

The Nature of Joy

Excerpt from *Joy and Evolution*

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There is an old, common, yet very accurate, description of joy that states quite simply that joy is the result of love in the heart becoming vitalized and manifested. This description has a nice ring to it, yet in this modern world it seems to lack any depth of meaning because of the loss of the meaning of “love” and “heart”. Two upcoming chapters will give detailed descriptions of love and heart but for a quick introduction, love is a metaphysical feeling or vision of a better self and world as well as a guidance to effectuate the vision. Love can envision the union with another individual or some chosen evolution of the self and world. The heart is located in the lower part of the body and serves as the central control for storing and manifesting the vision of what is loved. It will be demonstrated to exist at the base of the spine within the sacrum bone (Latin: *sacer*: “dedicated or holy place”). Joy, therefore, can be said to result from the manifesting of the sacred heart’s desire.

Joy is the perfect union of reason with feelings. Joy requires both wisdom and experiencing. Joy is also the interface between the present and the unfolding future.

A few unconventional examples will be given in order to illustrate the nature of joy. Consider first, an actor who is of the method acting school in which the actor becomes the person in the play.¹ The method is that the actor studies the role or person to be portrayed until he or she is able to feel how the character moves, talks, behaves and reacts. When the actor finally understands and longs to become that person, he or she is then ready to make that person real. Then the actor forgets being an actor and becomes that person almost instantly as the curtain rises. In the process of becoming someone else, actors report finding a deep joy, even if the person they are becoming has a tragic future in the play. This can then be compared with the joy experienced in childhood, as a child also instantly becomes some imagined person in a game. Again, the child experiences joy regardless of the status of the person in the game.

The joy of becoming someone else, evolving, or becoming more of what you are, can also be experienced by a man who sees a child fall into a rapidly flowing river and dives in to save her. As he sees the child fall, there may be an instant shock in his groin as of a loss. The child’s danger stimulates his basic love for children that, although difficult to express, becomes a powerful drive. Instantly he senses the currents of the river and mentally feels himself becoming a strong swimmer, knowing how he must counter the currents in order to reach the child. In that instant, he feels the demands of the future and the new role he must play. While this instantaneous feeling is going on, he is already dashing to the shore and taking on the role of being an experienced, capable swimmer filled with vitality, courage and joy who can envision a successful and wondrous future.

An entirely different but more common form of taking on different roles and changing the world can be found with an inexperienced, yet dedicated couple who work evenings and weekends in rebuilding their house in their spare time. They are amazed at how they look forward to their

¹ T. Cole, et al., *Actors on Acting*

work sessions and how they become one in meeting each problem. Their house becomes a home as the feelings in their hearts merge and become manifest with their concerted efforts.

A simple form of joy is found watching a movie or reading a book, where the desire of the heart is to experience more in life. The reader first is interested in the central character, then identifies with the character, and finally becomes the character as in a dream. Almost everyone experiences the short period of joy during sexual intercourse when for a few moments you are able to escape your central ego and become pure feeling as you get caught up in the rising passion of the moment as well as in the drive for orgasm.

The nature of joy can be further defined as the experiencing of evolving and becoming (not possessing) something more, or the process of fulfilling the heart's expectation for more in life. Joy is not obtained with the satisfying of the desires of the brain, but rather from what is implanted within the heart. The actor above must work to implant within his heart the image, feelings, behavior and existence of the person he is to become. He has to rely upon his heart and feelings to direct his role in the play rather than his thoughts and judgments. The lines that he says and the movements that he makes are dictated by the script and the director, but who he is, is dictated by his heart. Similarly, a child playing a "make-believe" role has become someone who was envisioned within the heart and is then directed with subtle cues from the others in the game. The man swimming to the child already had a deep love for children that was no doubt placed in his heart many years ago. The couple redoing their home are responding to an image they had both found together in their hearts. Their joy results from the manifesting of the outpouring of their hearts into improving their world rather than from the static pleasure of admiring their finished accomplishments.

We have found that many individuals identify with the above descriptions of joy as they review their lives and find that they had joy in the midst of their efforts to become or find more in life. However, very few found joy with the receipt of a gift, and surprisingly, not even with the gift of a beautiful day or perfect health. The latter are, of course, quite pleasurable and comforting, and a modern dictionary could define them as joyous, but they were not felt within the lower heart deep in the bowels.

