

## *The Kinds of fun*

**“All for fun, and fun for all”**

-The Oaqui

This book, as well as I, is/am not here to talk about just any old kind of fun. In fact, I'd go further, and say, quite narrowly, that we are particularly interested in just one kind of fun – the kind of fun that we experience when we are part of a well-played game.

That kind of fun is, of course, not restricted to games. We can experience it when we are dancing, or making love, or playing with children or pets, even. This is probably what makes it so powerful, and so vivid, when it happens in a sport where the only stated objective is to win. Where the only tangible reward comes from winning. And still we manage to create moments of profound, often mystical harmony, spontaneity, shared excellence<sup>xxix</sup>.

This kind of fun, the well-played-game kind, as notable of an achievement as it is in sports, is just as notable, but even more achievable in games – especially in my kind of games - games whose sole purpose is to keep you in play together because in that laughing together we are sharing the wonder of the fun we create, the love we manifest, the mind-body-soul-deep wellness we share, the momentary lowering of the divisions that separate us.



## *Just plain fun*

Of all the many kinds I've so far identified, there's one that doesn't seem to be any particular kind at all. Plain fun is what you might call it. Just plain fun. Fun with no particularly redeeming quality: not necessarily community-building, or body-building, or brain-building; not especially spiritual or transformational or educational; not significantly rational, or emotional, or social, even. Just your plain, every day, ordinary. Just something you happen to enjoy, for the moment. The sun. The breeze. On your skin. In your hair. A joke. A story. A book. Running down a hill. Blowing dandelions. Finding a bird's egg. Watching a flower. Trying to listen to the slow, serene, slime-smoothed slide of a snail. A child's touch, a game of solitaire, a magic trick, stacking coins, flipping cards.

This kind of fun is common to all kinds of fun. It's the medium in which all other kinds of fun gel. It's just fun. It has nothing to do with anything else. And yet, like all kinds of fun, it heals, it brings us back from wherever we were to where we actually are. It brings us, as they say, back to our senses, to our bodies. It brings back wonder, awe, peace, fascination, love, stillness, harmony. Pure, plain fun.

This is the kind of fun that, now that I play for life rather than for a living, I have come to savor. O, I love every taste of fun, every taste: the taste of fun when it's loving, in deed I do; and the taste of fun of the healing kind, and the learning kind, and all those kinds of fun that build us into more completely human beings. But lately I've come to appreciate the gift, the simple presence of fun, the glorious wonder of being able to have fun, feel fun, of any flavor. Fun. Just fun.

## *The kind of fun that makes you laugh*

I like it best when laughter hits me “accidentally on purpose.” I like to teach silly games – games that make people laugh. I like the sound of that laughter, how it seems to take people by surprise even though the whole reason they are playing together is so that they can laugh like that together. I like funny fun – the fun of being funny together – that comes when people try to sit on each other’s laps, and don’t quite succeed. That laugh that releases us from the fear of failure because we do fail, and we don’t care, because we fall into laughter. Not laughter at. Laughter with. With the playfulness of the game. With each other.

Sometimes, even when we play silly games, the laughter takes on a different tone, like, well, love. We’re playing a game like Hug Tag (where to be safe you have to be hugging someone) and amid all the screaming glee there’s a laugh that sounds like a celebration of the discovery that we are, in fact, safe in each other’s arms. Even when we’re playing hide and seek (my favorite variation being Sardines where when you find someone you hide with them) there’s a laugh like that, a laugh celebrating community.

Lately, I’ve been exploring what you might call “spiritual laughter,” but it is actually no more spiritual than any laughter that springs from joy and love and community. I play a game where the whole idea is for people to bless each other. Each blessing is supposed to be as heartfelt as a blessing can be, but, at the same time, even more of a blessing than the previous blessing. Someone says something like “may the fruits of your labor never spoil.” And then the next person says: “may the fruits of your labor not only never spoil, but may they be available at a grocery store near you.” And then the next: “And may they be non-GMO.” And people laugh. Meaningfully.

## *Loving fun*

There's fun, and then there's love.

I am a lover of love.

I love loving.

I love being loved.

I love loving my lover.

I love fun, sure. But not like I love love.

I have the most fun when I'm loving. When I'm loved. When I'm doing the things I love.

