

# The Conceptualization of Life and Happiness

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**Abstract:** I examine the concept of HAPPINESS in three very different historical and cultural contexts: the Declaration of Independence, contemporary everyday English, and the New Testament. I show that the study of contemporary English yields not just one but two prototypical models (meanings) for the concept (happiness as an immediate response and happiness as a value). The four meanings display clear and major differences.

I point out how different historical and cultural contexts influence and shape the concept of HAPPINESS. This shaping effect results primarily from the conceptual devices that constitute the way we speak and think about emotions: conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts. The different cultural contexts favor different conceptual devices that result in different cognitive models (or frames) for the concept of HAPPINESS.

This view of how context shapes emotion concepts and this methodology may open up the way to similar studies of other emotion concepts in other cultural contexts both cross-culturally and within a single culture.

**Key words:** happiness, metaphor, metonymy, related concepts, context, life metaphors, happiness in the Declaration of Independence, happiness in everyday English, happiness in the New Testament.

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In previous work on metaphorical conceptualization, I proposed a theory of metaphor that is capable of accounting for both the universality and cultural variation of conceptual metaphors and metaphorically constituted concepts (Kövecses, 2005). A large part of this endeavor was based on my prior work on emotion concepts and the metaphors that are related to them (Kövecses, 1990, 2000/2003). In general terms, I argued that universal aspects of (emotion) concepts arise from universal bodily experiences that characterize the people who construct the concepts and that variation in metaphorical conceptualization is a result of the various types of contexts in which people with essentially the same bodily experiences perform conceptualization. I also argued that universal embodiment and contextual influence cannot be rigidly separated, but instead they work jointly in the creation of (emotion) concepts.

In this paper, however, I will focus attention on contextual influence alone; that is, on how different contexts can shape our conceptualization of an emotion – that of happiness, in particular. I will examine a set of concepts that can, and are, subsumed in English and other languages under the general category of HAPPINESS in three different historical and cultural periods: in late 18<sup>th</sup> century American politics, in present-day everyday English, and in Christian thought in biblical times.

More specifically, I want to examine the concept of HAPPINESS in terms of its three closely related meanings as the three meanings appear in the three very different contexts. The concept, or category, of HAPPINESS can be referred to by a variety of different terms. These include the term *happiness* itself, *joy*, *merry*, *delight*, *rejoice*, *glad*, *elation*, and many others. The terms we use for happiness can vary according to the contexts in which the concept is used. I will consider three such contexts: the *United States Declaration of Independence* (the pursuit of happiness), the everyday world as represented in English (be happy, happiness, joy), and the *New Testament* in

the Bible (be blessed).

First, I will characterize the concept of emotion in general from a cognitive linguistic perspective, making use of such cognitive devices as conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, conceptual prototypes, and conceptual frames. Second, I take an inventory of conceptual metaphors for the concept of LIFE, with which HAPPINESS is closely connected. Third, I analyze the phrase the *pursuit of happiness* in the first passages of the *Declaration of Independence*. Fourth, I examine the concept of HAPPINESS as it can be recovered from everyday English. Fifth, I will study the closely related concept of “being blessed/happy” in the Gospel by Matthew in the *New Testament*. The so-called beatitudes are widely regarded as the most definitive explication of the idea of Christian happiness in the Bible.

My major goal is to compare the various meanings and how these meanings have emerged. My initial assumption is that although the concept of HAPPINESS is linguistically expressed in the same way in the *Declaration of Independence* and everyday English, that the English translation of the concept in the *New Testament* (*blessed*) is based on the Greek term that meant ‘happy’ (*makarios*), and that some languages, such as Hungarian, use the equivalent of *happy* (*boldog*) in the *New Testament*, the various meanings will be different in important ways. I suggest that the differences arise in part from the use of the different metaphors, metonymies, and “related concepts” that were employed to construct and comprehend the concept and in part from the nature of the frames, or idealized cognitive models, activated in the different historical and cultural contexts.

## **1. The conceptual structure of emotion concepts**

In previous research on emotion concepts, I have found that emotion concepts are composed of four distinct conceptual

ingredients: conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, related concepts, and cognitive models (see Kövecses, 1986, 1988, 1990, 2000/2003). My suggestion in all this work was that conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts constitute cognitive models. It is cognitive models, or conceptual frames, that we assume to be the mental representation of particular emotions, such as happiness, anger, love, fear, and many others. Let us now see some representative examples for each of these.

## 1) Conceptual metaphors

By conceptual metaphor, I mean a set of correspondences between a more physical source domain and a more abstract target domain (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002/2010).

Some of the most typical conceptual metaphors that characterize emotions include the following:

- EMOTION IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER (*filled* with emotion)
- EMOTION IS HEAT/FIRE (*burn* with emotion)
- EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE (be *overwhelmed* by an emotion)
- EMOTION IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (be *struck* by an emotion)
- EMOTION IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR (be *governed/ruled* by an emotion)
- EMOTION IS A OPPONENT (be *overcome* by an emotion)
- EMOTION IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL (*let go of* an emotion)
- EMOTION IS A FORCE DISLOCATING THE SELF (be *beside oneself* with an emotion)
- EMOTION IS BURDEN (be *weighed down* by an emotion)

The overall claim concerning such conceptual metaphors was that they are instantiations of a general force-dynamic pattern (see Kövecses, 2000), in the sense in which this was first discussed by Leonard Talmy (1988). In that pattern, a forceful entity (a cause or an emotion) affects another forceful entity (the

rational self) with a certain outcome. Given the force-dynamic character of these conceptual metaphors and given that they can be said to make up a large part of the conceptual structure associated with emotions, it can be suggested that emotion concepts are largely force dynamically constituted (Kövecses, 2000/2003).

