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## Why we need to read and understand literature: literariness and Hans Rosling's *Factfulness* (2018)

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### Abstract

My article addresses the qualities of “good” literature and how an understanding of the nature of literary devices, so-called “literariness”, can enhance the reading experience. Focusing on Hans Rosling’s *Factfulness* (2018), I discuss some of the most important features of good writing. Six literary devices have been selected for special attention: point of view, tone, amplification, anecdotes, flashbacks, and parallelism. *Factfulness* is not only good writing, it carries an important message: “[w]hen we have a fact-based window, 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” (p. 255). Rosling emphasises the importance of knowing the facts about our planet, and relying on *these* rather than primitive instincts to make assessments and decisions. The elegance of Rosling’s language makes the message not only convincing but also palatable.

**Keywords:** Literariness, Good Writing, *Factfulness*, and Instincts

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## **Introduction**

Good literature can be read by all kinds of readers, with or without literary training, but the reading experience will be different. With knowledge of what makes a text literary, the reader not only gains a better understanding of the text itself but also enjoys it more. Literariness, i.e. the use of special devices and techniques, heightens the reading experience. Literariness also enables us to distinguish between “good” and less good writing. Hans Rosling, in his recently published *Factfulness*, provides an excellent example of good writing. Focusing on six literary devices that are particularly prominent – point of view (who is telling the story), tone (the attitude of the writer to his subject or character(s)), amplification (elucidations by explanation and/or example), anecdotes (short, often personal stories), flashbacks (interruptions in the chronology of the story to enable the insertion of past events), and parallelism (repetition of a word, phrase or grammatical structure, or a full sentence for emphasis), I demonstrate why *Factfulness* is such a powerful as well as enjoyable book. It is the author’s final gift to the world (Rosling died in February 2017). *Factfulness* marks the end of Rosling’s long and distinguished international career in global health. Its wisdom is borne up by a sophisticated and yet accessible style of writing that is as unaffected as it is convincing. Why and how this is the case is the subject of the present article.

## **Discussion**

Roman Jakobson (1980) declared that it is literariness that makes a given work a literary work. Literariness, in other words, is a feature that distinguishes literature from other types of texts. It comprises certain artistic techniques or devices that, as readers, we must recognise and understand if we are to appreciate the text to the full. Literary devices serve to defamiliarise, i.e. present a familiar phenomenon in an uncommon fashion, with the aim of providing a renewed and prolonged aesthetic perception (Shklovsky, 1991). Rosling’s narrative, illustrations, graphs, and charts are important parts of this technique.

Miall and Kuiken (1998), in discussing the disjunction between professional concerns and the interests of ordinary readers outside the academy, argue that “[i]f the gap is to be narrowed, it may come from focusing once again on the formal aspects of the literary text through which . . . the ordinary reader’s concerns primarily can be located” (p. 328). As a teacher of literature, I find it not only helpful but absolutely necessary to teach literary devices. This becomes particularly important when teaching trainee teachers whose task it is to help young, untrained readers to realise the full potential of the reading experience and teach others how to do the same.

Nonetheless, some leading critics have called into question the practice of teaching literary devices. Stanley Fish (1980), for example, asserts, “It is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities” (p. 326). To

pay attention to something, however, assumes that we know and understand what we are looking at. A different angle is taken by Terry Eagleton who points to the changing nature of literature. He claims that:

Anything can be literature, and anything which is regarded as unalterably and unquestionably literature - Shakespeare, for example - can cease to be literature. Any belief that the study of literature is the study of a stable, well-definable entity, as entomology is the study of insects, can be abandoned as a chimera. (Eagleton, 1983, pp. 10-11).

But if this is true, how is it possible to define a literary work as a classic? For a work to become a classic, it must have certain recognised literary qualities that withstand the test of time. These are upheld by the use of literary devices, which, I maintain, need to be understood and formally taught. By receiving guidance on the nature and use of literary devices, we can enhance our reading experience and understand why we are so affected, intellectually as well as emotionally, by a text. By recognising literary devices we become not only more satisfied but also more critical readers. This is particularly important in relation to such powerful works of literature as *Factfulness*, which is all about making us think and be critical of what we read, what we believe, and what we *think* that we know. In the following, I hope to demonstrate that van Dijk's (1979) view that "there are no sufficient or necessary properties of literature" (p. 602) is neither adequate nor helpful in understanding and appreciating literature.

