



Research article

Joy Invincible

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Abstract

Joy is the self, as primal as the self, and so as difficult to capture as one's self. We can only adumbrate joy by jot-dotting joy's typical appearances, as "joy possible ubiquitous," "joy beautiful accessible," "how to joy," "joy at play," "joy the ruler of all," "joy various," and then "joy fulfills uniquely ubiquitously" to round up the whole essay.

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The etymological origin of joy is joy, as "I" am what I am and how I will be, originated in the root-of-all, God, who is the I-am and the I-will-be (Exodus 3:14). Joy is the basic primal notion at the root of our life. As the root, joy is quite elusive invisible, and extremely difficult to capture in our understanding, as hard as understanding our self. The difficulty of capturing joy is obviously due to the fact that joy is part and parcel of our life, as we live for joy to live in joy, to live joy. So, joy is as necessary to our living as it is difficult to understanding our living.

What can be done, then, as this essay does here, is to barely jot to jot to "dot" some typical concrete appearances of joy, to impress us with joy in which we live and have our being, personally and pervasively. As such, joy is ever inside us and around us to support our days, to invigorate and refresh our living. Joy itself will then turn those random jotting "dots" all so joyous into some delightful coherence, as randomness tells of vigorous joy alive.



The following pages have some typical jotted dots of joy among many others, “joy possible ubiquitous,” “joy beautiful accessible,” “how to joy,” “joy at play,” “joy the ruler of all,” “joy various,” and then “joy fulfills uniquely ubiquitously” to round up the whole essay that still lingers on in joys haunting and ineffable, joys that are unique and ubiquitous in Mother Nature.

Voluptuous randomness is freely shown in these spontaneous dot-jottings in the following pages, as listed here. Such randomness portrays the mighty joy of the universe that breaks through all boundaries of systematic decency, to flood all over anywhere anytime. The ubiquitous flooding composes the beauty of Mother Nature, where, incredibly, chaos of joy is cosmos of *coherent* harmony all so happy together, composing lyrical rhythm of the lusty music of spheres chanting random *chaotic*, and voluptuous. Coherent joy is randomly sung and shouted; such random chants compose joy coherent.

In whatever situation we are, what we all need is always to stick to joy, gutsy vigorous, and all troubles will go out of the window. Sadly, however, no one so far in world history has ever thought of joy when in trouble, much less in ordinary days to take trouble of looking into *what* joy is. This fact of universal negligence is so tragic because joy is the sine qua non of our existence itself; without joy we cannot live.

This essay supplies this indispensable human need to familiarize with joy by considering *what* joy is and how *necessary* to life joy is, and suggest *how* to have joy in *all* situations, including while we are suffering pain. “What? Aren’t we sometimes joyous and some other times sad? Isn’t life such ups and downs? We cannot try to be happy when we are sad, now can we?”

Our response hits the central point of this essay. No, we cannot *try* to be happy. Joy cannot be tried, for it is not sporadic excitement but our basic life-nisus. Sorrow is supported by deep calm joy, for without joy we cannot live, and only while we are alive can we be sad. And so, without joy, no sorrow is possible. Far from being an eternal giggle, joy is our basic ruling passion of living.

Joy is strange. The nation of Bhutan has its “gross national happiness index.” Everyone smiles when hearing it. This is because that nation is an exotic outsider to us; being in USA, we rarely hear about that tiny odd nation. In contrast, the personal universal republic called “I my self” has no such happiness index. *This* republic simply overflows itself so satisfied, so happy from moment to moment, more than objective “100% index”; after all, no objectivity is possible in joy that is intensely personal. In fact, being so personal this perfectly subjective republic has no smile, nor does it incite smiles anywhere.

Nothing is more natural, healthy, and happy than such republic of “I my self,” as no one smiles at breathing, either of my own or someone else’s, when “I my self” breathe so “happy” pure and simple. Indian Chief Seattle says, “All things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man. The air shares the spirit with all life it supports.” Breathing is living, and living is the spirit of cosmos calmly happy.

