

Daily Meditation 09/09/2022

Barbara Ehrenreich on Joy and Celebration

Good morning.

We continue our reflections on work, and our reflections on the wonderful work and life of Barbara Ehrenreich, who brought to the attention of all of us so many insights about people's lives, trying to do good work in America.

And she was a champion of the search for truth, search for justice. And as it's clear in her book on joy and celebrations -- she calls it *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*....dancing in the streets, a history of collective joy. I love that.

It's a wonderful book on ritual and ceremony and the importance of that. And it's significant to me that the last chapter of my book, *The Reinvention of Work*, was on that exact topic.

The role of ritual is such important work, because ritual and ceremony bring together the workers of a community, everyone is contributing, and it gives them a chance to enter into the group joy. And how important that is to bring the energy up as we go back to work, back to our roles in society.

But good ritual also allows the community to grieve together in an explicit and conscious way, you might say, and created grieving practices, getting down on all sixes and sevens and letting the sound come out from your gut, your third chakra, your gut, where we carry our pain, where we carry our anger, and our outrage.

We let those sounds out: how important that is, so many conversions, so many awakenings happen to people who are able to do that kind of practice. We do these rituals in all of our Cosmic Masses, and always with amazing results. One man, when we did it for 800 people in a Colorado mountain retreat center, up there... he said to me afterwards, he said, "I've been seeing a psychiatrist for 21 years, and I'm firing her on Monday. This is all I needed all that time, was to get the grief, to get the anger out."

And you shouldn't underestimate how important it is to deal with grief in our time, because everyone is carrying grief.

So the last chapter of my book on *The Reinvention of Work* is reinventing. ritual and ceremony, bringing the body back, bringing silence back.

In modern consciousness it's almost antithetical, it seems to me, to the deeper ritual. It was ill at ease with silence -- always had to fill it with noise, talk, singing, music, and reading prayers.

And so I think we need to simplify radically what ritual can be, and these other basic elements, and they are seven of them, for bringing ritual alive.

Now Barbara Ehrenreich talked about herself as an atheist. But I think it's clear that she believed in truth, she believed in justice, she believed in compassion. She believed in celebration, and joy is there in the titles of her books. And from that point of view, then, I think that she very much fits my writings in my book on *Naming the Unnameable: 89 Wonderful and Useful Names for God, Including the Unnameable God*.

I think that people who worship and honor and pursue, at great cost to themselves, truth and justice, and compassion, and joy and celebration. These people do believe in a God, by the name of truth, or justice, or compassion, or celebration, or joy. I think many people have a very small understanding of what God means, and it's not their fault, necessarily. Religion has shrunken God on a regular basis.

But as I point out in my book on Naming The Unnameable, these are authentic names of divinity. There are so many others. I named 89 there. Beauty is another one.

So it's been my experience interacting with atheists, that often they think they're atheists because they reject the God of religion as currently promulgated. But in terms of their value system, and, but their love and commitment to life, they are deep believers in the deepest meaning of divinity.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.