In his study of phonetic and graphic features of poetry, Hanauer (1996) makes an important point that is highly pertinent to the present discussion, namely "[w]hile sensitivity to formal textual features and the way to integrate this information may stay constant, the value assigned to these textual features was seen to change according to literary educational background" (p. 374). Learning about narrative devices is only one part, albeit a very important part, of the story: our backgrounds, educational as well as cultural, also influence the way we perceive and appreciate a literary text. This makes for fruitful discussions, and particularly where the participants are from different backgrounds.

Rosling's *Factfulness* addresses the state of our planet, giving ten reasons for why we may be optimistic about its future. *Factfulness* is for all nations and all peoples. Rosling does not suggest that we can afford to be complacent: far from it, we need to take action, but not out of a sense of panic but in response to a proper understanding of the planet's status today. This is a global project with many challenges. *Factfulness* is a set of stories about these challenges, about us and the world in which we live.

As readers, we make a contract with the literary text. Miall and Kuiken (1998) define this process as follows:

By treating [the text] as a single, albeit complex, communicative experience, the reader comes to recontextualize or redefine some significant aspect of experience. A reader taking up a literary text thus makes several related commitments that guide the act of reading. Let us call these the Formalist Contract. (p. 339)

In creating a pact with the text, we treat the latter as a whole, assuming that something new will be learned in the reading process. We respond to the text and re-shape it as we recall memories and experiences. We analyse the text in order to better understand and respond to the environment. Rosling invites us to make such a pact with his book. He knew, after having been diagnosed with cancer in 2016, that *Factfulness* would be his last work. It was his final attempt to share with others the knowledge he had gained from a lifetime of teaching at university level and working as a doctor/medical researcher in countries across the globe. *Factfulness* has already become a sensation. This is because it is a fine work of literature; at the same time, it enables us to re-think our perceptions of the world and addresses the very future of our planet. Its entertaining stories help us to accept challenging messages without panicking – and, equally importantly, without losing hope.

The subtitle, “Ten Reasons We’re Wrong About the World – and Why Things Are Better than You Think”, defines both the purpose and structure of *Factfulness*. Rosling’s (2018) study is born not only of disappointment in, but also frustration about our “devastating global ignorance” (p. 15). As part of his mission to change the current state of affairs, Rosling presents practical thinking tools to overcome our lack of understanding. There is one important and rather unexpected underlying metaphor that supports Rosling’s reasoning and to which he recurs often, namely that of sword swallowing. The feat is not, as we might think, impossible. As Rosling demonstrates, all you need to know is that the throat is flat and that you can only slide flat things down it. With some practice, we can all do it (Rosling does not, however, advocate that we do so!). He constantly reminds his readers that our knowledge of the world and how it works, which includes our own position in the universe, is so poor that even chimpanzees, selecting answers on a random basis, can gain higher scores in multiple-choice tests on the environment, global health, etc.

While Rosling does not ask us to swallow swords, he does ask us to consider why we know so little about our planet, how it works, and what it needs. Our ignorance, he maintains, is rooted in basic, primitive instincts, which he calls the gap-, negativity-, straight line-, fear-, size-, generalization-, destiny-, single perspective-, blame-, and urgency instincts. Each of these is addressed in a separate chapter. There is no space to go through these here. Suffice it to say that our primitive instincts cause us to think and act irrationally, draw wrong conclusions, and fail to perceive the world as it really is. They are what prevent factfulness. The

six literary devices discussed below and outlined above are drawn from different chapters of *Factfulness*.

Rosling concludes his study with “factfulness rules of thumb”, which, as their name suggests, act as practical guidelines. “Factfulness”, argues Rosling, is all about seeing the world clearly. He describes *Factfulness* as

a book about the world and how it really is. It is also a book about you, and why you (and almost everyone I have ever met) do not see the world as it really is. It is about what you can do about it, and how this will make you feel more positive, less stressed, and more hopeful as you walk out of the circus tent [where Rosling first saw sword swallowing] and back into the world. (p. 17)

Rosling makes many demands on his reader. These are expressed in an encouraging and polite style, the purpose of which is to bring about a change in our thinking and a firm desire to act on our new insights:

So, if you are more interested in being right than in continuing to live in your bubble; if you are willing to change your worldview; if you are ready for critical thinking to replace instinctive reaction; and if you are feeling humble, curious, and ready to be amazed – then please read on. (p. 17)

Why is this challenge so effective? Firstly, there is a skilful use of parallelism in the form of “if you” that introduces each challenge. Secondly, the result of responding to the challenges is connected with a positive emotion, that of amazement. And thirdly, you are formally invited, indeed encouraged, to take up the challenge by the simple but all-important word “please” which recurs often in *Factfulness*, and it always has the function of stimulating positive thinking and action.

