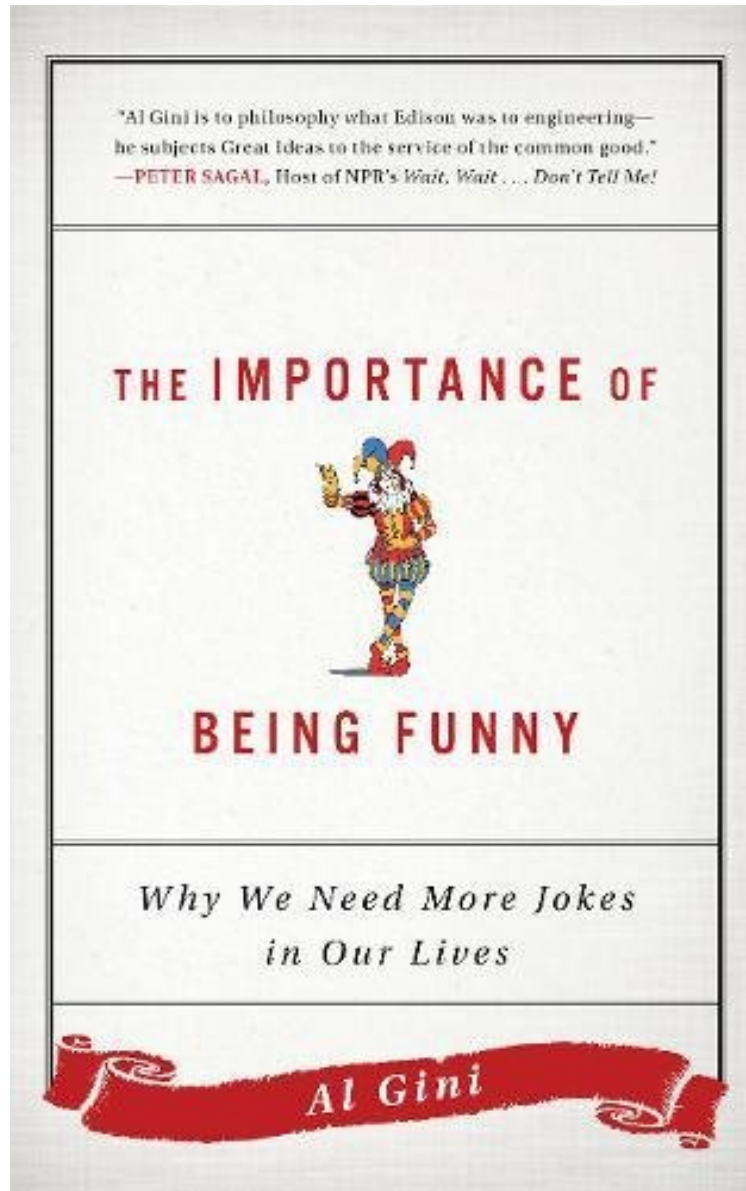


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The Importance of Being Funny: Why We Need More Jokes in Our Lives

Al Gini

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#231285 in Books Gini Al 2017-07-25 Original language: English 8.91 x .70 x 5.651, #File Name: 1442281766168 pages The Importance of Being Funny | File size: 62.Mb

