

Joy

Alova

Abstract: Life is full of ups and downs, one after another, one at the same time as another. It is natural to want to be comfortable, and to have all sorts of desires. Ups and downs are inherent to earthly life. We are born with physical pain and pleasure, and soon enough experience emotional, mental, and uniquely human types of comfort and discomfort. We can experience multiple sensations simultaneously. Joy helps us to bear pain and sorrow. We can also feel happiness or sorrow through memory or imagination. A transcendent joy lies within all of Life, all of Creation, a joy without pain or sorrow, independent of all the ups and downs of life.

1. Ups and Downs

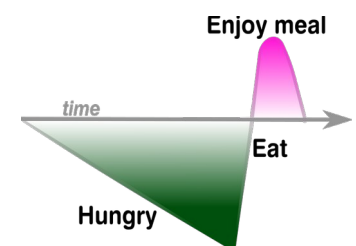
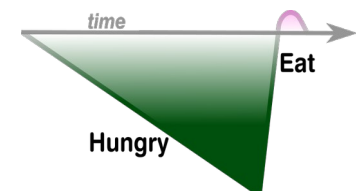


All creatures seek pleasure and avoid pain. Life on Earth is full of ups and downs. On our happiness thermometer, we feel happy and sad, pleasure and pain, many times per day. We may feel happy physically and unhappy mentally or emotionally, or the other way around. We may feel pain in our foot and pleasure in our stomach. We may feel anxiety about our work, yet happy with our family.

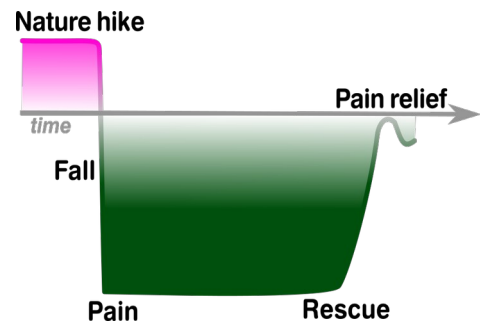
Most of our experience of pain and pleasure, suffering and happiness, is stimulated by a condition, or by our thought about a condition. When the body is hungry, it feels the pain of hunger. When the pain is gone, we feel relieved and satisfied. We are not necessarily extremely happy, but we are no longer in pain. This cycle repeats daily all our lives.

If we happen to be able to eat something we especially enjoy, we will feel more happiness while we eat. Later our happiness dissipates as we go about our daily activities.

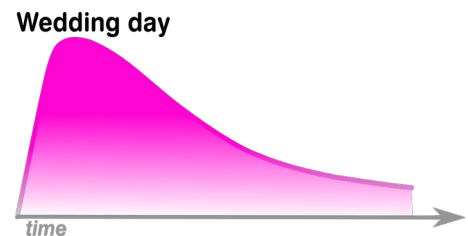
When we are not hungry, not in pain, and we eat a wonderful meal of all our favorite foods with our favorite people, we start out neutral and experience pleasure. If we eat too much, we feel some discomfort afterwards.



If we are enjoying a wonderful hike in Nature and suddenly fall and break a leg, we instantly feel great pain. When rescued we feel some mental relief, and when we are given medicine for pain, our happiness index rises toward neutral again.



Some people feel their wedding day is the happiest day of their lives, and their joy can continue for a long time, despite the other ups and downs of marriage and of life. Significant and lasting joy in our lives helps to balance much pain, disappointment, and loss that are inevitable.



Ups and downs, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, comfort and discomfort—these are part of the very nature of life on Earth. However much we enjoy our favorite food, at some point we can't eat any more. However much health and vitality we enjoy, the body eventually tires and ages. However much joy we experience from close, loving relationships, people are eventually called away. However much sorrow we experience, the Sun always rises, ocean waves rise and fall, breezes blow, and birds sing. Some people experience more pleasure than pain, some more pain than pleasure—and much depends on our outlook and what we dwell on, as well as our responses.

Everybody has ups and downs. No healer, priest, philosopher, theologian, or politician can eliminate them.

