Chapter 7, The Destiny Instinct

- (p. 166-170) The idea that innate characteristics determine the destinies of people, countries, religions, or cultures and are unchangeable.
- Rosling challenges that mindset. “Societies and cultures change,” (p. 168) Notions of European cultural superiority is fed by the destiny instinct.

Africa as a case study. Child mortality in 50 African nations has been reduced faster than Sweden ever did it.

- **Extreme poverty** is the issue, and it can be reduced for the 500 million in Africa in extreme poverty.
- **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** income growth estimates in the years after the Great Recession of 2008-2010 were wrong. Estimates for Level 4 countries were too optimistic
- Greatest growth was in Level 2 countries.
- But it is IMF estimates that influence where retirement money is invested. Level 2 countries warrant the investment, but it went to Level 4 countries.
Babies & Religions

- High childbirth rates are correlated with high poverty societies. They have low education (sex education) and no access to advanced public healthcare (contraception). Improve education and birthrates drop.
- Organized religions’ rules about sexual behavior have an influence on birthrates, but it is extreme (Level 1) poverty, not religion, that correlates with high birthrates.

Source: https://www.gapminder.org/answers/how-did-babies-per-woman-change-in-different-regions/
Source: https://www.gapminder.org/answers/how-did-the-world-population-change/

Sexual Behavior & Contraception

- Rosling argues that “values change all the time.” (p. 176)

How to Control the Destiny Instinct

- Slow change is not no change
- Unlike Math, Physics, & the arts, knowledge in the Social Sciences changes very quickly. Knowledge grows and the world changes in Social Science research.

Chapter 8, The Single Perspective Instinct

“No single measure of a good society can drive every other aspect of its development. It’s not either/or. It’s both and it’s case-by-case.”

“Being always in favor of or always against any particular idea makes you blind to information that doesn’t fit your perspective.” (p. 186)

- Constantly test your favorite ideas for weaknesses.
- Two main reasons why people focus on a single perspective: political ideology & professional blind spots.

Professional Expertise

- “Experts are experts only within their own field.”
- Intelligence is not a shortcut to factual knowledge.
Statistics—numbers—are critically important, but reliance solely on statistics and number crunching is insufficient for drawing conclusions.

Political Ideology

• Comparing healthcare & child survival rates in Cuba & the United States—Single-Perspective Mindsets
  o “We [Cuba] are not the healthiest of the poor, we are the poorest of the healthy.”
  o “The United States is the sickest of the rich.”
  ▪ What does Rosling mean when he writes that US politicians make decisions based on ideology and not what the data says.
  ▪ US spending on healthcare vs. the results as measured by longevity. Rosling argues that a lack of public healthcare in the US is the reason. Why is political ideology a factor in American political decision-making about healthcare access? (p. 199-200)
    • A balance is needed between regulation and freedom, and the public sector versus private sector

• Rosling: Liberal Democracy is the best system, but several dictatorships have improved their people’s lives and prosperity. “Most countries that make great economic and social progress are not democracies.”
• “No single measure of a good society can drive every other aspect of its development. It’s not either/or. It’s both and it’s case-by-case.”

Chapter 9, The Blame Instinct
“The instinct to find a clear, simple reason for why something bad has happened.”

- It undermines our ability to solve the problem, often by exaggerating the importance of individuals or particular groups. (207)
- Who gets blamed? Businessman, journalists, and foreigners. (p. 207-215) Compare this analysis with what we hear from politicians today. To what extent are they different? A careful reading of this section echoes current attitudes prevalent in many countries.
- “The Foreign Disease” (p. 216)
- Blame and Claim:
  - Powerful leaders like Chairman Mao Zedong was credited with lowering birth rates in China with his **one-child policy**. Closer look showed other factors.
  - The Pope (the Vatican) condemns the use of contraceptives, but contraceptive use in Catholic-majority countries is greater than in the rest of the world.

Rosling proposes that it is the systems more than the individuals to blame when something goes wrong; he adds that two kinds of systems deserve more credit than they are given: **Institutions**—primarily the people (nurses, police, teachers, firefighters, etc.) — and **Technology** – time-saving technologies which liberated humans to do better (?) things rather than mundane chores like laundry.

When it comes to blame, “It’s almost always about multiple interacting causes—a system.”

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Chapter 10, The Urgency Instinct

p. 223-227 The chapter’s introduction recounts a mysterious malady in Mozambique and the decision—and consequences—to treat it as possibly contagious.…A complex set of decisions and random unintentional results…

- “When we are afraid and under time pressure and thinking of worst-case scenarios, we tend to make really stupid decisions.” (p. 226)
- “The urgency instinct makes us want to take immediate action in the face of a perceived imminent danger. It must have served us well in the distant past.”

With risks that are far off in the future we can be lazy. We don’t save well for our retirement.

Rosling argues against creating fear and using exaggeration to motivate people to act quickly. Example: Al Gore and climate change. He argues that if one is going to show a worst-case scenario, it is essential to show probable ad best-case scenarios as well in order to have the information to make the best decisions. This is partly due to the complexity of systems involved.

Case Study: Climate Change. The solution is to stop emitting greenhouse gas as soon as possible. But good data is needed to make good decisions, and CO2 emissions data is published bi-annually (every two years) and should be published quarterly (every three months). (p. 231-232)

The dangers of crying wolf… (233)

Case Study: Ebola outbreak, 2014 – When a problem seems urgent the first thing to do is not to cry wolf, but to organize the data. (235)
The Five Global Risks We Should Worry About (237-241)

- Global Pandemic. – like the Spanish Flu of 1919. 50 million dead
- Financial Collapse --
- World War --
- Climate Change – Requires “a strong, well-functioning international community” (the UN)
- Extreme Poverty – A current reality. A smaller proportion than ever before live in extreme poverty, but that is still at least 800 million people. We know the solutions: “Peace, schooling, universal basic health care, electricity, clean water, toilets, contraceptives, and microcredits to get market forces started.”
  “There’s no innovation needed to end poverty.”
Chapter 11, *Factfulness in Practice*

- A summary of the lessons from this book
- How to use *Factfulness* in every-day life: in Education, Business, Journalism, Organizations, & Communities