Fun without love is never fun enough for me. Love without fun is impossible.

All of the things I do in the name of fun are about love.

I am a fun lover.

The fun I teach, the fun I share, the fun I seek, the fun my life is for is what one may call "loving fun."

Love is fun. Love, freely given. Love received.

Sometimes love is so much fun it makes you cry. It actually hurts. Beautifully.

It can come from a child, from a friend, a relative, a stranger, an animal.

It is precious, and like the most precious of precious things, it can't be owned, it can't even be counted.

Such fun, such deep fun is love that it changes you, connects you, makes you whole, happy, heals you, frees you.

Not all fun is love. But love is. Loving is. It is fun to love. As fun, at least, as it is to be loved.

Your love is fun. Loving you is fun.

## *As fun as fun can be*

As fun as fun can be, as central as it can become to a healthy, healing relationship, it is remarkably hard to take seriously. Even though fun is the experience that binds, the purpose that shapes, the phenomenon that leads into and out of body, most organizations and institutions insist on pretending that fun has nothing to do with it. Even though, if they took it seriously enough, they could heal themselves and probably the world.

Here is a suggestion: give each other a weekend, a day, an hour devoted to fun – to thinking about fun, practicing fun, expanding your abilities to create and share fun with each other. In other words, to playing, games even – fun, funny, loving games that help you laugh and love with each other – word games, walking around games. Playful games in which nobody keeps score, where the only point to playing is the loving fun we can give each other for a moment, for forever.

Play with each other, play with strangers and neighbors. Play games that make you want to play lovingly. Games that are fun, gentle, touching, safe, freeing, and in some very real, very unthreatening way, intimate.

In between games, talk about the fun you shared, the fun you created for each other, the fun that truly made you feel free. And then, during the next game, see if you can bring each other more fun, liberate each other to some higher plane of fun.

Play some more. Love some more.

## *Intimate fun*

Intimate fun is a dance between two very big mysteries.

The first is the mystery of ME. This is the mystery with which each of us is most truly intimate. The mystery of self, of mind and body, of oneness and separateness.

The second is the mystery of WE. Of an intimacy that is beyond body. Of an embracing of minds and spirit, of ME plus.

Me on one side. We on the other. The rest is choreography.

Maybe I've been spending too much time on my computer. But whenever I migrate from flash to flesh, I am increasingly amazed at how other each of us is. How other you are. And how other I seem to be when I'm with you. I've been focusing especially on how other we both are when we are having fun, and even more especially how other we are when we are having fun together.

Like how, when we're laughing together, it's as if there's another being laughing with us. Another will. A will not totally in our control.

There's something very personal about this being we create, something intimate about this kind of fun.

Intimate Fun: the joyous being that we create by our being joyous together: the WE that we become when we are having fun together. The Tickled WE.

Intimate Fun only lasts as long as we are each ticklish. My being tickled in turn tickles you, which in turn tickles me. Our periodic rediscovery of how tickled we each are in turn gives life to the Tickled WE.

It is not about becoming the Other, or realizing the We of the Me or the Me of the We. It's about how often we cross the line. It's a frequency thing. When we transcend our selves and affirm each other often enough, something else happens. Something other is created. I think it's called "love."

## *Funny fun*

Probably one of my favorite flavors of fun is the taste of what happens when we get funny together. It tastes just like laughter. Spicy. Embracing the full geography of your bio-conceptual landscape.

Sometimes, we are funny together. All of us. At more or less the same time. Singing a silly song, maybe, playing a funny game. Walking a funny walk, talking in funny voices, in foreign accents, in slow motion.

For me, being funny together with my wife, my kids, my grandkids, is almost always the funniest, the deepest, the most deeply funny.

We're not being silly. No way. We're being funny together. Magically funny. Even when we are doing playful things, it's not at all about being silly, it's all about the funniness that we're creating together. The magic of it. All about the laughter we are sharing.

I think those times when we are funny together, those amateurish, funny together times, we are funnier than comedians and clowns. Funny beyond clever. So funny, we are taken by surprise by how funny.

That's funniest fun, it seems to me, the fun of being funny together.

It's hard sometimes to remember that. Especially if you're in the funny business. Like a comedian or clown or something. You get so much into making people laugh that it gets to be you vs. them. Comedians say that about their acts, how they "slayed" the audience, how they "killed." So you stop getting very much out of it. You burn out trying, because making people laugh is not like laughing with them, not like when they're making you laugh. You get funny with no fun. Just —ny.