Al Gini : The Importance of Being Funny: Why We Need More Jokes in Our Lives before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Importance of Being Funny: Why We Need More Jokes in Our Lives:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Insightful and humorous look at humorBy Steve GI enjoyed this book. I will go so far as to say that the only weakness of the book was that it wasn't longer. I certainly could have read more about the need for and the value and ethics of comedy. Al Gini is a great writer with great insights into comedy. He formalizes the types of things I think about when I hear jokes or stand-up comics. But his book isn't just theory. He gives a lot of examples of jokes so the book is actually quite funny, sort-of practice what you preach.Disclosure: I received a complimentary copy of this book via Netgalley for review purposes.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The perils of academics trying to be funnyBy John PlowrightThere are many potential pitfalls in discussing humour including the fact that humour can be very subjective and that even the funniest material is likely to lose its capacity to amuse when subjected to critical scrutiny. Despite being well aware of these problems Al Gini's 'The Importance of Being Funny' is not wholly successful in avoiding them.The book does not aspire to be "a complete history or investigation of humour" and Gini expresses a commendable desire "to focus on jokes and joke telling as well as the people who tell jokes." The book is peppered with jokes and given that some of them originated with such talents as Milton Berle, Bob Hope, Joan Rivers and George Burns, it is highly unlikely that the reader won't find something that makes them laugh.Gini is to be commended for including jokes that some will find tasteless, in order to explore what, if anything, is comedically off limits. His conclusion that some jokes may seem funny yet still be "unethical and socially unacceptable" seems judicious.Gini's analysis is, however, sometimes open to question. "Today's professional comedians rarely rattle off one-liners or deliver a long series of disconnected jokes", he opines. It may indeed be rare but the careers of Stewart Francis, Milton Jones, Tim Vine, Emo Philips and Steven Wright, amongst others, show that this form of stand-up is still far from dead. What is dead, according to Gini, is the practical joke – a statement that surely ignores the Jackass school of comedy. Most tendentiously he asserts that "there is no such thing as a pure joke, a universal joke or a joke that would make sense and be funny to everyone" when the slapstick comedy of the silent cinema clearly had a global audience.The aspect of the book which severely tries the reader's – or at least this reader's – patience is Gini's ponderous style of writing. This is a brief book but seems much longer given the longwinded way in which even the simplest of ideas is expressed.To give an example, Gini writes that, "When a joke 'flops' - fails - the teller and the told did not connect; for whatever reason, the target audience failed to respond." This is because "audiences can find a joke ... boring, tedious, unsophisticated, offensive or utterly uninteresting." Do we really need to be told that to flop means to fail, and what is the precise difference between something being "boring, tedious ... or ... uninteresting"? Gini can even mindlessly riff on "nothing": "Virtually every professional comic has bombed on stage. The lights go up, you're introduced, you're in front of the mic, and you're giving them your best stuff, material that has worked before, and yet ... nothing! Literally, nothing! No applause! No laughs! No boos! No heckling! Not even a little nervous coughing."It is thus entirely typical that instead of being told that aspiring comedians should "Practice, practice, practice!" Gini says they should "Practice, practice, practice practice, and practice!"Gini's regular job is Professor of Business Ethics at the Quinlan School of Business at Loyola University Chicago and in 'The Importance of Being Funny' he admits to lacing his lectures with jokes in an effort to keep his students interested and engaged. After reading this book you'll know exactly how they feel.

When E. B. White said "analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog; few people are interested and the frog dies," he hadn't seen Al Gini's hilarious, incisive, and informative take on jokes, joke-telling, and the jokers who tell jokes. For Gini, humor is more than just foolish fun: it serves as a safety valve for dealing with reality that gives us the courage to endure that which we cannot understand or avoid. Not everyone tells jokes. Not everyone gets a joke, even a good one. But, Gini argues, joke-telling can act as both a sword and a shield to defend us from reality. As the late, great stand-up comic Joan Rivers put it: 'If you can laugh at it, you can live with it!' This book is for anyone who enjoys a good laugh, but also wants to know why.

The Importance of Being Funny: Why We Need More Jokes in Our Lives ... did a good job of suggesting why humor is important and describing the place it has in a free society. (Great Writers Steal)The Importance of Being Funny [treats] its ideas with intellectual respect.... Gini's writing has a geniality that works nicely with a tricky subject to examine. He's found a narrow window in which to operate, one in which he's able to treat his explorations seriously without taking them TOO seriously. His passionate connection with the ideas being expressed goes a long way toward imbuing the book with an energy that it would fall flat without. If you love comedy and have ever wondered WHY you love it, The Importance of Being Funny is for you. It's a thoughtful and thought-provoking read ... and it's even got a few laughs. (The Maine Edge)This book is a comprehensive, coherent distillation of the best thinking on humor and jokes, both the philosophical and ethical issues, as well as the place of humor in our lives. . . . it is stunning in its breadth, accessibility, and brevity. It truly is a distillation of the best the field has to offer and written in an accessible and fun style. (Jacob M. Held) "I've known Al Gini since I was five years old. I always thought of him as the hilarious kook who lived down the street. Until I read this excellent book I had no idea that he was in fact, a gainfully employed, productive member of our society. This book is so insightful, I highly recommend it. We need more Al Gini's in our life." (Thomas Lennon, of Comedy Central's Reno 911, CBS' The Odd Couple, co-author of the Night at

