

Introduction

A Little Extra Light for the Bottom of the River



Like smooth water-polished pebbles, set like jewels in a bracelet at the bottom of the river of the collective human soul, there are noble and profound human beings whose radiance and value are unknown even to their closest neighbors. People whose depth and nobility of soul live unexpressed inside situations that are for them so unnatural, oppressive, and beyond their control, that as individuals they intentionally obscure their own spiritual majesty with a theatrical veneer of the same banal drivel that surrounds them every day to avoid the pain of being mocked or trivialized if discovered by the heartless and uncomprehending.

By doing this they inadvertently subsidize the mentality that oppresses them, adding further still to their own false belief that they are alone and that there are no others like them. It takes courage to be what the world needs, but the world never seems to change when you are alone.

The truth is they are definitely not alone, for the river of life is jammed full of such unique jewels. We only require just a little more light, so anyone with a heart and even just a little vision can see that, though these kinds of people are not in the news or on talk shows, they are to be found in every cultural crack the world over, faithfully panting over the trails of their lives in situations they neither believe in nor belong.

Born already capable of real love, of turning their constant awareness of life's grief

into a god-nourishing beauty with the way they would rather live out their everyday existence, their huge desire to praise life by just the way they live with an innate sense of wonder for the earth's miracle of life remains backed up and rusting away on the rail siding, while on its rails of unjustly claimed priority, civilization's absurd imperative goes rushing past in its never-ending state of emergency.

These amazing individuals have their greatness suspended like emergent butterflies entombed in the clear plastic of the surrounding culture's infatuation with endless mediocrity held motionless by a stratified business culture of mediocrity managed by clever thieves who know that the love, grief, generosity, and well-developed sense of life's wonder of such people do nothing to maintain the necessary state of constant desperation and urgency in a population terrified by scarcity or of being left out of the herd, for lucrative business to expand.

These small-minded cowardly trends of certain national cultures, political institutions, big business, and people have lost the plot of what it has to mean to be a human. They have lost the taste buds and the nerve endings of a natural sensual human as given to us by evolution, filling their insatiable paunches and quotas without any hope of ever getting full, much less fulfilled. Capable of tasting only a superficial smattering of what they devour, as the world they consume goes gulping down the untenable gullet of scared greed, they live eternally dissatisfied, always in need of "something else."

Cowardly because they cannot live unarmed and unparanoically, supplanting the normal deliciousness of just being alive with a stodgy predictable existence that spares no expense in the maintenance of a bristling array of self-preserving power in every conceivable form in order to be equally feared and survive their own neighborhoods of equally armed and feared corporations, nations, entities, and people just like them.

But more to the point is, if any of this madness is going to change, then it is of greater pertinence to realize that each one of us, in a way, is a nation unto ourselves, and that as a nation we do have the power to change. Inside each one of us, sitting like a well-worn jewel in the clear-running river of our own soul, present right here today, there is also a deep and noble human being, unknown even to his or her closest neighbor: that more external outer layer of ourselves who has become a personality of the surrounding culture, instead of that true individual, a person indigenous to our own deeper spiritual landscape.

The fact that commercial culture always panders to the lowest common denominator

of awareness and taste should not stop us in our personal revolution to become real human beings. If there are enough of such humans, then collectively, real cultures worth living in, cultures that don't depend on scaredness, scarcity, and sarcasm, could actually begin to cultivate themselves into motion. No longer needing someone else's rails, we could get off the siding, the plastic could disappear, the butterflies could be released, the river could light up.

This little book is meant as a companion of encouragement, a little extra light for those deep and noble parts of all of us and our cultures, who think they are too small, alone, unsupported, and unseen to make such a motion out loud.

It is always good to start small and move slow with such things.

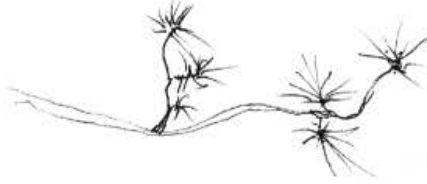
Though presently highly twisted, overlooked, and practically forgotten, there are two places where such people can surely begin "giving a home" to that greater, nobler, and deeper being all of us really are, and that is through two strangely married instinctual talents.