Ups and downs are due to the very nature of our physical existence—the body with its needs and desires, the mind with its needs and desires, and even the soul with its desires and purpose for living on Earth.

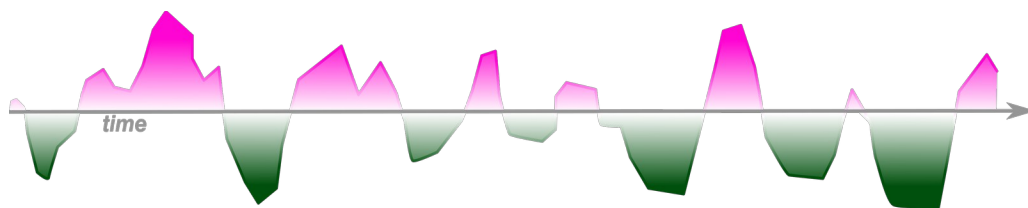


Comfort and discomfort flit here and there,
flowing with an invisible current of life.



As long as one has desires—any desires, “good” desires, “bad” desires, wonderful desires—one is bound to experience ups and downs. There's no way around it. Sometimes we get what we want when we want it, and sometimes we don't.

If we never experience the pain of struggle or failure, we have obviously set our goals very low. It is when we challenge ourselves to do things that require great effort, persistence, uncertainty—pain, more or less—that we experience other types of pleasure: self-confidence, fulfillment, respect and gratitude of other people, as well as the material benefits of our work.



Incidentally, noticing that life is full of ups and downs, more ups and downs, and even more ups and more downs, and deciding to see if there is some way, somehow, of transcending all of them, is the first step on what is known as “the spiritual path.” Until then, we can enjoy the bumpy ride.

2. Ups and More Ups



We experience physical pleasure and pain at birth, and even while still in the womb. Plants react to being sick, cut or injured by emitting chemicals like skunks do, and plants alter their growth trajectories away from toxicity or danger and toward what is healthy for them. Many native peoples communicate with plants before cutting them, such as asking trees for volunteers to be cut down to build a house.¹

Animals experience not only physical pleasure and pain, but also emotional—we can see happy and sad expressions in the eyes of pets, and cows urinate or defecate deliberately at times to communicate displeasure. Animals run toward tasty food and away from threats, coo or purr with pleasure and yelp in pain. People have these and more complex behaviors in response to physical and emotional pleasure and pain.

Every day we sacrifice a physical pleasure for an emotional pleasure. We sacrifice our favorite food for our child’s favorite food. We work late to earn appreciation and rewards for a job well done. We pay taxes for what we hope will result in safety and well-being for us and our community, and to stay out of jail.

Humans also have other, more abstract sources of pleasure and pain. When not in acute pain or danger, most people feel pleasure doing random acts of kindness to strangers, discovering truth, seeing justice, and pursuing various ideals. Humans routinely sacrifice physical and emotional discomforts for many of these pleasures. This is what distinguishes human beings from animals—what makes us human and humane.

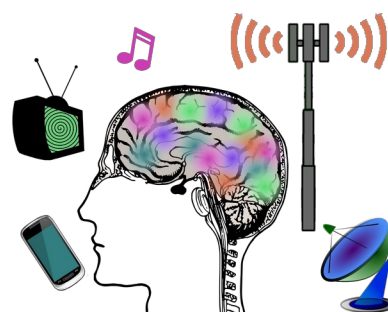


¹ This practice is followed by indigenous people on a Pacific island visited by David E. Martin.

Just as there is a quantum gap between plants and animals, there is a quantum gap between animals and humans, both in body and in awareness. Animals have nervous and digestive systems, and lack chlorophyll so they must obtain food rather than make it. They have a deeper and broader emotional range than plants.

Humans have a larger brain, as well as a capacity for abstract ideas and noble ideals. Human beings have an internal moral sense, a conscience. Pets can be trained to not jump onto the sofa when their owners are home, but when the owners leave they freely jump onto the sofa. There is nothing intrinsically immoral about animals jumping onto sofas; animals can be trained using pleasure and pain, but they have no morality or immorality.