Then there's being funny with strangers, which I consider some kind of miracle, some kind of blessing. When I'm funny with, not funny for. When I'm being just funny enough to invite someone totally new to me to be funny, too. And that person, that stranger, invites me back, and maybe we are not so funny, but we are good, surprisingly good, witty, both of us, responsive, smoothly creating funniness together, in a theater so private there's really no room for audience, funny for each other alone. Strangers, together, engaged in a kind of intimacy that is funny beyond laughter.

That's funniest fun, it seems to me, the fun of being funny together.

## *Fun beyond funny*

There is fun, and there is funny. There's funny fun. There's funny that isn't fun. And there are yet other kinds of fun, some sometimes deeper, that are just as much fun, and yet not funny, really, unless you have reached maybe enlightenment or godheadhood.

I'm writing about this because I have the very good fortune of having some deep, sensitive thinkers in my community, who think deeply and care deeply and have fun deeply. And one of them asked me, on a now deleted Facebook post, about wanting to have fun, because it appeared to her, quite rightly, that if you want to have fun, and aren't, you probably won't. Because want implies lack. And as long as you hold on to that lack, well, your emotional arms will be too full to receive the gift of fun when it is presented to you.

And that led us to a video chat – she in a coffee house, me in my dining room – about fun and how it can happen even when you are crying and in pain and finding your self near death. And then to this, because I realized that somewhere, somehow in all my funny wittiness, I might just have misled us, you and me, into thinking that fun is all about laughter or playfulness.

Fun, since you ask, the kind of fun that I call “deep,” is the fun of finding your self (yes, you, yours) as large as, well, life. Embiggened, as some might say, by, oh, anything – a glance from a baby, a smile from a stranger, a dog's lick, someone skipping, dancing, singing for the sheer because of it. By a breeze, or a squirrel or a moment of sweet quiet. You, suddenly feeling as large as life itself.

Joy is fun. Ecstasy, o, so much fun. Feeling present, feeling alive, feeling awe, feeling loved, embraced, touched, feeling beauty, beautiful. And none of these experiences has anything to do with laughing, though you might laugh. And all of them have something to do with fun, though you might not think so at the time.

## *Naughty fun*

When we've talked about fun in the past, we (royally speaking) divided the conscious universe into two parts: the have to, and the want to, the want to part being where the fun is. And then, of course, there's the area of miraculous overlap, where the have to coincides with the want to, is probably where the fun is deepest.

There's another factor to all this – the should do – which we find our selves having to contemplate now that we're talking about fun of the naughty kind.

Being naughty is fun because it makes you feel, however temporarily, free. You are heading towards the arena of pure want to – outside the boundaries of both have to and should do. Heading, but not quite there, because for naughty to be fun you have to be close enough to should do and have to to feel their frowning presence.

There are, of course, degrees of naughtiness, ranging from the cute to the criminal. Make, as they say, no mistake about it. Naughty fun is genuinely, and sometimes profoundly fun. But you have to be a little more careful with fun of the naughty kind. There's not getting too naughty. And then there's not getting caught.

## *Dangerous fun*

There are things that we learn, and we learn to forget. Until we forget that we've learned them. And we get to learn all over again

Like: fun can be dangerous.

You can get hurt having fun – you, other living things. I mean you can get really, really hurt. Skiing, jumping off of things, running downhill.

Because fun is a living thing, like you. And no matter how important it is, how wonderful, how blissful it can be to have fun, you can get hurt even in the apparently simplest of fun pursuits. Which, for some people, apparently, is one of the things that makes fun fun.

For some people, fun is all about danger. There would be no fun without the thrill, and no thrill without the risk, and no risk without the danger. Real danger. Pretend risk isn't enough. It's a real parachute and you're really 15,000 feet in the air, and it has been known and documented that sometimes the parachute doesn't open. Which is why there is a spare. Which has also been known not to open. And that very thought, that very genuine, deservedly frightening thought, makes the whole thing so gosh darn fun you could die for it.

But the thing is, no matter how hard you try to remember the consequences of all that glorious danger, you can, barreling down a playful path in the innocent pursuit of fun, get hurt harder. And, if you don't do your self permanent damage, you will forget about the hurt, and do that dangerous thing again and again. Because it's fun.

