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## The Invention of 'Happiness'

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### An Early Modern Puzzle

This chapter starts with a puzzle. The word 'happiness' is absent from the first English version of Thomas More's *Utopia*, which was translated into English from the Latin in 1551 and again in 1556 by Ralph Robinson.<sup>1</sup> 'Happiness' remains absent from the next four editions of Robinson's translation, which was republished regularly to 1639.<sup>2</sup> But when Gilbert Burnet translated *Utopia* anew from the Latin, in 1684, he used 'happiness' no less than nineteen times.<sup>3</sup> What follows looks to explain and contextualize this striking semantic development. Or, to put that slightly differently, the chapter asks whether this change in the language of *Utopia*, and the apparent emergence of 'happiness' it suggests, was simply a peculiarity of translation or symptomatic of wider semantic and cultural change.

There are at least two reasons for asking these questions. The most obvious is to provide a deeper historical perspective on what can only be described as a modern obsession. A prevailing feature of contemporary western governments and corporations is their interest in understanding, measuring, and improving the happiness of populations. The political scientist William Davies has decried the emergence of what he calls the 'happiness industry', noting that, for leaders of big business, happiness 'in its various guises, is no longer some pleasant add-on to the more important business of making money'. Rather, as 'a measurable, visible, improvable entity, it has now penetrated the citadel of global economic management'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas More, *A Fruitful and Pleasant Work of the Best State of a Publyque Weale, and of the new Isle Called Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson (1551); *A Fruitful Pleasant, Witty Work, of the Best State of a Publyque Weale, and of the New Isle Called Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson (1556). In what follows all quotations from the 1556 version are taken from David Harris Sacks, ed., *Utopia* (Boston, Mass., 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas More, *A Most Pleasant, Fruitful, and Witty Wore, of the Best State of a Publyque Weale, and of the new Isle called Utopia*, translated by Ralph Robinson (1597); *Sir Thomas More's Utopia Containing, an Excellent, Learned, Witty, and Pleasant Discourse of the Best State of a Publike Weale, as it is found in the Government of the new Isle called Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson (1624); *The Common-wealth of Utopia containing a Learned and Pleasant Discourse of the Best State of a Publike Weale, as it is found in the Government of the new Isle called Utopia* trans. Ralph Robinson (1639).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Gilbert Burnet (1684).

<sup>4</sup> William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London, 2015), 3.

In the meantime, the perennial success of ‘how to be happy’ books like Paul Dolan’s *Happiness by Design* suggest that individuals are quite as interested in securing and improving their personal happiness.<sup>5</sup> Although Dolan and Davies differ in terms of their evaluation of ‘happiness’, they nevertheless share important and more representative assumptions. Both assume a stable concept of happiness as a state or condition that it is possible for individuals, institutions, and societies at once to engineer and attain and to measure and compare. And both trace the origins of this concept to the Enlightenment in general and the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham in particular.<sup>6</sup> As Davies tells it, Bentham had a ‘Eureka’ moment when he read these words from Joseph Priestley’s *Essay on Government* in a London coffeehouse in 1766: ‘The good and happiness of the members, that is, the majority of the members, of any state, is the great standard by which everything relating to that state must finally be determined’.<sup>7</sup> Or as the American Declaration of Independence put it a decade later, in 1776: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness’.<sup>8</sup>

This paper argues, in contrast, that the genesis of the modern concept of happiness was a century or two before Bentham read his Priestley or Thomas Jefferson scripted the Declaration. But taking the story back reveals, secondly, that ‘happiness’ has not always been as conceptually stable as contemporary commentators, or indeed historians, assume – that, indeed, it was only in the sixteenth century that the word began to acquire the meanings with which we associate it today. In exploring the conceptual mutability of ‘happiness’ the paper looks to contribute to what Keith Thomas describes as the ‘retrospective ethnography of early modern England’: ‘approaching the past in the way an anthropologist might approach some exotic society’ and identifying ‘some of the central values of the English people’ and ‘the ways in which these values were accepted, challenged and reformulated in response to the social and cultural developments of the time’.<sup>9</sup> But while the pursuit of such values is admirable in theory, Thomas’s own methodological caveats indicate that

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Dolan, *Happiness by Design: Finding Pleasure and Purpose in Everyday Life* (London, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> Dolan, *Happiness*, 6-7; Davies, *Happiness*, 13-39.

<sup>7</sup> Davies, *Happiness*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Jack, N. Rakove, *Annotated U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence* (Harvard, 2009), 73.

<sup>9</sup> Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2010), 2.

finding and fathoming them is much more difficult in practice. There is, as he notes, ‘the tangled inheritance of incompatible ideas’ to deal with (‘classical, Christian and chivalric’); the problem of relating ‘intellectually sophisticated works of theology and philosophy’ to ‘the desires and dilemmas of ordinary life’; the need to read printed texts in ‘context’; and, perhaps most importantly, the problem of deconstructing ‘the linguistic and conceptual resources’ that ‘inevitably constrained’ how contemporaries expressed themselves.<sup>10</sup> Thomas acknowledges these complexities in order to ignore them: his method of recovering early modern values is to provide what he terms a ‘collage of quotations’ and leave context, genre, discourse, and language largely to one side.<sup>11</sup> The method here, in contrast, is to focus less on values and more on the most basic resource of their expression: words. What follows is accordingly concerned in a quite precise and literal way with the word ‘happiness’ and what early modern writers may have meant when they used it.

Over the last few decades, semantic histories and studies of ‘keywords’ have become an established feature of early modern historiography.<sup>12</sup> This makes it all the more surprising, perhaps, that a word as important as happiness should have received so little attention from historians.<sup>13</sup> A recent exception is Paul Slack’s account of the development of English ‘political economy’ – a new way of thinking and writing about the world that emerged in the face of England’s quickening commercial growth and imperial expansion in the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> Slack’s premise is that ‘when authors of different kinds and in different contexts were beginning to use similar language, it is possible to argue that the intellectual equipment of an important sector of public opinion, that of the educated, was shifting’.<sup>15</sup> Happiness was one such piece of ‘intellectual equipment’. Slack accordingly notes that happiness was an ancient and ‘scholastic’ term that could be put to ‘various uses’, ‘could embody a number of sometimes contending

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, *Ends*, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976); Quentin Skinner, ‘The Idea of the Cultural Lexicon’ and ‘Retrospect: Studying Language and Conceptual Change’ in *Visions of Politics: Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), 158-188; ‘Towards a Social and Cultural History of Keywords and Concepts by the Early Modern Research Group,’ *History of Political Thought XXXI* (Autumn, 2010), 427-48; Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: the Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, Polity, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> It is absent from Williams’ original *Keywords* and Tony Bennett et al, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information & Material Progress in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 2015), 4-8, 112-14.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Slack, ‘Material Progress and the Challenge of Affluence in Seventeenth-Century England,’ *EcHR*, 2009, Vol. 62 (3), 592.

associations’, and traditionally lauded ‘the active pursuit of virtue and the common good’.<sup>16</sup> Around the middle of the seventeenth century, however, circumstances ‘conspired to accelerate its long evolution from a rare experience, the fruit of supreme virtue scarcely attainable in this world, to a commonplace mixture of physical well-being and psychological content’.<sup>17</sup> Crucial in this respect were the interventions of the Hartlib Circle, who chose happiness as one of the words with which to frame their projects for public improvement. Thereafter, Restoration political economists like John Houghton and Nicholas Barbon deployed ‘a shared vocabulary of happiness, in titles and texts, in order to validate the pursuit of consumer self-interest and national aggrandisement’.<sup>18</sup> The result was that by ‘one route or another, and under the cloak of the individual and collective pursuit of happiness, acquisitive and competitive appetites became as worthy of serious attention, if not quite so respectable, as material progress’.<sup>19</sup>

For Slack, then, the later seventeenth century was a pivotal moment in the history of happiness, with political economists taking the old word and giving it modern connotations. This paper takes a longer and broader view: it traces the use of ‘happiness’ in printed vernacular texts back to the fifteenth century and considers its adoption in more than just works of political economy. It takes its cue from the historical linguist Matti Rissanen’s important insight that the noun ‘happiness’ was not, in fact, a perennial term of contentment that early moderns simply inherited unquestionably from the ancient and medieval worlds.<sup>20</sup> Rissanen shows, rather, that ‘happiness’ was unavailable for prominent fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers to translate what subsequently became its Latin synonyms into the vernacular: *felicitas* (denoting worldly contentment) or *beatitudo* (denoting spiritual fulfillment and redemption). While Geoffrey Chaucer resorted to his own coinage – ‘welefulnes’ – to translate *felicitas*, the translator and Augustinian canon John Walton preferred to borrow the French ‘felicity’; and both writers used ‘blissfulness’ (subsequently ‘blessedness’) for *beatitudo*.<sup>21</sup> Indeed according to Rissanen it was not until the middle of the sixteenth century that ‘happiness’ even appeared in printed English texts and only after 1600 that it began to be used with any consistency.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Slack, ‘The Politics of Consumption and England’s Happiness in the Later Seventeenth Century’, *EHR*, June 2007, Vol.122 (497), 629-30.