Just as animals can be trained with pleasure and pain like Pavlov's dog, human behavior can also be controlled with pleasure and pain. Advanced bio-electronic technology has been used for decades to stimulate pleasure and pain centers in our brains in order to control our behavior—what we buy, what we do, what we think, and how we vote.² Certain frequencies in the 5G range cause severe pain and can be used to disperse crowds.³ Unbeknownst to the majority, similar technology has been employed in our televisions, electric power, mobile phones, internet signals, antenna towers and radar.



The higher sources of pleasure and pain transcend body and mind. They are abstract, not corporeal. Conscience in particular is not localized in one area of the brain. It connects with more than one specific area, including those related to empathy.⁴ Consciousness and conscience connect with the brain, but are not created by it or dependent on it; consciousness and conscience are resident in the soul.

Good will toward all humanity and all creation stimulates a pleasure sensation in the human brain. “Pangs” of conscience are actual painful brain sensations. Whenever we are fulfilling our life purpose, we feel pleasure, even if we are not consciously aware of that life purpose, and even if it involves considerable physical or mental discomfort. As the poet Rūmī wrote,

When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.⁵

2 Physicist and inventor Adam Trombly with Catherine Austin Fitts, Entrainment Technology, *The Solari Report*, August 18, 2011, https://home.solari.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/Solari_Report-Adam_Trombly_on_Entrainment-2011-08-18.pdf; and many patents and defense publications.

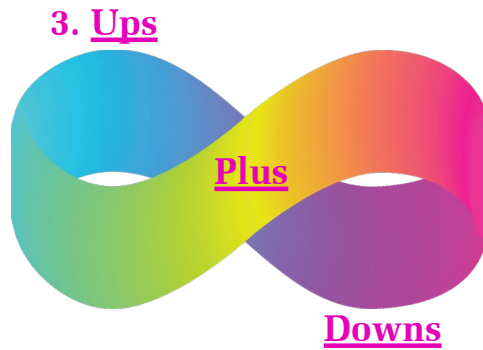
3 The U.S. Military developed the Active Denial System crowd control weapon that produces intolerable heat in the skin. <https://www.healthnutnews.com/5g-network-uses-same-emf-waves-as-pentagon-crowd-control-system/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEhmFp-Gvyc>. There are dozens of other references to this type of control technology.

4 See *Reference* endnote.

5 Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (Persian Sufi poet, theologian, mystic, 1207-1273), “Moving Water.”

It is only these higher senses, including our conscience, that allow human beings to be fully human, and also to overcome the technologies that otherwise can control us like animals.

The more we become aware of and pay attention to these higher sensations, the more fully human and humane we become.



Human beings have a remarkable ability: we can simultaneously hold ups and downs, pleasures and pains, comforts and discomforts, at the same time. We can enjoy a meal while our foot is hurting. We can do an unpleasant task while enjoying music. We can like a job and dislike the location and some of the people we work with.



Just as we can multi-task, we can be multi-aware of several pleasurable and painful sensations simultaneously.

In fact, enjoying music actually helps us to complete unenjoyable tasks. A comfort can help us to bear a discomfort. Happiness can help us to bear sorrow and physical pain. We can choose to focus more strongly on one or more of our many sensations, and not pay attention to others.

We can distract ourselves from pain and discomfort by remembering a time when we were happy, or even by making one up. Imagining comfort and joy is a time-tested technique taught in hospitals and clinics for reducing pain.

We are able to delay gratification, imagining a greater pleasure in the future if we forego a pleasure or endure a pain now. Animals do not exhibit this ability—if they are in pain, they want it relieved immediately, no matter what. They experience the present fully and one-pointedly. Willingness to delay gratification is a sign of higher intelligence.

Humans can become absorbed in a book or movie or task, unconscious of hunger or pain until something calls us back to physical reality. Entertainment distracts us temporarily from trials and troubles. Entertainment is an enormous part of human life, from film to music to sports to jolly banter—just think about how much we pay for it, and how much time we spend in it!