## *Nachas and Mechaiyeh*<sup>xxx</sup>

In my attempts to understand fun, and especially to convey that understanding, I find myself very often using two Yiddish words: nachas and mechaiyeh.

The word mechaiyeh describes the experience of soaking in a hot bath. Not too hot, of course. But perfectly hot. Quietly soaking. Not scrubbing. Not even necessarily soaping. Effortlessly afloat in the embrace of penetrating warmth. Finding yourself, from time to time, saying, to no one in particular, except maybe the entire universe: “Ahhh, such a mechaiyeh!”

Of course you can have mechaiyeh-like experiences almost anywhere. A shower, maybe. Even, you should forgive the reference, on the toilet. Of course, you don't need water to experience a mechaiyeh. You can be lying in the sun, on the beach, on your porch. You can be having a massage. You can be sitting still on a hot day in a cool breeze. And then there's that first sip of tea or soup, especially in cold weather or in the morning. And then, in the evening, the simple acts of opening your belt, taking off your shoes and socks, putting on a bathrobe or a soft sweater.

Mechaiyeh comes from the Hebrew word “chai,” which means life. To experience a mechaiyeh is to experience yourself becoming more alive, your being being enlivened. Listening to music. Dancing. Holding hands with your spouse, your friend, your children or grands. Ah, such mechaiyehs!

So, if you understand the meaning of mechaiyeh, you understand something else about fun.

Then there's nachas. Nachas is fun of a very different kind. It's the kind of fun you have when you're watching your kids at a school play. A funny kind of fun, because you can have it even when you're not doing anything. Fun of the nachas variety is most often attributed to the fun you get from your kids and grandkids, and sometimes even your spouse and parents and friends. You can be playing a game with your kids, and get beaten, both fairly and squarely, and also totally and entirely, and feel good about it. Because it gives you such nachas.

Nachas is the kind of fun where you find yourself actually feeling happy for someone else. Because of someone else. It's the opposite of schadenfreude. It's freudenfreude.

There are many kinds of nachas. You can get a sense of nachas from walking into your kitchen after a particularly grueling round of cleaning and putting away, and just noticing how everything is so clean, orderly. You can get nachas just from appreciating things – your self, your spouse, your kids, your car, even.

Nachas comes from the Hebrew word “noach” – which means “rest” or “peaceful” or “comfort.” It also means a sense of satisfaction, contentment, gratification, of feeling accomplished. It’s a kind of fun that feels good, like a mechaiyeh. But it’s not the body that gets the good feeling. It’s more like nachas is a mechaiyeh for the soul.

So here we have two kinds of fun, both penetrating very deep into the core of being: the fun of great physical comfort, and the fun of great spiritual comfort. They are the kinds of fun that enrich our lives, whether we are young or old, healthy or not so much. They are gifts, and the more we receive them into our lives, the more fun our lives become.

## *Fantastic Fun*

It's fun to fantasize. It's even fun to fantasize about fun. It's an art, don't you know. Something you get better at.

You can fantasize all by your self. You can fantasize with other people. When you fantasize with other people it can feel at least as real as it feels when you fantasize alone. And the fantasy can get more complex, more detailed, more encompassing. But it must never be more real than that. It must always remain a fantasy. That's the fun of it. That's what keeps it fun.

Fantasy frees us. Not totally, but enough to make the daily game more fun.

Fantasy changes the meaning of things. It even changes the meaning of us. Fantasy creates meaning. Its own meaning. Meaning nothing else or more than we need it to mean. Those who make meaning out of it for us make it into something else than it is.

Fantasy is never as real as we pretend it to be – as if it were possible to follow the outline of a dream or fill the fractals of the imagination. But it can get awfully close.

## *Sacred fun*

Some kinds of fun are sacred. Like the fun you feel when a baby smiles at you. Or the fun of seeing a rainbow in a puddle. Or the fun of a first kiss and the more fun of a second. They are moments that you hold close to you, that cherish you. Many of them are fragile, temporary, like a silence you share with a gathering of meditators, or a two-year-old. Some you greet with awe, like the fearsome thrill of thunder, like the deeply silent darkness of the dark, like the ringing of a chime. Some moments are too intimate to share, like the fun of a baby's touch, or a lover's, or the dance of a falling leaf.

