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## Trends. Why Princess Di?

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Necessarily Enjoying It

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People have died, are dying, and will die. Why is this death different from all other deaths? Correction. Many other deaths, for it's not as if Moses and his people are fleeing slavery and death from Egypt--necessitating unleavened bread amidst the night. Some possibilities. (1) Most people lead relatively insignificant lives. Someone who is leading a significant one--as defined by the amount of money paid to learn about it--has unexpectedly died. Yet, most of the insignificant still live. Thus the death is an exemplar of success for the many who live. The insignificant have won. The significant have lost. (2) One way for many of the insignificant to tolerate their insignificant lives--as defined by the amount of money paid to learn about them--is to live partially (at times totally) through the lives of the significant. So her death is their death. And their deaths--at least to them, if nobody else--are different than those of others. They're extremely important, so important that a new princess Di somewhere and somehow has to be found. (3) She got what was coming to her. The mother of the second-in-line to inherit the English throne via the House of Windsor was a confessed adulterer and an at least part-time sybarite. Well, for the insignificant, what do you expect? But the significant have to pay. Their hubris demands retaliation, if not from the Gods, then from the paparazzi, from a drunken driver. So Di's life is so different because it ended the way our moral tutors have insisted such a life must. Psychological research suggests that intermittent reinforcement often results in strengthened beliefs or behavior more than continuous reinforcement. Thus, we already are primed for the next death different than most others. (4) Her celebrity status was a significant vehicle for the insignificant to develop and share interpersonal bonds and a sense of community--increasingly difficult to develop and share as our era of globalization appears to induce social mobility and certain variants of anomie and alienation. Ironically, her death and afterdeath may not rip asunder these interpersonal bonds and sense of community but further strengthen them until slow deterioration occurs. (5) To the insignificant, "she was one of us." But not in the sense that she liked the same things, experienced the same fears, or spent some time hugging an AIDS patient or an abused child. Instead that she incurred the same derision from many of the significant that the insignificant do. A difference was that she was a significant who reaped derision for at times acting like an insignificant. The insignificant reap derision for not being significant or for acting like they are significant. Nevertheless, she knew what the derision was like. (Possibilities (4) and (5) also may comprise a portion of charismatic leadership.)

Yes, she was relatively young--although in her sybarite circles, older than she might have liked to be. Yes, she did some good works, seemed to love her children, had been married to a cad, had common psychological problems, alternated between self-confidence and low self-esteem. Like many of us. But why Princess Di? After all, even those who profess disinterest, disgust, and disregard still profess. Why Princess Di? Why not, it's our nature.