We use entertainment to stimulate an adrenal rush, to rouse ourselves, and then again to relieve that stimulation, to relax. There are plenty of exciting challenges that are natural and real, not just fantasy, to which we can apply our effort and talents. We are so creative by nature! Imagination and entertainment are one of the primary ways we learn and thus have a vital role in human development; however their misuse or overuse can deter our progress rather than promote it.



+ The human faculty to hold disparate feelings and thoughts works to our **advantage** because it allows us to bear unbearable hardships and sorrow, and to survive intact mentally and spiritually. It allows us to feel happy in deplorable conditions, to have hope despite dire circumstances and dismal forecasts.

— This same faculty works to our **disadvantage** because it allows us to bear unbearable hardships and sorrow—**instead** of righting wrongs, instead of daring bravely, instead of fighting for right, instead of marching into hell for a heavenly cause—instead of reaching **reachable** stars.⁶

Our ability to ignore discomfort, to bear unbearable conditions, to fantasize and then feel as if our fantasy were real, has **both facilitated our survival and thwarted our progress** as a species.

Much of the distress of today's societies can be traced to humanity's failing to admit truth that is right in front of its eyes. Willful blindness, and complicit ignorance that is actually not bliss at all, lead to more and more suffering. When facts or evidence conflict with belief, belief almost always prevails. When facts conflict with feelings, feelings usually win. Humans do so many things a hundred times with the same result, and for some reason expect a different result the next time. Most people need to be figuratively hit squarely between the eyes before they will make simple changes in eating habits, or entertainment habits, or live within their means.

It is this ability to hold dichotomies that enables humans to torture, to slaughter, to harm children and one another—and animals too—in the most cruel ways, and often for no real reason. Humans are induced to kill for pay, for ideologies, because they're convinced without being told the whole truth, and simply because they're told by the powerful to do so. Unnecessary cruelty to animals on animal farms is so horrifying that in the U.S.A. it is illegal to show the video footage. It is our ability to hold disjunction that allows our inhumanity to sink far below the level of animals.

If we choose, we can put this faculty to use for only good purposes, such as controlling pain when we don't know how to cure the cause. For humanity to progress, it is essential that we recognize this mental ability of ours and utilize it only for benefit.

6 "The Impossible Dream" lyrics by Joe Darion, after Cervantes, *Don Quixote de La Mancha* (1605-15).

Real ups—happiness, joy, comfort—are wonderful, and imagined ones can help us along when we use them wisely. Meanwhile, we can look beyond the transient ups and downs for the transcendent joy that lies within all of Life and all of Creation.

4. Transcendence

Just as human beings are able to be aware of pleasure and pain at the same time, we are also able to be aware of a reality that transcends the ups and downs of physical life. Just as happiness can carry us through suffering, awareness of a transcendent joy can carry us through enormous hardship. It doesn't eliminate material ups and downs; it abides with us and sees us through them.

What is transcendent is real, even though it is beyond materiality and thus not subject to material rules or logic. Our languages are inadequate to describe the mystical. "Theologians may quarrel, but the mystics of the world speak the same language." References to mystical truths are found among all major belief systems the world over:

"O how can I say He is not like this, and He is like that?
If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed:
If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood.
He makes the inner and the outer worlds to be indivisibly one;
The conscious and the unconscious, both are His footstools.
He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed:
There are no words to tell that which He is."⁸

"There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."⁹

"I am the drop that contains the ocean."¹⁰

Jesus spoke often of transcendence:¹¹

"My kingdom is not of this world."

"I am with you always."

"I am the way, the truth and the life."

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

7 Johannes Eckhart von Hochheim (German mystic theologian and philosopher, ~1260-1328).

8 Kabir (Indian mystic poet, 15th century), *Songs of Kabir* (Tagore, tr.).

9 Daniel 2:28.

10 Yunus Emre (Turkish Sufi poet and mystic, 1238-1320).

11 John 18:36; Matthew 28:20; John 14:6; John 10:28; and Matthew 7:13-14, 11:15, 13:9, 24-27; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8, 14:35. "Jesus" is the English translation of the name in the original language.