Sacred fun. Fun that has become holy. Sanctified fun that you carry with you like the penny you put on a trolley track, like the memory of something so deeply fun that you and all those who made that memory with you speak of it as they would speak of something almost holy.

Like the time you all peed into the Grand Canyon.

## *Beauty*

There's something fun about beauty. Something that touches us deeply enough to bring us from wherever we are into the very center of the moment. Unlike other kinds of fun, beauty doesn't invite play. Rather, like awe, it invites presence.

Like fun, beauty transforms us. We are struck by it, moved, transported, caught in it, our whole attention taken up to a different plane of awareness, all else vanishing before it. Like fun. Like what happens to us in a good game, or in a moment of deep laughter, or child's smile, or a loving glance.

Like fun, beauty is something the world makes and something we make, something we make of the world and the world makes of us. It delights us like fun does. It transforms us like fun does. In its light, as we are in the light of fun, we are beautiful.

## *Practical fun*

No, not practical jokes. Practical fun. The fun of collecting practical advice, hints, tips. Vast collections thereof.

It's not important why it's fun to collect all those truly practical, time-tested pieces of exceedingly pragmatic advice, insights, shortcuts, recipes, helpful hints, how-tos and when-tos. What's important, at least as far as I'm concerned, is that collecting bits of practical wisdom is fun. Practical fun. Real, genuine fun.

As my granddaughter Lily explained, it's all about "knowing things that you will probably never have a use for, but having an excuse for learning them anyway."

And, who knows? There could always come a time...

## *Cruel fun*

I'm not sure if it's the same thing as "mean fun." I mean, I'm not sure if the practitioners of cruel fun mean to be mean. Or even if they're particularly aware that they're being cruel. The point that needs to be made here is that they, for all their cruelty, are having fun. Actual, genuine, regardless of what else you might want to believe they deserve, fun. Fun of the cat-and-mouse-type, of the killer-whale-and-seal-pup-type. And it's natural, this kind of fun. As natural as nature.

Scientists and other play apologists like to attach meaning or at least purpose to this kind of fun. They say that the animals are "practicing skills" that they need to survive. So it's not bad or anything. It's survival.

Human animals are also practitioners of cruel fun, examples of which are plentiful, excuses for which only slightly less plentiful.

But the thing is, the thing we need to acknowledge is – it's fun, it's play, and it's cruel.

I so much want to tell you that fun is good, that all you really need to find happiness is let your self have more fun. But the truth is that neither play, nor fun, nor even happiness is a moral or ethical choice. Choosing fun is choosing life, to embrace life, to be alive. It is not necessarily choosing to be a good person, or a wise person, or the kind of person you are when you are at your best. That kind of person chooses the kind of happiness that is most meaningful to him, the kind of fun that resonates most fully with the fullness of his human being. And even though you are always and only you, and even if you might be having fun, you are not always that kind of person. You are not always that kind.

## *Tragic fun*

Evidence of our fascination with the darker side of life goes back at least as far as the first performances of the Greek tragedies. There is something utterly absorbing, something deeply engaging, something, well, entertaining about the tragic. We have elevated it to an art because we enjoy the tragic at least as thoroughly as we enjoy the comic. It appears to be as fun being moved to tears as it is to laughter.

We witness our fascination with tragedy on almost a daily basis, every time there's an accident on the highway, and the traffic slows to a crawl as we rubberneck our way past the scene. Call it compassion. Call it schadenfreude. It engages us beyond reason.

There's something fun, something entertaining, something genuinely enjoyable about witnessing someone else's tragedy. Getting to watch the agony of defeat is at least as stadium-filling as witnessing the thrill of victory. Go to any of our more gladiatorial contests – like, for example, car racing. Note how there's a certain unspoken disappointment if, at the end of the whole thing, no car crashes.

Sports, and, to a lesser degree, games, have a tragic element to them. Losing is tragic, especially for the losers. Having to stop playing is tragic. Getting hurt is profoundly tragic. If the hurt is serious enough, it's a moment of high drama. The players in both teams, and even the spectators, unite in genuinely shared grief. And, though we would be loath to admit it, that, too, is very much part of the fun. We enjoy that moment of grief. We momentarily transcend all divisions, all roles, and are moved together towards each other, and in our shared shock we touch the confluence that makes us all one. And it is fun.

