

Humor is a Sign of Life and Light

The more jokes are told in a culture, the healthier it is.

And the more things allowed to be joked about.

Individual jokes are not always good, or in good taste, or kind. They can be nasty and dark and uncalled for.

But the propensity to joke and allow jokes – the boundaries around what is laugh-at-able and how able a culture is to laugh – directly correlate with good things.

I've been heavily bummed out by what seems a decline in humor. Most of the bastions of at least reasonably funny stuff are utterly unfunny these days. There are beacons of light (often coming from the people who a mere decade ago were the least funny of all), but it seems culture is dominated by the weird, the ugly, the dark, the self-serious, the self-righteous, and the grave.

When I begin to get grumpy about this, I realize that being grumpy is the opposite of being funny. To combat the lack of laughs, I should start laughing or making others laugh, rather than complaining.

A good friend with a very dry wit used to say that being unfunny was the greatest crime. Theft, murder; these are forgivable. But an unfunny person?

On an individual level, the statement works as a joke. But on a culture-wide level, maybe it's not just a joke. An unfunny culture may be the worse culture of all. When humor is not appreciated or tolerated, it's a sign that the most dangerous things have taken hold.

On the flipside, laughter killed the devil.