The main idea or theme then of *Factfulness* is how to think about our world and how to understand it – a tall order for a book of 342 pages! Variations on this theme will be considered in relation to the six literary devices discussed below. The theme is elaborated on through the point of view of the writer/narrator, which is established at the beginning, in the very first sentence of Rosling’s (2018) “author’s note”. Here, the reader is informed that “*Factfulness* is written in my voice, as if by me alone, and tells many stories from my life” (P. ix). But this is not the whole story as he also acknowledges the support of his son and his daughter-in-law, Ola and Anna Rosling Rönnlund, who helped with the presentation of ideas and statistics in the graphs and diagrams that fill the pages of *Factfulness*. Nonetheless, it is clear that the actual text is Rosling’s own work, is based on his own experiences, and presents his own conclusions. In the following discussion, I shall, as already established, focus on the six most prevalent and most important literary devices in terms of the present discussion, namely point of view, tone, anecdote; flashback, amplification, and parallelism.

*Factfulness*, as already established, is written in the author's own voice, from his own point of view, and based on many years of experience as a medical doctor and professor of global health. This experience has taught Rosling not to trust data 100%. It also gives him confidence to issue challenges such as the one below, to be found in the section "Feeling, not thinking":

My guess is you *feel* that me saying that the world is getting better is like me telling you that everything is fine, or that you should look away from these problems and pretend they don't exist: and that feels ridiculous and stressful.

I agree. Everything is not fine. We should still be very concerned. As long as there are plane crashes, preventable child deaths, endangered species, climate change deniers, male chauvinists, crazy dictators, toxic waste, journalists in prison, and girls not getting an education because of their gender, as long as any such terrible things exists, we cannot relax. (PP. 68-69; original emphases).

The two paragraphs quoted above contain important indications of Rosling's point of view. In the first paragraph, he puts himself in his reader's shoes and describes his/her emotions. Why does he italicise "feel"? Because it is all about responding to challenges and recognising our own feelings, which are the basis of our perceptions. Our feelings can be wrong! The first sentence of the second paragraph aligns the writer with the reader. It is short and pithy, as is the sentence that follows it. Rosling's examples of what is wrong with the world today are fascinating: we can easily identify with them, we have read about them elsewhere (in newspapers, etc.), and they are clearly unacceptable if we are to pass on to future generations a world that is worth living in. By using the personal pronoun "we" in the final clause, after the comma, Rosling firmly aligns himself with the reader. *Factfulness* is replete with such examples.

The tone of *Factfulness* is inviting. From the very beginning, Rosling (2018) shows an interest in the reader's level of knowledge. He begins his book by inviting us to test ourselves: "I would like you to test your knowledge about the world" (p. 3). The thirteen questions relate to the number of girls who finish primary school in low-income countries; where the majority of the world population lives; how many people in the world live in extreme poverty; what the average life expectancy is in the world today; how population rates will change by the year 2100; why the UN predicts that the world population will increase by 4 billion by the year 2100; how the number of deaths per year from natural disasters has changed over the last hundred years; how the population of the world is distributed; the number of one year olds who have been vaccinated against a disease; how many years thirty-year-old women have spent in school; how many tigers, giant pandas, and black rhinos have been listed as endangered species and are still endangered today; how many

people in the world have access to electricity; and finally, whether the global climate will become hotter, colder, or remain the same over the next one hundred years.

Rosling anticipates his readers' scores, expecting them to be low. The present writer fulfilled Rosling's exceptions! At the same time, Rosling comforts us by telling us that by the time we have finished reading his book, we will "do much better" (p. 6). And secondly, "if [we] did badly on this test, [we] are in very good company". Despite the fact that the questions are relatively straightforward, "most people do extremely badly" (p. 6), Rosling adds for good measure.