## *Good fun*

Good fun is a healing kind of fun. Healing itself is fun of the good kind, whether you're healing your self or the world. The fun that characterizes much of the experience of those who volunteer to be part of things like Doctors Without Borders. The fun of doing good.

Then there's my kind of fun - the fun that comes from playing well together, or from games that just make you laugh together, or from anything at all that makes you laugh, together.

And loving fun - the fun of loving, the fun of playing lovingly.

These are all good kinds of fun. And the more you think about it, the more kinds of good fun you'll discover. Like the fun of caring for someone you care about, the fun of teaching and learning, of listening and watching and tasting and smelling good air and feeling clean clothes, of touching and being touched, of glee, exuberance, accomplishment, of remembering your childhood, of wrestling with your children, of making a list of the things that are fun for you.

## *Meaningful fun*

So I find my self thinking about doing “meaningful” things. Things like being engaged in meaningful work and doing meaningful deeds and having meaningful relationships, like the connection between meaningfulness and happiness. And, after significant intro- and extro-pection, I’ve come to a natural conclusion: meaningful stuff is fun. Saying, doing, thinking, acting, working, learning almost anything actually meaningful, is always fun. Really fun. Deep fun.

Even if you’re cutting potatoes in a food kitchen for the poor, it’s fun. It’s a feel-good fun that comes, not from what you’re doing, but who you’re doing it with and for.

But when the thing you’re doing is itself fun, like, for example, batting a balloon around, and you’re having fun batting the balloon with the people you’re batting around with, and they’re having fun, with you, with each other, and they are people who need to have this kind of fun almost desperately – children, the hospitalized, the institutionalized, the people of countries at war, the less-abled, less-skilled, less-lucky – well, that’s a unique kind of fun, a life-fulfilling fun that really needs its own name.

For the time being, I’m suggesting calling this specific kind of fun, and equally specific kind of meaningfulness, “deep fun.” Because it reaches not only into your very own personal core, but all the way into the core of human being. Because it’s a healing thing, a spiritual thing already.

## *Minor fun*

Let's pretend that there are only two kinds of fun: major fun, and everything else, which we shall call "minor fun."

Major fun is the kind of fun that is so intense, so engaging, so total, that you really know, when you have it, that what you are having is fun.

Minor fun is the other kind of fun, the kind you are barely aware of as being fun. Like the watching TV kind of fun, or the eating potato chips, or the day dreaming kind. Minor fun is generally pleasant, mild, kind of euphoric, kind of like flow. Minor fun is what we have when we're doodling, making paper clip chains, twiddling thumbs and other twiddlables, getting comfortable, feeling well-fed.

Minor fun is smelling something good, seeing something pretty, hearing something nice, tasting something tasty.

Major fun is the fun that people write books about, that people risk their lives for. Minor fun is the kind of fun that people spend most of their time having or wanting.

Some times, minor fun can get close to major. Like when you taste something exceptionally, surprisingly delicious. Or when you really, really make love. Then you find your self feeling all those kinds of things they talk about when they talk about flow. You get timeless. You get completely engaged, totally in the "now." You get larger than life.

But most of the time, minor fun stays minor, in the background, barely noticed.

I'm thinking that minor fun is something we might really need to pay a lot more attention to. I'm thinking that for every 10 minutes of major fun, we spend maybe 10 days having the minor kind. I'm thinking that when we go without minor fun long enough, like maybe 10 minutes, we start getting into some major misery.

I'm thinking that when we are at our most natural, we are having minor fun most of the time. But downtown and in the office and family room what we hear most of the time isn't so much fun. Horns blaring, copiers copying, the TV.

I'm thinking that major fun, as fun as it is, isn't enough fun to last us through the hours and days and weeks of hardly any kind of fun at all. And that maybe the only way for us to find our way back to happiness is for us to spend a lot more time paying a lot more attention to fun of the minor kind.

Beginning, for example, with your very desk and the hitherto-unknown art of Fun Shui achieved through the cunning and often haphazard placement and/or removal of photos, toys, plants, miniature fountains, candy jars, pithy sayings, etc., as practiced in office cubbies around the official world.

