group of tourists who have been sitting in a mountain hostel for an hour waiting for the heavy rain to stop. Everyone gathered had gone to the mountains in the hope that on this day the weather would be conducive to the implementation of their plans. The content that results from the contextual enrichment of the logical form of the sentence (4)—i.e. the explicature of the considered expression—is similar to the content of expectations clearly shared by tourists waiting in the hostel; in other words, it echoes the common content of these expectations. [9] By uttering sentence (4), the speaker distances himself from this obviously unfulfilled expectation and adopts a mocking attitude towards it. Let us also assume that the words in (5) constitute a commentary on facts suggesting that Jan behaved disloyally towards the conversation participants and revealed a secret entrusted to him. The explicature of the considered utterances echoes the content of the interlocutors' disappointed expectations regarding Jan's

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[9] In fact, a proponent of the relevance theory would say that the explicature of the expression under consideration is an interpretation—i.e., is similar to—some content presented in the mind of the sender, which in turn is an interpretation of the thought attributed by the sender to another entity. For simplicity—which does not concern the heart of the echo model of irony—let us treat the explicature, not the interpretation of the content of the sender through it, as an echo of the thought attributed.

attitude. The author of utterance (5) expresses her dissociative attitude to the content of these expectations; more precisely, she expresses her contemptuous attitude to the fact that Jan's behaviour clearly did not fulfil them.

For comparison, let's imagine an exchange in which the words in (5) express approval as a summary of a conversation about Jan, whose recent actions testify to his exceptional loyalty. We shall say about this situation that it is an example of echoic use of language: the person who utters the sentence (5) simultaneously activates and positively assesses one available contextual thought. However, her attitude towards her thoughts is not dissociative. Rather, we say she is approving. That is why we consider the utterances to be echoic, but not ironic.

In summary, we can say that the formulation of a successful ironic act understood as a case of echoic use of language requires a specific conversational situation. It consists in the fact that a certain thought is contextually available, in the sense that it is ready to be echoed; it is available either because someone recently expressed it, or because it well represents the position or expectations of certain participants in a speech situation or other relevant persons, or because it is the content of commonly shared views and expectations based on them. We return to this idea in section 4.

3.2. Ironizing as Parody

Herbert H. Clark and Richard J. Gerrig in the pretence theory argue that cases of irony are overtly pretending to perform a certain speech act. The following example will explain the pretence theory.

Imagine a situation where Mariola and Piotr are planning their honeymoon. Due to the prices and the expenses associated with the wedding, Piotr proposes giving up on the grand wedding and choosing a more expensive honeymoon. To express her negative attitude to this idea, Mariola utters the following sentence in a tone of voice that can be described as overly enthusiastic:

(6) That's a great idea!

Mariola communicates that she doesn't like the idea. She communicates this in a specific way, pretending—by engaging in exaggerated, caricatured enthusiasm—that she accepts Piotr's proposal. By the same

token, she presents in an unfavourable light anyone who would accept Piotr's offer or think that she really likes it.

Clark and Gerrig report the main theses of their theory as follows:

> Suppose S is speaking to A, the primary addressee, and to A', who may be present or absent, real or imaginary. In speaking ironically, S is pretending to be S' speaking to A'. What S' is saying is, in one way or another, patently uniformed or injudicious, worthy of a "hostile or derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt" (Grice, 1978, p. 124). A' in ignorance, is intended to miss this pretense, to take S as speaking sincerely. But A, as part of the "inner circle" (to use Fowler's phrase), is intended to see everything—the pretense, S''s injudiciousness, A''s ignorance, and hence S's attitude toward S', A', and what S' said. S' and A' may be recognizable individuals (like the TV weather forecaster) or people of recognizable types (like opportunistic politicians). (Clark, Gerrig, 1984, p. 122)

According to Clark and Gerrig, the theory they propose explains the three basic features of irony. They call the first of these "asymmetry of affect". It consists in the fact that by deciding to use irony, the speaker runs the risk of being misunderstood, but if the speaker's intention, which is the desire that the ironic act of speech be recognized, is fulfilled, the speaker can gain an advantage in a communication game; this advantage is obtained by placing in an uncomfortable situation anyone who would like to agree with the literal meaning of the parodied utterance. The second feature considered is that in the case of most irony, one can speak of "victims of irony". According to the pretence theory, there are two types of victims of irony. The first type is S', i.e. the person or people S is pretending to be; while the second type is A', i.e. the recipient who exhibits an uncritical approach to S'. The third of the considered features of acts of ironizing is their characteristic ironic tone of voice: to convey her negative attitude to the parodied speech act of S', the ironist can adopt the tone of voice appropriate for S', and even parody it or display its characteristic properties in caricature.