The diagrams that Rosling uses by way of amplification (the third literary device to be discussed here) demonstrate not only the truth, but "capture the misconception" (p. 30) that forms the basis of our lack of knowledge and understanding in so many crucial areas of our lives. An excellent example of Rosling's use of amplification is a simple diagram that demonstrates the fallacy of the generally held belief that the world consists of two groups, rich and poor, and that the gap between these is virtually unbridgeable. By dividing the world up according to income per person (in dollars per day; adjusted for price differences; p. 33), Rosling (2018) is able to demonstrate that the world's population is divided up not into two but four main groups: those earning up to two dollars a day, eight dollars a day, 32 dollars a day, and "the others" (the group to which, he notes, we as readers of his book are most likely to belong). The vast majority of the world's population is spread out across levels 2 and 3. Rosling has done what he promised to do: "capture the misconception". He has also made this abundantly clear to his readers.

In *Factfulness*, Rosling takes us on a journey, one of the primary goals of which is to help us better understand the statistics and figures we see every day so that we can avoid drawing the wrong conclusions. A case in point is the challenge that he issues at the beginning of the book: "let's get a better sense of the reality behind the numbers" (p. 40). In this chapter Rosling is trying to help us understand the dangers of comparing two averages, because this makes us "see gaps that are not really there" (p. 40). He does this by relating the average scores of men and women in mathematics to their average income per day in dollars. Three sets of graphs, showing men and women's scores in mathematics in the USA and Mexico, demonstrate that the widely held belief that the scores are very different is a fallacy. Rosling concludes that, "looking at the data this way, . . . the two groups of people – men and women, Mexicans and people living in the United States – are not separate at all" (p.41). Amplification with the aid of graphs is a highly economical and effective way of helping us to see things clearly. It can also be misleading, as Rosling indicates, if we do not understand what we are comparing.

Rosling does not pretend to be omniscient. He spent a lifetime trying to learn as much as possible about our world and to share his knowledge. This was not

always a smooth process. In *Factfulness*, he describes some of the surprises that he had. A case in point is when he was in Norway, speaking at a conference of social science teachers. He asked his audience the following question, “There are 2 billion children in the world today, aged 0-15 years old. How many children will there be in the year 2100, according to the UN?” (2018, p.78). This should have been an easy question to answer for such teachers. The ignorance of the teachers, however, astounded Rosling. His amazement is expressed as follows:

Thinking it over more calmly after the teachers’ conference was over, I started to see the size of the knowledge problem. The number of future children is the most essential number for making global population forecasts. So it is central to the whole sustainability debate. If we get this number wrong, we are going to get a lot else wrong. Yet almost none of the highly educated and influential people we have measured have the slightest knowledge of what the population experts are all agreeing about. (p. 29)

The use of “slightest” in the final sentence serves to enhance the seriousness of the situation.

At the same time, Rosling is careful, even when criticising his reader, always to be polite. When, for example, he demonstrates that we tend to get things out of proportion, he adds the short but all-important sentence: “I do not mean to sound rude” (p. 128). He explains that it is “instinctive” (p. 128) to misjudge, and that such misjudgements are sometimes fuelled by the media. Rosling is concerned to help rather than criticise his reader, as indicated in the advice that follows: “It will be helpful to you if you always assume your categories are misleading” (p. 158). Rosling is speaking from his own experience. He frequently reminds us that we have learned new things from *Factfulness* and can now draw our own, more accurate conclusions after just a few chapters. Rosling shares in this process. In the section on greenhouse gas emissions, for example, he writes:

So, what is the solution? Well, it’s easy. Anyone emitting lots of greenhouse gas must stop doing that as soon as possible. We know who that is: the people on Level 4 [this goes back to the earlier division of people into four groups or levels discussed earlier] who have by far the lowest levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, so let’s get on with it” (p. 230).

The “let’s” in the final sentence clearly encompasses not only the reader but Rosling himself.

Rosling’s identification with his reader is enhanced by the use of the fourth literary device to be discussed here, namely “anecdotes”. Rosling’s short and often personal stories make his message convincing. The sword swallowing mentioned earlier is a method that Rosling actually used to demonstrate that the seemingly impossible is, in fact, quite possible if we understand the challenge and the limitations of the task in hand. This is why Rosling frequently swallowed a sword at



the end of his lectures! He notes with pleasure the surprise and admiration expressed by the audience. Another story, from Rosling's early childhood, relates to when he nearly drowned in a ditch full of rain water and sewerage. This is used to demonstrate how far Sweden has advanced since the days of Rosling's youth. He refers several times to this story, which is one of his "earliest memories" (p. 48).

