

**National Taiwan University**  
**Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures**  
**2020 Ph.D. Program Admissions Examination**  
**Subject: English Literature (60%)**

“Literary critics have tended to concentrate much more on tragedy than comedy. In consequence the body of criticism for comedy is slighter than that for tragedy—and than it ought to be. Causes and effects are commonly confused, means are not distinguished from ends, and comedy itself is often treated as if it needed no distinction from farce and divertissement. Speculative philosophers and psychologists have given it more attention, but the habit of identifying it with laughter has largely nullified any value their work might have had for the student of literature.”

---Allan Edwin Rodway, *English Comedy: Its Role and Nature from Chaucer to the Present Day*

To fill the lacuna in the body of criticism for comedy mentioned by Allan Edwin Rodway, please provide a critical assessment of the value, function, and role of English comedy by drawing on concrete examples from at least two conventionally defined periods of English literature. Your essay may encompass a chronological description of the development of English comedy, or it may narrow the scope of discussion to two or more subgenres/writers of English comedy. In either case, your essay must go beyond a historical summary and must provide interpretative, theoretical, or contextual examinations English comedy as a dramatic genre and not as a mode of literary figuration.