We sometimes experience transcendence in response to poetry, music, and art. In fact, some artists consider that such a response indicates the success of their art. People also sense transcendence during a spiritual or religious experience, or in the presence of a great soul. Rūmī noted, “Everyone sees the unseen in proportion to the clarity of one’s heart.”¹²

There is a quantum gap between the physical and the transcendent. What applies to the physical obviously does not necessarily apply to the non-physical, and vice versa. What applies to the physical, mental or intellectual does not necessarily apply to the transcendent.

The transcendent is not quantifiable, not measurable. It has no scale, no index, no benchmarks. It has no ups or downs, no more or less. It has no time. It is continual, abiding, everywhere present.

The transcendent is all one. There is no duality, no opposites. It has joy, but not sorrow; truth but not falseness; freedom but not bondage; oneness but not separation. We describe it using words in our duality-based language because we don’t have any others, but the opposites we experience in our physical reality do not exist in transcendent reality.

The soul is transcendent, eternal. Our consciousness lies in the soul, not in the body. Our consciousness is not dependent upon being in a body, as we have learned from many thousands of people who have died, observed their physical bodies from above, remembered what happened, and then re-entered the body to complete their life work.¹³

Transcendence does not involve comprehension. It does not require intellectual acuity, words, or study of any kind. It is not philosophy. There is no agreement or disagreement. Reality is seen as real or unreal or neither or both, all at the same time—the concept of reality or non-reality does not exist here.

12 Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (1207-1273).

13 Dr. Bruce Greyson (<https://the-formula.org/nde-researcher-dr-bruce-greyson/>), P.M.H. Atwater (<http://www.pmhatwater.com/>), Dr. Melvin Morse (<https://www.near-death.com/science/experts/melvin-morse.html>), International Association for Near-Death Studies (<https://www.iands.org/>), Near-Death Experience Research Foundation (<https://www.nderf.org/>) founded by Dr. Jeffrey Long, and Near Death Experience (<http://neardeathexperience.us/>) are some of the many physicians, neuroscientists, psychologists and researchers on near-death experiences.

It does not require or depend upon faith. People from all religious traditions, or none, have experienced it. It confounds the mind, intellect and logic. Language fails to describe it. People who have experienced it sometimes do strange but harmless things. Some have been known to speak nonsense or rave like a madman to drive away the profane, or to dance in ecstasy, or to be absorbed in bliss without eating for weeks.

Transcendence involves a shift in perspective—a quantum shift. Ādi Śhankara described how one perceives the physical world after this shift in awareness:



Maya [illusion] is neither real nor unreal, nor both together; She is neither identical with Brahman [Supreme Being] nor different from Him, nor both; She is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated, nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words.¹⁴

From this transcendent perspective, everything—matter, Nature, sights, sounds, feelings, logical conclusions, everything thought to be certain—appears differently ... not real like it seemed before, but not unreal either. Even one's self is seen as nothing, yet everything! It does not exist, yet it is the only thing that exists.

Being around someone who experiences transcendence can help one to resonate with it, but contact with such a person is not required. “Catching” an awareness from someone else is not permanent—each person must do one's own inner work and garner one's own awareness. Gifting and cheating are not even possible. The Creator of the universe is no fool. Our outer actions—refraining from some and doing others—can prepare us, but ultimately the work is inner. There is no other way.

In this transcendent realm, there is no such thing as trading, deals, or bargaining. Theft is impossible. Injustice is impossible. There are no police officers, no enforcement—no force of any kind. There are no rules or need for rules.

This avenue is open to all, for our Creator never forsakes the created; but relinquishing attachments is necessary in order to gain the pearl of great price—the only one really worth having.

Transcendent awareness neither compels any particular behavior, nor prohibits any particular behavior. It does not bind or loose in any way—bondage, like sorrow, does not exist here.