## 2) Conceptual metonymies

Conceptual metonymies can be of two general types: CAUSE OF EMOTION FOR THE EMOTIONS, and EFFECT OF EMOTION FOR THE EMOTIONS, with the latter being much more common than the former. (For a cognitive linguistic viewpoint on metonymy, see Kövecses and Radden, 1998; Panther and Radden, 1999; Barcelona, 2000.) Below are some specific representative cases of the general metonymy EFFECT OF EMOTION FOR THE EMOTIONS:

BODY HEAT FOR ANGER (being a *hothead*)

DROP IN BODY TEMPERATURE FOR FEAR (getting *cold feet*)

CHEST OUT FOR PRIDE (*puffing one's chest out* with pride)

RUNNING AWAY FOR FEAR (*fleeing* the scene)

WAYS OF LOOKING FOR LOVE (*looking* at someone *amorously*)

FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR SADNESS (*having* a sad *face*)

These specific types of conceptual metonymies correspond to physiological, behavioral, and expressive responses associated with particular emotions. Thus, BODY HEAT FOR ANGER and DROP IN BODY TEMPERATURE FOR FEAR are conceptual representations of physiological responses; CHEST OUT FOR PRIDE and RUNNING AWAY FOR FEAR are those of behavioral responses; and WAYS OF LOOKING FOR LOVE and FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR SADNESS are those of expressive responses.

### 3) Related concepts

What I call “related concepts” are emotions or attitudes that the subject of an emotion (i.e., the person feeling an emotion) has in relation to the object or cause of the emotion. For example, friendship is an emotion or emotional attitude (though, according to studies, a nonprototypical one) that the subject of love prototypically has toward the beloved. If someone says that he or she is in love with someone, we can legitimately expect the subject of love to also exhibit the emotional attitude of friendship toward the beloved (at least in the prototypical cases of romantic love). In this sense, friendship is a concept inherent in the concept of romantic love (again, at least in the prototypical cases of romantic love). (Related concepts display different degrees of relatedness – inherent concepts are most closely related to a particular concept.)

It can be suggested that such inherent concepts function as conceptual metonymies. After all, by mentioning one such inherent concept I may refer to the whole concept of which it is a part. In the example, friendship may indicate romantic love. This explains why the words *girlfriend* and *boyfriend* can be used to talk about people who are in a romantic love relationship. (If there were no such inherent relationship between romantic love and friendship, the use of the terms would be entirely unmotivated to designate people who are in love.) Such uses of related concepts can be taken to be PART FOR WHOLE metonymies.

### 4) Cognitive models

Following Lakoff (1987), we can think of a category as constituted by a large number of members, with some members being central. The mental representation of such central members can be given in the form of prototypical cognitive models. Such cognitive models can be metaphoric

or metonymic.

Emotions are conceptually represented in the mind as cognitive models. A particular emotion can be represented by means of one or several cognitive models that are prototypical of that emotion. This emerges from the Roschian idea that categories have a large number of members, one or some of which being prototypical and many of which being nonprototypical (see, for example, Rosch, 1978). Prototypical members of emotion categories are represented by prototypical cognitive models, whereas nonprototypical members are represented as nonprototypical models; that is, as deviations from the prototypical model (or models).

Conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts all converge on such a prototypical model (or models) for particular emotions. Such convergence can occur in at least three different ways. In one, the conceptual ingredients jointly constitute a cognitive model. In the other, they are based on a previously existing cognitive model. And in the third, some of them constitute parts of a model and some of them are based on a prototypical cognitive model. In the discussion to follow, I will not take sides on this issue (but see Kövecses, 1999, 2005).

Prototypical cognitive models can be thought of as folk theories (as opposed to expert theories) of particular emotions (Kövecses, 1990). As I have suggested previously (Kövecses, 2000), the most schematic folk theory of emotions at a generic level can be given as follows:

cause of emotion → emotion → (controlling emotion) → response

In other words, we have a very general idea of what emotions are like: There are certain causes that lead to emotions, and the emotions we have made us (i.e., the self) produce certain responses. Commonly, there are certain social constraints on which responses are socially acceptable. Societies may impose different sets of control mechanisms on emotions.

This general folk theory of emotions derives from the application of the generic-level conceptual metaphor CAUSES ARE FORCES. The metaphor applies to both the first part and the second part of the model. In the model, whatever leads to an emotion is conceptualized as a cause that has enough “force” to effect a change of state in the self (i.e., to become emotional), and the emotion itself is also seen as a cause that has a “force” to effect some kind of response (physiological, behavioral, and/or expressive). As a matter of fact, it is the presence and double application of this generic-level metaphor that enables a force-dynamic interpretation of emotional experience.

