



Jim Henson and Philosophy: Imagination and the Magic of Mayhem

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Jim Henson's creations have inspired generations with characters that are among the world's most recognizable cultural icons. From Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy and their Muppet friends to the legendary *Sesame Street* and Children's Television Workshop, Henson revolutionized children's educational entertainment. Combining live action and puppeteering into fantastical narratives like *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*, as well as the whimsical *Fraggle Rock* and *The Storyteller*, Henson transformed imagination into reality, weaving together powerful philosophical messages on identity, community, diversity, love, death, and friendship. Henson never shied away from exploring deep questions, nor did he underestimate the ability of children (or adults) to grapple with profound philosophical questions. *Jim Henson and Philosophy* explores the entertaining and educational world of the genius's creations, revealing what it is about Henson's world that has touched us so deeply and improved our lives in such meaningful ways.

Contributions by: Lauren Ashwell, Kimberly Baltzer-Jaray, David R. Burns, Samantha Brennan, Amanda Cawston, Brooke Covington, Christopher M. Culp, Ryan Cox, Natalie M. Fletcher, Victoria Hubbell, Dena Hurst, Christopher Ketcham, S. Evan Kreider, Shaun Leonard, Jennifer Marra, Michael J. Muniz, Laurel Ralston, Rhona Trauvitch, and Sheryl Tuttle Ross

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Editorial Review

Review

I was privileged to work alongside Jim Henson and experience his philosophy in practice. To be there was to be in an ever deepening, ever more connective family that embraced the whole world. There are very few true visionaries, but Jim Henson stood alongside the greatest of them.

Jim Henson and Philosophy is a perfect guide to the mind of a man who celebrated the fragmentary uniqueness of us all, and showed how we, fragmented as we are, could be reconciled into a world that is whole and connected. The authors explore the philosophical soul of Jim Henson, revealing his complex vision with words both eloquent and funny, and revealing insights into his world both poignant and absurd.

Of the many philosophical ideas of Jim, the one I appreciated the most was when in the middle of a long, creative meeting he would say, "let's go eat!" Well, this book is as good a philosophical feast as could be wished for, so *bon appetit!* (Brian Froud, founder of World of Froud, former colleague of Jim Henson)

Whenever I think about the nature of humor, Jim Henson's Muppets come to mind. All of the elements of a philosophy of humor are present: irony, cognitive dissonance, hyperbole, and, of course, catharsis. This book contains chapters that take a serious look at humor and other ideas worthy of philosophical analysis found in Henson's works. (Robert Arp, independent researcher and editor of 1001 Ideas That Changed the Way We Think)

I was always struck by how Jim would give me, and anyone and everyone, from leaders of the world to the janitor at the Muppets, his undivided and complete attention when they had a thought or idea they wanted to share... 'Let's think of an idea that will bring peace to the world in our lifetime.' Maybe that was Jim's philosophy boiled down to the essence. Totally unrealistic. Naive. Foolish... A valiant attempt toward world peace! (From the Foreword)

(Craig Yoe, former creative director and manager of The Muppets)

About the Author

Timothy M. Dale is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where he teaches courses on political philosophy. He is coeditor of the collections *Homer Simpson Ponders Politics: Popular Culture as Political Theory* (2013) and *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington: Dissent in American Popular Culture* (2010).

Joseph J. Foy is associate campus dean at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha. He edited the award-winning *Homer Simpson Goes to Washington: Politics as Popular Culture* (2008) and *SpongeBob Square Pants and Philosophy* (2011), and co-edited *Homer Simpson Ponders Politics: Popular Culture as Political Theory* (2013) and *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington: Dissent in American Popular Culture* (2010).

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