There are different levels of joy depending upon the evolution of the self, which are indicated by the resulting change in either the self or the outer world or both. For instance, there is the joy of reading fiction stories which may yield a temporary change in one's self-identity, but this joy is generally not of any long duration nor evolutionary. There is the evolution, however, that can be found with reading historical or philosophical books which can permanently change the view of the self and world. Similarly, there is variation of joy in dealing with others that depends upon the "heart" or intent of the group. At the simplest level it can be a simple social conversation or the playing of a game in which you can only temporarily change your role. Continuing evolution can be found in groups maintaining a common goal such as, discussing some subject to explore, its meaning, or partaking in some activity that will alter their philosophy about the outer world.

Finding joy and evolution requires special powers. The first required power is the ability to manifest another role. The second is finding a source of energy for the change. The third is the attainment of increased sensitivity and awareness of your milieu to be able to respond differently in a new role. The fourth is the uniting of your role with others and the outer world with the vision in the heart.

The attainment of joy is, therefore, not automatic and does require "turning on" the heart in the bowels. The Bible speaks of "quickenings" that can be obtained by "girding the loins." Actors

frequently speak of the rituals they must use to get “turned on” to their roles. Consider the couple working on their house described above. They can very easily drop into worries, complaints and judgments and feel miserable. Or they can look at each other, hug or kiss, mutually wonder at their union and their progress etc, give a deep exhalation and “get set” to work. The child stepping into a game similarly must activate her heart which is done by a laugh, shout or exhalation and a downward pressure against the lower abdomen. Or it can be done with the sense of expectation that results in tension in the lower abdomen and a “quickenened” or more forceful exhalation (all to be elaborated upon later).

The quickening can become so great that an overabundance of energy is found such that it is quite common to couple the word joy with some other activity of the body such as “leaping for joy,” “dancing with joy,” “shouting with joy,” “being filled with the joy of life,” or “can’t contain yourself for joy.” Jack London was describing joy when he wrote: “There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive.”²

Philosophy and the Arts have been humanity’s chief media for expressing the joy of creation. The creation of, or the listening to, music can carry both its creator and its listener to experiencing new sensations and feelings. An artist can become lost in the forest that is being painted and later an observer can enter into that same forest and find joy in the sound of the wind. Both a fiction writer and the reader become the character who is being described. Although such experiences are commonly relegated to imagination, the merging of the present experience into a future, personal, yet integrated world characterizes joy.

The early Greek *Dionysian* religion³ related joy to madness, intoxication, or becoming god-like. Plato⁴ had an excellent method of identifying joy which he described as consisting of a strong flow⁵ through the self, as compared to normal pleasure which has only a trickle⁶ like the breath.

In seeking an understanding of joy and methods of finding it, we were fortunate to be led into Eastern philosophy and early Sanskrit writings. One interesting happening came about when one of our students took a sabbatical to India and encountered a holy man who asked that he forward a Sanskrit book⁷ to Peck. In translating the inner text⁸, doors were opened that allowed us to see the universal presence of joy that was called *anuttara* or the unsurpassable, even though it is often obscured.

The earliest known Indus Valley culture in India, which left no records of their society, did leave many teachings about joy in the *Rig Veda*. These teachings were carried forth by the next culture who, in their writings, even further defined joy with a large number of separate words for its associated physical changes such as dilation of the eyes, hair standing on end (*horripilation*), being mad or intoxicated, inflamed, exhilarated, animated, thrilled, shaking and agitated. The teachings also included many different words describing various methods of physical coupling that are well beyond the normal accepted Western variations. These early sages taught that the

² J. London, *Call of the Wild*

³ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

⁴ *Cratylus*

⁵ Greek, *pseō*

⁶ Greek, *erpon*

⁷ *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa*

⁸ *Parātriṃśhikā*

source of joy resided in the sexual region of the body, which was accepted throughout much of the East (and now has some support from modern research).⁹

In attempting to more fully understand joy, it seemed obvious to take a close look at children for examples of joy and what it might be. We didn't have to look far, for one of the best examples of joy is in the imaginary games of children. Many children are capable of "losing themselves" in play with such vitality that they forget their problems and who they were and fully become whatever the game requires. This joy is commonly described with such words as: excited, anticipating, lost in play, eager, wanting more and more, taken over, impervious to outer world, energized, sensitive, open, going crazy, out of control, mind running wild, and hilarious. They eagerly reach for more excitement and good feelings while completely trusting and opening to what the life of the game and its future can offer. This unity and reaching for more leads to the nearly constant experience of the expansion or betterment of the game as well as an increased order and joy within the game.