## **2. The metaphorical conceptualization of LIFE**

The concept of LIFE is comprehended through a variety of conceptual metaphors in English and other languages (see, for example, Lakoff and Turner, 1989; Kövecses, 2002/2010). The main conventional conceptual metaphors that have been identified for life include the following:

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

LIFE IS A BUILDING

LIFE IS A MACHINE

LIFE IS A PLAY

LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION

LIFE IS A STORY

LIFE IS FIRE/A FLAME

LIFE IS LIGHT

A LIFETIME IS A DAY

A LIFETIME IS A YEAR

LIFE IS A SUBSTANCE/FLUID IN A CONTAINER

LIFE IS BEING PRESENT HERE

LIFE IS BONDAGE

LIFE IS A BURDEN



## HUMAN LIFE IS THE LIFE-CYCLE OF A PLANT

Of these, the metaphor that seems to be bound up with the concept of HAPPINESS in the most direct way is LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The mappings (i.e., the correspondences between the two domains) of this metaphor can be given as follows:

JOURNEY:		LIFE:
traveler	=>	person leading a life
journey	=>	leading a life
destination	=>	purpose/goal of life
stages of journey	=>	stages in life
distance covered	=>	progress made
paths of the journey	=>	ways of living
obstacles along the way	=>	difficulties in life

As can be seen, a structured set of elements from the journey domain is used to structure the more abstract and elusive concept of LIFE. The mapping of this set of elements onto life provides us with a clear, well-structured understanding of the concept. As we will see, this understanding of life interacts with our understanding of happiness as well.

After this survey of the general structure of emotion concepts, the main conceptual metaphors for life, and the details of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, let us turn to the specific concept of HAPPINESS in the three contexts, or domains, mentioned in the introduction.

### 3. Happiness in the United States Declaration of Independence

One of the best-known uses of the word *happiness* can be found in the *United States Declaration of Independence*. The first sentences of the Declaration read:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

In the view expressed in the *Declaration*, the concept of HAPPINESS has several interesting properties. First, happiness is viewed as an (animal) object. In cognitive linguistics, this is called an “ontological” metaphor in which a state receives the ontological status of an object. This can be represented by the metaphor HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT, sanctioned by the generic-level metaphor STATES ARE OBJECTS. Given this metaphor, it is possible to *pursue* happiness (i.e., to obtain or acquire it). It is also viewed as a desired resulting state-object that can be brought about or produced (*effect*).

Second, in the view of the *Declaration*, people are not inherently happy, but they can institute governments that create

conditions in which they can become happy, that is, they can achieve happiness. The notion that happiness is to be achieved in a particular social arrangement gives happiness the character of secular state, as opposed to a religious (Christian) state, in which people are naturally happy as a result of God's grace (see later section).

As indicated by the phrase the "*pursuit* of happiness," happiness is a desired state; we are pursuing it because we want to obtain it. We can call this the HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT metaphor (again, based on STATES ARE OBJECTS). The DESIRED OBJECT metaphor comes in two versions. In one, the desired animal object is moving away from us (the pursuer) and we are pursuing it. In the other, the desired object is hidden and this is what makes it difficult for us to find it.

#### HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT

##### Version one: MOVING DESIRED OBJECT

###### Mappings:

The desired object → the happiness

The movement (of the object) away from us →  
the difficulty (of obtaining the object)

The pursuer (of the object) →  
the person (trying to obtain happiness)

The pursuit (of)/trying to catch (the object) →  
trying to obtain/attain happiness

The desire (to catch the object) → the desire (for happiness)

Catching the object → obtaining happiness

##### Version two: HIDDEN DESIRED OBJECT

###### Mappings:

The desired object → the happiness  
 The “hidden-ness” (of the object from us) →  
 the difficulty (of obtaining the object)  
 The seeker (of the object) →  
 the person (trying to obtain happiness)  
 The search (for the object) → trying to obtain/attain happiness  
 The desire (to find the object) → the desire (for happiness)  
 Finding the object → obtaining happiness

Clearly, it is the MOVING DESIRED OBJECT version of the metaphor that applies to and explains the phrase “*pursuit of happiness*” in the *Declaration*. In the two versions, both the pursuer and the seeker move closer to the desired object until they get to it (catching it or finding it). Success is achieved when this happens. As a result of this feature, the HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT metaphor coincides or overlaps with the well-known metaphor for life mentioned above: A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Given this metaphor, we have a successful life when we get to where we wanted to be (i.e., reach our immediate or more distant destination); that is, when we reach our goals. This (immediate or more distant) destination, this goal, corresponds to the desired object of the HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT metaphor. Getting to one’s destination in life (considered as success) is the same as catching the animal or finding the object (becoming happy). This is the mapping that provides the overlap between the HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT and the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphors. Thus, the conceptualization of LIFE and that of HAPPINESS are intimately connected, in that success in life makes us happy (where success involves getting to, or reaching, a destination that coincided with a desired object).

But it should be noticed that the *Declaration* talks about the “*pursuit* (of happiness)” as an inalienable right, and not about *happiness* itself. In other words, happiness itself is not guaranteed for everyone, only the possibility of pursuing it. How can the pursuit of happiness be guaranteed? The

HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT and the PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphors both contain the idea of motion toward an object (desired object) that is the destination of the pursuer. If the motion toward the object/destination is unobstructed in the source domain, then one has the freedom to achieve happiness/success. That is to say, we need a third metaphor in our account: FREEDOM TO ACT IS FREEDOM TO MOVE, and even more generally, ACTION IS MOTION (see the Event Structure Metaphor in Lakoff, 1993). The phrase “pursuit of happiness” also fits the FREEDOM TO ACT IS FREEDOM TO MOVE metaphor. The metaphor gives us an idea of the precise nature of this “unalienable right.” It is the right to be able to pursue happiness unobstructed by others; that is, to be able to obtain the state of happiness in a free manner.