Let us check how the pretence theory deals with the explanation of the examples discussed in section 3.1.

By saying the sentence:

(3) Great fun!

Anna pretends to be a person who enjoyed Marysia's birthday party. This communicative act of ironizing will be fulfilled provided that Kasia recognizes that Anna is pretending to be Anna'. In addition, Anna decides to use irony to take advantage of Kasia's or other people's fear of being ridiculous and make it harder for her to express a positive opinion about Marysia's birthday party. Similarly, the ironist S utters the sentence:

(4) What beautiful weather.

pretending to be an imprudent person S'. Person S' is not real, but her beliefs include the thought that the weather seen through the window by people gathered in the hostel is weather that allows one to go out into the mountains. Speaker S adopts a communicative strategy, which is parodic irony, to discredit anyone who would like to seriously express an opinion consistent with the literal meaning of the sentence (4). Finally, the ironist S uttering the words:

(5) a. Yes,
    b. he's a good friend.

while talking about Jan's actions proving his disloyalty, pretends to be a person S' praising Jan's behaviour. In other words, Clark and Gerrig would say, S puts in a negative light everyone who would come forward in praise of Jan, and anyone who would understand the words under consideration as authentic praise. Thus, S makes it difficult for her interlocutors, and possibly other people, to express and adopt opinions consistent with the literal reading of sentence (5).

For comparison, consider an alternative version of the conversation between Mariola and Piotr who are planning their honeymoon. Let us assume that after hearing Piotr's suggestion, Mariola says with clear indignation in her voice:

(7) Are you feeling okay?

Also in this case, we can say that Mariola pretends to perform a certain speech act. This time, however, it is not about parodying the acceptance of the interlocutor's proposal, but about pretending to be an act of speech that could be called a "caring question", which is a question we

direct to a person displaying symptoms of feeling unwell. Importantly, this type of situation is difficult to explain using the scheme "by speaking to A, the sender of S pretends to be S', who by speaking to A' performs a certain speech act". Rather, we will say that Mariola gives Piotr to understand that his proposal is similar to the symptoms of a malaise. The pretence in question does not directly have an ironic effect and, as such, is not a subject of the theory of irony proposed by Clark and Gerrig.[10]

4. COMMUNICATIVE IRONY AS LANGUAGE ETIOLATION

In our opinion, ironic utterances are speech actions performed in the language etiolation mode. They are cases of expressive intentional communication, and their purpose is to create an ironic effect recognizable to the appropriate audience. It involves the recalling and presenting in an unfavourable light—e.g. ridiculing, compromising, discrediting, trivializing, etc.—of some contextually available thoughts, statements, hopes, fears, attitudes, opinions, certain beliefs, expectations, anxieties or other states the content of which can be express with a sentence. Recalling and presenting the object of irony in an unfavourable light should be understood as two inseparable aspects of the act of expressive intentional communication: just as the unrevealed and intentionally exposed critical look directed at a restaurant guest who draws attention to himself with inappropriate behaviour, at the same time distinguishes and judges him—evaluates him expressing a negative attitude towards his way of being—so, an acts of ironizing at the same time evokes and disparages a certain thought or state. The state being the object of irony is contextually available in the sense that it could now or could have been in the past attributed to one of the participants in the current speech situation or other persons significant from its point of view. In short, irony requires a certain conversational situation, which can be described as the contextual availability of its object. It also requires some foundation: the object of irony—which, let us recall, can be represented as a certain state or propositional attitude—must actually deserve to be shown in an unfavourable light because of its falseness or other form of inaccuracy.

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[10] Perhaps the considered utterance of sentence (7) should be described as a case of sarcasm. We thank the Reviewer for drawing attention to this possibility.

We postpone the discussion of the conditions for the successful completion of the ironizing task—the conversational circumstances required by it, the basis, etc. (see Witek, in preparation). In this article, we want to focus on etiolation techniques involved in creating an ironic effect, and more specifically in recalling the object of irony and showing it in an unfavourable light. In our opinion, two techniques discussed above in section 3 are involved, namely echo and explicit pretence. At the same time, we claim that the dilemma "either the echoic theory or the pretence theory" creates a false picture of the situation, because in many cases the interaction of both techniques can be observed. They have a parasitic character, i.e. they use the mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode. What's more, they can use mechanisms appropriate for both locutionary and illocutionary acts. We also claim that each of the techniques considered allows us to point out the object of irony by expressing our negative attitude towards it; in other words, it also allows us to recall and present in a negative light a certain contextually available propositional attitude.

