

## In Pursuit of Happiness – Would You Seek Wealth or Joy?

*Does Wealth bring Happiness? Read on! Sections in italics give hints to Annie's journey.*

*Annie is incorrigibly interested in everything, and has found joy – or what some people call happiness. She hopes that visitors to her site will consider ideas offered here, as they seek their own paths forward.*

*The books described below give fascinating insights into living with the pain, suffering, hope, and joy in all human hearts. The books' authors work with people from all walks of life, and present both unexpected ways to connect – supported with scientific evidence – and personal experiences with healing. The first book offers a perspective on modern politics in the U.S.A. The rest of the books offer ways to work within that reality, or perceived reality. Annie is an economist and trauma-survivor. She sees the world through those lenses, among others. After the reading list for joy, Annie offers her perspective on some other popular books about the modern world, from the perspectives of “healers,” and “thinkers” within it.*

### *1. Only the Rich Can Play, especially Chapter Four*

David Wessel, Public Affairs, Hachette Book Group, 2021

Wessel, a reporter and think-tank analyst, explains how Opportunity Zones (OZs) were conceived, passed into law, and became realized in the U.S. economy. He implies that it takes money, connections, luck, and a message that may be misleadingly positive.

He writes that, after a law was passed offering tax credits for investments in disadvantaged areas (Opportunity Zone investments), many of the super-wealthy invested in projects that would have brought good returns anyway. State and local politicians and administrators, recognizing this reality in advance, selected their OZs from regions that met the legal requirements and had a realistic chance of receiving investments, rather than from regions where the need was greatest.

Wessel suggests, probably cynically, that the blame lies with the game, not the players. It is as though he thinks a better human being would behave differently, given this environment and these incentives.

*This book documents how wealthy people with good intentions may fail to achieve their philanthropic goals. Chapter Four supports Annie's research on inter-regional differences. For example, it has long been argued that wealth spreads from centers of growth to the rest of an economy. Annie's research is not only consistent with Wessel's findings, but also offers a reason why the “game” doesn't work as argued.*

*Our economy (i.e., the in-group's cultural norm – see book four below) rewards increases in productivity (i.e., increasing output per worker per hour). For example, if the dominant culture believes in producer-driven increases in productivity, and the system promotes that, then people must either use their creativity to increase business productivity or find ever more inventive ways to fight the consequences. Is it possible that machines are getting better and better at pursuing someone else's goals on his or her behalf, by influencing what customers believe in, what they buy, and how they behave?*

*Individuals must either work to increase productivity (winners, or in-group), or struggle within a system they dislike (challengers, or out-group). Some people may become so frustrated that they drop out altogether, perhaps destroying things as they go. Let us explore some other perspectives on how to live.*

*Consider, for example, that Jacob Schmookler (1976)\* discovered that the rate and type of technological change responds to the potential for economic advantage (that is, to demand conditions). What people*

want (and pay for), is what they get! Therefore, not only does technological progress merit a broader role in economic modeling than where it currently sits, but also, if ordinary people can change the narrative on what we want, need, and are willing to pay for, we may get more of it.

\*Schmookler, Jacob, 1976, "Invention and Economic Growth," Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London

## Reading List for Joy

### 2. *I Can See Clearly Now*

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, Hay House, Inc., 2014

Dr. Dyer, an inspirational speaker, shows how his most important moments all fit into a plan directing him toward his purpose of becoming a spiritual teacher. For example, he gave up a tenure-track faculty position in psychology, to go on the road delivering his message – “It’s OK to follow your intuitive drive and purpose.”

*Annie says no-one should have to choose between home and work. For years, she thought she had fallen off the fast track. But in fact, she had chosen between her family and the fast track when it appeared the two were incompatible. With hindsight, she wonders whether she could have used better communication skills to retain both. “What a pity youth is wasted on the young.”*

### 3. *Man’s Search for Meaning*

Viktor E. Frankl, Beacon Press, 2006

Dr. Frankl, a psychiatrist, describes life in a concentration camp during World War II, where he was imprisoned. He observes utter deprivation and its relation to the soul. Prisoners had lost everything except their ability to choose how they responded to their situations. A reason to live (whether common to many, such as the hope to see family again, or unusual, such as to re-write a ruined manuscript) sustained those who survived, as did reaching out to others rather than turning within – i.e., wanting to preserve self; giving up on others.