Living has no fanfare; it is simply self-satisfied, in calm joy. All of us live “growing like a baby and sleep like a baby,” and the baby makes no noise but is just being herself quietly, all satisfied, all in joy of no joy. Where is room to smile in such common living days and nights? All these days simply go by, nothing matters, as all things are flowing over and over with simple happiness, and there is no objective “happiness index” whatever anywhere. No nation bothers with such quiet joy of living.



After all, only things rare are of concern to catch our attention. Where there is nothing rare, nothing matters. Here “hiding” makes no sense. When *all* things are precious, we just roam around them, casually watching all flowers of happiness always in blossom. All this is so blissful that it makes no bliss. Now, beauty is itself such all-bliss that we just nod, smell, and wander around in it without trumpeting noisily. Gratitude oozes out everywhere as if nothing matters, in blissful no-bliss breathing joyous, anywhere anytime.

In this light we now understand Apostle Paul when he says, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.”¹ I used to doubt if such “always” and “unceasing” are ever possible. Now, not only do I understand it; I need not even smart Paul to say such stuff so silly and otiose, yet all so natural. Paul is here simply saying that we must breathe always, and be always in gratitude. As long as I am being alive always, I breathe gratitude praying, always, in joy always. Such telling is so silly so unneeded, as I am the personal republic of no-Bhutan.

Joy possible ubiquitous

“But, really, is such spontaneous happiness possible?” Well, we often say time flies, with a sad touch of nostalgia, because what has been is assuredly peaceful for us to be here, while what is coming is uncertain. Jesus is the “I my self” deep inside “I my self” as the lord and creator of me in time. And we must bear in mind that “creation” is impossible without the creator who loves to create to love the creation.

In his unlimited love, with his nail-pierced palms, he clasps us so tightly. He assures us absolutely with his tight body-clasp that time is flying *my* way. And that is why I can be satisfied within my republic of “I my self” all the time, beyond objective public happiness of the republic of happy Bhutan. You see, my spontaneous happiness has its base *beyond* me unawares, much as kids ever playing outside entrusting their all to Mom at home inside, all unawares to playing kids outside.

Writing about play as above barely approximates play, but even such clumsy writing on play exquisitely plays around toward joy ineffable. Joy composes play, as play is joy on the move, dynamic and alive. Joy and play are two in one ever jumping, one as two Janus-faced. The one defines the other as both are indefinably alive. Being indefinable indicates being reasonable beyond reason, and that rational beyond rationality features play. No wonder, it is so hard to even adumbrate play as play plays around fooling around all over, all in exquisite joy. Such is joy ineffable, not smiling.

Not only does joy thrive in such common days of kids playing; joy is rampant even in days of troubles when it is impossible to smile. To punch into our awareness our ubiquitous necessity of joy, we now look into the extreme situation of joy in trouble. If we cannot believe in such joy in the midst of anti-joy milieu, we can remind us of an *actual* example.

It is Confucius. He is famously known all around worldwide as a person fully knowing his ideal is impossible to attain, yet stubbornly trying all his might all his life to struggle toward it (14/38 or 41). Not only that, in his lifelong failures, he has been overflowing in happiness, in fact so happy that he is unaware that the old is about to arrive (7/19). He is happy every moment of his life.

¹ This is one of his injunctions at which I used to puzzle. It is casually tossed out in I Thessalonians 5:16-18, toward the end of that letter hurried-on.



Confucius is “forever 21,” as a dress store is so named. Confucius is one who always puts on the dress of life-as-21, never older but forever vigorous, so much so that he continues to single-handedly shape the entire China’s history and its culture, even today. Usually reserved Chan unplugged all his modesty when he said without careful demonstration at all,

“Confucius (551-479 BC) can truly be said to have molded Chinese civilization in general. It may seem far-fetched, however, to say he molded Chinese philosophy in particular—that he determined the direction or established the pattern of later Chinese philosophical development—yet there is more truth in the statement than is usually realized.”²

In my opinion, Confucius is totally invincible precisely because of his *joy* overflowing his lifelong failures in which he continued to struggle, in overwhelming joys! In the light of joy as ubiquitous power invincible, we suddenly realize. It is not that Confucius was in joy despite lifelong failures. The fact is rather that it was Confucius’s overwhelming joy that strengthened him so much as to continue to struggle against all odds that lasted throughout his entire life.

