

**Opening
Art Exhibition “Happy Moments”
at Buchhaus Campe, Nuremberg**

When Christian Pietschiny asked me if I wanted to speak at the opening of “Happy Moments,” I said I would love to. I was supposed to talk about happiness and not about the art.

Happy Moments, happiness, what a topic! I’d like to begin with a famous quote. Happiness? That’s a topic where I know that I don’t know anything! But I’d like to speak from a few experiences that I have had with some of my closest family and friends.

It’s harder than ever to be happy these days!

I realized this again while reading in the newspaper recently that the most common cause of death in Germany is still heart attack. Three hundred thousand people die of heart attacks every year, and this figure has remained constant for the last 20 years. And this is all in spite of the constant progress in the fields of cardiology and cardiac death, and the continuing popularity of exercise, and the exploding number of marathons participants, and the growing trend of light eating. My personal experience with the 300,000 annual cardiac deaths is the following: We live in heartless times. Feelings such as love and happiness are widely made light of and commercialized. We indulge our needs for real love, nourishing happiness and a meaning in our lives less and less. Things are more important to us than people. We would rather spend our lives worrying about things than about people. It is more important to us to *have* more than to *be* more. But this way of life creates unhappiness.

It’s easier to be unhappy than to be happy!

Why does unhappiness persist? Happiness often appears inviting yet allusive, attractive yet dangerous. The things that we want often bring unhappiness, and the things we’re afraid of, happiness. For this reason, many people clutch to unhappiness. It seems bigger and more secure. Or, we confuse unhappiness with innocence, or consider it earned or a promise for coming happiness. That’s why many people condemn happiness as trivial, short-lived, or fleeting. Or they dread it as if it were guilt, treason, or sacrilege. Or as if it were a harbinger of unhappiness.

Happiness begins in yourself!

How does happiness come? It can only come when I’m in harmony with myself. And that is only possible when I’m in harmony with my ancestry; that is to say, with my entire family, living and deceased. To be in harmony with them means that I respect them for who they are, or were. That I give them a place in my heart and feel linked to them: to their good sides and to their bad sides, their good and bad deeds, their fates, their happiness, their unhappiness, and their deaths. Once I’m in harmony

with my entire ancestry, my soul opens up wide to accept everything that flows from them into me, and through me to others. Then I'm linked to something more important, older, and wider-reaching and am carried and guided by it. Then the happiness begins.

Happiness grows through others!

Where does happiness come from? It comes from other people. From those who I turn to and open myself up to, from those who I love and who are dear to me, and from those who I would be nothing without and could do nothing without. But above all it comes from those whose individuality challenges me, and from whose influence I can grow and prove myself, and who I in return influence with my own individuality.

People who are in harmony with themselves and with others are also in harmony with their own souls, their strength, and their possibilities. They are in harmony with their limits, their failures, and their guilt. People who live from their centers give happiness room. Then the happiness can grow.

Happiness is running after us!

When does happiness come? It cannot come as long as we waste away our limited lifetime on things; then we just feel emptiness afterwards. What do we learn from this? Nothing! We're always wasting more and more time on things; we're always running faster and faster after success, our careers, love, and happiness, and never catch up to it. My experience is this: happiness is running after us. If we would just stand still for once and calm down, it could catch up to us. Then it would stick with us. For a while at least. And then it would go away again. But we could calmly let it go because we would know that a new happiness would catch up to us again.

The man standing here before you is someone who sees it as a privilege that the scales have very often tipped deep into happiness during his life. Last week I had the opportunity of working with Bert Hellinger and learning through his eyes how people who are exhausted from terminal illness can experience a reconciliation with their approaching death as a deep happiness.

We are all so rich and so privileged that we have had the opportunity to reach such a nice outlook on life together today! Everyone brought something with them, especially the artist. A piece of everyone will remain here. And everyone will take something new home with them. What could be a greater happiness?