

THE BOOK OF JOY

CHAPTER 1

Page 32—joy subsumes happiness...it's an interesting thought. I'm not ready at this very beginning to put one inside the other, but we'll see

Page 33, although not an exclusive definition in and of itself, it is easy for me to argue that joy is---and should be---also the *absence* of things that bring unhappiness---the absence of anger, sadness, frustration, irritation. It is not necessarily akin to love, which has pain involved in it sometimes.

I note that they decry the accumulation of material things as a route to joy. That for me isn't necessarily so---if you use what you acquire to share or give to others.

Page 38—"wherever you have friends, that's your country, and wherever you receive love, that's your home". There is a lot of truth in that statement.

Page 39—we all probably know people who have sustained great loss---and somehow found whatever strength is needed to pass beyond it and overcome it. Deb has talked about her admiration for Joan and Christy many times. My admiration for my now-deceased good friend Jim, and for my very much alive friends Steve and Lisa, knows no bounds, very much because they've accepted the bad and transmuted it into something that they give and receive joy from. Jim said to me, 'in accepting death I am rediscovering life". I've not heard a more profound or beautiful statement in all my time.

Page 40—well, I *do* have a way with words, don't I?! "transmuted". Me and Archbishop Tutu. What a team!

Page 40---I think something that is beginning to percolate in my consciousness as I read is this---that if you are hoping to experience true joy, you have to *want* less. Perhaps not even want joy itself....just allow it to happen to you. That is a field that you have to carefully sow, perhaps. And it may be that a lot of us, especially nowadays, do not have the proper seeds or soil or nutrients to generate the end result of joy---patience, acceptance, being less to experience more, equanimity.

A fiction book I read once said "joy is in the ears that hear". But for me, joy is in the mouth that laughs. I think a large number of my moments of joy have come when I have laughed uninhibitedly, uncaring of what people around me might think. And you know what else? Truly odd---joy does NOT equate with memory for me. I don't think in these cases I have any memory of the particulars of the conversation that led up to the instant of joyous laughter. I just have the memory of how I felt and that I was with loving, laughing, caring friends or family. I will want to explore that further as we get into the book.

Page 43, "part of a wonderful community". Well, that is certainly true from a personal standpoint. Many years ago, when I was going through my period of illness with colitis, I had so many people pulling for me, caring for me, that I almost had an *obligation* to get better. It can be a very powerful thing.

Page 43, a necessary ingredient. Yup. I wouldn't wish my 3 years on anyone, but it was also the most valuable thing that ever happened to me. Every decision in my life has been fundamentally tied to that experience. Now? My health and well-being comes first, foremost, always. And that perspective has kept me out of a lot of mental and possibly physical "unnecessary" suffering.

45, biological—that is really curious

46-47, they seem to be affirming my comment at page 40 about being less

48, “wise selfishness” - my coordinate sayings. “Love thyself, for no one else will do quite so good a job.” “love thyself, for it is necessary in order to live”. “Love thyself, for it is necessary in order to love others”.

48, “obsessing about getting what you want”. Goodness! I seem to be tracking well, don’t I?



48, that’s interesting---joy as a state of being to aspire to. Let me think on that one. It may be that it is all the more worthwhile to pursue because of its ephemeral and fleeting nature, like the reward of a particular taste or food dish that you wouldn’t *want* to have every day because you’d lose the wonder of it. I’m going to see about working “wonder” into this equation as we go along.

49, that’s a decent formulation, but perhaps not a complete one. Not only experiencing gratitude but experiencing and accepting the *receipt* of gratitude. My mom has a very difficult time with that and sometimes, so do I.

There’s something that it is a propos to talk about here. A good many years ago, I was at an evening gathering where we were discussing philosophy. And the leader of our group, he said “tell us something that you’re proud of”. And I thought about that. Got up and talked about this. This isn’t proud-as-pride. This is something else. It’s a rule---and I don’t tend to follow many rules. But I don’t think I’ve broken this one even *once* in what has to now be about 15 years at least. Here it is. In any day in which I have interacted with another human being? I have said something nice to *someone*...every...single...day. No exceptions. I’D LIKE EVERYONE TO MAYBE TAKE A CRACK AT THIS EXERCISE WITH THIS KIND OF THING IN MIND.