This book is for everyone. The prisoners and their torturers were ordinary people before they met in death camps. Frankl thinks few people can rise above their deprivations. Maslow – book 7 below – sees it differently.

*After reading Frankl’s story, Annie wondered what might be her “reason to live.” She revisited some work that she had started, years ago. Now updated, it is good. It can explain, using basic economic concepts, why our economic system rewards those already wealthy while others have little voice, why this imbalance has remained under many economists’ radars, and what economic forces have increased the imbalance over time.*

### 4. *On Aggression*,

Konrad Lorenz, Harcourt Books, 1966

Dr. Lorenz, a zoologist, shares what the animal world can teach about human aggression. Within-group aggression must be tempered so that a social group can survive. In nature, he writes, the aggressive instinct is retained – re-directed in some way, but not suppressed. We humans still possess many drives and instincts from when we lived closer to nature, including aggression, the subject of this book.

Lorenz also notes that tradition and ritual arise in animal and human societies, partly in order to tame the destructive sides of individual survival instincts, and partly so that all individuals can help each other to live safely together, thrive, and increase.

When people developed weapons, a balance between two opposing aggressive instincts (survival of self vs. survival of group) was lost. That is, if a person can be aggressive with a tool, rather than with hands and teeth, his or her mind and body do not appreciate the true impact of the violence and may cause more harm than is healthy, or natural.

*Other authors point to the aggressive (survival) instinct in explaining an in-group/out-group mentality in human societies. Interpreting Lorenz, Annie says we direct our natural aggression to the out-group, so it will not manifest in and destroy in-group cohesion. If society is divided, then each subgroup may become an “in-group,” interacting little with “out-groups,” reinforcing divisions among them.*

#### 5. *The Tipping Point, especially Chapters Two, Five, and Seven*

Malcolm Gladwell, Abacus, 2015

Gladwell, a reporter, writing about how epidemics (very loosely defined) spread, offers scientific reasons why the natural size for a human community is approximately 150 (p. 177).

*Annie says, therefore, that a society larger than about 150, will naturally form subgroups. New large societies may arise in response to inspirational values, delivered by charismatic leaders. Over time, those values become routine and inflexible; rulers become distant from ruled; and the dynasty collapses. Annie can explain, in economic-speak, how today’s inflexible rules mean that the rich get richer while the poor receive too little attention. If subgroups no longer share common values, then our nation is ripe for fracture or re-set. Historians also tell us that the modern world appears ripe for a re-set, when compared with patterns from prior periods in history. Annie says we should reconsider some of today’s influential, but inflexible, beliefs.*

Two other sections of Gladwell’s book discuss the contagiousness of emotions (p. 86) and behaviors (pp. 224-5). A certain type of person sets an example that is followed, or “infects” people nearby with his or her mood.

*Annie’s mood is more easily “infected” than infecting. Who will pay attention to her work, given that she is a responder, not someone in charge? She doubts she can change her natural relationship to others, but she can perhaps find someone who will support and defend her in ways that she cannot, alone. The next book can help someone explore “extreme” responsiveness, or “different” ways of viewing the world, in general.*

#### 6. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, and Other Clinical Tales*

Oliver Sacks, Touchstone 1998

Dr. Sacks, a neurologist with a strong interest in neuropsychiatry, tells how he treated each patient as an individual and not as an “illness.” For example, we can observe the physical symptoms of epilepsy in the brain, but the interactions of seizures with the way an epileptic person thinks and feels are much harder to understand, because his or her thoughts and feelings are not scientifically observable.

Sacks also notes that patients with very low IQs can be almost uncorrupted, in terms of emotional functioning. They may have a beautiful, child-like appreciation for and love of nature. And, “idiot savants” are truly gifted, outside a clinical setting. A savant with a musical gift can appreciate all of Bach’s complexities, with musical expression full of the most tender and intuitive spirituality, as though he communes with Bach himself, via the music. (See Chapter 22, *A Walking Grove*, esp. pp. 191-2.)