By the same token, the astute Taoist Chuang Tzu told us the story of “supreme joy” of abject dry skull casually tossed on roadside, enjoying the cosmic joys of doing the rounds of seasons with heaven and earth day after day, without ceasing. Chuang Tzu told us this incredible story in his Chapter Eighteen titled “Supreme Joy” that is no joy at all. That dry roadside skull is a bosom friend of Confucius, indeed.

Both Confucius and that casual skull remind us of a *baby* who only occasionally smile. But even when she is quiet and staying put, she is flowing all over with fragrance of joy, so much so that whoever happens to see her cannot help but break out smiling. Even while she is asleep, we cannot help but sneak into her baby-room to steal a stealthy glance at her, all so irresistible. No wonder, we say we have “slept like a baby” when we had a full happy sleep. The baby in joy is eternal and steady in constant smile of no-smile at all, to irresistibly spread all smiles, staying with us to bless all of us, ever, without even trying to do so herself.

All this joy inside Confucian troubles and during ordinary baby-days shows how joy is not a sporadic “jack rabbit” hit-and-run but an abiding milieu and situation of constant vigor. Joy is happiness of no-happiness, and no-happiness as supreme happiness, ever. Such joy of no-joy happens even in a casual roadside skull thrown out as (what we take as) rock-bottom misery so abject.

In fact, let us repeat. An ancient Taoist Chuang Tzu describes this heavenly ultimate joy of a roadside skull in his Chapter Eighteen titled “Ultimate Joy” that is no joy. Smile or no smile, joy simply draws us in willy-nilly; we cannot resist it at all. And such drawing-us has a good reason, to wit, joy is supremely and vigorously healthy, absolute and unconditional! And of course no one can refuse joy that induces health, or rather, joy that *is* itself health, smiling or no, unconditional and so attractive. Joy is our life-health smiling no-smile.

Joy the beautiful accessible

² This extraordinary statement appears in Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 14. This balanced book, though seldom deeply thought through, is still in print, as far as I know.



It is thus not at all too much to say that joy is the mother irresistible of all beauty and all artworks. For instance, music sings joy on and on. I myself cannot live without music, while I eat or write. Music continues my daily ongoing. After all, all beauty and artworks attract us because they are all healthy and health-inducing. Health itself is beautiful, as shown in beautiful athletes and dancers all so healthy. Beauty, health, and joy form a trinitarian unity that spells life at its supreme best, most vigorous, and highest. Supreme ultimacy is occupied by joy supremely reigning over healthy life.

Or rather, joy is much more. Joy is itself a panacea that heals *all* troubles and *all* illnesses. Are you sick? Are you sad? Are you downcast for whatever reason? Try going to joy. Joy will at once smile at you gently, and your being sick with sorrow will vanish into joy of all smiles, even sigh of no-smile that smiles at bottom, in unspeakable confidence, all in overflowing baby-joy.

In addition, here is an important fact about joy. It is that joy is ever lying around us constantly; joy is so easily accessible so much as going to see a baby all over. It is really *our* own fault that we continue to mope around in sorrow and in sickness, while our complete cure in joy is just at our finger-tips. Just look at casual clouds sky-high, with invisible birds faintly chirping far away. Overhearing faint birdsongs, even casually and unawares, will soothe our hearts and souls simply and unmistakably.

