

## Joy is Without Cause

Lina Malfiore

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*If a truly simple man were to ask you the purpose of the Teaching, tell him: "To make you live happily." Do not burden him with overly complex concepts. Let his entire being deeply understand that everything taught seeks to improve his existence. Responsibility will be understood later. First: proclaim the joy of a better life.*

*Agni Yoga 1929, Paragraph 65*

### **Roberto Assagioli and the Psychology of Joy**

Roberto Assagioli desired the development of a "psychology of joy" and spoke of joy as the "most distinctive characteristic of the superconscious or spiritual Self." With evocative expression, he wrote: "The result of satisfying higher needs is joy" (R. Assagioli, *The Act of Will – Astrolabio*, p. 150).

Saint Francis of Assisi had a natural disposition toward joy, so much so that his calling to be Christ's knight sparked such joy in his heart that "he could not contain himself" (Thomas of Celano). The more he lived his love for Christ—caring for lepers, rebuilding ruined churches, and finally renouncing all worldly possessions—the greater his joy in God grew. For him, prayer was also a source of holy joy:

"He would avoid melancholy with the utmost care, the worst of evils, rushing to prayer as quickly as possible whenever he felt any trace of it in his heart" (idem).

Neither illness nor suffering could ever rob Francis of his soul's serenity. His joy was spiritual: joy in God and of God. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:9-11).

In the songs and hymns he composed, we find a radiant and sparkling fountain of joy, one of the most famous being *The Canticle of the Creatures*, a testimony to his soul filled with joy in the Soul. Saint Francis knew that humans need joy: for him, the spiritual attribute of joy—the main characteristic of the Soul—was a support against the temptation to seek happiness elsewhere.

I wanted to begin this article on joy by quoting one of the most beloved spiritual figures of Christianity and perhaps beyond. From the description, it is clear that joy has a very special nature and cannot be reduced to material possessions or life events that can make us happy but only for a short time. Afterward, the search for something outside ourselves continues.

If we ask someone what the joy of living is, many might be tempted to answer: earning lots of money, doing the work they love, advancing in their career, or being loved in return. But all these are partial explanations, centered on possessing material goods or finding a "soulmate." They are external situations, while the joy of living is, above all, the ability to rediscover the taste for life and appreciate its many facets.

Since childhood, everyone pursues happiness, and in this constant search, the most important thing is often forgotten: feeling serene and satisfied depends on ourselves. It's a matter of perspective. We can rejoice in our achievements, in what we have, in the goals reached, in who we are, in the expression of our potential. But we must know that all these are effects that do not last forever. Joy must arise from within our Soul.

Before examining this topic more closely, I would like to address the difference between joy, pleasure, and happiness, which are often and incorrectly used as synonyms but are fundamentally different.

## **Joy, Pleasure, and Happiness**

Those on the Spiritual Path know well that each of us is a complex mix of needs, instincts, desires, emotions, thoughts, and images that overlap, merge, drive us to act, and often dominate us. Needs represent a state of tension manifesting when the organism requires actions necessary for survival, such as hunger, fatigue, or sexual instincts. Fulfilling these acts leads to relaxation and restores physiological balance.

To physiological needs, we add social needs related to learning, such as the need to be recognized and esteemed. Satisfying basic and social needs results in pleasure.

Similarly, fulfilling instincts produces pleasure that borders on happiness. For example, satisfying the instinct of self-assertion gives us pleasure and satisfaction, as does fulfilling other instincts like sexual or social bonding. However, satisfaction lasts only until a new need arises, pushing us to act again. This process never ends, as our personality continually experiences tension and requires constant fulfillment.

Happiness, another term often confused with joy, is of a different nature and character. It results from fulfilling emotional, mental, or aspirational needs. Desire, a feeling of passionate search or anticipation for achieving or possessing what we consider adequate for our needs or tastes, often indicates a lack and can also involve fantasies.

How can happiness be defined? According to the Treccani Dictionary, happiness is the "state of mind of one who is serene, untroubled by pain or worries, and enjoys this state."

### **Joy as an Inner State**

Unlike fleeting pleasure or happiness tied to external circumstances, joy is a lasting state that arises from within. It is cultivated through connection to the Higher Self or Soul, and its sources include:

- Nature
- Art and Beauty
- Love
- Knowledge
- Friendship
- Service
- Prayer
- Meditation

Above all, joy comes from intimate contact with the Source—our Higher Self or Soul. All the lesser sources mentioned serve as tools to access this connection.

Practical advice for cultivating joy includes avoiding depression, hypersensitivity to criticism, and self-centeredness. Joy is built on trust in the divine within, proper appreciation of time, and self-forgetfulness. It is not dependent on success or external validation but on mastering the lower self and eliminating desires.

### **Joy and Universal Unity**

True joy also involves a sense of unity and solidarity with all beings, feeling part of the Whole rather than separate entities. Living as Souls diminishes the value of personal happiness and fosters joy in group relations and in helping others manifest their Soul qualities.

In moments of deep meditation, we may transcend the self, experiencing fleeting glimpses of "bliss"—a state connected to our spiritual essence and beyond ordinary joy. This spiritual joy, luminous and adamant, radiates outward and reflects the creative energy of the Universe.

As Assagioli wrote, joy is "a duty" and a state to cultivate until it becomes unshakable, arising without cause and glowing as a testament to our connection with the Soul.

### **Bliss and the Monad**

Bliss shares the nature of the Spirit or Monad, a more profound state than joy. This state is experienced fully only after significant spiritual milestones, such as the fusion of the Soul with the Monad. Before this, the fusion of the Soul with the personality is necessary. This bliss can manifest during deep meditative states, when we transcend the Self and connect with the unity of all Life.

### **Conclusion**

I wish to conclude by suggesting that joy is luminous, adamant, and radiates outward even physically—from the face, the eyes of those who experience it—attracting more joy and spiritual light. I believe it is the fundamental state of Creation, an intimate effusion permeating the entire Universe, the joy of the creative act emanating from the Manasic plane and anchored in the Heart through the Soul when we work as part of the New Group of World Servers. It is not an act that happens without our determination to remain steadfast in the spiritual Being, and it must be an attitude on causal levels. In other words, contacting joy requires and demands an act of will—for example, a methodical work undertaken by the personality infused with the Soul to consolidate the threads of the Antahkarana. It is a radiant energy transmitted to all beings and dances in the rays of the sun. Here are some examples:

- Tommaso da Celano, an Italian friar minor (Celano, ca. 1190 – San Giovanni, Val De Varri, L'Aquila, ca. 1260). He was Saint Francis's first biographer and one of the Saint's earliest disciples.
- Eudaimonism: A doctrine that considers happiness to be natural for humans and assigns life the task of achieving it. It should be distinguished from hedonism, which places this task in the pursuit of immediate pleasure.
- According to Psychosynthesis, the personality tends to be regarded as an organism or complex system composed of multiple independent subsystems that interact with each other. Assagioli refers to these as subpersonalities. Each subpersonality is structured to possess specific functions and features interconnected, even though individuals usually shift from one to another without full awareness. These functions are useful for daily life, depending on the roles and contexts we find ourselves in, such as child, parent, professional, friend, etc. They constitute the repertoire of roles, functions, and parts we embody and act out based on situations and relationships. Subpersonalities should be considered miniature personalities with all the features of a complete personality, including a core around which emotions, sensations, desires, thoughts, and a Will are structured.

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