Continuing, I suppose, with the wearing of comfort clothes to go with the eating of comfort foods, the frequent exchange of greetings, jokes, email, the use of humor, smileys, and other signs of ongoingness.

## *Dizzy fun*

I started thinking about how a simple thing like getting dizzy, which kids seem to love doing so much, could ultimately become a spiritual practice. Searching for deeper significance, I learned that the word *ilinx*<sup>xxx1</sup> (Greek for “whirlpool”) was used by Roger Callois to describe something very similar to dizzy fun, here called vertigo, where he says: “based on the pursuit of vertigo and which consists of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind. In all cases, it is a question of surrendering to a kind of spasm, seizure, or shock that destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness. The disturbance that provokes vertigo is commonly sought for its own sake.”

“Ah,” said I to my self, “voluptuous panic” in deed. “Surrendering,” of course. Destroying reality, as one often needs do, with, what else, “sovereign brusqueness.” An archetypical religious experience, at least.

And then, two clicks onward, we find each other reading about Fell Running in which the author notes: “To get a notion of fell running, picture your self a typical running enthusiast, then imagine running over the roughest ground and in the worst weather possible.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

I leave you for the nonce to your own running, and the fellness thereof, and the spinning grip of your own personal momentum.

## *Public fun*

There's a flavor of fun that we get when we're not the only one having it. You can call it "social fun" or "shared fun" or even "loving fun." It's a kind of fun that often leads to public fun.

As I said earlier "Playing and laughing together, especially when we play and laugh in public, for no reason, is a profound, and, oddly enough, political act."

Political, because when we play or dance or just laugh in public, people think there's something wrong with us. It's rude, they think. Childish. A disturbance of the peace.

And what those grown-ups are doing, playing, dancing, laughing in public is not an act of childish discourtesy, but a political act – a declaration of freedom.

That kind of fun, public fun, when applied to human affairs in general, can prove a most reliable socio-political guide to human ethics, which we shall, for current purposes, call "the More Merrier Multiplier."

The More Merrier Multiplier, in a mathematically articulate manner, expresses the true relationship between the Merrier and the More. If no one else in this meeting is making merry, OR if you find your self clearly lacking in measurable merriment, OR if nobody else will be the merrier because we are having the meeting, the whole thing is pretty much worthless. Or, saying the same thing in just about the same way: If you're having fun, and if everyone else is having fun, and if just about the entire world will have more fun as the result of what you're having fun doing, you can be pretty sure that what you're doing is, in fact, a very right thing.

And if there's such a thing as public fun, there's definitely equally such a thing as private fun: the fun we have all by our selves with our selves often within our selves; fun that we share with our selves only, demonstrating for our personal freedom. And of course there's semi-private fun, like the fun we have with kids and pets and ocean waves and sand and water....

## *Fun with your self*

Some games we play by our selves. There are two kinds: puzzles (word puzzles, picture puzzles, moving piece puzzles, chess puzzles) and games (solitaire card games, solitaire computer games). You could think of them as one kind. They're all puzzles. They're all games we play with (or against) our selves. Playing any of them, we learn about the fun we can think our selves into. Some of them also involve us in the fun of reacting quickly, or the fun of manipulating things, balancing things, fitting things together. But, for the most part, we play with our expectations of our selves. It's fun to find out that we can do more than we thought we could do, or do it faster, fun to discover that we can solve puzzles, that we can figure things out, that we can make mistakes and learn from them. That we don't need any help. We can do this all by our selves, if we have patience and time. And we can, when we need to, cheat.

There are lots and lots of computer games that we play by our selves. There's even a kind of computer game that we play by our selves against others. All these games let us explore our relationship to our selves. In all of them, we learn how we can make that relationship fun.

## *Fun with an other*

There are a lot of games we play with just one other person: card games, board games, computer games, word games. Then there's walking together, dancing together, touching together – and all those other games implied thereby. I mean the ones done for fun.

Playing these games, we can explore the art of having fun together, one-, as they say, on-one. The more we play together, the more clearly we will understand that we can't really explore what's fun for us alone or what's fun for our partner all by himself, because we're together. And we can't really explore what will be fun for both of us a year from now or even an hour from now, because we're playing only now. And the way we combine with time, place, and each other are as unique as we are.