Let us apply the above-mentioned ideas to discuss examples (3) and (4) presented in section 3.1. Recall that the speaker of the words in (3) is one of the tourists who are waiting in the mountain hostel until the heavy rain stops. Her tone of voice betrays disappointment and slight irritation. Undoubtedly, listeners have the right to think that, when uttering her words, the sender negatively assesses the current state of the weather (Attardo, 2000, p. 807). However, they would also have the same right if she said one of the following sentences in a similar tone:

(3') What weather!

(3'') But it's pouring!

So we can assume—in accordance with the main idea of the echoic theory (Sperber, 1984; Wilson, 2006; Wilson, Sperber, 2012)—that by deciding to say sentence (3), the sender wants to achieve a certain communicative effect that would not appear as a result of utterances of sentences (3') or (3''). In our opinion, it is an ironic effect, which consists in recalling and presenting in a negative light the common expectations of the majority of the tourists gathered in the hostel—expectations, let us add, contextually available—that the weather on this day will be favourable for mountain trips. This effect appears due to the parasitic use of the mechanisms of the normal communication mode: by using sense and reference conventions, the speaker creates a locution understood as a linguis-

tic representation of a certain state of affairs. This representation, however, does not serve its usual purposes: the speaker does not want to take responsibility for its veracity, but uses it to evoke and ridicule some expectations shared by all. The evoking game takes advantage of the similarity between the content of the constructed locution—or, as the authors of the theory of relevance put it, the explanation of the considered expression—and the content of the cited expectation; meanwhile, ridicule employs such expressive signals as the tone of voice and facial expressions, as well as the body posture accompanying speaking.

The act of irony performed in this way and its product, i.e. the ironic effect, have a communicative nature, just like the explicit and purposely sustained smile with which I greet my friend: my smile both indicates the person being met and assesses them as welcome (Wharton, 2003; cf. Witek, 2019b; forthcoming). In both cases there is an act of expressive communication in the sense of Green (2007). Moreover, they cannot be divided into two separate components, one of which performs the act of referring to a certain object, and the other—expressing a specific relationship to the designated object. Both the ironic utterance of the sentence (3) and the explicit and deliberately maintained smile, simultaneously point to and evaluate their objects. The difference between them is that a smile means its object using the existing causal relationship (the appearance of a friend makes my smile), while the ironic utterance of sentence (3) recalls its object on the principle of similarity in content. In short, a smile is an index and an ironic utterance is an iconic sign. The iconicity in question is possible thanks to the use of echoes understood as one of the techniques of linguistic etiolation. This technique combines two moments that can also be distinguished in a caricatured portrait: the simultaneous presentation and ridicule of the object. Importantly, it uses parasitically the mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode— Austinian demonstrative and descriptive conventions (Austin, 1961) or pragmatic processes of enriching the coded logical form in the form of an explicature (Wilson, Sperber, 2012)—which allow the construction of a linguistic representation of a certain state of affairs.

Similarly, one can describe the operation of an utterance of (4) as an act of communicative irony. The author of the words under consideration uses normal mode mechanisms to build a linguistic representation of a certain state of affairs. Importantly, the representation constructed in this way uses the purpose of evoking and discrediting the expectations— of herself, her interlocutors or other persons at stake—that Jan is a loyal

friend. Thus, it creates an ironic effect: in a way that is recognizable to others, it evokes and presents in a negative light a certain contextually available thought or attitude.

In the case of ironic utterances (3) and (4), there is a parasitic use of locutionary mechanisms. However, there are forms of irony that involve the use of illocutionary communicative mechanisms. Moreover, they interact with two etiolative techniques: echo and overt imitation. Let us consider this matter further.

Let us present the situation in which Jan and Ola are talking about their plans for a winter holiday. Jan is an avid skier. On the other hand, Ola, who is known for her reluctance towards winter sports, is quietly counting on going to a dance camp. Jan makes a proposal to go skiing, to which Ola responds in the way presented in the dialogue (8), with her tone of voice being overly enthusiastic.

(8) Jan: a. Maybe we could go skiing in Szklarska?

Ola: b. Great!

c. That's just what I've been dreaming of!

Let us assume that in an alternative version of this story, Ola utters the words (8d) and (8e) in a grim tone of voice that betrays disappointment and resignation.

(8) d. OK.

e. That's just what I've been dreaming of.

