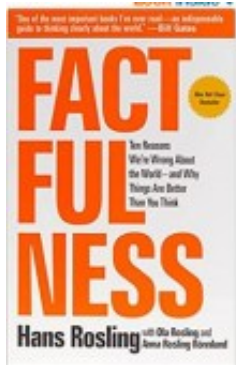


Factfulness by Hans Rosling

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Monday, June 27, 2022

<https://curmudgeon-alley.com/factfulness-by-hans-rosling/>



The subtitle of this book is: *Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World – and Why Things Are Better Than You Think.*

Read on for a link to the Factfulness quiz.

First a couple of confessions, this is not a book I would normally have read, and it is definitely not one I would have picked off a bookstore shelf. I have a few charities that I have on automatic pay, including the [Fistula Foundation](#), a wonderful charity that does good work, and is well managed. I discovered this charity in an opinion piece by the former New York Times columnist, [Nicholas Kristof](#). I do not remember the name, but an individual donated copies of this book to the Fistula Foundation along with the money to distribute them. Being a regular donor they sent me a copy. After reading the first few pages, I became very interested in the book.

My second confession may confound folks who know me as I am betting *Señora's* good money that they see me as “somewhat” pessimistic. However, until a few years ago I was very optimistic about the direction of the world. Racism seemed to be decreasing. Women seemed to be gaining more equal footing in society and the workplace. We seemed to be headed for a more inclusive society. Nations seemed to be cooperating better. The Berlin Wall had fallen. Russia seemed less of a threat than it had in the past. While there were still conflicts around the world they seemed contained. Science and technology were making our lives easier and better. Just any number of things of this ilk had me thinking that perhaps humanity was getting its act together. This optimism began to wane with 9/11 and our overreaction to that. With the rise of Trumpism and all that goes with that, it has all but evaporated.

The book can best be described from a summary statement at the end of the book by the co-authors:

“When we have a fact-based worldview, we can see that the world is not as bad as it seems – and we can see what we have to do to keep making it better.”

What they are advocating is that we look at the world through the lens of facts, which is not how most of us process the world.

They start the book off by having the reader take a short quiz, 13 questions. You can also do so by following this link: [The Factfulness Quiz](#)

When I took the quiz I was vaguely upset as I missed so many. But then I read that they have given this quiz all over the world, frequently to groups of very intelligent people who are experts in some of the fields in the quiz. Generally the results were not as good as monkeys randomly selecting A or B or C. The book goes on to explain why that is so.

Many are logical fallacies that most of us are aware of intellectually, but seem to ignore in our day to day evaluation of the world. Another big one was the media. They do not fault the media, they are doing what they do, but we need to be more aware they too have biases. They also have commercial interests that must be taken into account, they want eyeballs and ears.

There are ten chapters, each detailing the various causes of misperception. I will not go through each, but I personally tend to generalize from my own experiences to the group...usually not a good idea. And I definitely, more than I care to admit, want to put the blame of societies problem on the groups that I see as the “bad guys”.

Am I more optimistic after reading this book... about some things, yes. The evidence is that poverty is decreasing; literacy and health care worldwide are on the upswing. But are we going to do anything about the climate change, I am not optimistic, I am not sure that the authors are either. This book is worth the reading as it will give some fresh insight into some global issues, and we can all use a little optimism, even in the best of times... or the times we live in now.

And so it goes.

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