<sup>17</sup> Slack, *Invention*, 111–12; ‘Material Progress’, 589-90.

<sup>18</sup> Slack, ‘Politics of Consumption’, 629.

<sup>19</sup> Slack, ‘Material Progress’, 592.

<sup>20</sup> Matti Rissanen, ‘In Search of Happiness: *Felicitas* and *Beatitudo* in Early English Boethius Translations,’ *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 31 (1997), 237–48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

If Rissanen is right, then any adaptation of ‘happiness’ after 1650 has to be understood as part of a longer process of linguistic and semantic change that saw the word quite rapidly supplant ‘fairly well-established loan word’ – felicity – and ‘native derivatives’ like blessedness.<sup>23</sup> It transpires that his analysis is mostly, though not entirely, accurate. Although ‘happiness’ was absent from the lexicon of Chaucer and Walton *circa* 1410, by 1473 William Caxton was able to use the word in his translation of Raoul Lefevre’s French *History of Troy*, one of the very first texts to be printed in English.<sup>24</sup> That it was used in vernacular printed texts thereafter – albeit only very occasionally until the 1550s – suggests that ‘happiness’ was not absent from the first English translations of *Utopia* because the vocabulary was unknown to Robinson, as might be inferred from Rissanen’s account, but because ‘happiness’ was not yet known to mean all the things it did by 1684, when Burnet rendered More’s text into ‘more Modern English’.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, closer consideration of the semantics of happiness *circa* 1550 reveals them to be quite as dynamic and formative as those *circa* 1650. This is because it was only in the early sixteenth century that ‘happiness’ began to accumulate the concepts and associations that enabled early Enlightenment authors like Burnet to give the word paradigmatic status.

What follows accordingly explains why Gilbert Burnet was able to turn *Utopia* into a book about happiness. In telling this story the paper divides into three sections. The first considers the conceptual formation of ‘happiness’ up to the 1550s, showing how a medieval term rooted in the concept of ‘hap’ acquired a range of concepts and meanings integral to Reformation and Renaissance culture: how happiness turned, in effect, from a relatively simple noun into the ‘complex word’ beloved by Burnet.<sup>26</sup> Section two then provides a rough and ready quantification of what happens to the word after 1559 by using digital technology to trace its appearance in printed texts and titlepages. The rapid ascent of ‘happiness’ into a seventeenth-century commonplace explains, finally, Burnet’s predilection for the word.

### **The Conceptual Formation of Happiness**

‘Happiness’ derived from the Old Norse noun ‘hap’, meaning luck or fortune, was probably in use by the mid-fifteenth century. Before the 1550s the semantics of ‘happiness’ were largely informed by this provenance: the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>24</sup> Raoul Lefevre, *Here Beginneth the Volume Intituled and Named the Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*, trans. William Caxton (1473), 10r.

<sup>25</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, A7r.

<sup>26</sup> William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (Cambridge Mass., 1989).

addition of the English suffix ‘ness’ to the adjective ‘happy’ made for a word that indicated the quality and state of hap (i.e. fortune) or the circumstances and phenomena that exemplified such a condition. It was precisely on this basis that Caxton first used ‘happiness’ in print in 1473, the character Saturn lamenting (on receiving an unfavourable prophecy from Delphi) that, even if ‘all my life hath been nourished in happiness’, he would now ‘be called & said unhappy’.<sup>27</sup> Likewise the text that used ‘happiness’ most often in the hundred years after 1473 reproduced the same semantics. Thomas Hoby’s translation of Castiglione’s *The Courtier* (1561) used ‘happiness’ twenty times, and as Hoby has an interlocutor note in the second book:

For since ill is contrary to good, and good to ill, it is (in a manner) necessary by contrary and a certain counterpoise the one should ... strengthen the other, and where the one wants or increases, the other to want or increase also: because no contrary is without his other contrary. Who knows not that there should be no Justice in the world, were it not for wrongs? No stoutness of courage, were there not fainthearted? Nor continence, were there not incontinency? Nor health, were there not sickness? Nor truth, were there not lies? Nor happiness, were there not mischances?<sup>28</sup>

A systematic survey of ‘happiness’ in printed texts between the translations of Caxton and Robinson confirms the pervasiveness of ‘hap’ as the root meaning of happiness. Of the 74 hits for ‘happiness’ between 1473 and 1559 it has been possible to find and contextualize 61 of its uses in the first editions of texts (Figure 1).<sup>29</sup> Across this sample, ‘happiness’ denoted hap twenty-four times (40 per cent), referring to luck as diverse as ‘worldly fortune’, the Immaculate Conception, or the spoonfuls of ‘happiness’ and ‘unhap’ ladled onto cities by pagan Gods.<sup>30</sup> But as well as signifying hap, between the 1470s and the 1550s ‘happiness’ was increasingly used to do new semantic work, accumulating connotations that it had not previously possessed, at least in print.

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<sup>27</sup> Lefevre, *Troy*, 10r.

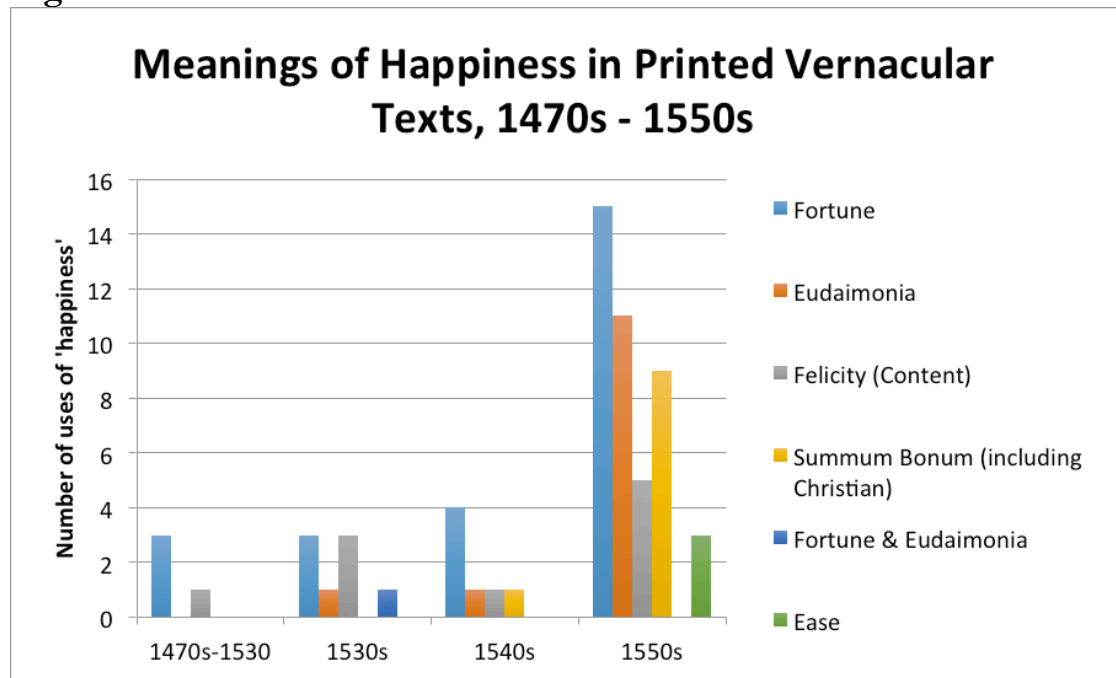
<sup>28</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby (1561), L2v.