If there is ever to be any real peace on earth, all people need to relearn and reestablish the now diminished and hidden arts of Grief and Praise, for one without the other is not possible.

One

Grief Is a Shameless Dreamer





Grief is what living beings experience when what or whom they love dies or disappears.

Grief is *not* what people feel when they lose what they want, or lose what they want to happen, or when they don't get what they think they deserve. This is only disappointment. Not the same at all (very important not to confuse with grief).

- Grief is natural; to grieve the loss of what we love is as natural as peeing, eating, singing, dreaming, running, or looking under rocks for bugs to feed your frog.
- More importantly, grieving is necessary: when there is real loss, grieving should never be avoided or postponed; grieving is absolutely necessary. Without grief the world would cease to renew itself; the world would cease to exist.
- Grief is not a preference, for choosing to not have grief when grief is there is to defer and burden someone else with having to do your grieving. This makes the world a sick place.
- Grief is an obligation to the life one has been awarded, an obligation to life to make more life.
- To truly and freely grieve as an entire people can revive an entire culture just as much as it can bring back to life an individual.
- This necessity of active grieving when there is the deep loss of what we love can be done in many ways; it can take many forms, but is lost when it is simply a theatrical act, choreographed to mimic grief.
- Grief permeates life and grieving can take many forms, but grief can never be outrun or simply thought away, transcended or meditated into nonexistence. Necessary grief when shunned or unattended can easily hide for years, even generations,

in the skeletal structure of the family collective psyche. Like light, matter, sound, and energy, grief will eventually manifest even among those in the future who did not consciously experience the loss.

- So, best to grieve when it's time, to save the world a lot of war and trouble.
- Grieving is a sacred art, not an art whose products should be sold or seen objectively. Grieving is an art that when it is fully known and made to actively happen in all its grandeur and integrity, is the backbone of all real peace. It is the art of all arts; it is the art behind all real art.
- Grief is not sorrow, though there are certainly stages of grieving that are sorrow-filled. Real grieving refuses to remain in sorrow.
- Grief is a phenomenon that must be purposely done, for grieving needs time and motion to allow the medicine of grief's dream to fully blossom into new life to fill the loss.
- Grief is active.
- Grief is movement, not stagnation; real grieving never wallows.
- Only nations capable of the true art of grief, grieving their mistakes and the deeply felt losses they have endured or have caused to happen, can say that they are not pools of emotional stagnation dressed up in the spoils of unrieved wars disguised as good business, heaping their unwept tears upon the poor and struggling as the currency of poverty.
- Grief has a sound, a sound that embarrasses the repressed and offends the oppressive; grief is the sound of being alive.
- Grief is not depression; a griever is not depressed. Depression comes from not being able to grieve, which converts our losses into violence.
- Grief is a shameless dreamer who thinks nothing of healing impossible despair head-on, of reionizing impossible situations, of healing impossible sickness, of depolarizing impossible hardheaded people. Grief thinks nothing of impossibility, only of what makes life more deliciously alive.
- Grief doesn't care if he's badly misunderstood, underestimated, or forgotten: he's not hurt because people run away when they see him coming, because grief has one real good friend.
- Grief is the best friend of Praise, because Praise is a grandiose griever!

- Without both Grief and Praise, life is only hate and mediocrity.
- Grief and Praise are renters whose landlord is Love.
- Because they are best friends, both Grief and Praise live together in the same building, but in opposing quarters: in the left and right chambers of Love's great thumping house called the Heart.
- Together both Grief and Praise work hard to print their own money which they use to pay their rent to Love, for theirs is the common currency of life's great beauty.
- Praise also has a sound, that always moves and motivates but never ends. One can only catch up within earshot of Praise's sound or pull away, but Praise of life never ends.
- Grief is a worker on life's big highways, and Praise is Grief's eternal freight train, forever hauling the vision of life's bigger picture from stars whose light hasn't got here yet, which Grief uses to refill the potholes of our losses.
- Praise is Grief's voice and neither ever disappears, because they are the sound of all parts of the world and universe, each living according to its own nature, each entire in itself, each a willing participle in the great prayer of praise singing the world back to life.

Two

Normal Grief

Our First Song Is Grief