In Chapter 14, *The Possessed*, esp. pages 122-125, Sacks describes a Tourette’s syndrome patient, saying of this type of patient that, “He may be faced, from earliest childhood, with extraordinary barriers to individuation, to becoming a real person.” And, in Chapter 23, *The Twins*, (pp. 195 – 213), Sacks describes the special, almost reverent way in which “idiot savants” twins play twin-games with numbers. Their ability to “see” when a very large number is a prime number, is part and parcel of their special

relationship. They can be seen to enjoy this mutual interaction as though it were a kind of spiritual dance between themselves and a visual “math of the universe.”

*Annie is an identical twin. She knows how to share physical and emotional space with another human being, expecting a degree of consideration and respect that non-twins rarely understand. And, she is accustomed to duking it out with her twin, no doubt dispensing with customary social niceties. She believes she was born with a natural empathy that was enhanced by the twin relationship; yet, the twin relationship also isolated her. She spent much time with her twin, growing up, and was accustomed to being perceived by the world as a twin rather than as an individual. Perhaps twinship in a normal family represents “an extraordinary barrier to individuation,” but of a different type from that of the neurologically-challenged patient.*

*A modern-world education has trained Annie in intellectual thinking; yet she often experiences a moment such as that described on page 200, where the twins “...seemed surprised at my surprise; as if I were somehow blind.” So, if Annie appears difficult, it may be because she has twin-type visuo-spatial intuition; straddles at least two cultures and several subcultures (different ways of organizing the world, intellectually); is a trained analyst, a wife, and a mother. In short, not easily stereotyped. Annie regrets that Sacks’ approach to patients, recognizing and treating their individualities, has gone out of style. The next book looks at the individual in society, asking what makes people good, and what makes a good society.*

#### 7. *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*

A.H. Maslow, Penguin Books, 1976

Professor Maslow might be **the** psychologist of wellness. He researched what makes good people and good societies. He writes that self-actualized people [admirable or saintly people] “...are devoted to some task, call, vocation, beloved work (‘outside themselves’). This is something for which the person is a ‘natural,’ something he or she was born to do, in some sense.” (Maslow, p. 291.)

Maslow states that we all need a value system, good or bad – and wonders what makes a “good” value system. So, he talked with people who appeared to have one (p. 7), and drew conclusions, including: “In...peak experiences it becomes impossible to differentiate sharply between the self and the non-self. As the person becomes integrated so does his world. As he feels good, so does the world look good... **Observe first of all that this is an empirical statement and not a philosophical or theological one. Anyone can repeat these findings. I am definitely speaking of human experiences and not of supernatural ones.**” (Maslow, p. 159; Annie’s highlighting.)

*Annie’s work – seeking to understand the difference between what is universal and what is cultural – could be considered her life’s work. Much of what our technological society believes to be true falls under “cultural.” Maslow, working at the farther edges of “wellness,” where psychology morphs into spirituality, shows that much of what has been considered the domain of religion and religious teachers, is in fact the fulfillment of our humanity. This type of spirituality does not require adherence to organized religion. We move now to books examining the universal nature of the human spirit.*

#### 8. *The Wisdom of Your Dreams: Using Dreams to Tap into Your Unconscious and Transform Your Life*

Jeremy Taylor, The Penguin Group, 2009

Dr. Taylor, a psychiatrist who works with dream groups (including those who have been involuntarily detained), explains that dreams come in the service of growth and wholeness. One night, he dreams that

he takes something harmful out of his patient's psyche. The patient, in the same night, dreams that the doctor has taken something from him. (Taylor, pp. 206-210.)

*Annie has long been curious about dreams. She now considers them the soul reaching out to the mind. She is learning to connect with her soul's messages (often symbols or images), as they arrive in dreams, in meditation, or in other moments of deep significance.*

9. *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves, Especially Chapters 8 and 9*

Sharon Begley, Ballantine 2008

Begley, a science writer, discusses data gathered after Buddhist monks with many years of meditative practice allowed their brains to be connected to scientific instruments. Not only did the monks' brains overflow with certain types of brain waves while meditating, but also the "action stations" in their brains were fully primed. Meditation makes a person stronger, both physically and mentally, in the chosen meditative habit of thought (Begley, pp. 233-239). Meditative practices can and do change people - both the structures of their physical brains, and their capacities for compassion.