<sup>29</sup> The hits were located on EEBO on 14.09.2015.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Legrand, *The Book of Good Manners* (1487), D3v; Gaia Servadio, *Renaissance Woman* (New York, 2005), 193; Eric L. Saak, ‘Augustine in the Later Middle Ages to the Reformation’ in Mark Vessey, ed., *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2012), 473. Desiderius Erasmus, *The First Tome or Volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the New Testament*, translated by Nicholas Udall (1548), 24. Robert Dick Sider, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians: Volume 42, Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1984), xxx. William Hugh, *The Troubled Man’s Medicine* (1646), C4r; Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), 176.



Figure 1



The most pervasive of these was the classical/Romance notion of *felicitas/felicitate*. Given the synonymy between the two terms, this was, perhaps, hardly unexpected: just as the Latin concept could intimate degrees of fortune as well as contentment, so the realization of hap necessarily implied felicitous feelings. More puzzling is why ‘happiness’ was needed at all. As Rissanen notes, by the end of the fifteenth century ‘felicity’ was a well-established loan word in English and English authors before the 1550s almost invariably used ‘felicity’ to connote felicitous feelings and experiences, be they material, emotional, corporeal, or psychological.

It is interesting, therefore, that the first use of ‘happiness’ for ‘felicity’ occurred in a translation of Guillaume Tardif’s *L’Art de Bien Mourir*, itself rendered from an unidentified Latin text.<sup>31</sup> The *ars moriendi* (art of dying) genre was extremely popular in late medieval literary culture and Tardif’s text was translated at least twice from the French into English in quick succession: in 1505 in London by the productive Andrew Chertsey in *The Craft to Lyve Well and Dye Well*, and in 1503 in Paris in *The Book Intytuled The Art of Good Lyyng [and] Good Deyng*, which is attributed to Thomas Lewington.<sup>32</sup> Along with the printer Wynkyn de Worde, Chertsey produced

<sup>31</sup> *L’Art de Bien Mourir*, trans. Guillaume Tardif (printed Antoine Vérard, Paris, 1498).

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Chertsey, *The Craft to Live Well and to Die well*, (Westminster?: Wynkyn de Worde, 1505); Thomas Lewington, *The Book Intituled The Art of Good Living [and] Good Dying* (Paris, 1503).



an accurate copy that was popular enough to go into several editions. The ‘Lewington’ copy, in contrast, is such a bad translation that Alice Hamilton has dubbed it ‘vile’.<sup>33</sup> Certainly the mistakes, confusions, and lack of grammatical structure suggest a translator unused to writing in English. The sentence ‘Helas comme dure departie de souuerain bien en souuerain mal de toute felicie en toute misere/ De pardurable paix en enternelle & abominable confusion’ is a case in point.<sup>34</sup> Part of a longer meditation on the contrasting fates of the saved and the damned, Chertsey rendered the passage ‘Alas how hard is this world depart ye from sovereign wealth into sovereign ill from all felicity into all misery from perdurable peace into eternal and abominable confusion’.<sup>35</sup> ‘Lewington’, in comparison, came up with ‘Helas what one heard departing of the sovereign good in the sovereign evil of all happiness in all wretchedness of everlasting pains in everlasting and abominable confusion’.<sup>36</sup> Without the Tardif and Chertsey versions as prompts, that is, this first printed use of ‘happiness’ as felicity makes very little sense. More intriguingly, that ‘Lewington’ conjoined ‘happiness’ and ‘wretchedness’ – words derived from Norse and Saxon – instead of ‘felicity’ and ‘misery’ – French and Anglo-Norman words – points, perhaps, to an attempt to render the text into a spoken rather than literary English vernacular.

That it took another thirty years for ‘happiness’ to translate felicity again suggests that the cultural impact of the Lewington copy was minimal, at least in printed discourse. When it did happen, it was in translations of humanist and reformist literature published in the 1530s. In these instances, ‘happiness’ was used in conjunction with ‘felicity’ rather than instead of it, perhaps to make a literary and so potentially difficult word explicable for a vernacular audience. Thus an edition of Erasmus’s *Declamatio in laudem nobilissimae artis medicinae*, commissioned by the experienced printer Robert Redman in 1537, ridiculed the popular sentiment that –

He that lives after the rules of physic lives wretchedly. As though it were an happiness and felicity, the body to be swollen and stretched out with surfeiting, to be brasted with the pleasure of the body, to wax foggyshe with drinking of good ale, & to be sepulte and drowned in sleep.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Alice Hamilton, ‘Orthodoxy in Late Fifteenth Century Glass in Leicester’, *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 55, 1979-80, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Tardif, *L’Art de Bien Mourir*, A2v.

<sup>35</sup> Chertsey, *The Craft to Live Well*, Aa1r.

<sup>36</sup> Lewington, *The Art of Good Living*, N2v.

<sup>37</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Declamatio in laudem nobilissimae artis medicinae, A Declamation in the Praise and Commendation of the Most High and Excellent Science of Physic* (1537), C4r; Alexandra Gillespie, ‘Redman, Robert (d. 1540)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*,

A year later a translation of Martin Luther's *Exposition Upon the Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary* contrasted 'the felicity or happiness of this world' with the remission of sins.<sup>38</sup> Translated by John Hollybush (possibly a pseudonym of Miles Coverdale), it also asked the reader 'what tongue can utter the felicity & happiness of such as have this knowledge, that John is come to give ... that [God] forgives them their sins'.<sup>39</sup> It was only at the end of the decade that the schoolmaster, grammarian, reformer, and translator John Palsgrave – who was also a friend of Erasmus – used 'happiness' without felicity alongside it. In his Latin/English edition of *The Comedy of Acolastus*, Palsgrave carefully used 'happiness' to translate the Latin 'foeliciter'; but he also specified the kind of felicity that the happiness took: 'Now at the last do I feel and perceive, how great a happiness or quiet (it is) to a father to have his children by all things and in every condition obedient (unto him)'.<sup>40</sup>

Whether these moves served to expand the meaning of the word in every day speech or simply acknowledged the ordinary sense of the term as it had developed outwith printed discourse is difficult to say. However, two other concepts to migrate to 'happiness' by the 1550s offer more concrete evidence that the word became an important conduit of classical and patristic ideas into vernacular and spoken English. These were the Greek notion of *eudaimonia* and the Latin sense of *summum bonum*: on the one hand, the realization and fulfillment of perfect and 'natural' selfhood; on the other hand, the overarching ideal – or 'sovereign good' – upon which the good life, the good person, and the good afterlife is based. These concepts, of course, have intricate histories within the realms of western philosophy and Christian thought: the concern here is less with their substantive appropriation and definition in different intellectual traditions (whether Stoic or Epicurean ethics, for example, or Augustinian or Calvinist theology) and more with when 'happiness' became a word used to render the states so conceived and described.<sup>41</sup>

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Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23261>, accessed 19 Sept 2015].

<sup>38</sup> Martin Luther, *Exposition Upon the Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Called Magnificat*, translated by John Hollybush (1538), M3r.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, N6v.

<sup>40</sup> John Palsgrave, *Joannis Palsgravi Londoniensis, Ecphrasis Anglica in Comoediam Acolasti The Comedy of Acolastus* (1540), C1r, C3r.

<sup>41</sup> I'd like to thank Philip Reynolds for discussing these issues and for his essay 'The Biblical Definitions of the Pursuit of Happiness', posted at [www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-reynolds/the-pursuit-of-what\\_b\\_781092.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-reynolds/the-pursuit-of-what_b_781092.html).