This reading of the *Declaration* arises if we do not regard the three inalienable rights (life, liberty, pursuit of happiness) as simply a list of independent rights. We can conceive of them as a meaningful sequence of concepts instead, in which life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are closely related by virtue of their meaning. I pointed out in the previous paragraphs that the concept of LIFE overlaps with the DESIRED OBJECT metaphor for happiness (in that success in life corresponds to achieving happiness) and that success/happiness can only be achieved if the process of achieving it happens freely, that is, if, metaphorically, the movement toward it is unobstructed. In my view, then, the three seemingly unrelated and independent rights (“right-concepts”) form a tightly connected system of ideas by virtue of the three metaphors that characterize them, and thus they are anything but a list or a random set of rights in the *Declaration*.

In summary, the DESIRED OBJECT metaphor for happiness, the JOURNEY metaphor for life, and the FREEDOM TO MOVE metaphor for freedom (to act) as characterized above provide us with a certain conception of HAPPINESS that can be given as follows:

## HAPPINESS in the *United States Declaration of Independence*:

### Goals in life:

Happiness is one of people's main life goals.

It is a desired state.

It is an inalienable right of all people.

### Action in accordance with the goals:

It is the responsibility of government to make sure that people can obtain it.

People devote their lives to trying to obtain it.

It is difficult to obtain.

It requires effort to obtain it.

It takes a long time to obtain it.

Once people have obtained it, it lasts a long time.

### Desired result:

Achieving goals → Happiness

The feature “People devote their lives to trying to obtain it” indicates that, in my interpretation, the authors of the *Declaration* conceived of happiness as a major life goal or even as the meaning of life.

While this metaphor-based view of happiness in the *Declaration* provides some idea of the nature of happiness and the manner in which it can be achieved, it does not tell us much about the internal structure of the concept. To see more of that structure, let us now turn to the everyday model of happiness as expressed by the English language.

## 4. The concept of happiness in everyday English

The concept of HAPPINESS is characterized by the same cognitive devices as we have seen above for the concept of EMOTION; that is, metaphors, metonymies, related concepts, and cognitive models. The description of happiness in this section is

largely based on Kövecses (1991).

## 1) Conceptual metaphors of happiness

The concept of HAPPINESS is characterized by a large number of various types of conceptual metaphors. Specifically, three types of conceptual metaphor can be distinguished as regards happiness: general emotion metaphors, metaphors that provide an evaluation of the concept of HAPPINESS, and metaphors that provide much of the phenomenological nature or character of happiness. The particular conceptual metaphors belonging to the three types are given below, each with a linguistic example.

### General emotion metaphors

HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER She was *bursting with joy*.

HAPPINESS IS HEAT/FIRE Fires of joy were *kindled* by the birth of her son.

HAPPINESS IS A NATURAL FORCE I was *overwhelmed* by joy.

HAPPINESS IS A PHYSICAL FORCE He was *hit* by happiness.

HAPPINESS IS A SOCIAL SUPERIOR They live a life *ruled* by happiness.

HAPPINESS IS AN OPPONENT She was *seized* by joy.

HAPPINESS IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL All joy *broke loose* as the kids opened their presents.

HAPPINESS IS INSANITY The crowd *went crazy* with joy.

HAPPINESS IS A FORCE DISLOCATING THE SELF He was *beside himself* with joy.

HAPPINESS IS A DISEASE Her good mood was *contagious*.

Although some of these conceptual metaphors are more common than others (as indicated by Google searches), they can all be used when talking about happiness.

The conceptual metaphors above are called general emotion metaphors because each applies to some or most emotion concepts, not only to happiness.

## Metaphors providing an evaluation of happiness

Some metaphors capture the appraisive (evaluative) aspect of happiness:

HAPPINESS IS LIGHT He was *beaming* with joy.

HAPPINESS IS FEELING LIGHT (not HEAVY) I was *floating*.

HAPPINESS IS UP I'm feeling *up* today.

HAPPINESS IS BEING IN HEAVEN I was in *seventh heaven*.

Not surprisingly, the metaphors above provide a highly positive valuation for the concept of happiness. The presence of light, not being weighed down, being up, and being in heaven are all very positive, unlike their opposites (dark, being weighed down, and being down), which characterize the opposite of happiness: sadness or depression. However, being in hell does not seem to characterize the contemporary conception of sadness (Tissari, 2008).

Metaphors providing the phenomenological character of happiness

HAPPINESS IS AN ANIMAL THAT LIVES WELL I was *purring* with delight.

HAPPINESS IS A PLEASURABLE PHYSICAL SENSATION I was *tickled pink*.

HAPPINESS IS BEING DRUNK It was an *intoxicating* experience.

HAPPINESS IS VITALITY He was full of *pep*.

HAPPINESS IS WARMTH What she said made me feel *warm* all over.

These conceptual metaphors give the “feeling tone” of happiness, that is, they depict the way happiness feels to the person experiencing it. The latter two types of conceptual metaphor may be correlated: For example, feeling warmth is normally evaluated as a positive experience.



## 2) Conceptual metonymies of happiness

The specific conceptual metonymies that apply to happiness correspond to behavioral, physiological, and expressive responses, as can be seen below:

### Behavioral responses

JUMPING UP AND DOWN FOR HAPPINESS (*jump up and down* with joy)

DANCING/SINGING FOR HAPPINESS (*dance* with joy)

### Physiological responses

FLUSHING FOR HAPPINESS (*flush/beam* with joy)

INCREASED HEART RATE FOR HAPPINESS (*heart beats* with joy)

BODY WARMTH FOR HAPPINESS (*be warm* with joy)

AGITATION/EXCITEMENT FOR HAPPINESS (*be excited* with joy)

### Expressive responses

BRIGHT EYES FOR HAPPINESS (*shine* with happiness/joy)

SMILING FOR HAPPINESS (*smile/laugh*)

Happiness often manifests itself through such behavioral, physiological, and expressive responses. We can indicate our own or another person's happiness by making reference to any one of these responses (see, for example, Wierzbicka, 1999). For example, smiling is prototypically taken to be a sign of being happy. Furthermore, interestingly, we can find some degree of cultural variation in such responses. For example, in Buddhism, happiness is associated with reduced, rather than increased, heart rate.