the Museum series)“I have been the victim of some of Al Gini’s early research for this book, being one of his unsuspecting students many years ago. I had intended on attending and listening to boring lectures about dry philosophy subjects. But he’d interject humor and, therefore, make it nearly impossible to forget the lessons. (Shaking fist at sky...) Damn you, Gini!” (David Pasquesi, Chicago's Second City, HBO's Veep, Improviser of the Year by Chicago Improv Festival)“Gini gives us a careful examination of comedy and its central importance in our lives from the classroom to the boardroom to the bedroom, managing to extricate precisely where, why, and how something can be funny without ever spoiling the good time with pedantic antics. I learned and LOled simultaneously.” (Zach Freeman, Chicago Tribune Comedy Critic)“The Importance of Being Funny is both important and funny. The French existentialist Albert Camus said that life is absurd. Gini agrees and argues that to live it well we need to embrace the absurdity. Laughter isn’t just the best medicine, but the very stuff of life.” (Steven Gimbel, Gettysburg College)“Life isn’t funny--except when it is. Yet humor, such as it is nowadays, tends to degenerate into one of two unbearably joyless perversions: the condescending, cynical snark of didactic political pundits, or the cringe-inducing, unsubtle raunch of a typical Hollywood offering. But In The Importance of Being Funny, Professor Al Gini attempts to recover the joyfulness of humor by deriving it from the best--and the most demanding--material of all: the baffling contours of everyday experiences and our uproariously futile attempts to make complete sense of life. Humor, in Gini’s hands, is sometimes homey, mostly honest, and ultimately humane. A timely and entertaining offering!” (Gregory Wolcott, Saint Mary’s College of California)“Socrates argued that the unexamined life is not worth living. Diogenes, Socrates’ ever-present heckler and frenemy, would probably have countered that the un-laughed-at life is equally a waste. Fast-forward two-and-a-half millennia, and Al Gini makes a convincing case for why being funny is important not just for teachers and philosophers, but for everyone—especially when it comes to learning how to live in a less-than-perfect world. Indeed, contra Leibniz, it’s hard to imagine that this imperfect world in which we live is even the best logically possible one. Then again, logic is something that Gini shows us has always been based on some funny stuff. Laughter, according to Gini, is a natural reaction to the breakdown of rationality and reason. It is also a balm for our personal ills, an anesthetic for our collective pain, the most sincere response we can have when faced with the unknowable—and yet simultaneously a sign of hope that we will be all right even when faced with ills, pain, and imperfect knowledge. Walking a fine line between arguing that so-called political correctness can unacceptably hinder comedy, yet admitting that jokes do carry moral import—and certain jokes cause harm and thus border on hate speech—Gini does not shy away from addressing the question of ethics as well as aesthetics in matters of comedy. In a concise and accessible manner, he thus takes up the history, nature, morality, and pragmatics of joke telling—an art form he admits is not as popular as it once was. Yet out of something “old school,” Gini creates a new reason to pay careful attention, and a reason to follow a new Kantian-inspired Comedic Imperative. Plus, along the way you’ll not only learn about the importance of being funny, you’ll also learn the answer to some of philosophy’s greatest mysteries: why the first chicken crossed the first road, why men go bear hunting, and why the elephant was walked.” (H. Peter Steeves, DePaul University)About the AuthorAl Gini is a well-known Chicago radio personality, professor, and the author of a number of books that examine contemporary topics in American culture and other themes including: *My Job My Self: Work and the Creation of the Modern Individual* (Routledge, 2000); *The Importance of Being Lazy: In Praise of Play, Leisure, and Vacations* (Routledge, 2003) *Why It’s Hard to Be Good* (Routledge, 2006); and *Seeking The Truth of Things* (ACTA, 2010). Gini has been interviewed on several national and international media outlets including: “The Bob Edwards Show”, NPR’s “Morning Edition”, NBC’s “Nightly News”, CBS News, ABC News, CBC Canada, WTTW Chicago, WGN Chicago, Stanford University’s “Philosophy Talk”, South African National Radio, Wisconsin Public Radio, Massachusetts Public Radio, CBS Radio, and San Francisco Public Radio. For over twenty-eight years he has been the “Resident Philosopher” on National Public Radio’s Chicago affiliate, WBEZ-FM, and he regularly lectures to community and professional organizations on issues in popular culture, business and ethics.