The first transparent appropriation of happiness for these kinds of conceptual purposes was by Thomas Elyot in his translation of Plutarch's *The Education and Bringing Up of Children*, published in 1532.<sup>42</sup> Elyot quite deliberately wrenched 'happiness' away from 'fortune' to make it the outcome of a more calculated process of education and self-improvement. This depended, in turn, on taking the adjective 'happy' to connote felicity – contentment – as well as luck, and using 'unhappiness' to indicate its deficit. This was all done in the chapter on 'The inconveniences which happen for default of learning, and the comparison of learning to other qualities'. Here Elyot had Plutarch promise 'to shew what happens often to these monstrous fathers ... when they have lewdly and unhappily nourished and brought up their children' to 'despise all wholesome doctrine & vertuous order of living' for the sake of 'inordinate pleasures' and 'servile and abominable voluptuosities & vices'.<sup>43</sup> Elyot was in no doubt that the subsequent 'mischief and unhappiness' of children would leave parents 'continually in their minds tormented'. But he also took the opportunity to make the broader Platonic point about the relative merits of different kinds of felicity: honour, health, and so on.<sup>44</sup> It transpired that, 'Generally two special things be in the nature of man which be good, that is to say, knowledge and reason.' To clinch the point, Elyot translated Plutarch citing Socrates –

For when Gorgias the Rhetorician (as I remember me) demanded of him, if he thought the king of Persia to be happy: I know not said he, how much he hath of vertue and learning. As who says, in those things stands happiness, and not in the treasure and gifts of Fortune.<sup>45</sup>

The cord between happiness and hap was broken.

Plutarch's Platonism (as translated by Elyot) privileged the life of the mind over the material and sensory world as the source of happiness. Another early use of 'happiness' as a deliberative rather than haphazard process instead drew upon an Aristotelian framework for understanding the nature of the felicitousness for which people should strive. This was by John Wilkinson in his translation of the abridged Italian version of Aristotle's

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<sup>42</sup> Plutarch, *The Education or Bringing Up of Children, Translated out of Plutarch by Sir Thomas Elyot* (1532).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, L5v.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, L5v.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, L5r.

*Ethics* for Edward Stanley, the third earl of Derby, in 1547.<sup>46</sup> As well as the first vernacular rendition of Aristotle, Wilkinson's translation is interesting because 'happiness' is not completely denuded of hap. It is 'beatitude' that mostly bears the burden of ideal felicity throughout the text, which is in turn closely linked to 'vertue'.<sup>47</sup> Happiness, in contrast, is only used twice. On the first occasion it was still linked to fortune – a fortune that, importantly, was itself indicative of divine will: 'The happiness of the man that is well fortun'd, is so much to be praised, as a thing sent from God, and is so much to be honored & commended'.<sup>48</sup> But in the second instance, 'happiness' as the ideally felicitous state becomes more explicit, with just laws – rather than God's will – enabling virtuous actions. As Wilkinson put it: 'The law is just, and all things of the law be just, for it commands the works of vertue: which works make a man happy, and conserves the works of happiness in him, and forbids all evil in cities and countries, and commands unto good men great works'.<sup>49</sup>

While these developments were important, it was the 1550s that marked the pivotal moment in the semantic formation of 'happiness'. Perhaps most importantly in terms of its subsequent ascent, John Harington used the term three times in his 1550 translation of Cicero's book of friendship.<sup>50</sup> Harington wrote his translation of this iconic Renaissance text as a political prisoner alongside leading public figures like Thomas Seymour, the Dudley brothers, and Thomas Smith; and he dedicated it to the influential Protestant patroness Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk.<sup>51</sup> If this gives some clue as to the scribal community to whom his choice of language made sense, then so does his philosophy of translation. Harington explained that 'for lack of a fine and flowing style, I have used the plain and common speech'. But he also 'conferred with the Latin author, and so by the known well learned to be corrected'.<sup>52</sup> For Harington this combination of vernacular English and original Latin meant –

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<sup>46</sup> John Wilkinson, *The Ethiques of Aristotle, That is to Say, Precepts of good Behauoute [sic] and Perfect Honesty, Now Newly translated into English* (1547). The Italian translation has been attributed to Brunetto Latini and also Taddeo Alderotti.

<sup>47</sup> See for example *Ibid.*, A6r–B2v.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, B1r. In his 1542 *Bibliotheca Eliotae* Thomas Elyot likewise translated *beatè* as 'happily, fortunately'.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, E8v.

<sup>50</sup> John Harington, *The Book of Friendship of Marcus Tullie Cicero* (1550). Harington claimed in the preface to have copied the French translation by Jean Collin and an original version.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, A2r–A3v; Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013), 90–100; Ruth Hughey, *John Harington of Stepney* (Ohio, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> Harington, *Book of Friendship*, A3r.

a new spirit and life was given it, and many parts seemed as it were with a new coat arrayed, as well for the orderly placing and eloquently changing of some words, as also for the plainly opening and learnedly amending of the sense, which in the French translation was somewhat darkened, and by me for lack of knowledge in many places missed.<sup>53</sup>

Whether Harrington was thinking explicitly of ‘happiness’ is unclear (though it perhaps articulates the same thinking behind the less successful Lewington translation); but his use of the word is striking and also unprecedented in translations of Cicero. First, Harrington intimated ‘happiness’ as the ultimate felicity, noting how all friendships are vulnerable to rivalries, rancour, and even malice, and suggesting that ‘These many things so hang over friendship, even as one should say, by destiny, that he [said] to escape all these, he thought it to be not only a parte of wisdom, but also of very happiness’.<sup>54</sup> Second, he echoed Palsgrave in suggesting what constitutes felicity: ‘For they say, quietness is the chief point of happiness, which the mind cannot enjoy’ if it is worrying about the problems of too many friends.<sup>55</sup> But most strikingly, Harrington unhesitatingly used happiness to depict the *summum bonum* and the good life, both of which were closely linked to virtuous friendship and which he regarded as ‘natures chief happiness’ and the key to ‘the happy life’.<sup>56</sup>

Aside from now figuring in English Ciceronian discourse, three other features of the word’s use during the 1550s anticipate the future popularity of ‘happiness’. The first was the consolidation of ‘happiness’ as an Erasmian term, most emphatically in Robert Barrant’s translation of Erasmus’s annotations of Cato’s *Precepts* in 1553.<sup>57</sup> Arranged as wise epigrams with pithy explanatory glosses, the short text contained no less than eight uses of ‘happiness’ – usually to denote fortune, occasionally in a more complex sense of felicity and eudaimonia.<sup>58</sup> In the meantime the Erasmian Richard Sherrey published the first English handbook on how to write figures of speech.<sup>59</sup> In it he illustrated the technique of *enumeration* with an account of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., A4v.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 53v-53r.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Barrant, *Precepts of Cato with Annotations of D. Erasmus of Rotterdam Very Profitable for All* (1553).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Barrant, *Precepts* V6r; N2v-N2r.

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas Orme, ‘Sherrey, Richard (b. c.1505)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25389>, accessed 13 Sept 2015]

Cicero's defeat of the Catilinarian conspirators.<sup>60</sup> Sherrey explained how 'the consul did quickly smell out by his foresight, and by his singular vigilance sought them out, by his high prudence espied them, by his incredible eloquence convinced them, and by his grave authority repressed them, by force of arms subdued them, & with great happiness took them quite away'.<sup>61</sup> Second, in a related development 'happiness' was used much more regularly to depict Christian blessedness; indeed it was Sherrey who (also in 1550) equated 'the life in Paradise' with 'the happiness that [man] had lost'.<sup>62</sup> Likewise the Marian martyr John Bradford advised his audience to ask God 'to make my body such a companion, or rather a minister of godliness, to my soul, in this present life, that in the life to come it may partake with the same everlasting happiness by Jesus Christ our Lord'.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, it was in the 1550s that 'happiness' was explicitly used to describe the aspirations of societies and commonwealths as well as individuals. This had been intimated in Wilkinson's Aristotelian connection of happiness and law; it was developed much more clearly by the lawyer and translator William Bavande in his 1559 translation of the German humanist Johannes Ferrarius's *De Republica Bene Instituenda*.<sup>64</sup> Bavande joined with Cicero and Ferrarius in noting 'the wealth of Citizens, the safety of Cities, and the quietness and happiness of mans life' were all established by laws'.<sup>65</sup> He also justified all 'studies of humanity' on the grounds that they 'have always[s] from the beginning helped common weals ... because no man can more perfectly reason and decide of the vertue and happiness which we seek in the society of men, then he that hath the knowledge of such things as belong to god and man'.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, he did so as a man embedded in the literary culture of the Inns of Court, suggesting that by the beginning of 1560s the semantically complex sense of 'happiness' was normative within an extremely influential community of translators, authors and readers.<sup>67</sup>

Bavande's translation marked, in fact, a kind of watershed in the vernacular formation of 'happiness'. Bavande used the word relatively often

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Sherrey, *A Treatise of Schemes [and] Tropes very Profitable for the Better Understanding of Good Authors* (1550), E1r.