### 3) Related concepts

Similar to many other emotion concepts, happiness also consists of several “related concepts” – that is concepts that are inherent in or closely related to the concept of happiness. These include:

(FEELING OF) SATISFACTION (a *satisfied/contented* baby, a *contented* smile)

(FEELING OF) PLEASURE (do it with *pleasure*)

(FEELING OF) HARMONY (feel happiness and *harmony*)

In prototypical cases, happiness assumes being satisfied with a certain outcome. Happiness also entails a feeling of pleasure. Finally, when we are happy, we tend to feel harmony with the world.

### 4) Prototypical cognitive models of happiness

The theory of cognitive models applies to happiness as a category in the following way: The conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts mentioned above jointly converge on one or several prototypical cognitive models of happiness. (The details of this “joint convergence” are spelled out in Kövecses, 1991, 2002/2010.) They either constitute the prototypical cognitive model(s) or are based on it (them).

I suggest that the general concept of HAPPINESS is best described as having three prototypical cognitive models and many nonprototypical ones clustering around the three prototypes. I refer to the three prototypes as “happiness as an immediate response,” “happiness as a value,” and “happiness as being glad.” I will only deal with the former two in this paper.

My specific suggestion is that it is these three uses of the concept of HAPPINESS that stand out among the many shades and

kinds of meaning that the word *happiness* may be used to denote. They seem to be the most salient meanings—but, as we will see below, each for a different reason.

### Happiness as an immediate response

In “happiness as an immediate response,” a person responds with a form of happiness to a desired outcome. The form of happiness that is involved is commonly referred to as *joy*. I do not suggest that this is the only meaning of the word *joy* (see, for instance, Fabiszak, 2000), but it is the one that I analyze here.

As the list of examples above suggests, “happiness as an immediate response” corresponds to a special variety of happiness: joy. For this reason, I will refer to this kind of happiness as “joy/happiness.”

Given the conceptual metaphors, metonymies, and related concepts associated with joy/happiness and the language that exemplifies these, we can describe joy/happiness with the cognitive model that follows:

#### Cause of joy:

- You want to achieve something.

- You achieve it.

- There is an immediate emotional response to this on your part.

#### Existence of joy:

- You are satisfied.

- You display a variety of expressive and behavioral responses including brightness of the eyes, smiling, laughing, jumping up and down.

- You feel energized.

- You also experience physiological responses, including body warmth and agitation/excitement.

- The context for the state is commonly a social one involving celebrations.

You have a positive outlook on the world.  
You feel a need to communicate your feelings to others.  
The feeling you have may “spread” to others.  
You experience your state as a pleasurable one.  
You feel that you are in harmony with the world.  
You can’t help what you feel; you are passive in relation to your feelings.  
The intensity of your feelings and experiences is high.  
Beyond a certain limit, an increase in intensity implies a social danger for you to become dysfunctional, that is, to lose control.  
It is not entirely acceptable for you to communicate and/or give free expression to what you feel (i.e., to lose control).

Attempt at control:

Because it is not entirely acceptable to communicate and/or give free expression of what you feel, you try to keep the emotion under control: You attempt not to engage in the behavioral responses and/or not to display the expressive responses and/or not communicate what you feel.

Loss of control:

You nevertheless lose control.

Action:

You engage in behavioral responses and/or display expressive responses and/or communicate what you feel. You may, in addition, exhibit wild, uncontrolled behavior (often in the form of dancing, singing, and energetic behavior with a lot of movement).

It is debatable whether the part “attempt at control” is just as important with joy/happiness as with other, negative emotions. It seems to me that in Western culture intense forms of emotions are in general negatively valued, which would explain the presence of “attempt at control” in positive emotions. It can certainly be found in romantic love as well (Kövecses, 1988). However, this topic deserves further investigation.

We can think of the emergence of this model from the specific metaphors, metonymies, and related concepts given

above in the following way: Take, for instance, the idea that when we are very joyful/happy, there is some loss of control involved. An indicator of this idea is given in a number of conceptual metaphors, such as HAPPINESS IS A NATURAL FORCE, HAPPINESS IS AN OPPONENT, HAPPINESS IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL, and HAPPINESS IS INSANITY. The typical linguistic examples of these metaphors suggest that the person who is intensely joyful/happy is likely to undergo some loss of control (we are *overwhelmed*, we are *seized*, we *go crazy*, etc.). Thus, the language we use about happiness reveals the way we think about happiness, and the way we think about it is given in a prototypical cognitive model. This is the general methodology that I follow in this paper.

The “immediate response” model is a salient one due to its high degree of “noticeability.” It is dominated by highly noticeable behavioral, physiological, and expressive responses (i.e., conceptual metonymies) and also by conceptual content that is provided by conceptual metaphors suggesting intensity and control, leading eventually to a loss of control. This yields joy/happiness as a basic emotion that conforms to the general force-dynamic pattern of intense emotional events. Other basic emotions have a similar force-dynamic pattern, each with its characteristic response profile as reflected in language by the conceptual metonymies.

Is this the model of happiness that the author(s) of the *Declaration* had in mind? In all probability, it is not. The model of happiness as an “immediate response” is much more dynamic and short-term than the model we saw in the previous section.