How to joy

“But, really, *how* do I find such joy that you said is so easily available?” Well, just step back a step, and you will turn roomy enough to see ocean open wide and heaven beckoning vastly. Joy is all over silently inviting us all, all open sky-high, vast as ocean, all completely free of charge. “Work done, back me off,” says Lao Tzu (9). Jitters gone day spent, and night comes. Gentle dark, I rest pillowed, roomy fresh. Refreshed, I can now welcome concrete bits coming on, one after another without rhyme, all jumping alive. Now I follow the fresh observant poet, Dr. Williams the kid-doctor sharp as kids.³

I am forever 21 here now, growing up to forever 13, claiming “I can do anything!” Joy dawns vast and unlimited, as I back me off as things are done. Back-off goes ahead, quite roomy quite leisurely. In all, things go delightfully this way. Feisty jitters now exhausted, I back me off. “Backing off” gives me rest, for me to be at home in me. Now roomy, I can welcome days as they come, one at a time, with concrete bits here and there, whatever they are. And then, the joy of living arrives in me all around all over. I am all joy jumping alive, forever 21 forever growing up to almighty 13.

Such “back off” takes it easy through the days of troubles. Stepping back is actually a move forward of synthesizing Confucius’ “not rather” of his three chants of joy that begin his punchy spunky *Analects*. He sighs long, chanting, “O learning and time and again practicing it, isn’t it rather happy? O having classmates come from afar (to compare notes of learning and living), isn’t it rather delightful? O ignored by people and not vexed, isn’t it rather princely of a person?”

The ending chant is significant. It is *his* personal chant of joy of no-joy, during his negative days, to culminate to actualize his happy delight during assiduous learning of living in failures continuous. Such is

³ See *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, Volumes 1, II, NY: New Directions, 1991.



Confucius' joy of backing off. It is a dynamics of "no do" that differs from "do" and from "not do," and synthesizes both "do" and "not do" that exhaust alternatives of usual logic. A simple story so concrete would gently clarify this motherly back-off that is a joy-move of "no do." It goes like this.

The gutsy boy Tommy is happily playing all self-forgotten, when Mom suddenly calls, "It's time for nap, Tommy." Wow, that really angered Tommy, now so enraged. "No, no, no! No nap, Mom! Never! No!" The world is too exciting to miss in such silly atrocious nap! "Nap" is quite a dirty three-lettered word for Tommy! Now Mom who loves Tommy so dearly has a tough dilemma on hand.

Mom cannot simply let Tommy go, for Mom knows how tired he is now, as his angry shout shows, and if he goes on playing, he would stumble and get hurt badly. Mom cannot just "not do" Tommy. And yet, Mom cannot go and grab Tommy by force, throw him onto his bed, commanding "Sleep! It's good for you!" That would start the disastrous World War Three! Mom cannot "do" Tommy, either. But then "do" and "not do" exhaust all our usual logical alternatives. What can Mom do, then?

Mom naturally and warmly says, "OK, Tommy, no nap for you, OK? Just come over here, and sit on your bed, but don't sleep, ok? Mom will read you your favorite story. Do you like that?" Tommy nods and comes back home, to sit on his bed, still all sweaty. Mom then slowly begins, "Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a wicked old lady named Tiger Lady . . ." Whereupon Tommy falls into his pillow. Mom then softly covers a light blanket over him. Tommy can now sleep his needed sleep with no protest, and Mom is so happy to see him sleep. Both Mom and Tommy are so happy now in Mom's "no do" so embracing.

It is thus, so gently, that "no do" threads through conflicts of contraries in life—Tommy needs nap but refuses to sleep, Mom can neither let him go nor force him onto bed—even pesky pain and headaches quite troublesome insoluble. Gentle "no do" penetrates them all and pervading all over, to let each and everyone be a winner totally satisfied, nodding at oneself, nodding at one another, in all joys all around.

Backing off from clashes of contraries into calm "no do" would now imperceptibly render each one of us a winner, to wit, each is now both a winner of oneself and a winner of each other, ha-ha-ing one to another, all in joy spontaneous. Such is spontaneous joy that wins the win-win situation for each of us and for all of us, and that without force without twisting arms. Every one of us is drawn instinctively to such "joy" of all of us.