<sup>61</sup> Sherrey, *A Treatise of Schemes*, Er.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Sherrey, *A Very fruitful Exposition Upon the Six Paper of Saint John Divided into. x. Homilies or Sermons: written in Latin by the Right Excellent Clarke [sic] Master Johann Brenz* (1550), F5v.

<sup>63</sup> John Bradford, *A Godly Meditation Composed by the Faithful* (1559), B1r.

<sup>64</sup> William Bavande, *A Work of Johannes Ferrarius Montanus, Touching the Good Ordering of a Common weal* (1559).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 49r.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>67</sup> Jessica Winston, *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Politics, and Law at the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Oxford, 2016).

– ten times in all – and he did so in all the senses that had been introduced over the previous decades *aside from hap*. Thus Bavande not only used it to describe a collective and political aspiration, but also distinguished between ‘heavenly life, and true happiness’ (Christian ‘blessedness’) and the ‘civil’ happiness (‘felicity’) that was achievable on earth. In particular, he used ‘happiness’ to describe the alternative ancient philosophies regarding the good life and ideal felicity before the ‘true happiness’ of Christianity was made apparent to the world: that some ancients ‘acompnt the wealth of the world & outward goods, happiness’, while others ‘do place happiness, in the goods of the mind.’<sup>68</sup> Along with evangelical proponents of ‘true happiness’, these ‘Philosophers’ were to have a profound influence on the sensibilities of educated Englishmen and women over the next hundred years or more; and ‘happiness’ was one of the words through which they did so.

### **The Rise of Happiness**

‘Happiness’ did not appear fully formed in early modern English, as historians and social scientists tend to assume. Rather it was only in the seventy or so years after Caxton’s first use of the term in print that ‘happiness’ began to accrue meanings beyond its medieval sense of hap: felicity, eudaimonia, and summum bonum (Christian and classical). It was in vernacular translations of reformist and humanist literature that this semantic expansion occurred: this was a word that, in its newer manifestations, was associated with Luther, Elyot, Plutarch, Aristotle, and, most importantly, Erasmus and Cicero. And it was through the energies of influential scribal communities that these translations occurred – whether Harrington and his network of prestigious Protestant prisoners and patrons, or Bavande and the legal fraternities of the Inns of Court. That in these early decades authors often used ‘happiness’ in the name of ‘plain English’ and in texts designed to disseminate unfamiliar ideas to vernacular audiences suggests that the word was more ‘popular’ and recognizable than its literary and classical equivalents. Certainly ‘happiness’ translated ‘felicity’ in Robert Cawdrey’s dictionary of ‘hard usual English words, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or French &c ... with the interpretation thereof by plain English words, gathered for the benefit and help of all unskillful persons’.<sup>69</sup> But in using ‘happiness’ as a conceptual conduit the same authors could not help but turn the simple designation of hap into a complex and multivalent term.

It is this combination of popular purchase and semantic complexity that helps explain the rise of happiness after 1550. The pace and scale of this

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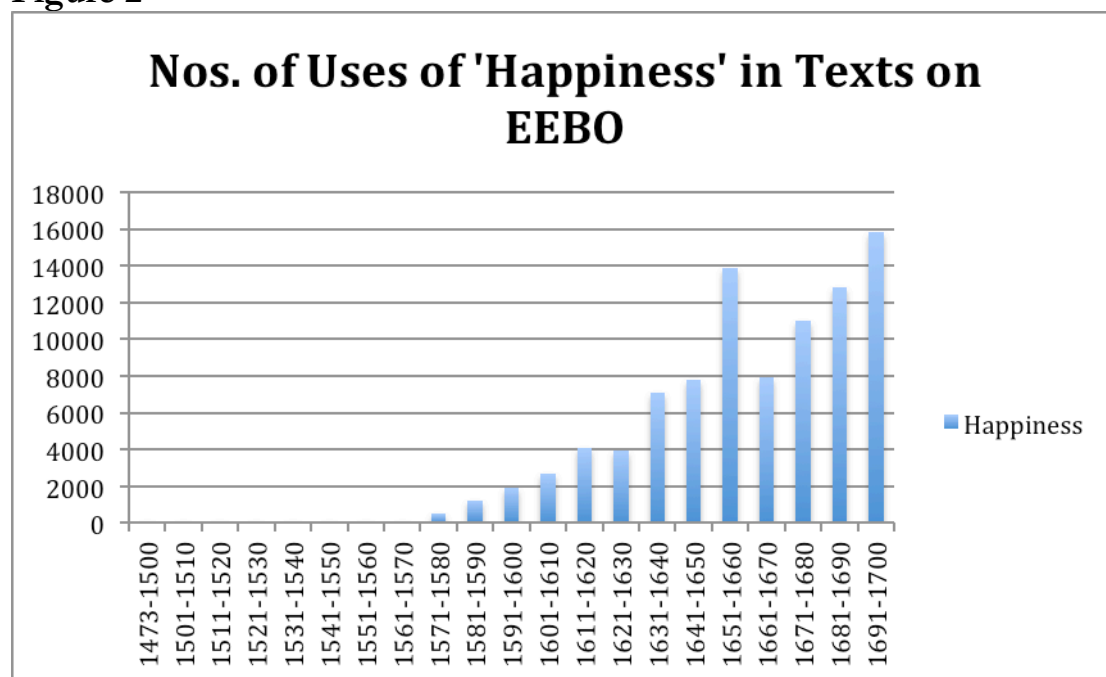
<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabetical* (1609), Titlepage.



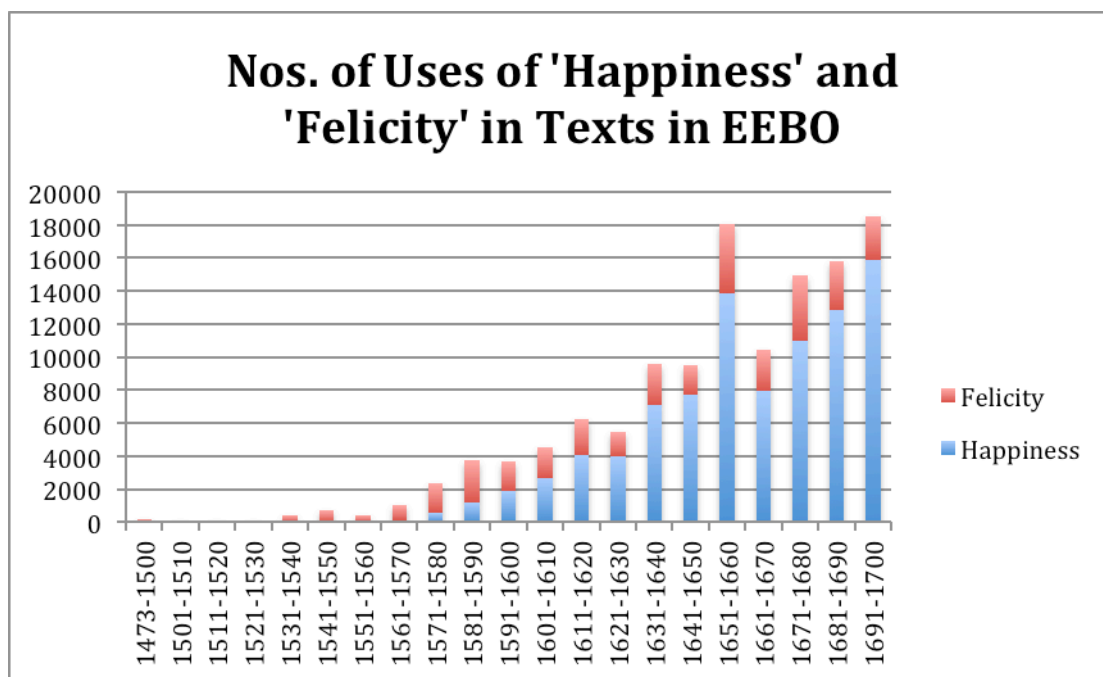
rise can be gauged simply through the number of ‘hits’ in texts catalogued on *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) made searchable by Text Creation Partnership (TCP) – a crude and in some respects problematic method of quantification, but indicative nonetheless. Though ignored by Robinson and his citizen readers in 1551 and 1556, the term doubled in use in vernacular print in the 1550s (to 37 hits) and then more than doubled per decade until the 1590s, to 1913 hits (see Figure 2). By the seventeenth century happiness was clearly an established fixture in printed texts, with significant increases in the number of hits in the 1610s, 1630s, and 1650s, and a notable dip in the 1660s.