Chapter 8 shows how we can change who we are and how we respond to the world, by training ourselves to feel, and think, differently. Chapter 9 describes the experimental process – that of persuading the monks to accept the experiment, the experiment itself, and the findings, which confirm that human beings can change themselves by training their minds; in particular, we can learn how to direct our mental energies so that we feel and radiate compassion.

*Annie's personal experience tells her that meditation is beneficial. The difference between compassion and empathy is that compassion involves action; it eases the observer's distress at seeing another's pain, while empathy does not. Wolynn (Book 18, in the postscript below) writes that thinking we are interacting with a distant or deceased relative has the same impact on our brains as if we are actually interacting with him or her. This can be emotionally healing.*

*Since the main subjects of Begley's book were Buddhist monks, Annie now introduces Buddhist philosophy.*

10. *Buddhist Boot Camp*

Timber Hawkeye, HarperOne, 2013

Hawkeye, a Buddhist, calls his book Boot Camp because its prescriptions are short, tough, and to the point. He left his home in the U.S. and trained to be a Buddhist monk in Tibet. Then he left the monastery and returned to the U.S., where he continues to practice Zen Buddhism.

*Annie likes the following passage in particular: (Hawkeye, p.5) "Your mind is like a spoiled rich kid! You have raised it to think whatever it wants, whenever it wants to and for however long, with no regard for consequence or gratitude. And now that your mind is all grown, it never listens to you!" Annie did not know, before encountering Eastern philosophies, that she could train her awareness to stand apart from herself. Other mental training can teach the hands to help others heal themselves.*

11. *The Therapeutic Touch: How to Use Your Hands to Help or Heal*

Dolores Krieger, Ph.D., R.N., Prentice-Hall, 1979

Dr. Krieger, a professor of nursing, teaches how to heal with the hands. She provides techniques for becoming aware of the body's energy field, and for using this knowledge to help unblock a patient's

energy-flow, so that his or her body may start to heal. She writes that ordinary people noticed beneficial results, and asked either for the healer to work with their loved ones, or to receive the training themselves (Krieger, pp. 4, 18-19).

*For Annie, this is further proof that human beings can generate real results from training their minds. This is not training in use of will-power, or training in how to direct anything. It trains people to stand apart from bodily will, allowing natural energies to flow, connect, and heal as they were born to do.*

## *12. Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*

Richard Rohr, Jossey-Bass 2011

Father Rohr, a Franciscan priest, teaches that myths and symbols help express what is hard to express with language. He invites those who believe in the supremacy of the rational mind to learn more about the symbolic language of the soul. For example, “Western rationalism no longer understands myths, and their importance, although almost all historic cultures did.” (p. xxix.) And, “Because the rational mind cannot process love or suffering, for example, it tends to either avoid them, deny them, or blame somebody for them...” (p. xxxi.)

Myths (such as those of Greek mythology, including the Hero’s Journey) connect us to our developmental journey through life, and show us the kinds of milestones that each of us will meet along the way – a journey that we all share in concept, though the details will be different. Rohr states that myths share a common imagery, or symbolism, which is present in all cultures and is expressed in dreams, ancient myths, and the beliefs of tribal societies.

*Falling Upward*, the title, means that we cannot achieve our destiny without a fall, or failure. Only this can free us to see our own truth, and discover the (upward) spiritual path for which we were born.

*After reading this book, Annie concluded that her purpose will be revealed in time, as long as she is connected to her own inner truth, and through it, to a collective or universal truth. We could call this perspective imaginary (see also the discussion of book 9) – “all in the mind” – but its impact will be real!*

*Annie believes that everything is interconnected. She could be mistaken, but respectable modern physics (i.e., quantum entanglement) is aligned with her position. Annie cannot rationally respond to each of mega-trillions of events occurring around her in any one moment. But, if indeed everything is entangled, then she may connect with everything via her intuitive soul.*

*The next book suggests the costs of maintaining an external focus, ignoring the inner world of mind and spirit. If we look at books One and Thirteen together, perhaps we may see where balance has been lost in the materialistic parts of the modern world.*

## *13. The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity*

Nadine Burke Harris, M.D., Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018

Dr. Harris was challenged by what she observed while treating patients at her clinic in Bayview, a low-income region of San Francisco. She explains how she sought and found ways to improve outcomes for children of high-stress environments. She wants an “adversity” questionnaire included in standard medical screenings.

