

Daniel M. Haybron







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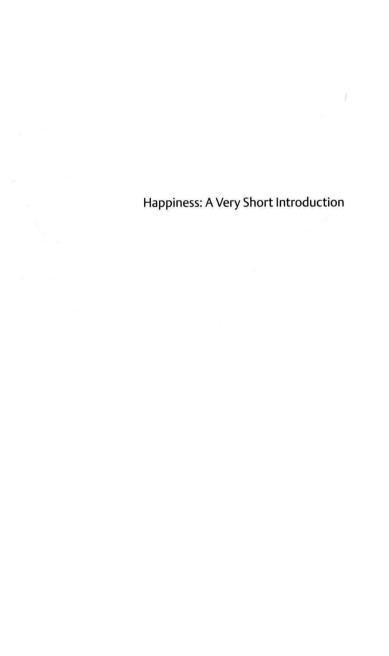
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Chapter 1

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