**Figure 2**



This story of a tardy but ultimately significant take off is evident when hits of ‘happiness’ are compared with those of ‘felicity’. Figure 3 confirms that for most of the sixteenth century ‘felicity’ appeared much more frequently in printed texts than ‘happiness’: it has 162 hits on EEBO-TCP even before 1500, 699 hits by the 1540s, and a peak of 2512 hits in the 1580s. In the 1590s, however, ‘happiness’ overtook ‘felicity’ for the first time and remained the commonplace term of preference thereafter, so that by the 1650s ‘happiness’ has 13850 hits compared to felicity’s 4243, and by the 1690s the difference is 15862 hits compared to 2692.

**Figure 3**



Appearances of 'happiness' and 'felicity' on printed titlepages corroborate this more general pattern. The vocabulary of titlepages offer a more precise index of usage than general surveys of all text in that the searches tend to be more reliable, comprehensive, and easier to contextualize. They are also more suggestive of a word's cultural purchase, because titles can be expected to resonate with and speak to anticipated audiences.<sup>70</sup> Figure 4 shows that until the 1570s a few titlepages contained felicity (as many as seven in the 1540s) and none happiness. This then switched, though the number of titles emblazoned with either word remained relatively small. However, in the 1610s the number of titlepages featuring happiness increased significantly, to 51, and the 1640s saw a peak of 136. While the term receded somewhat from view thereafter, the word was clearly much more visible after 1660 than before 1640. Of course, these increasing appearances of happiness in part reflected the general increase in the amount of printed material produced over the period. It is therefore instructive to consider the number of titlepages featuring 'felicity' or 'happiness' as a percentage of all surviving catalogued texts.

**Figure 4**

<sup>70</sup> Withington, *Society*, 8–9.

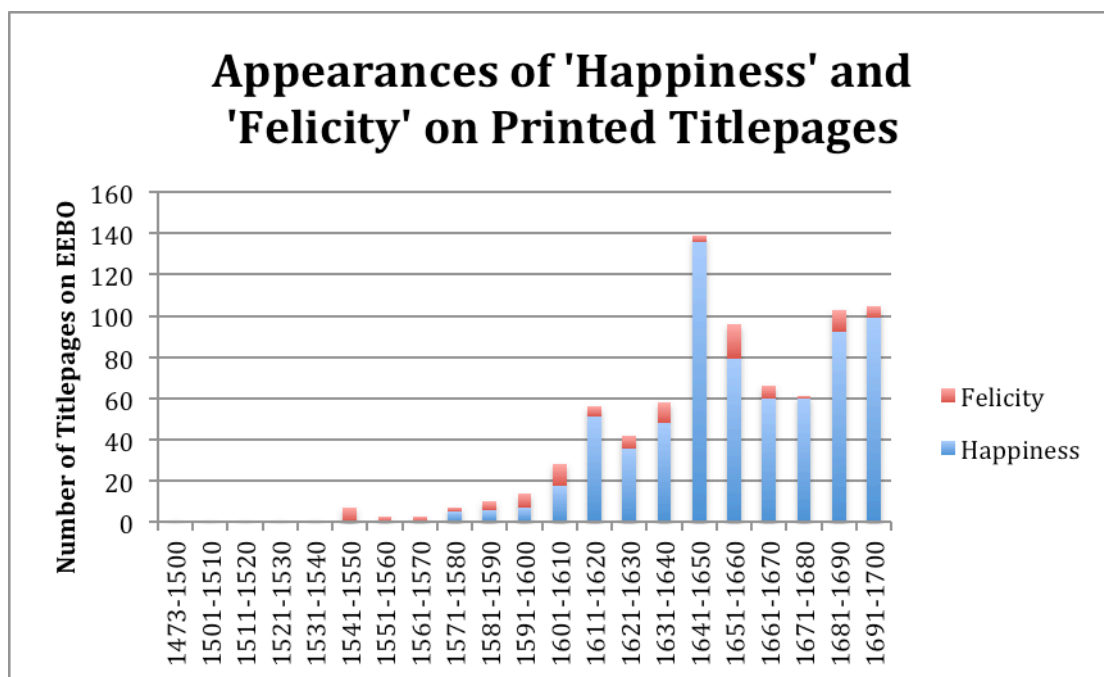
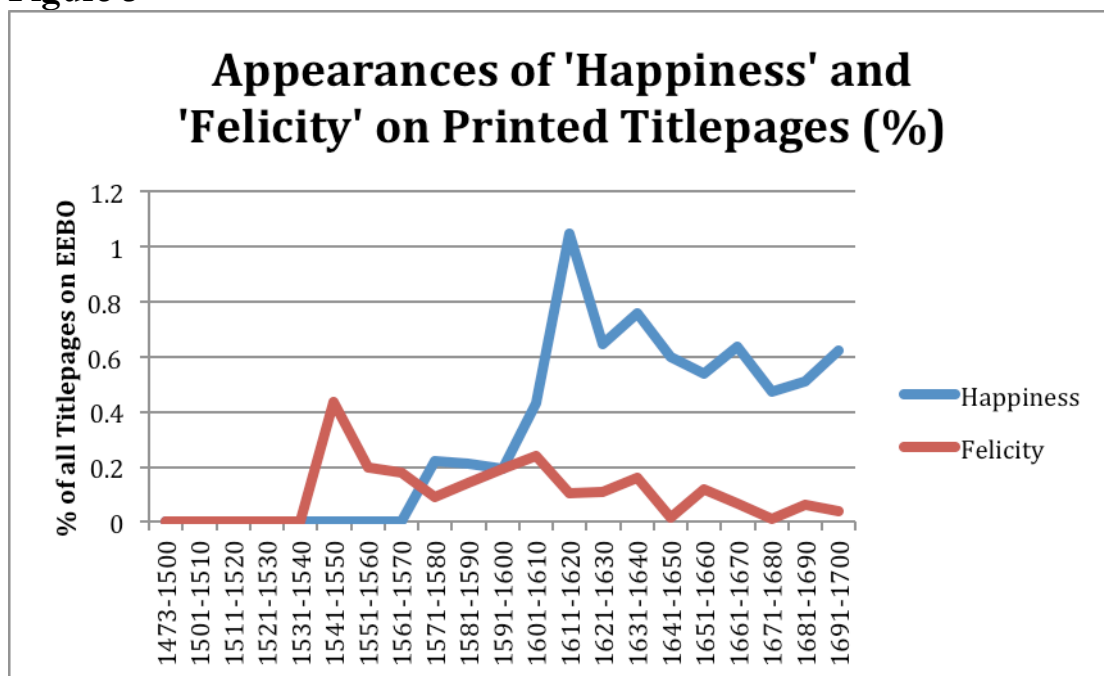


Figure 5 shows that, proportionally, it was the 1610s rather than the 1640s or 1650s that was the peak decade for happiness on titlepages, with just over one per cent of all titles bearing the word, and that the word then appeared proportionally less often over the course of the seventeenth century.