14 *Vivekachudamani*, Swami Madhavananda, tr., p. 9, 109, <https://estudentdavedanta.net/Vivekashudamani.pdf>.

Cause and effect still operate: when one acts the results return to the actor in whatever plane the action occurred. This is not restriction of any kind, but rather absolute joy and love.

What is transcendent is in and around, under, over and through all material ups and downs. Ups and downs still exist, but they become less and less significant as we identify with the transcendent joy of existence, or more accurately, of non-separate-existence.

Transcending ups and downs, pleasure and pain, is not the same as ignoring them. It does not mean failing to deal with them because they are unreal or insubstantial. It does not mean denying physical or mental reality, or holding them as unreal or unimportant. Duality and opposites exist, good and evil exist, ups and downs exist. Transcendent awareness does not result in ignoring the body or its needs. It does not involve killing anything except untruth.

Transcendent awareness does not magically transform our personalities or eliminate bad inclinations. It does not absolve us from responsibility for our action or inaction. It does not magically cause other people or the world to change—although the world certainly does change when more people experience transcendent joy!

Spiritual development causes us to become more and more sensitive to and cognizant of the transcendent; but someone who has experienced it is not necessarily omniscient, free of obligations, at the epitome of development, fully realized, perfect (whatever that means), or deserving of worship.

Knowing oneself as an eternal soul, fear of isolation and death disappear and one is much freer to choose, to be bold and brave. One is not easily intimidated, not easily offended or hurt.

Being aware of the transcendent is part of humanity's rightful inheritance, our very nature. According to some, realizing that divinity is our true nature is the very purpose of human life.



5. Joy Transcendent

I-identifying with the body or with the mind keeps us focused on the ups and downs of pleasure and pain. Life is a constant struggle to avoid pain and to experience pleasure, more pleasure, and still more pleasures, of so many different kinds. ... What about an **abiding** joy that is with us always, that we can access whenever we choose?

Mystics claim that the wise are never sad:

“Those who are wise mourn neither for the living, nor for the dead.”¹⁵

“A man who has **tao** cannot be miserable.”¹⁶

“Worry is an accusation against Divine Wisdom, a criticism of Divine Mercy.”¹⁷

How is it good or wise to **not** feel sad when we see so much suffering all around, near and far ??? ...

How is it even possible ???

Since the body changes continually, abiding joy must be completely independent of the body.

Since conditions and situations change, abiding joy must be completely independent of any condition or situation.

Since other people make their own decisions and can change them at any moment, abiding joy must be completely independent of anyone else.

In life, happiness comes and goes like everything else. Yet some have claimed that not only is abiding joy possible, but that it is our very nature.

“There is sorrow in finiteness. The Self is beyond time, space and objects. It is infinite and hence of the nature of absolute happiness.”¹⁸

15 *Bhagavadgita* 2:11.

16 Zhuang Zhou (Chuang Tsu, ~269-286 BC), Ch. 20.

17 Said Nursî, (Kurdish theologian, 1877-1960), *The Gleams: Reflections on Qur'anic Wisdom and Spirituality* (1996, 2009).

18 Ādi Śhankara (Indian philosopher, 788-820).



A man once told Gautama the Buddha, “I want happiness.”

Buddha replied, “First, remove ‘I,’ ego. Then remove ‘want,’ desire. Now you are left with only happiness.”¹⁹

Transcendent awareness is without ego-identification, and without desire! This is obviously a major shift from what occupies most of humanity, but it is possible.

One may feel a desire to act, an urge to move, an impetus to create. But just like the self no longer seems real like it did before, one’s desires are different. Instead of being property of the individual self, this desire is of the Divine. Only in this state is “Thy will be done” truly accomplished, for there is no separation between Thou and self.

I-identifying with the transcendent soul
allows us to be aware of the absolute joy,
the bliss of pure consciousness,
the divine happiness that is eternal.