Joy at play

Such joy is, mind you, at *play*, devil may care, with all falsities, dilemmas, and even paradoxes, each one quite insoluble by straight logic. Let me give a tough example, the liar paradox, one of toughest paradoxes that are claimed to be basic "atoms" of basic thinking, philosophy, as numbers are atoms of mathematics.⁴ But sadly, this claimer never realizes that, unlike innocent numbers as atoms of mathematics, paradoxes insidiously self-destruct to destroy the entire philosophy as the liar paradox typically does. The liar paradox goes this way.

When someone says, "I'm a liar," the statement can neither be affirmed as true nor denied as false without destroying the affirmation and the denial, and thereby destroying the "I'm a liar" itself. The whole insidious process

⁴ It is claims so by Roy Sorensen in his *A Brief History of the Paradox: Philosophy and the Labyrinths of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. xi, to begin the whole book. The liar paradox features prominently and continually in the book.



goes this way. Affirmation of “I’m a liar” as true amounts to taking the statement as made honestly, and honest confession denies “I’m a liar.” Negative denial of “I’m a liar” as false takes that person as saying things false, as lying, and such taking affirms “I’m a liar.” And so, self-lying can be neither affirmed nor denied without disastrous destruction, one way or the other, positive and negative.

In this helpless cul-de-sac situation, logically stuck all around and cannot move, *playing* with this liar-paradox joyfully mounts up precisely on this impossible quicksand trap, and freely soar sky-high with it, devil may care. For instance, the impeccable master player Chuang Tzu the Taoist of ancient China, quips joyfully (2/83), “I say you are dreaming, in illusion, and I who say you are dreaming am also dreaming,” in so much hilarity. The player Chuang Tzu is frivolous in all profundity bottomless.

That master logician Whitehead also plays with logic by declaring, “All truths are *half* true,”⁵ to get away with “All falsehoods are half false.” This twofold declaration equalizes both all things true and all things false, to echo Chuang Tzu’s frivolously profound Chapter Two, “Equalizing Things Reasoned out.” Thus it is that everything true and everything false, all things flawless and all things flawed, are all equal winners, winning themselves to win one another, all embracing one another as equally victorious. Joy pervades all over in play invincibly win-winning.

The play fools around, ever, with all matters mutually contradictory, and affirming them all equally. Joy is thus the tacit ruler totally ubiquitous, drawing all things and persons into joy no matter what, anywhere anytime. Literally everyone and everything, no matter what, are affirmed playfully, thereby warmly embraced, enabled, and satisfied all around, no matter what conflicts paradoxical there are.

Joy the ruler of all

“But, now, seriously, what do you mean by saying that joy is the ruler of all?” It goes this way, simply and concretely, though quite elusively, my friend. A teacher goes to a student of his, and says, “You’re right,” and then goes to another students of his, saying, “You’re right.” A third student says, “But teacher, they are opposed to each other, and arguing against each other. How could both be ‘right’?” To him, the teacher says, “And you are right, too.”

A fourth student then says, “Then, teacher. You are contradicting yourself,” to whom he then says, “And you are also right.” The teacher affirms everyone, even affirming himself as contradictory. All this affirmation is made calmly, casually, playfully, and in self-confidence so joyous. “All” takes such brave confidence to play out consistent affirmations no matter what. Such is quiet joy supreme playing things out, all princely over all things, all matters, and all persons.

Here is another concrete example, this time quite close to our bodily living that lasts incorruptible. It is sex; sex is concrete joy to prolong our life to posterity on and on. Sex is concrete joy together of concrete contraries. Even the austere Confucius says, recorded in his terse *Analects* twice 9/18, 15/13, that we must love

⁵ This surprisingly illogical quip appears in *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead*, Boston: David R. Godine, 1954, 2001, pp. 14, 274, 298; its p. 250 says that this is because all ideas are alive and perishable. This is another bold declaration against the standard Plato.



virtue as we love sex. Wow! The joy of sex must extend to the joy of virtue! Still this joy of sex is a unity of contraries, incredibly complex.