Dr. Harris recognizes the many costs, to all of us, of childhood adversity. She suggests, only half-jokingly, that in poor communities, “people actually know who the molesting uncle is...[But, in rich communities] these things just aren’t talked about.” (Harris, pp. 170-171.)

*This, and Book One, show the consequences of unsympathetic behavior in the money-economy. The money-economy appears to ignore both inequity and adversity (a.k.a. disadvantage, or trauma, or distress, or similar). People may think it necessary to do so, and train themselves accordingly. U.S. capitalism rewards financial gain. Emotional distress may lie under the radar of people trained to focus on earning a living in the money-economy, or trained to fight wars on behalf of the money-economy.*

*Item fourteen below is Annie's idea for generating more equity in the money-focused world. She believes it merits debate, if not implementation. Debate of an extreme solution may bring to light another that could work. In the meantime, ordinary people can ask business people for what we really need. We can support businesses that provide it, and not support businesses that don't. The more wealth we own, the more it is incumbent upon us to do so, on behalf of ourselves and those whose economic "voices" (a.k.a. dollar votes) are small.*

#### *14. Annie's Economic Theory:*

*Annie offers, here, a few ideas on how to correct increasing material inequities and under-the-radar adversity. First, it should be made clear that, if our economic system (free-market capitalism) worked the way it is supposed to work in theory, we would not have wars, strikes, and attempts to legislate all kinds of behavior. See, for example, Annie's book review, "The Essential Adam Smith." Second, we should understand that globalization has brought "dualism" (glassy skyscrapers alongside shanty-town slums) to wealthy countries, as well as to poor ones. Annie's theory can explain how money and resources move out of some parts of an economy into others, to the detriment of those left behind.*

*For example, as soon as resources for education become available to workers and employers in unpleasant situations, they take advantage of the education to improve their prospects. Fewer and fewer workers and employers remain to do jobs at lower ends of the socioeconomic strata. Increasing productivity appears, at first sight, to be a win-win. It stops being so when productive ideas focus too much on the IT cutting edge, drawing workers out of service industries and agriculture to the point of dysfunction in those industries. The means for achieving this excess is money – too much investment and spending for the cutting edge, and too little for service industries and agriculture.*

*Annie thinks it would be better that the market economy "naturally" put money into necessity sectors than that government re-distribute money from advancing sectors back to where it is most needed. Necessity industries and producers should not be so squeezed for funds that they cannot deliver a good outcome. Necessity workers should not be under continuing pressure to do more with less. We may be able to orchestrate the system so that it does not do this to the same extent as it has done for the past many years.*

*Annie suggests reducing the money supply as much as is needed to restore balance among sectors, by increasing the required reserve ratio. Macroeconomists may reason that, when money becomes less, all prices fall proportionally so you will not change sectoral economic relationships. Annie says, even if all prices fall proportionally, which she doubts, not all quantities will adjust proportionally. Arguably, there will be more of what is needed, as opposed to what the wealthy desire, if there is less money.*

*Annie says, this is because, in the money-economy, all the money provides sustenance for all the people. So, if a higher proportion of all the money goes for necessities because there is not enough money for many luxuries, then a higher proportion of all the people will work in necessity industries. (We currently subsidize many necessity industries and poor people in one way or another. If we did not, those industries might go away, so we must. If we believe in the free market to fix the situation, why does it not work?)*

*Annie says, because there is too much money! Money is incentivized to go where it makes more money. Take away the excess, and it will have more incentive to go where it is needed.)*

## Postscript – One Size Does Not Fit All:

The books below illustrate the idea that what works for one person (or community, or economic sector, or culture) may not work for another.

