

Various ideas of happiness

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One of the issues, from my perspective, that the article doesn't address is the simple fact that "happiness" is an English word. They almost start to address it with the Danish hygge but then rapidly move on. If you ask people whose first language is not English to map their non-English subjective experience to the lexical field of English, you have problems. They're going to pick a "feeling" for which they might use a specific word in their language and then agree to use the English word "happiness" to describe it. I bet that if you asked those Japanese respondents what Japanese word they'd use to describe their "happiness" you'd find a much different semantic field covered than an English speaker saying they were "happy."

Which brings me back to my soapbox of translation (C'mon! Y'all knew that was coming 😊). Epicurus didn't use the word "happiness" but ευδαιμονία (eudaimonia). That's why I think it's so important to understand what he meant when he used that word - what semantic field was covered by the Ancient Greek term ευδαιμονία. To say it maps one to one to happiness or well-being or flourishing... Well, you can see right there that there are three English candidates.