Sex is the heavenly joy of “the battle of the sexes” with all body-aches, headaches, and heartaches. Sex unifies joys with all sorts of aches. In addition, “marriages are made in heaven” where, according to Jesus from heaven, there is no marriage but only angels in perpetual joys (Matthew 22:30). Sex does marry contraries so complex, doesn’t it?

But there is sex, and there is sex. Some sort of sex is clean and noble productive, while some other sexual acts are dirty, ugly, horrid, to violate personal integrity and can even physically murder persons. Of course, whatever sexual acts we perform are all attractive, but we have fatal attraction and fabulous attention. We must sensitively discern their subtle crucial difference to practice noble sex, as we perform noble virtue.

Sex is a raw act of raw joy of our very being, to bring down from heaven—marriage is made in heaven—baby-angels of our own flesh and blood, joyously proclaiming “the best is yet to come,” as our own children shout. Children are our tomorrow today. This is an awesome heavenly practice of or tomorrow today, entrusted to us as parental responsibility instinctive and inescapable, and all in joy invaluable. Such is all joy, called by our angel-children, “play.” We do play the joy of parenthood.

Not accidentally, masturbation, sexless sex, is called “playing with oneself,” an *incurvatus se*, turning into oneself, which is sin (as Luther characterized it as sin) against play that inherently plays *out with* play pals. Casual sex that evades childbirth is not far from masturbation, both trying to truncate complete sex, although sex after having given birth to two children or more would reasonably avoid further childbirth.

To make light of all this sex as mere physiology, or to disdain it in pretentious stoicism, is to commit suicide of humanity at the root of our being, our joy of sex that begets posterity. Such is a tragedy of swerving out of our essential nature, testified to no less tragically by horrid and continuous scandals inside the communities of Catholic celibacy, devastating our heavenly nature. In the ruins of heaven, Catholicism commits earthly suicide that sins against heaven.

So sad indeed are horrid acts committed in the name of sex, although we also know many noble deeds done in sex, as well as many evil deeds. Sex is Janus-faced so ambiguous. But one thing is certain. Sex is one most powerful basic libido-drive of humanity, and whatever we do is ultimately sexually driven, and so it is crucial never to despise or suppress sex. We must instead devise ways to channel sexual drive into its satisfaction in noble virtuous performance, as Confucius astutely discerned. How to do so is part of the most important task of our daily living. Sex must be pure, as our words must be pure and satisfactory to our heart-mind.

As channeled to universal libido-heights, sex appears throughout world history. Geniuses are powerfully sexed. We remember with reverence Socrates, Bertrand Russell, Pablo Casals, and Pablo Picasso. Mother Teresa widely served the poorest of the poor, out of profusely sexed maternal caring. They are all great examples of powerful sex powerfully channeled into sheer sublimity so admirable. More personally, our parental fore-parents come alive here now in all of us as their spitting images, on and on, and merely to exist this way is holy, all thanks to sex incorruptible, world without end—all so sublime all so powerfully *pure*, expressed heartfelt in pure language, as we did here.



Joy various

So far in the above, so many concrete instances of joys were mentioned. Boy Tommy jumping naughty, the baby absolutely irresistible, the master logician Whitehead at play, Chuang Tzu frivolously profound, Confucius in joy so princely, and many others have been appreciated in details. Life has countless and numerous joys of various sorts that compose the lyrical singing rhythm of our common living days. Joy crowns the completion of a project. Another joy steeps in ecstasy of having another child.

So many joys of so many kinds jostle into all our days all over, so much so that we will encounter many of them, as soon as we step back a step from our blinding preoccupations, to clear our minds to make room for many things to rush in, often at the same time. Saying “communication” happens between these joys is unintelligible, but they can often pile up, each one on top of another, to deepen life to enhance and enrich daily ongoing, on and on.