Practicing the art of fun with one other is infinitely richer than practicing it by our selves, which is already infinite in its richness. There are so many more variables, so many more things that can change or be changed. Between us, there are rules. And within these rules are the rules we know are rules and the rules we have to find out if they're really rules at all. And the more we explore these rules, the more deeply we will be practicing the unique art of fun that we can practice uniquely together.

And there are skills, only some of which belong to either of us, and others of which belong only to us together.

And this fun we are having together can get quite profound, surprisingly intimate, deeply spiritual – even in a game of ping pong, doing nothing more than volleying the ball back and forth.

## *Fun with a bunch of others*

Then, there are games we play with a whole bunch of people. With four people, maybe; maybe twenty, maybe a hundred, maybe a quarter-million. There's playing playfully, there's playing passionately. And every variation and version is a vehicle for exploring, learning, developing the art of fun. These games, with all these people, are so complex, so potentially freeing, that even the simplest and silliest of them, like, say, the exceptionally simple and silly *Estray Bonajour*, could result in sudden collective enlightenment, the experience I've been known to call "coliberation."

## *Estray Bonajour?*

About 30 years ago, I met Richard Nessen, who taught me a game I thought was called “Estray Bonajour,” and that the words were something like:

*“Estray Bonajour and a wannee, tashee ta, Cheeta, Voya Zigee Escaroo, Kayva, Kayva, kehaygeza, kehaygeza, keziggy, ziggy, za.”*

I loved the game and dutifully taught it, year after year, exactly as I thought I learned it.

I played it like this:

Each participant holds a shoe or object of similar heft in the right hand, and, as each line is chanted, passes the shoe to the right. The chant goes something like this:

*Estray Bonajour and a wannee tashee tah*

*Estray Bonajour and a wannee tashee tah*

Chanting continues as participants pass the shoe to the right, again one pass per line

*Cheetah*

*Voyah*

*Zigee Escaroo*

*Kayvah*

*Kayvah*

Still passing to the right, these lines are spoken, usually loudly, while shoe-passing continues.

*Kehaygeza*

*Kehaygeza*

Again spoken, rather than chanting. But here the shoe is not actually passed, but held on to, whilst placed first in front of the player on the right then in front of the player on the left, and finally released in front of the player on the right, whilst shouting “zah!”

*Keziggy*

*Ziggy*

*Zah!*

Repeat:

*Kehaygeza*

*Kehaygeza*

*Keziggy*

*Ziggy*

*Zah!*

About thirty years later, I learned another, remarkably similar game that, in the hand-ing-down, had become so significantly other. I correct my self entirely, and present with similar aplomb, the Brazilian game “Escravos de Jó,” played very much like this:

Each participant holds a shoe or object of similar thereto, in the right hand, and, as each line is chanted, passes the object to the right, while singing:

*Escravos de Jó*

*jogavam caxangá*

This is done twice.

Players lift the object , singing:

*tira*

then put the object down, singing:

*põe*

then shake their fingers twice at the object, chanting:

*deixa ficar*

Continuing to pass to the right two more times, chanting

*guerreiros com*

*guerreiros fazem*

And now, without letting go of their object, players put it in front of the player on the right while saying:

*zig*

Then put it in front of the player on the left while saying:

*zig*

Then put it in front of the player on the right, while saying:

*za*

Then, without stopping, they begin the second round, this time just humming. When the second round is finished, they continue the movement, but silently.

Sooner or later, someone makes a mistake. Tradition has it that that person is out for the rest of the game, the game continuing, the rounds going faster and faster, until only one player is left.

Played by children, families, and sometimes played by the college-inclined as a drinking game.

I, however, play it for laughs: encouraging people to sing in gibberish if they can't follow the words, continuing until someone has most of the shoes, and then starting over.

Loosely translated from the Portuguese: Slaves of Jo (or Job) played Caxanga. Take it out, put it back, leave it on. Warriors with warriors do zig zig za.

You may draw your own conclusions.

I've learned of similar games in Israel and Italy. In Israel, the game is called "Avanim Ovrot m'yad l'yad." In Italy, I was told of two similar games: "Salomé Son Letre" and a faster version called "Tu stai sempre intorno ame." The game is frequently played with shoes and in the sand.

I think, perhaps, I've made my point.

Now, with any luck, you'll make yours.