We found another source of understanding joy with Cassinari's discovery of the meaning of the original German words used by Friedrich von Schiller in his poem, *Ode to Joy*. In studying his philosophy, we found his view regarded game playing as the highest state that mortal man can rise to¹⁰ which he described in the *Ode to Joy* as being "Intoxicated with fiery passion" and the future of the game as "Heaven." We found that as an adult opens to the games of life there must be a similar response, as found in children's games, with finding the union and oneness with the world. If an adult is playing a game of life, he or she must be in union with the world and hence, as many old writings state, must be obeying deep and basic rules of human interactions that "make all men your brothers." In this state of righteousness,¹¹ the higher nature of man is experienced. Such a person does not need religious instruction,¹² as is also universally taught in most religious writings.

Another characteristic of joy is that it liberates an individual from the judgmental and controlling brain. Our modern tightly controlled and highly interactive society requires constant adherence to social rules which results in the inner chattering brain telling us constantly what we can and can't do according to what "others will think." The judgmental brain also keeps us locked into being ourselves and prevents us from stepping out of character or to fully contribute to and enjoy life. In the state of joy, however, individuals are able to break free of their tightly controlled identities. People, for instance, speak of being carried away with joy or being overwhelmed with joy such that the self is forgotten as they became another person. Since the new role fits or is united with the outer world, the resulting actions are perfect for what is required at that moment. Even though the word intoxicated is used to describe the unexpected feelings, thoughts and actions of a person in joy, the results are perfect and not due to a self-indulgent or alcohol driven fantasy.

There is one more interesting observation about the traits of joy and that is that these same traits are manifested in the great people of the world as well as in those who are perceived as truly enjoying their life and looking forward to more. Joy is associated with life and those who use the life force to change themselves or the world. It can be imagined that a vine that is growing profusely and taking over the available sunny area is filled with a form of joy and is more alive than the surrounding vines. When religious writings advocate taking on the traits of a child, it

⁹ R. Peck, *Joy and Evolution*, Chapter 11

¹⁰ F. Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*

¹¹ Greek, *dikaiousune*: "balanced, dedicated to being perfected"

¹² For instance, Matthew: 9:12-13

seems obvious that it is these traits of joy and life that are being promulgated and not the naiveté or ignorance of a child.

Individuals who are able to obtain joy in their daily activities demonstrate powers that can be compared with the powers normally relegated to divine or superior beings. Joy is connected with the realm of creativity in that some future need or goal is met with shifts and changes in the present. As a simple illustration of this creativity, consider how a sick child confined to his bed can create a whole future world on the cover of his bed.¹³ He uses a few toys and the folds in the cover to create a game that keeps him busy for hours. Those individuals filled with joy have the ability to choose, with absolute faith, their own future and are known to make the world a better and happier place. No matter how their actions may be judged, the results are beneficial to society. Many of these individuals make no claim to follow any formal religion and may even scoff at the idea of a god, yet they constantly have an implicit faith they will be guided by some external and hidden means in reaching their goals in life. These individuals have an unquestioning trust that whatever they fully dedicate themselves to, will be found. They know that unseen doors will open and seemingly impossible events may occur that prepare the way for reaching the desired goal. They likewise see beyond death. Religions describe such individuals as being perfected, walking in the light or having found the balance in life. Instead of using the word “joy” most religious writings use a word which includes the whole united world such as “heaven.” With the above definitions, it is easy to see why the term “heaven” is used since the word “joy” becomes too limited.

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¹³ R. L. Stevenson, *Counterpane*, in *Child's Garden of Verses* by