Who says life is boring, then? Who could even afford to get burned out for lack of joy?⁶ Playful joys constantly fill up life, as soon as we back off ourselves to allow them to flow in with fresh air in all wonder-dreams of Child Alice. And we are all Tommy jumping ever at play, enthused self-forgotten, so much so that none of us has time for anything else except joys humming along, fighting delightfully with our cherished playmates.

“We are OK! *You* are no-K!” we shout at one another, as we swap among us our priceless pebbles that are our precious stones. And these pebbles are lying all around us, free for the taking anytime anywhere. We adults live on these precious pebbles we solemnly call “business engagements” so silly so funny, all meant to be played with, not to be seriously engaged in long po-face.

Joy at play

It was Confucius who so expertly played with his living days, enjoying all his “failures” constant and lifelong. Meanwhile, Chuang Tzu on his part so ecstatically played with funny paradoxes and insoluble dilemmas, frivolously profoundly, as our loving Mom spontaneously guides on her dearest Tommy so recalcitrant with her warm “no do,” each moment of their day.

All this while, that precious baby of ours smiles at us occasionally, ever flowing and playing with her natural joy of simply being herself, self-forgotten, playing with her fingers, “this little pig went to market; this little pig cry wee-wee all the way home.” She is just being herself, playing, sleeping, and then waking up to play again, and O, how she simply draws us in with all her baby-fragrance! All such are life full of *joys* variously at frivolous play.

Joy fulfills uniquely ubiquitously

Of course joy deeply satisfies me to fulfill me, to turn me into real full me ever happy. And every “me” as self differs from every other self. The self is unique to itself. And so, joy is unique and individual. At the same time, the self exists everywhere to make everywhere “everywhere,” the world. No self, no world. Joy fulfilling the self makes up the whole world, then. And so, joy is everywhere all over, worldwide.

One day my happy tiny boy, my dearest Peter, taught me, “Dad, I have three names, ‘me,’ ‘myself,’ and ‘I.’” His injunction made me think deep and long. Beginning at toilet-training, “me” produces self-control to lead

⁶ Burnout is detailed in John Y. Wu and Kuang-ming Wu, “Burnout: Drudgery, Repetition, Creativity,” in *Open Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming. Four solutions detailed there are quite similar to joy proposed here.



to dialoguing with “myself.” Linked “me, myself, and I” is how I exist; this is “I am what I am.” It-me I deal with, as I relate to Thou-myself, and it is “I” who has both object-self and subject-self. And then “I” see many It-objects like “me” and so many Thou-subjects like “myself,” all around, and my lifeworld emerges about “me, myself, and I” thus expanded so naturally analogically, as the world is born as my milieu. In such I-milieu I move and have my being.

Such ontological genealogy of the self into the world tells an important story of existence in general, saying that without “me, myself, and I” there exists no world, and without my world-milieu I cannot move and have my being, to wit, I cannot exist. I and my world inter-depend to inter-exist. Existence is inherently co-existence in inter-dependence. Existence is existentially social through and through.

And all this dealing with the It-me to relate to Thou-myself comes to compose exquisite *joy* with the self and in the world. It is because such self-joy spreads all too naturally through the cosmos all over, in ubiquitous joys of the various dignities in innumerable self-identities, of all existents that compose the world. Such dignities are sheer joy of just existing, and believe it or not, “just existing” is rather complex.

All joy is unique and ubiquitous; it is due to the fact that *existence* is both unique and ubiquitous. To begin, existence is uniquely itself, for this existence is never that one. All this while, existence is everywhere. Without existence all over, there would have been “nothing,” no space, no time. And so, without existence, there would have been no world at all. And thus, existence is unique and ubiquitous. In addition, at the base of all existence is the self fulfilled by joy. And so, joy is unique and ubiquitous.

Therefore, we must always take note of the crucial double features of joy, that joy is both general and individual. To begin with, joy is all over existing everywhere in the world and anytime in history. We look around, and we are absolutely impressed at being surrounded all around with joy. No one can refuse joy to oneself or to one’s milieu. The more joy there is, the better the world becomes. And such a happy situation is exactly how we are, always, everywhere. Such happiness is what we have undergone above.

