

Better — Not Good Yet

Nobody asked but ...

I am reading Hans Rosling's book, *Factfulness*. Its subtitle is *Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*. I'm only up to reason #5, and I'm already convinced. It's too bad that Alex Jones has usurped the name, "Info Wars," because he is a malefactor in those info wars. Rosling, *et al*, are benefactors.

A few years ago, I waded into Steven Pinker's book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. I struggled with that book, mostly because of its length (800+pages), its premise, and its overwrought citations of past violence, abetted by references to questionable sources such as the Old Testament. Pinker treated modernity as a monolith, the world was proceeding in lock step from agony to bliss. I also thought that Pinker ignored the destructive potential of the armies and despots of today.

Rosling uses facts, however, which can be validated. Principle among these is an undeniable trend away from high rates of child mortality. A second principle is that wealth is growing, while poverty is diminishing — we are going from tribal isolation to networked intelligence.

After Pinker, I was still certain that war was the single biggest factor in the prevention of human logic's prevailing before the extinction of the species. With Rosling's much more objective, scientific view, I now lean toward seeing war as a feature of tribal life. Although tribal thinking will likely never end, it seems to be dwindling asymptotically, *ie* becoming a vanishingly smaller element of the overall human culture.

— Kilgore Forelle