If utterances (8a) and (8b) appeared in the ordinary communication mode, they could be described as submission and acceptance of the proposal, respectively. The illocutionary potential of the exclamation "great" includes acceptance, and the combination of (8b) with (8a) indicates that this possibility has occurred. However, Ola's overly enthusiastic tone of voice acts as a signal—readable especially against the background of her known reluctance towards winter sports—that she is pretending to accept the proposal, and thus changes the communication mode from ordinary to etiolative. The act of accepting the suggestion implies, by virtue of the appropriate condition of sincerity, that the solution proposed in the previous conversational move appeals to the sender. Thus, pretending in the utterance (8b) acceptance of the proposal involves pretending that Ola likes the proposed solution and it is in line with her preferences. Note

that the second pretence, contained in the first, is in some sense reinforced by the utterance (8c). By delivering this, Ola echoes and ridicules Jan's expectation that she will share his desire to go skiing. By pretending or parodying in the speech (8b) the acceptance of Jan's proposal, Ola indirectly pretends that the sincerity condition of the parodied speech act is met; the content of this condition is similar to the content of Jan's expectation, which is echoed by the utterance of the sentence (8c). In short, we are dealing with the interaction of two etiolative techniques—explicit pretend and echoing—to achieve an ironic effect. Importantly, the pretence and echo at stake are parasitic on honest and serious illocutionary communication.

It is worth noting that from the parodic utterance (8b) it can be concluded that Ola rejects Jan's proposal. This type of conclusion—which resembles a conversational implicature—does not appear, however, in the case of the alternative course of the discussed exchange, i.e. when Ola with clear signs of resignation and disappointment in her voice says (8d) and (8e). Rather, we say that, acting against herself, Ola agrees to Jan's proposal. In other words, her act of accepting Jan's proposal—that is, the act made with (8d)—is not so much pretended as openly and intentionally dishonest. As such, it still falls under the ordinary communication mode, which allows speech acts as examples of abuse, including explicit abuse. Meanwhile, the utterance of the sentence (8e) should be treated as etiolative, in which—similarly to the utterance of the sentence (8c)—Ola evokes and discredits Jan's expectation that she will share his enthusiasm.

Let us also consider the situation in which Anna carries a tray full of cups to the kitchen. Karol approaches her and insists on helping her. Despite Anna's undisguised reluctance, he finally manages to take over the tray. However, he does it so awkwardly that the cups one by one slide down to the floor, where they break with a smash. Anna utters the following sentence:

(9) Thank you very much!

Let us assume that in an alternative version of this story, Anna says:

(10) I don't know how to thank you!

In our opinion, in the case of utterances (9) and (10) we are dealing with an overt imitation of a direct and indirect act of thanks, respectively.

As in the case of the above-mentioned utterance (8b), the parodic performance of the act of thanks serves to pretend that its felicity conditions are met. In the case of Ola's speech from the dialogue (8), it is possible to pretend that the condition of honesty is met. Meanwhile, Anna's utterance is about pretending that one of the prerequisites for felicitous thanking is met. This condition states that the action for which one thanks is beneficial to one. In other words, Anna creates an ironic effect, which consists of recalling and ridiculing Karol's efforts and intentions to do her a favour. The evocation in question uses overt pretence or a parody of performing a particular illocution and uses its felicity conditions in a parasitic way.

5. Summary

In this article we have presented an approach to ironizing as a specific speech action performed in the language etiolation mode. In particular, we have shown that in the mechanisms enabling successful execution of this act—i.e. creating an ironic effect—two etiolative techniques play an important role: echo evocation and overt pretence. What's more, at least in some cases—including in examples (8), (9) and (10) discussed in section 4—both techniques interact. So it turns out that the "echo or pretence" dilemma that is formulated in discussions about the nature of verbal irony (see, for example, Sperber, 1984) is erroneous: the ideas discussed are complementary, not alternatives.

We believe that irony should be understood as a speech activity that has (a) a characteristic effect, i.e. the ironic effect, (b) performance techniques, i.e. the etiolative techniques of echo and pretence, (c) conditions for successful performance, e.g. the contextual availability of the object of irony. Moreover, the ironist uses (d) characteristic signals that reveal his ironic intention. In this article, we have presented some development of ideas (a) and (b). We have found that the ironic effect consists of recalling and presenting in an unfavourable light—e.g. ridiculing, discrediting, trivializing, etc.—some contextually available thoughts, statements, opinions, beliefs, expectations, hopes, fears or other states which can be expressed by means of sentences. We have also shown how echo evocation and overt pretence use parasitic mechanisms of the ordinary communication mode to achieve the ironic effect.

The full presentation of the proposed model should include the development of ideas (c) and (d). In further work (Witek, in preparation) we

intend to use the so-called score-keeping model of illocutionary games (Witek, 2015c; 2019a) to capture the felicity conditions of irony understood as etiolative speech activity, as well as to undertake empirical research on the prosodic, kinesic and contextual indicators of irony.

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