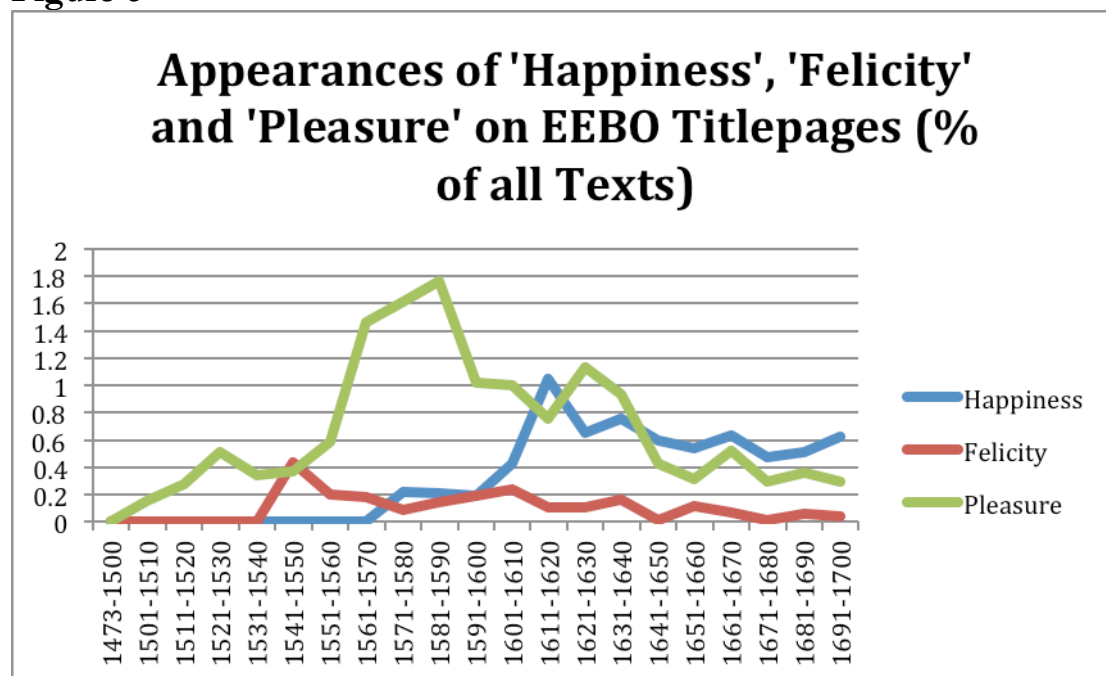
Figure 5



This trend is also evident when 'pleasure' is put into the mix, Figure 6 nicely summarising the key features of happiness's diachronic history: that the word only began to become a regular fixture in printed discourse after 1550;

that it had superseded felicity by the 1590s; that it was established as a commonplace of printed discourse by the 1610s; and that it had overtaken a perennial affinity term like 'pleasure' by the second half of the seventeenth century.

Figure 6



### Happiness and *Utopia*

On the face of it, then, it seems fairly obvious why Burnet made *Utopia* in part a book about happiness and Robinson did not. In the 1550s 'happiness' was a rare term, at least in print, which was only just acquiring its modern meanings; by the 1680s it was a commonplace with a host of potential connotations beyond the sense of hap. But, as always, there is more to it than that. First, Burnet was a writer particularly enamoured with 'happiness'; indeed Table 1 shows that it is difficult to find an author who used the word in print more than Burnet during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As such, it is perhaps entirely predictable that he should be generous with his use of 'happiness' when rendering *Utopia* into 'modern English'.

**Table 1**      **Gilbert Burnet's Use of 'Happiness' Compared**<sup>71</sup>

<i>Author</i>	<i>Uses of Felicity</i>	<i>Uses of Happiness</i>
Thomas Elyot	51	1
Ralph Robinson	12	0
Cicero (16 <sup>th</sup> C)	44	18
Cicero (17 <sup>th</sup> C)	18	137
Thomas Morton	10	226
Thomas Gainsford	26	110
Francis Rous	101	383
Samuel Hartlib	10	61
Thomas Hobbes	43	26
John Locke	5	108
Gilbert Burnet	31	331
Nicholas Barbon	0	0
John Houghton	0	4
William Petty	1	4

Second, there is the nature of *Utopia* itself. This was a place, or no-place, that was meant to embody reason and wisdom: the characterization of its government, its customs, and the behaviour of its citizens was a critical experiment in reflective thought pushed to its logical and sometimes playful extreme. For Robinson in the 1550s, More's imaginary society would have signified the antithesis of happiness. *Utopia* represented the triumph of man over capricious fortune: Utopians would never have heard of the term. Burnet, in contrast, inherited a different sense of happiness: a complex word that, while rooted in the stem hap, had transmuted into a term of 'art' or 'science'. Because of both its accretion of classical and patristic concepts and its assimilation into renaissance and reformation discourses – Erasmian, Ciceronian, Aristotelian; Lutheran, Calvinist, and eventually Latitudinarian – 'happiness' became a state or condition to be calculated and pursued rather than the outcome of chance.

There is no space to trace in detail the nature of this transition here: such an undertaking would require excavating most aspects of English print culture from the 1560s on. Its extent can be evidenced, however, by three texts that took 'happiness' as their organizing paradigm. In his *A Treatise of*

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<sup>71</sup> The table is based on hits on EEBO-TCP and compares Burton against a range of authors: those who used the word unusually often in print; political economists discussed by Slack; exponents of the new philosophy compared to sixteenth-century humanists; and sixteenth and seventeenth century translations of Cicero.

*the Threefold State of Man*, published in 1596, the Calvinist Thomas Morton explained to his readers that ‘we have rather applied our style to the capacity of the simple, and the good of all’.<sup>72</sup> This involved using ‘happiness’ in its various conceptual guises in order to explain humanity’s progression from original innocence (or happiness) to sinfulness after the Fall (worldly happiness and misery) to redemption in Christ (eternal happiness). The result was a popular piece of Calvinist theology that used ‘happiness’ 184 times. Twenty-two years later, in *The Glory of England*, the popular writer Thomas Gainsford adapted an Aristotelian sense of ‘happiness’ as the concept with which to compare national wellbeing on a global scale. Taking the wise rule of Solomon as the benchmark in governmental efficacy, Gainsford established that of all the world’s nations it was England that came closest to matching the Old Testament kingdom’s ability to engender ‘sufficiency and fullness of happiness’.<sup>73</sup> In making the argument, Gainsford used the word 61 times. These Calvinist and Aristotelian discourses merged and mutated in the writings of Francis Rous. Born in 1580 and dying in 1659, Rous bridged the late Elizabethan and Cromwellian eras and, as a Spenserian poet and author of the standard seventeenth-century version of the *Psalms of David*, spoke to England’s humanist and evangelical cultures.<sup>74</sup> His treatise on *The Art of Happiness* – published in 1619 and 1631 – used the word 221 times. In it he argued for a classically and spiritually informed sense of *summum bonum* over the worldly felicities of honours, riches, and worldly pleasures (while confirming, in the process, that worldly pleasures could be a happiness all the same). And like Morton and Gainsford, Rous served notice that whatever the ‘contentation of our desires’ might be, people and institutions should be ‘instrumental towards your own happiness’, as Samuel Hartlib urged the House of Commons in 1647.<sup>75</sup>

That Gilbert Burnet inherited this conviction of happiness as ‘art’ rather than ‘hap’ becomes apparent as soon as his conception of Utopian ‘happiness’ is read alongside More’s Latin original text and Robinson’s 1556 translation. In the first instance, the comparison nicely demonstrates the conceptual enrichment of ‘happiness’ since 1556: Burnet uses the word in most of the ways anticipated by the semantic developments of the early sixteenth century, adding a few extra besides (see Table 2). But second, in

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Morton, *A Treatise of the Threefold State of Man*, A7r.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Gainsford, *The Glory of England, or A True Description of Many Excellent Prerogatives and Remarkable Blessings, whereby she Triumph over all the Nations of the world* (1618), titlepage.

<sup>74</sup> Colin Burrow, ‘Rous, Francis (1580/81–1659)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24171, accessed 13 Nov 2015].

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Hartlib, *Considerations Tending to the Happy Accomplishment of England’s Reformation and State* (1647), 2.

each of these instances ‘happiness’ described or prescribed governments and citizens purposefully pursuing their individual or collective aims rather than bending powerless in the face of hap.