This transcendent joy answers the age-old questions, “How could a good God allow or tolerate such suffering?” and “How could a God allow such terrible things to happen to good people?” Philosophers have not been able to devise acceptable answers to these questions using their tools of facts, reason and logic because the answers lie at a transcendent level, inaccessible to material facts and linear reasoning—even though the answers are quite “reasonable” from a transcendent perspective.

Happiness characterizes the transcendent realm. Sorrow is impossible since one sees truly that the infinite compassion of our Creator allows souls to experience realms of limitation, realms of opposites. We are free to choose good or evil in these realms, and to see the results—that’s how we figure out what good and evil are, by the fruits. We eventually, inevitably come to realize how infinitely good and compassionate is our Creator: oh joy, oh rapture unforeseen!

Back in the mundane world, being aware of this transcendent joy transforms one’s inner landscape. Mountainous problems appear smaller and less relevant. Old resentments and scars disappear. Emotions float away more easily. Attachments loosen their hold. Material attractions pale. Moods are lighter, disappointments are not as disappointing. Drudgery becomes less drudgerous, as the mind can easily turn toward joy at will.

19 Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (Indian sage and teacher, b. 624-480 BCE, d. 524-400 BCE).

Outer circumstances
may not change at all.
Duties do not change.
Perspective changes.

Realizing—not just thinking or believing, but knowing with one's whole being—that our essential nature is truly divine impels us with absolute joy toward a wonderful calling and creativity. Confidence is unlimited, possibilities are unlimited. Worry seems amusing. There is naught but joy—misery does not exist here.

One sees beyond-through-inside-around the ups and downs—one's own and other people's too. One can be compassionate, even supremely compassionate—but not sad. It's not possible to feel sad from this transcendent perspective.

This is the only way the wise can see everything in the world without sorrowing, without mourning, without being miserable at humanity's suffering and furious at humanity's inhumanity.

This transcendent joy nourishes life. It nourishes the mind, will, and even the body. It even nourishes life that is nearby—other people, animals, plants, matter. It facilitates healing. It is accessible to anyone at any time.

Joy transcendent is Truth.
It is divine. It is awareness of oneness.

It is through Truth, the Truth in and around
and through our transient reality, that we
become truly, divinely, permanently joyful.

Joy to all!
Good will to all, in all worlds and all realms!
All are infinitely loved, infinitely blessed,
however winding and dark be the path.
Good is all that is: God is all that is.
All shall arrive to infinite joy!

Reference: UCLA researcher David Langness, “Can we physically locate the conscience?”

We know that people who suffer traumatic brain injury sometimes undergo changes in their previous moral guidelines as a result of the injury. They can lose their inhibitions and the behavior control they used to have, resulting in a radically different personality. Does this mean that our moral decisions take place in a certain part of the brain, somewhere specific we could locate in a CAT scan?

After investigating the injured areas in TBI patients and those same areas in healthy ones, the neuroscientists I worked with said no. They learned, in their research, that the brain’s neural network responsible for moral decisions—the human conscience—is “domain-global.” This means, at least as far as modern science can currently determine, that we have no “moral module” or specific, identifiable area of the brain responsible for conscience-driven decision making.

Instead, they found the neural network that makes moral decisions actually overlaps and connects with several other important brain functions. It cross-connects with the network that determines the intentions of others; with the network that attempts to understand other people’s emotional states; and with the network that prompts us to feel empathy for others, as well. All of those widely-dispersed networks “light up” in brain scans when moral and conscience-driven decisions get made. Determining feelings and emotions, in ourselves and others, links closely to our moral reasoning through a multitude of functions in every portion of the brain.

The natural scientific conclusion? Moral reasoning and the high-order abstract decisions we make from our conscience relates to our ability to see things from another person’s point of view, understand their emotional state and have empathy for them—all at the same time. This sophisticated, uniquely human and domain-global ability sets us apart from every other creature. The conscience, then, may even transcend the confines of the brain, and extend to the heart and the soul, acting as a universal instrument of perception, understanding and moral choice.”
—Nov 18, 2015, <https://bahaiteachings.org/human-brain-which-part-contains-conscience>

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