

An abstract painting of a seascape. The sky is a vibrant, textured red with some white highlights. The water is a deep blue with white foam from waves. The foreground is a bright orange, textured beach. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

Daniel M. Haybron

HAPPINESS

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

Daniel M. Haybron

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A Very Short Introduction
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First Edition published in 2013

Impression: 2

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN 978-0-19-959060-5

Printed in Great Britain by
Ashford Colour Press Ltd, Gosport, Hampshire

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For Elizabeth

Acknowledgements

For their invaluable assistance with this book, I am most grateful to Andrea Keegan, Anna Alexandrova, Anne Margaret Baxley, Antti Kauppinen, Barbara Baumgartner, Boyce Nute, Carol and Joel Friedman, Chad Flanders, Charlie Kurth, David Brax, David Chalmers, David Haybron, Deborah Welch, Elizabeth Foreman, Emma Ma, Eric Brown, Eric Wiland, Erik Angner, Gerardo Camilo, Jason Raibley, John Brunero, John Doris, Jona Ross, Julia Annas, Julia Driver, Lori Lipkind, Neil Thin, Paul Dolan, Robert Biswas-Diener, Robert Sullivan, robert wolff, Sara Bernal, Scott Berman, Scott Ragland, Sean Davies, Troy DeArmitt, Valerie Tiberius, and anonymous reviewers for Oxford University Press. For support in writing this book, I want to thank my department chair, Fr. Theodore Vitali, and Saint Louis University. For their support and mentorship in these matters over the years, I wish to thank Douglas Husak, Stephen Stich, and L. W. Sumner, whose pioneering philosophical work on happiness made my own researches possible. I owe a special debt to Ed Diener, who more or less invented the contemporary field of happiness research, and has contributed more to the study of happiness than anyone living. His own life pretty well embodies what this book is about, which is not to say he'll agree with everything in it. (We scholars get paid to disagree, after all.) There are few academics I admire, as a scholar or a person, as much as Ed.

Above all, I want to thank my most patient and incisive reader and advisor, my wife Elizabeth.

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Chapter 1

A remarkable fact

I have been wondering at your peaceful slumbers, and that was the reason why I did not awaken you, because I wanted you to be out of pain. I have always thought you happy in the calmness of your temperament; but never did I see the like of the easy, cheerful way in which you bear this calamity.

Crito to Socrates, who awaits execution. From Plato, *Crito*

I asked the Pirahãs once during my early missionary years if they knew why I was there. 'You are here because this is a beautiful place. The water is pretty. There are good things to eat here. The Pirahãs are nice people.' That was and is the Pirahãs' perspective. Life is good. Their upbringing, everyone learning early on to pull their own weight, produces a society of satisfied members. That is hard to argue against.

Daniel Everett, *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes*

Happiness in unexpected places

In all of human history, there may never have been a better time to be alive. In fact economist Charles Kenny declared the period 2000–10 to be the 'best decade ever'. Even with the wars raging in various parts of the globe, people are less likely than ever to die at the hands of others. We can expect to live *decades* longer than any generation until the last century. Worldwide, the average life