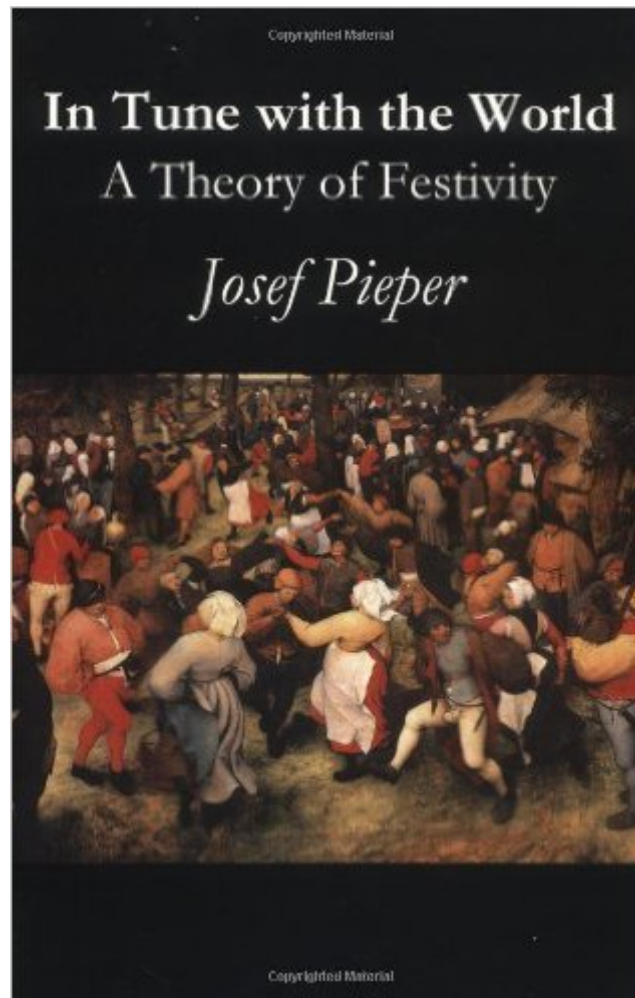


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In Tune With The World



Synopsis

In this stimulating and still-timely study, Josef Pieper takes up a theme of paramount importance to his thinking -- that festivals belong by rights among the great topics of philosophical discussion. As he develops his theory of festivity, the modern age comes under close and painful scrutiny. It is obvious that we no longer know what festivity is, namely, the celebration of existence under various symbols. Pieper exposes the pseudo-festivals, in their harmless and their sinister forms: traditional feasts contaminated by commercialism; artificial holidays created in the interest of merchandisers; holidays by coercion, decreed by dictators the world over; festivals as military demonstrations; holidays empty of significance. And lastly we are given the apocalyptic vision of a nihilistic world which would seek its release not in festivities but in destruction. Formulated with Pieper's customary clarity and elegance, enhanced by brilliantly chosen quotations, this is an illuminating contribution to the understanding of traditional and contemporary experience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Tune with the World is a fine translation of a German monograph on feasts and festivals by philosopher Josef Pieper. It is a short but high quality softcover with heavy paper, large print, and nice wide margins. I had never read anything of Pieper's before and knew only his name from hearing of "Liesure, the Basis of Culture." I found him to be an interesting writer. He is a philosopher of Christian background who writes philosophy rather than religious texts. He references here Aquinas, Nietzsche, Rousseau and the French Revolution, and socialists from Hitler to Trotsky. He is therefore, squarely in the realm of the philosophical conversation of the 20th century. As for what

festivity is, let me try to summarize his argument: Festivals are special days, and therefore require ordinary days to exist. Ordinary days are days consisting of servile work, that is, work that is not just busy but has meaning in the utilitarian support of life. The opposite of servile work is not non-work but non-utilitarian work. Therefore, festivals are days of non-utilitarian activity, or work that is meaningful in itself. In order to define festivals, then, one must be able to define work that is meaningful in itself. Historically, religious and philosophical authorities have defined contemplation--the joy of seeing the world--as the ultimate form of activity that has meaning in itself. In order to engage in contemplation, one must have existential wealth, or the ability to be joyful; i.e., festivity and nihilism are not compatible. Joy requires an object or reason for joy, and if festivity requires joy, festivity then requires an object or reason, such as an event like a marriage or birth.

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