*What worked for Annie, who is probably ADHD – book 15 below – although never diagnosed, may not work for you. The second book – book 16 below – introduces scientists to the idea that Western thought may have over-emphasized the rational.*

*Other books are works of comparative culture, cutting-edge psychology, and cutting-edge physics, for the general reader. Annie encountered different cultures, and different scholarly disciplines, early in life. She sees the human condition everywhere, and tries to isolate it from what is cultural or scholarly. So, this postscript is a reading list inviting interested individuals to ponder on the human condition:*

### *Exploring What May be Essentially Human, not Merely Cultural*

If you have been diagnosed ADD or ADHD, you might like this book:

#### *15. The ADHD Advantage: What You Thought was a Diagnosis May be Your Greatest Strength*

Dale Archer, MD, Penguin Random House, 2015

Archer discusses this particular personality type. Most notably, he suggests that people with this personality are “allergic to boredom.” So, attention to detail and the mundane is lacking, but rising to a challenge and staying cool under pressure is present in spades.

*One of the luckiest events of Annie’s childhood was a scholarship to a sophisticated English school that challenged and did not bore her, so that she did well in school and never knew she had ADHD, until now.*

*She does not accept that she alone is responsible for her feelings, behavior, and the atmosphere around her. As a woman, her perspective is different from that of the male authors of many respectable books, including most of the books on her reading list. They are leaders or teachers, accustomed to being heard. She is a follower, accustomed to receiving disrespect, or worse, if she dares to disagree with a leader.*

*Disagreement is not the same as insubordination, although some leaders overstep their bounds and do need to be defied. A leader is responsible for a healthy environment, including (usually) open debate and boundaries on authority. Some authority figures shut down challenges, enlisting the group’s support against the offender. One successful tactic against a great power was Mahatma Gandhi’s “non-violent resistance,” in pursuit of India’s independence. Eventually the British Government stepped down. It did not have to do that.*

*(Annie hopes that the above remarks might represent a reasonable “bare-bones” perspective on what happened as India gained independence. They are at least in accordance with the movie, “Gandhi.” If readers have not seen the latter, they might find it interesting. Annie understands, from a personal conversation, that some former residents of India were not happy with the way the British handled the partition of India. Since the movie represents that India was partitioned because Hindus and Muslims could not work out their differences, the matter likely involves much complexity.)*

If you are a scientist, you might be interested in the following book:

*16. Ten Philosophical Mistakes: Basic Errors in Modern Thought – How They Came About, Their Consequences, and How to Avoid Them*

Mortimer J. Adler, MacMillan, 1985

Compared with the detail-oriented, empirical books of today, this book looks like armchair philosophizing. Nevertheless, Professor Adler shows how some popular philosophical beliefs came about, why they don't make sense, and why many of them were retained, with complications that were supposed to plug the loopholes but didn't, rather than abandoned.

*Annie was never much interested in armchair philosophizing. She is mostly a hands-on, real-world type of person. Yet, she is glad to see Adler explain errors of thought with regard to some modern ideas.*

If you have been diagnosed an addict, you might be interested in this book:

*17. Refuge Recovery*

Noah Levine

Noah Levine describes how Buddhist methods and teachings can be helpful, even in the Western world, to heal addicts and the pain that leads to addiction.

If challenging personalities run in your family, you might like this book:

*18. It Didn't Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle*

Mark Wolynn, The Penguin Group, 2009.

Wolynn has worked with many individuals who are not at peace with themselves or others. The way someone feels after a loss, a death, or a betrayal, for example, can become embedded in the way his or her descendants respond to the world. But these types of changes can be reversed, so that a jumpy, aggressive, or overly passive pre-disposition need not be a permanent aspect of personality. Wolynn offers ways to uncover family trauma, if it exists, and to make peace with it and its past victim.

*Annie was lucky to observe, when young, that she would sometimes pick up another person's feelings from the atmosphere around her. She learned to notice which feelings were her own (generated within), and which derived from someone else (i.e., connected with her emotional state from the outside). Discovering inherited trauma is not yet part of Annie's story, although there is trauma in her family.*

More Books to Follow