We have appreciated the ancient Confucius so overwhelmingly happy while being totally steeped in lifelong failures, so much so as to be forever young and vigorous to make China forever young and thriving. All this while, we were surprised at the modern logician Whitehead in the West who dares to announce the shock of attacking logic. Joy is thus ubiquitous whether in failures or in successes, in the East or in the West, during ancient days or today here now. Joy is totally ubiquitous, in space and in time.

At the same time, joy is hopelessly individual and unique, quite incomparable. Confucius’ joy is all his own, totally distinct from the baby playing with her fingers. Joy is incurably the pluralistic “joys.” We ask Mom, and she would endlessly chat about the incurable differences among her beloved children, as each one is never any other. Each child even smells her own smell, each with her own exquisite baby-fragrance all her own and all his own, all so precious. Each child is *sui generis*, one of its kind. In order to appreciate joy, we must meticulously go through the specific biography of each specific individual. Joy is specific, or else it is not joy genuinely so called.

Now, in addition, what is interesting is this. When we cited those persons in joy, we inevitably showed how ingeniously creative they all are, fascinatingly at play always, each in her own ways and in his own ways. Thus



joy has its two happily close relatives, creativity and play.⁷ Each one differing from both others, these delightful three all share their identical double features of uniqueness and ubiquity worldwide through world history, as each elucidates the excitements of the other two, and as all three are interrelated indispensably one to both others. Each of the three is indispensable to others.

Joy invincibly fools around with impossible dilemmas, paradoxes, and troubles totally insoluble by ordinary prudential logic. Such all-power of joy expresses ingenuity of creativity to play precisely in the midst of the extremities of daily living. Joy without playful creativity is no joy. All this while, it takes *creativity* to play, and *play* can go on creatively as long as it is fun to play; without fun in joy, there could not be play at all. Play with no joy in the fun of creativity can never be at play.

By the same token, researches are fooling around all over; research *plays* casually, as it is led as it is attracted by any whimsical notice of anything anywhere, devil may care. All Nobel laureates can go on in decades of researches at play because of incitements of joy of researches pushing ahead the frontiers of human knowledge and novelty completely unpredictable. The ignorance of unpredictability is part and parcel of irresistible push ahead. Creativity not joyously at play loses itself-as-creativity.

And so, if we want to know about any one of the three, joy, play, and creativity, we must be referred to the other two. We must go deep in any one of the three to know any two of them, as we must probe deep into both others before we can be familiar with any one of the three. Each one threads through the other two to compose their seamless “unity in diversity,” as each is never any of the other two, while each can never exist without the other two.

And of course human life without the *zing* of any one of the three-in-one vitamin turns stale and dead. The zing is joy of life-vigor. Joy is the essential vitamin to life and to any life, however sad, failing, or decrepit. In fact, precisely such declining life would come jumping alive by infusing into it with joy as its life-core and essence. Joy is life’s very sine qua non. No joy, no life. This is because joy *is* life itself. Being life itself, joy is absolutely necessary for any life to go on zinging and happy ever after.

I have just got an email from my youngest friend so beloved. He says, “Work too continues to hum along, fighting the good fight against the prevalence of toxic perfectionism, ambition, and anxiety. It never ceases to amaze me how endemic our culture’s preoccupation with work and achievement and being better than others is. The good stuff is so close and free and there for all of us! We just need to take it easy and enjoy one another as my dad used to say.” I emailed back, saying, “What you say is precisely what I am writing now, titled, ‘Joy.’ We see eyeball to eyeball on the matter.”

⁷ See Kuang-ming Wu, “Being Creative,” *Open Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming, “On Argument at Play Alive,” *Open Access Library Journal*, June 2015, “Argumentative Togetherness: Playing with Argument,” *On the “Logic” of Togetherness: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, pp. 150-293, and *Chuang Tzu: World Philosopher at Play*, NY: Crossroads and Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982. Joy is added here to them.