### Happiness as a value

By contrast, happiness as a value is not characterized by a forceful emotion interacting with an opposing self. Instead, this form of happiness is constituted by a quiet state with hardly any noticeable responses or even a clearly identifiable specific cause.

(This is why some of its typical vague and general causes are given in parentheses below.) Such a form of happiness is often captured by the following conceptual metaphors:

HAPPINESS IS LIGHT He was *beaming* with joy.

HAPPINESS IS FEELING LIGHT (not HEAVY) I was *floating*.

HAPPINESS IS UP I'm feeling *up* today.

HAPPINESS IS BEING IN HEAVEN I was in *seventh heaven*.

HAPPINESS IS A HIDDEN DESIRED OBJECT At long last I have *found* happiness.

The first four conceptual metaphors provide a highly positive evaluation for the concept of HAPPINESS. (In the same way, their source domain opposites, DARK, HEAVY, DOWN and, at least historically, HELL [see Tissari, 2008], provide a negative evaluation for opposite emotions, such as sadness and depression). In addition, they also display happiness as a pleasurable sensation and the related concept of HARMONY (with the world) is emphatically present in this meaning.

I discussed the last metaphor in the section on the *Declaration of Independence*. As noted there, it is the second version of the HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT metaphor: HAPPINESS IS A HIDDEN DESIRED OBJECT. In that section we saw how the HIDDEN DESIRED OBJECT and MOVING DESIRED OBJECT metaphors are parallel ones; they share their target domain elements. As a result, the view of happiness represented in the *Declaration* comes closest to the model I call “happiness as a value.”

Given the metaphors above, this can be given as follows:

Goals in life:

(freedom, health, wealth, love)

Action in accordance with the goals:

It is difficult to obtain.

It requires effort to obtain it.

It takes a long time to obtain it.

Once people have obtained it, it lasts a long time.

Desired result:

Achieving goals → Happiness

Happiness is associated with positive value.

Happiness is pleasurable.

Happiness gives you a feeling of harmony with the world.

Due to the fact that the HIDDEN DESIRED OBJECT and MOVING DESIRED OBJECT metaphors are versions of the higher-level HAPPINESS IS A DESIRED OBJECT metaphor, they share their mappings that give rise to several of the features that characterize the “happiness as a value” model. Additional features are derived from the four metaphors above. In contrast to “happiness as an immediate response,” “happiness as a value” is not characterized by highly salient emotional responses and a force-dynamically constituted control aspect.

As we have seen, the two forms of happiness described above are referred to by means of different words in English – *joy* for “happiness as an immediate response” and *happiness* for “happiness as a value.” The distinction between joy and happiness in terms of distinctive sets of metaphors made by Kövecses (1991) was borne out by later corpus linguistic studies (Stefanowitsch, 2004) and in cognitive psychological Experiments (Tseng, Hu, Han, and Bergen, 2007).

In comparison with the “value” model, the *Declaration*-based model includes the following:

It is an inalienable right of all people.

It is one of people’s main life goals.

People devote their lives to trying to obtain it.

It is the responsibility of government to make sure that people can obtain it.

The feature that happiness is an inalienable right of all people

derives from the explicit (and literal) reference to this in the *Declaration*. The features that happiness is a major life goal and that people devote much of their lives to obtaining it comes from the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor and commonsense reasoning concerning desired life goals. The feature that mentions the responsibility of government is again stated literally in the *Declaration*. The explicitly stated features regarding happiness being an inalienable right and the responsibility of the government make the *Declaration*-model a secular one, whereas their absence from “happiness as a value” make the “value” model an alternative everyday model.

We can now ask what the non-secular, religious model of happiness is like in Christian thought.

## 5. Happiness in the Bible

The word *blessed* in the Bible means “(blissfully) happy.” How does the concept of HAPPINESS (BEING BLESSED) compare with the everyday conception of HAPPINESS and with what we found in the *Declaration*? The best-known place in the Bible where happiness is discussed is in the Sermon on the Mount:

- 1    aWhen Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on bthe  
       1mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples  
       came to Him.
- 2    aHe opened His mouth and *began* to teach them,  
       saying,
- 3    “1aBlessed are the 2poor in spirit, for btheirs is  
       the kingdom of heaven.
- 4    “Blessed are athose who mourn, for they shall be  
       comforted.
- 5    “Blessed are athe 1gentle, for they shall inherit  
       the earth.
- 6    “Blessed are athose who hunger and thirst for



righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

- 7 “Blessed are <sup>a</sup>the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- 8 “Blessed are <sup>a</sup>the pure in heart, for <sup>b</sup>they shall see God.
- 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for <sup>a</sup>they shall be called sons of God.
- 10 “Blessed are those who have been <sup>a</sup>persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for <sup>b</sup>theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 “Blessed are you when *people* <sup>a</sup>insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
- 12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for <sup>a</sup>in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew V. 3-12, *Bible Gateway*)

These sayings are called “beatitudes.” The name comes in part from the Latin word *beati* meaning “blessed.” In contrast to the previously discussed models of HAPPINESS (the secular and the everyday models), which are given largely in metaphorical language, the model of happiness in the Beatitudes is essentially literal. I say “essentially,” because the beatitudes clearly contain metaphorically used words (e.g., *poor in heart*, *hunger for righteousness*), but these do not amount to overarching and systematic conceptual metaphors as in the case of the other two models. The metaphors remain at the word level and do not form comprehensive patterns of thought in terms of which the concept of HAPPINESS is understood or could be, or should be, understood.