Another powerful anecdote relates to Rosling's earliest experiences as a junior doctor. He demonstrates that not only was he lacking in knowledge, but by panicking, he drew the wrong conclusions. The event took place in a hospital in Hudiksvall in Sweden. Rosling is suddenly faced with the arrival of a man on a stretcher. The injured person is dressed in army uniform, is twitching, and appears to be bleeding to death. Rosling panics and sends off an assistant nurse to fetch four bags of O-negative blood. Due to his panic, Rosling concludes that the man is not only bleeding to death but also suffering from an epileptic fit. When the head nurse arrives, Rosling learns just how badly he has misjudged the situation: the patient is a pilot, who has crash-landed in ice-cold water, and, as a result, is twitching and his speech is slurred; the red on the floor is not blood but leakage from a colour cartridge that the pilot was carrying. Rosling believes that his misconception of the situation was fuelled by a childhood fear of a third world war breaking out. His misconception was a classic case of fear-induced misjudgement: "Inexperienced, and in an emergency situation for the first time, my head quickly generated a worst-case scenario. I didn't see what I wanted to see. I saw what I was afraid of seeing . . . There's no room for facts when our minds are occupied by fear" (p. 103).

Another memorable anecdote is an episode in a supermarket, when Rosling sees a mother laying her baby on its back (pp. 162-164). He quickly rushes towards the baby in order to place it on its stomach, which was the accepted procedure in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s (it was believed that babies were less likely to suffocate if placed on their stomach. This has since proved to be wrong). In the light of experience and new research, Rosling wonders a) what the mother must have thought of him and b) if the baby is still alive! What is the point of this personal anecdote? To illustrate the necessity of questioning entrenched beliefs and practices.

Yet another anecdote describes the event that caused Rosling to decide to become a researcher. He was in Memba, in India, in 1981, when he was sent to diagnose an unexplained disease that had caused paralysis of the legs among several hundred patients. In severe cases, some patients had also become blind. Why? Rosling describes how he spends a whole night consulting his medical textbook. He draws the conclusion that the source of the problem is probably not an infection. He finally discovers that the villagers have been poisoned by eating unprocessed cassava (normally cassava is processed but the poor farmers had suddenly started to eat it straight from the field because they were starving due to a major famine in the area). The story does not finish here.

In the early stages of his investigations, the Mayor of Memba had asked Rosling if it would be advisable to stop all public transport in and out of the village in case the disease should prove to be infectious. Without thinking carefully, Rosling hastily agreed to the suggestion even though he was fairly sure that there was no risk of infection. The women who normally took the bus to market were then forced to travel by boat. Because the boats were in poor condition, they sank and all the mothers, children, and fishermen drowned. Talking directly to the reader, Rosling writes: “I have no way to tell you how I carried on with the work I had to do that day and in the days afterward. And I didn’t talk about this to anyone else for 35 years” (p. 225). He trusts his reader to understand and to forgive. And equally importantly, to learn from it. There are several such stories in *Factfulness*, though not with such fateful consequences.

Rosling’s final anecdote brings together many of the lessons that he teaches in *Factfulness*. In 1989, in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rosling found himself collecting blood and urine samples as part of an investigation into an epidemic of the incurable paralytic disease known as “konzo”. Without warning, a crowd of 50 natives arrived, angry and armed with machetes. They were convinced that Rosling was going to sell their blood. Thanks to the intervention of a wise woman, disaster was averted. Rosling describes his reflections on the incident as follows:

I have always been extremely thankful for this courageous woman’s insight. And now that we have defined Factfulness after years of fighting ignorance, I am amazed at how well it describes her behaviour. She seemed to recognize all the dramatic instincts that had been triggered in that mob, helped them gain control over them, and convinced her fellow villagers with rational arguments. The fear instinct had been triggered by the sharp needles, the blood, and the disease. The generalization instinct had put me in a box as plundering European. The blame instinct made the villagers take a stand against the evil doctor who had come to steal their blood. The urgency instinct made people make up their minds way too fast. (p. 246)

Characteristically, Rosling’s analysis concludes with a direct address to his readers: “And if that woman could be factful under those circumstances, then you, highly educated, literate reader who just read this book, you can do it too” (p. 247). The parallelism, i.e. repetition of “you” here makes the statement even more powerful.

