

Daily Meditation 09-08-22

Speaking of Work, Let Us Praise Barbara Ehrenreich

Good morning.

In yesterday's meditation, we set forward a theme for the next several daily meditations, the theme being around work and the spirituality of work, or reinventing our work.

And today we're reflecting on the life and work of Barbara Ehrenreich, who died over the weekend. So I call the essay, "Speaking of Work, Let Us Praise Barbara Ehrenreich."

Barbara Ehrenreich did a tremendous job of raising questions around values in our culture; therefore, in our workplace. Work is a place where we put our values into practice, whether they be healthy values or unhealthy. If our values are greed, then that becomes the dominant motif in our workplace. If our values are the preservation and love of the earth, and therefore future generations of humans and other beings, then those values will come through and will shine in our workplace.

But I strongly recommend simply listening to this, what I call the litany of book titles from Barbara Ehrenreich and her work. And all of them have to do with our work world. She is on the ball about addressing the importance of work.

As I say, work is what we prepare for for so many years; we call that preparation education, or apprenticeship. And work is what we spend so much of our energy doing, having brought preparation for it over the years. And work is what we recover from on weekends, or vacation, or what have you.

So much of our energy and our work and our footprint that we leave behind is regarding our work. And of course work is not just that which we do for a paycheck, but it includes parenting, and developing a relationship, a marriage if you will; community, giving, giving your time and values to community and so forth. All that is work.

Work is not just a job. In fact, there's a big difference between work and a job. Work is why we're here on earth. What we're here for a job is a paycheck. Ideally, we want to blend the two, but often they are distinct.

Again, let us look at this litany of work by Barbara Ehrenreich, by one person. The titles of many of her books, not all of them.

Nickel and Dimed, on (Not) Getting By in America. So she's addressing the poor, the lower part of the totem pole when it comes to work.

Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive. Being a maid...but what's that like? What kind of work is that? What kind of pay is it?

Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America. But positive thinking, just floating around and saying everything's gonna be okay, and everything's wonderful, hunky dory -- that leaves out the critical consciousness, doesn't it? Our critical minds. As I point out, the via positiva does not float around in ether -- it's part of three other paths in the spiritual journey that include the path of justice-making and healing and compassion.

Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, The Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer. So the danger of our being in denial of death, as one important writer has put it, and when you're in denial of death, there's this epidemic of wanting to live forever.

Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream. The American Dream was kind of an illusory object and living in an illusion is not a very good idea.

Living With a Wild God: A Non-Believer's Search for the Truth about Everything. I like that phrase, the "wild God." And I liked that Barbara Ehrenreich is out of the closet as a nonbeliever. She was tough. She was raised by atheist parents. But she's still on the search for something, something meaningful that undergirds life, and all our choices.

Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers. That sounds like a wonderful book.

For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women. The experts' advice to women -- that seems very relevant, in light of the Supreme Court taking away 49 years of a law for women to make decisions about their own bodies. So that seems extremely pertinent.

So we can go on, but again, this is a litany. And of course, I love her book, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy.* Talking about that later...

And *The Fear of Falling and the Inner Life of the Middle Class.* The middle-class America she showed several years ago is in a position of collapse, and the COVID, of course, hastened that collapse.

So again, we're doing homage; we're praising Barbara Ehrenreich for her work... for her work about work, and raising the important questions.

Thank you, Barbara Ehrenreich.

Thank you. And we'll see you tomorrow.