The list of required features for being blessed/happy in the Beatitudes includes the following (my interpretations are based on J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton *The Fourfold Gospel* (1914) retrieved from <http://www.biblestudyguide.org/comment>

/mcgarvey/four-fold-gospel/ FFG000.HTM):

- a. The poor in spirit (i.e., who are not full of themselves, who are not arrogant, who are not feeling superior to others, who are modest).
- b. Who mourn (i.e., who feel guilty because of their sins).
- c. The gentle (i.e., the kind, peaceful, and patient).
- d. Who hunger and thirst for righteousness (i.e., who desire what's morally good).
- e. The merciful (i.e., the forgiving).
- f. The pure in heart (i.e., who are free of evil desires and purposes).
- g. The peacemakers (i.e., who make peace between people).

The features given in a through g (let us call them “features X”) – modest, remorseful, kind and peaceful, morally good, forgiving, free of evil desires and purposes, peace-making – are like the characteristics of Jesus and indeed those of God; they are divine characteristics. The possession of these divine characteristics makes people similar to Jesus and God. Just as importantly, many people in Jesus’ time did not possess them and, in the same way, many people do not have them today. The human world assumes, expects or requires the opposite of the features; it is good (it was good) to be self-confident and proud, we should not worry about the sins we commit (we can hide them), it is good to be aggressive and pushy, moral goodness is unimportant, it is fine to harbor bad feelings for others, some amount of wrong helps achieve our goals, and warring and fighting is inevitable. On the whole, in today’s human world (just as in the human world of biblical times) it is taken to be more beneficial to possess these latter characteristics than their opposites taught by Jesus. How can the features X given by Jesus make anyone blessed/happy then?

The list of rewards as given in a' through g' below (let us call them "features Y") for possessing the features X above include the following (my interpretations are again based on J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton *The Fourfold Gospel* (1914) retrieved from <http://www.biblestudyguidd.org/comment/mcgarvey/four-fold-gospel/FFG000.HTM>):

- a' Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- b' They shall be comforted.
- c' They shall inherit the earth.
- d' They shall be satisfied.
- e' They shall receive mercy.
- f' They shall see God.
- g' They shall be called sons of God.

In most cases, the rewards Y are complementary to and entailed by the features X. For example, people who feel guilty because of their sins will be comforted, people who hunger for what's morally good will be satisfied, etc. Some other features will simply entail certain rewards. For example, people who are free of evil desires and purposes shall see God. In general, rewards Y make it worthwhile to possess the features X and make it also worthwhile to suffer from the consequences of the opposite features that people possess in the human world; in some of the cases, the negative consequences will be eliminated, and in some others the features will bring very positive results. This is possible if we engage fully in the religious world (e.g., through believing in God) and if we engage in the human world by means of adopting the laws and principles of the religious world.

The sayings (Beatitudes) have the following structure:

Those who have features X now are blessed/happy because they will receive rewards Y later on.

A significant aspect of the structure “feature X now, reward Y later” is that people are blessed/happy because of what *will* happen to them. Note, however, the last three sayings have a slightly different structure:

- 10 “Blessed are those who have been  
apersecuted for the sake of righteousness,  
for btheirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 “Blessed are you when *people* ainsult you  
and persecute you, and falsely say all  
kinds of evil against you because of Me.
- 12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in  
heaven is great; for ain the same way they  
persecuted the prophets who were before  
you. (Matthew V. 3-12, *Bible Gateway*)

In these (10, 11, and 12), it is not the possession of a feature that makes one blessed/happy but what other people have done or do to those who possess features X. In other words, the three sayings describe the consequences of what can happen to people who possess features X, and that these consequences can make one blessed/happy. For this reason, 10 through 12 are not considered to be on the same footing as 3 through 9. In addition, the saying in 12 has a further noteworthy characteristic. It is that some of the words used in it (*rejoice* and *be glad*) seem to point to the conceptualization of happiness as “happiness as an immediate response” (i.e., what was characterized as joy/happiness), which is the most salient model of HAPPINESS in everyday English. This is indicated especially by the use of the word *rejoice* that is clearly related to *joy*. If this argument is correct, it can be suggested that the statement of the New Testament version of happiness contains a plea for people to be happy in the everyday sense of the term; that is, achieving happiness in the biblical sense must make us happy in the everyday sense as well.

How does the biblical (New Testament) model compare in detail with the two everyday models outlined in the previous section, on the one hand, and with the secular model of the *Declaration*, on the other? First, let us consider “happiness as an immediate response.”

In the everyday model, you want to achieve something, you achieve it, and *as a result* you are happy. The cause precedes the state of happiness in time. In the realm of the sacred, it is a future cause that makes you happy. You are blessed/happy now because something good will happen to you later.

As a result, it is a long-lasting state that is fueled by the anticipation of what will come, rather than by what happened before. The religiously blessed/happy person does not undergo any kind of immediate emotional response and his or her happiness may not always be a pleasurable feeling. By contrast, happiness in the everyday, human world gives people immediate and short-term pleasure.

Happiness as an immediate response is characterized by people being physiologically and behaviorally aroused and active in the everyday world. This is not the case in the sacred world, where people’s happiness is not displayed in their physiological and behavioral reactions but in their inner life and their attitude to other people. While people’s reactions in the everyday world can often lead to a loss of control over their emotions, this cannot be found in the sacred.

In the everyday model of HAPPINESS as an immediate response, you want to achieve something and you achieve it; this makes you happy. In the sacred, there is no personal achievement, like winning a competition; there is only a state, a characteristic that makes you different from most other people. This is a characteristic that goes against the “norms” of the human world, and if you possess it, other people may consider you “weak” (just as many looked at Jesus as being weak because he did not fight the fights of the human world).

