

But death comes with an active purpose too: It ensures natural selection so that the evolution of life can advance. Species with genetic mutations that prove to be unfavorable for life will eventually die out. This is how nature succeeds at being so effective—to economize valuable resources in a sustained manner while advancing *biologically* at the same time. But what stays hidden from most people is that death contributes essentially to *spiritual* evolution too: Why should we do something today if we could still do it tomorrow? It's death that makes us not put off until tomorrow what we can do today. So, try to *understand* death once in a while from this perspective—and it will become more likeable for you! Death is not an enemy of life. It's rather the mortality of life that moves us and makes consciousness grow in the cosmos.

True Happiness

It happened on the way to work this morning. I was moving along with other commuters through the narrow subway at Mannheim Central Station when it flashed right in front of my feet. I bent down and picked up a shiny one-euro coin. “My lucky day!”, I thought to myself. But then “bang!”—a heavy suitcase hit me from behind and hurt my right heel. I squirmed and limped painfully to the exit. A few moments later, while walking in pain, I was struck how the artificial neon light gave way to warm daylight beyond it. There sat a man on his blanket playing a clarinet. Most people went by and didn't even take notice of him. I stopped, and instantly harmonic sounds captured my imagination.

Like magic, the music made me forget my pain. When the clarinet stopped playing, I felt the warm coin nestled in my hand and put it in the cardboard box in front of the musician. He thanked me with a smile that made all of his face beam with joy. In that very moment, I understood the tremendous difference between *lucky* and *happy*. Most people associate both concepts with joy, and some languages like German have only one word to fit both. But I can tell you: There are no two concepts more different than these! When I found the one-euro coin, I was lucky—not happy. I found it only because someone else had the bad luck to lose it. I was only happy after I gave the same coin to someone who really needed it.

Here's a little quiz question for you: What's still vivid in my mind whenever I remember that morning in Mannheim? Just one answer is correct:

- a) the pain in my right heel,
- b) the artificial neon light,
- c) the musician's smile.

You got it right—it's the beaming smile of the musician! Memories of the pain in my heel and also the neon light have long since faded. It's too bad that most people associate *both* lucky and happy with joy. If we took a closer look at both concepts, we wouldn't fall so quickly into the temptation of confusing material *having* luck with immaterial *being* happy. This confusion is the main reason why people fail in their search for becoming happy and live lives of silent desperation instead (figure 46).



Fig. 46: Lucky or happy?

Let's take a closer look at some more examples to clarify the difference between lucky and happy: If you have a job, have a house, have lots of contacts—then you are lucky. If you are pleased with what you do, are at home everywhere you go, are always among friends—then you are happy. All these situations describe lucky as something that you *have*, but happy describes what you *are*. Happy is not what you have, it's what you are! Be honest—have you ever thought this much about being truly happy?

Unfortunately, we live in an age today that puts more value on luck—not happiness. TV shows like *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and excessive lotto jackpots make more and more people dream of striking it rich—hitting “the big one.” But this luck is just luck that I can *have* or *not have*—it's not the **true happiness** deep in my heart that lets me *be* happy. Having luck never goes deep because I can just as easily lose again whatever I have. Only what I am right here and now, no one can take away from me. It's what I am—now!

The search for true happiness is something that really brings us all together. In order to see this, here is a simple trick. Please ask yourself: Can I imagine anything in life that is more worth striving for than being happy? And if such a thing really exists, wouldn't I strive for it precisely for this reason because I expect that it will make me happy? After you have answered these two questions, you will know that we all strive—deep in our hearts—for the same goal: being happy! Please meditate about this insight for a few minutes because it transforms us all into social beings: We all want to be happy, and that brings us all together. The fact that we often get in each other's way is because most people don't know how this true happiness can be found. They hope to come upon it somewhere in their lives and don't see that it is already inside of them.

How do I become happy? Believe it or not—there is a clear answer to this question, and that is why I made it my motto of life. Since happy is something that I am and don't have, there is nothing outside of me (no other living thing, no object, no event) that can make me happy. There is only one recipe to be happy:

I am happy
if I say “yes” to everything that I *am* (not: *have*)
and—with this attitude—take my next step forward.

It's just as easy as it sounds. I only have to accept me as I am and then live with this attitude, and I am already happy. But if I say “no”—for example, because I want to *have* a more beautiful body or fancier clothes or a better job—then I

am unhappy. Just try it yourself. It really works! But now you could argue: If everyone says “yes” to oneself, the motivation will be lost to change something. That is why it is so important to not only say “yes” to oneself, but—from being happy—to also take the next step forward. Most people believe that being happy is the true goal of life, but it isn’t—it’s the path! I often like to put it this way: Enlightenment isn’t about searching for becoming happy, but about living one’s happiness step by step.

And so, being happy or not being happy has absolutely nothing to do with my environment. It has everything to do with myself and, most of all, it is a matter of heart: If I welcome all of the experiences of life, then I am happy. Never forget: It’s the mind that says “no” to some things and consequently makes us unhappy. By the way, it’s precisely for this reason that people meditate—to let go of their thoughts. Meditation is actually nothing more than a universal yes-saying to everything that is.

Let’s remember Alfred North Whitehead and his *drops of experience*. We are these drops of experience, and we are happy if we welcome all drops of experience, that is, if we welcome each other. Yet this yes-saying to everything that is also means surrender. In an age characterized by rabid consumption and greed, it would do us much good to practice surrender. This could involve our own interests in partnerships¹²³ or salary increases. The well-known saying “being perfectly happy” isn’t by chance. It is based upon the great treasure troves cherished from many generations of experience and implies that true happiness occurs whenever we are free of wishes and desires.



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SEEING OUR WORLD THROUGH DIFFERENT EYES

**Thoughts on Space and Time,
Abraham Lincoln, and God**

translated by James David Dunn

**What
Humanity
Deserves in
Times Like
These**