Where does all this wisdom come from? And why are we convinced that the lessons learned are Rosling’s own? *Factfulness* is replete with flashbacks, i.e. events occurring prior to the text. This is the fifth literary device to be discussed here. Rosling reflects at the very beginning on how many years he spent trying to teach what he calls a “fact-based worldview”. Perhaps one of his most memorable flashbacks is a lecture he gave at an African Union conference in 2013, just three

years before he started to write *Factfulness*. The incident is almost exactly in the middle of *Factfulness* (pp. 181-184), and it teaches one of the most important lessons in the book, namely

Factfulness is . . . recognizing that many things (including people, countries, religions, and cultures) appear to be constant just because the change is happening so slowly, and remembering that even small, slow changes gradually add up to big changes. (p. 184)

Rosling was addressing 500 women leaders from across the African continent. He calls it “the lecture of my life” (p. 181). During it, he summarised decades of research on female, small-scale farmers, predicting that in twenty years’ time, extreme poverty would come to an end in Africa. At the end of the session, however, the chairwoman of the African Union took Rosling to task, explaining that Africans will not settle for merely getting rid of extreme poverty. Instead, she envisages her people coming to the West and enjoying the same privileges as westerners, including coming to Europe as tourists and not just as “unwanted refugees” (p. 182). On reflection, Rosling realised that, far from delivering the lecture of his life, he “was still stuck in an old, static, colonial mind-set” (p. 183). “The lecture of his life” did not take place in 2013 but posthumously, in 2018, in the lessons learned and recorded in *Factfulness*.

It will be clear by now that *Factfulness* is not just a book or series of lessons but a collection of examples, stories, and flashbacks, all of which are designed to correct our distorted view of our world. Every set of statistics, every illustration, diagram and graph has its purpose and its explanation. Each, suggests Rosling, is like a part of a giant incubator, in which a premature baby is struggling for life. He does not use metaphors often, but when he does, it is to teach a particularly important lesson:

Think of the world as a premature baby in a giant incubator. The baby’s health status is extremely bad and her breathing, heart rate, and other important signs are tracked constantly so that changes for better or worse can quickly be seen. After a week, she is getting a lot better. On all the main measures, she is improving, but she still has to stay in the incubator because her health is still critical. (p. 71).

This metaphor incorporates many of the main ideas of *Factfulness*. And significantly, it gives reason for hope: the world *is* getting better, but it is not out of danger yet. The world’s condition is both “bad and better. Better and bad at the same time” (p. 71). The reversal of the adjectives is particularly effective here.

All the above literary devices used in *Factfulness* are reinforced by a careful use of parallelism, the sixth and final literary device to be discussed here. Some examples have already been identified, in relation to amplification and flashbacks. Rosling often uses parallelism to incite action and/or a change of attitude. A case in

point is where he repeats “we must” in three consecutive sentences: we must try hard not to generalise; we must try hard to discover sweeping generalisations; and we must be ready to question previous assumptions and “admit if we were wrong” (p. 164). It is made abundantly clear what we need to do.

The most outstanding example of parallelism in *Factfulness* is on the final page, in the section “Final Words”. The repetition of “I have found” helps the reader to understand that he/she too has made important discoveries while reading *Factfulness*. The paragraph reads:

I have found fighting ignorance and spreading a fact-based window to be a sometimes frustrating but ultimately inspiring and joyful way to spend my life. I have found it useful and meaningful to learn about the world as it really is. I have found it deeply rewarding to try to spread that knowledge to other people. And I have found it so exciting to finally start to understand why spreading that knowledge and changing people’s worldviews have been so damned hard. (p. 255)

## **Conclusion**

Rosling deserves to have the last word. It comes in the form of a clear challenge, and constitutes the final paragraph. The one-sentence paragraph says everything, and not surprisingly, it contains a powerful example of parallelism in the form of “we can see”. This gives us hope: “When we have a fact-based window, 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” (p. 255).

## **Note**

Readers may also be interested in reading Steven Pinker’s *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress*. London: Allen Lane, 2018.

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