Let us now turn to the comparison of the second everyday

model (happiness as a value) with the biblical one. It was mentioned above that in the New Testament model people are blessed/happy because of the good that will happen to them later and that the good that happens to them is something divine that comes from God. In contrast, the “value model” works on the principle of “having a certain cause now makes us happy.” In addition, the causes involved in it are worldly ones, whereas in the New Testament model they are divine. What is shared by the “value view” of HAPPINESS and the biblical model is that neither produces salient responses, that they last a long time, and that they are both characterized by the feeling of harmony with the world.

Finally, we can also ask what the relationship is between the concept of HAPPINESS in the sacred and in the secular worlds. As we saw in the *Declaration of Independence*, happiness is a desired state. In the sacred world, it is not; it is a state that is widely available to everyone (it is a gift as God’s grace), so it is not an object of desire. In the *Declaration*, the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right of the people. In the sacred world, it is not a right, let alone an inalienable one; you simply have it if you possess some or all of the characteristics that are required by Jesus – but only then. In the secular world, it is a major life goal; in the sacred world, it is a way of life. In the secular world, happiness is difficult to obtain, it requires effort to obtain it, and it takes a long time to obtain it. In the sacred world, it is both very easy and very difficult to obtain. It is easy because people “only” have to believe in God. That this is not so easy after all can be seen in the number of people who have turned away from Christianity in the past one hundred years. The secularization process going on in the western world is an indication that many people find it very difficult to live according to the requirements taught by Jesus. Finally, the *Declaration of Independence* states that the government is responsible to make sure that people can obtain happiness. By contrast, Christianity does not appeal to the state to guarantee

happiness; it leaves it to people. Jesus asks people to make a responsible decision for themselves whether they want it or not.

## 6. Conclusions

I examined the concept of HAPPINESS in three very different historical and cultural contexts: the Declaration of Independence, contemporary everyday English, and the New Testament.

As a matter of fact, the study of contemporary English yielded not just one but two prototypical models (meanings) for the concept. The four meanings display clear and major differences.

The model of HAPPINESS in the *Declaration* portrays the concept as a desired future state, a goal to be achieved. It is the government's duty to make it possible for people to achieve it. The purpose of human life and the desire to be happy largely coincide. Simply put, happiness itself is a life goal. This concept does not tell us much about the internal structure and content of HAPPINESS.

The model of HAPPINESS that the *Declaration* provides comes from three conceptual metaphors: HAPPINESS IS A MOVING DESIRED OBJECT, A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and FREE ACTION IS FREE MOTION. It is these three metaphors that largely constitute the concept.

The contemporary everyday idea of happiness comes in two versions: "happiness as an immediate response" (joy/happiness) and "happiness as a value" (happiness "proper"). Both the immediate response and the happiness as value versions are constituted by a number of conceptual metaphors, metonymies, and related concepts. The more salient prototype of the everyday notion of HAPPINESS (as an immediate response) is composed by a variety of force-dynamic metaphors, metonymies indicating various bodily reactions, and some inherent concepts. Happiness as an immediate response does not

seem to be defined by a major constitutive conceptual metaphor, such as THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER for anger. Instead, a variety of general emotion metaphors are used to create aspects of the concept. The concept fits our general lay understanding of what emotions are (short events) and what stages they consist of (cause, existence, control, etc.). What makes happiness as an immediate response unique as an emotion is a set of distinctive metonymies indicating inherent concepts (SATISFACTION, HARMONY, PLEASURE).

Happiness as a value is, however, constituted, in the main, by a set of distinctive metaphors: HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, HAPPINESS IS NOT HEAVY, HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS BEING IN HEAVEN, and, most importantly, HAPPINESS IS A HIDDEN OBJECT. The concept is also characterized by a strong evaluative component (deriving from the UPWARD-oriented evaluative metaphors) and the inherent concept of HARMONY.

Given these metaphors, people are seen as having some general purposes in life that they want to achieve. They act in accordance with those purposes. When their purposes are fulfilled, they are happy, and this gives them a sense of harmony with the world.

The structure of the concept of HAPPINESS in the *New Testament* is very different from that of the previous ones. One can be blessed/happy now if we possess certain features now (“those who have certain features X now are blessed/happy”). That is to say, to be blessed/happy requires the fulfillment of a set of preconditions. In addition, the source or cause of people’s happiness derives from certain future rewards (“because they will receive rewards Y later on”). In this model, the cause follows the resulting state (of happiness) in time, whereas in all the other cases the cause precedes the state (of happiness).

Also, unlike the other models, the New Testament model is spelled out in literal, nonmetaphorical language. However, it requires the acceptance of a Christian worldview that is metaphorical. In this worldview, there is an all-powerful God



and Jesus Christ is his son who can provide people with the rewards he promised. The Christian view is based on a large and intricate system of metaphors (see Lakoff, 1996; Kövecses, 2011).

In the paper, we have seen how different historical and cultural contexts influence and shape the concept of HAPPINESS. This shaping effect results primarily from the conceptual devices that constitute the way we speak and think about emotions: conceptual metaphors, conceptual metonymies, and related concepts. The different cultural contexts favor different conceptual devices that result in different cognitive models (or frames) for particular generic emotion concepts – in our case HAPPINESS. This view of emotion concepts and this methodology may open up the way to similar (but more systematic and more corpus-based) studies of other emotion concepts in other cultural contexts both cross-culturally and within a single culture.

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