**Table 2**                      **‘Happiness’ in Burnet’s *Utopia***

<i>Latin 1516</i>	<i>Robinson 1556</i>
Felicitas/ felicitatem	felicity
populo bene/ populi bono	wealth of the people/peoples
reipublicae	commonwealth
summum bonum	perfect blessedness
laetam	joy and mirth
voluptas, aut nausea	pleasure or displeasure

To give some examples of collective happiness: More wrote that ‘eoque magis ad principem eam pertinere curam, ut populo bene sit suo, quam ut sibi, non aliter ac pastoris officium est, oues potius quam semet pascere, quatenus opilio est’. For Robinson this translated as ‘the king ought to take more care for the wealth of his people than for his own wealth, even as the office and duty of a shepherd is, to feed his sheep rather than himself.’<sup>76</sup> For Burnet this meant ‘that therefore a Prince ought to take more care of his Peoples Happiness, than of his own, as a Shepherd is to take more care of his Flock than of himself.’<sup>77</sup> Likewise when Hytholday explains the Utopian rationale for colonisation, More puts it as ‘cum volentibus coniuncti in idem vitae institutum eosdemque mores, facile coalescunt, idque utriusque populi bono. efficiunt enim suis institutis, ut ea terra, utrisque abunda sit, quae alteris ante parca ac maligna videbatur’. For Robinson this translated as:

they thus joining and dwelling together do easily agree in one fashion of living, and that to the great wealth of both the peoples. For they so bring the matter about by their laws that the ground, which before was neither good nor profitable for the one nor the other, is now sufficient and fruitful for them both.<sup>78</sup>

For Burnet, in contrast, it meant:

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<sup>76</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 119.

<sup>77</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 49.

<sup>78</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 142.



where they do that [merge] of their own accord, they quickly go into their method of Life, and to their Rules, and this proves a happiness to both the Nations: for according to their constitution, such care is taken of the Soil, that it becomes fruitful enough for both, though it might be otherwise too narrow and barren for any one of them.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed so good were the Utopians at governing that neighbouring nations borrowed their magistrates. Likewise for Robinson the Latin ‘atque hi quidem populi optime profecto ac saluberrime reipublicae suae consulunt’ became ‘These nations have undoubtedly very well and wholesomely provided for their commonwealths’.<sup>80</sup> For Burnet it read: ‘They seem to have fallen upon a very good Expedient for their own happiness and safety’.<sup>81</sup>

For Burnet happiness was the deliberate result of care and shepherding, method and rules, expediency. But this art of happiness was not limited to society. It was also integral to the person’s mental and bodily state. More observed ‘nunc vero non in omni voluptate felicitatem, sed in bona, atque honesta sitam putant. ad eam enim velut ad summum bonum, naturam nostram ab ipsa virtute pertrahi, cui sola adversa factio felicitatem tribuit’. Robinson rendered it –

But now, sir, they think not felicity to rest in all pleasure, but only in that pleasure that is good and honest and that hereto, as to perfect blessedness our nature is allured and drawn even of virtue, whereto only they that be of the contrary opinion do attribute felicity, for they define virtue to be life ordered according to virtue.<sup>82</sup>

For Burnet:

Yet they do not place Happiness in all sorts of Pleasures, but only in those that in themselves are good and honest: for whereas there is a Party among them that places Happiness in bare Vertue, others think that our Natures are conducted by Vertue to Happiness, as that which is the chief Good of Man.<sup>83</sup>

A few lines on and the amount of semantic work required of happiness increased even more. More wrote it was ‘secundum id commonet, atque excitat nos ut vitam quam licet minime anxiam, ac maxime laetam ducamus

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<sup>79</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 89.

<sup>80</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 174.

<sup>81</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 151.

<sup>82</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 156.

<sup>83</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 113.

ipsi, ceterisque omnibus ad idem obtinendum adiutores nos pro naturae societate praebeamus'. Robinson observed that what 'stirs and provokes us to lead our life out of care in joy and mirth ... also moves us to help and further all others in respect of the society of nature to obtain and enjoy the same.'<sup>84</sup> For Burnet, this meant 'we should consider our selves as bound by the ties of good Nature and Humanity, to use our utmost endeavours to help forward the Happiness of all other Persons'.<sup>85</sup> And to conclude with the most striking example of happiness's detachment from hap: More justified the Utopian custom of naked pre-marital examinations by potential spouses on the grounds that 'in deligenda coniuge, qua ex re aut voluptas, aut nausea sit totam per vitam comitatura'. Robinson explained that because 'choosing a wife ... shall either be pleasure or displeasure to them all their life after', Utopian men examined the body – as they would a horse – in case 'anything in her body afterward should chance to offend or mislike them.'<sup>86</sup> For Burnet –

[Utopians] wondered at the folly of the Men of all other Nations; who if they are but to buy a Horse of a small value, are so cautious, that they will see every part of him, and take off both his Saddle, and all his other Tackle, that there may be no secret Ulcer hid under any of them; and that yet in the choice of a Wife, on which depends the happiness or unhappiness of the rest of his Life, a Man should venture upon trust, and only see about an handbreadth of the Face, all the rest of the Body being covered (142).<sup>87</sup>

Conjugal happiness – voluptas, pleasure – was no longer something to be left to chance.

### **From Hap to Art**

Concentrating on the word 'happiness' across the sixteenth as well as the seventeenth centuries challenges the story told by Slack in at least two ways. In the first instance, it reveals that 'happiness' was not an immemorial Christian and philosophical term that only came to intimate material affluence and sensory and subjective pleasures in the later seventeenth century. On the contrary, as the designation of hap the word already carried these worldly connotations *circa* 1500. It was only when 'happiness' began to appear in translations of classical and reformation texts, and became a vernacular conduit for philosophical and patristic ideas, that it acquired its more complex semantics. Viewed in these terms, the adoption of the term

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<sup>84</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 156.

<sup>85</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 114.

<sup>86</sup> Sacks, *Utopia*, 171.

<sup>87</sup> *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, 142.

by political economists to describe individual or collective affluence after 1650 marked, if anything, a reversion in sense rather than a moment of modernity. Second, however, it is not at all clear that political economists did come to ‘share a vocabulary of happiness’ to articulate their materialism. As Table 1 shows, political economists like John Houghton, Nicholas Barbon and William Petty rarely used the term in print; when they did so, it was either to denote a general and very familiar sense of worldly fortune and felicity – Houghton’s title ‘England’s Great Happiness’ – or to describe what Petty described as the ‘Spiritual happiness’ of the papist Irish.<sup>88</sup> And while certainly a proponent of happiness, Hartlib also tended to fix it in religious discourses.<sup>89</sup>

The same was true for proponents of the ‘new philosophy’ such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Hobbes was certainly influential in reconceiving worldly contentment in terms of sensory gratification. But in *Leviathan* he was also scrupulous in distinguishing between ‘civil’ felicity and ‘true’ spiritual bliss. This he did by using ‘felicity’ to describe the former and ‘happiness’ to denote the latter: in *Leviathan* it was the displaced term ‘felicity’ that described worldly enjoyments – whatever they might be – with ‘happiness’ demarcating the unknowable promise of ‘sovereign good’.<sup>90</sup> While Locke was much less discerning than Hobbes in his use of ‘happiness’ – using it to describe material, sensory, and spiritual pleasures in the manner of Burnet – it is difficult to see how his acknowledgement of the many different sources of happiness available *circa* 1690 was especially different from the range of alternatives mapped by translators and writers over the previous century and a half.<sup>91</sup> Certainly what puzzled Locke was the same question that had worried generations of early modern thinkers: the tendency of people to put worldly happiness, which was pleasurable but temporary, before the realisation of an everlasting summum bonum. This should not be surprising. The invention of happiness was a protracted rather than a sudden affair that involved, at heart, the transformation of a term of hap into the work of art. It is here that the antecedents of our modern preoccupation with the happiness industry and happiness by design lies; or what Rous styled in 1598 ‘the astronomy of happiness’.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> William Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (1691), 95, 24.

<sup>89</sup> For example fn. 70 above.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), 58, 189, 230, 240, 245, 335.

<sup>91</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), 123-9.

<sup>92</sup> Francis Rous, *Thule, or Vertues History. To the Honourable and Vertuous Mistress Amy Audely* (1598), R5r.