Adithya Chimalakonda

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AP Language and Composition

Dr. Gingrich

The World Isn’t Going to Destroy Itself

It seems today that the world is going to destroy itself at any minute. Some complain of the impending over-population resulting from bringing countries out of poverty. Others lament the good-old-days when [vaccines didn’t cause autism](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism.html). A few are afraid that exhausted resources will drive authoritarian regimes to fight one another in strife for the remaining earthly elixirs. This world, filled to the brim with hatred, despair, and unholy mergers, is considered by many to be fixable only though a return to the rosy and all-perfect past. For such naysayers, however, their nostalgia and convenient forgetfulness of the horrors that plagued our ancestors are the only broken glue holding their argument from obscurity. The world is not on track to destroy itself because 1. The news media we currently use isn’t an accurate representation of the facts and trends of global well-being, and 2. The resources of the world are positive-sum, not diminishing with the increase in population.

It seems like the number of horrible events in the world has been increasing over the past decade. News stories have gotten increasingly more pessimistic about the world we live in, releasing one downpour after the other. Their status as the torch bearing heralds of our culture elevates newscasters’ words to the highest levels of respect awarded by our community. However, this doesn’t bode well for the majority of those that read the news because there is an increased flow of information around the world. This causes many to have a pessimistic mindset because all they see is war, wanton destruction, and suffering. Over the past two decades, the content put out by mainstream news media, has gotten more accurate, more current, and more pressing. This is a result of advancements in technology and development of journalistic techniques. The internet has allowed light-bringers around the world to put the transfer of information on steroids. This has the advantage of bringing everyone’s attention together at a moment’s notice and giving them the necessary information to act with immediacy. Citizens can be warned of severe weather, small businesses can be saved from international trade disasters, and children can be quickly recovered from abductions. However, this system’s dark side can be seen in the news corporations vying for the attention of millions as they come up stories, each racier and more sensational than the last. They jump upon hearing the news story, not to do justice or to help, but to wolf the viewership and watch-time. Hooked on this excitement, the audience becomes nothing more than a source of revenue for news sites. Because it makes monetary sense, a cycle of constant news is formed, where there is always something noteworthy that the audience needs to know about to stay current. The stories that maximize the attention garnered by the company are seldom about the leaps and bounds we make as humans. No reporter stands at an international border reporting, “I’m here in Somalia, where a Civil War did not break out today.” Neither does anyone say, “Here in Nicaragua, we don’t have famine. All the children, as you can see, are well-fed and well-clothed. There’s absolutely nothing to worry about.” In the span of day, the number of newsworthy negative events far outnumber the number of newsworthy positive things, simply because there are far more possibilities for something to go wrong, than there are for something to go right. This probability plays through in the news because for corporations to turn out attention-grabbing stories consistently, they must record all the negativity they possibly can. In maximizing their viewership to appease their investors and stock-holders, news companies leave audience members with a false hopelessness at the state of our world. They compare the slow and steady rate of progress to the jittery and jumpy spurts of wars, famines, and disasters. This comparison, however, does not represent the reality of the human state because it discounts all the achievements made thus far and all those we will make in the future. [Most people think](https://ourworldindata.org/optimism-pessimism) the human condition has gotten worse over the past few decades, when the opposite is, in fact, true. The world has been absolutely getting better. The [prevalence of disease](https://ourworldindata.org/eradication-of-diseases), the [infant death rate](https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality), the [deaths from child-birth](https://ourworldindata.org/maternal-mortality), [poverty](file:///C:\Users\ramgaru\Downloads\world-population-in-extreme-poverty-absolute.png), and [malnourishment](https://ourworldindata.org/hunger-and-undernourishment) have taken a steep decline in the past fifty years. This wasn’t a result of chance or a natural play of events. This progress was a result of human ingenuity and problem-solving. It was the fruition of the efforts of billions of people working hard for the betterment of their communities. It entailed the deaths of many but saved the lives of many more. With this context, the news we see and read is so keen on missing the big picture entirely by pointing out the minutiae of political drama, superfluous celebrities, and extraneous economics. The inner-workings of news companies as machines of monetary interests is clearly seen by their ignorance of general global trends.

A newscast happening less often would not only to set different priorities for its air time but would also be much more careful with the content it spreads to audiences that are tuned in much more intently. Instead of focusing acutely on disasters, it would showcase the advancements made, such as the cell-phone, the growing [world-wide access to vaccination](https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis-dtp3-immunization-global), and the [decrease in military conflicts](https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace). Once every decade or two, the span of human progress yielded by logic and science can be showcased to determine what has been done right and what needs to be fixed. This won’t be to preen and rest easy about the remaining problems, but strictly to analyze what has worked and what hasn’t. Having objective viewpoints of our problem-solving will give us the tools to solve problems more effectively because we can develop patterns of treatment for recurring problems. Being transparent with the successes and failures of our attempts will engender the spirits of younger generations to continue bearing the torch of humanity. Rather than feeling betrayed by their ancestors for bringing them into a terrible world, the coming generations will flourish in a community of people who uplift one-another. They will be fostered in an environment where failure is encouraged because it brings us closer to solving the problem. Humanism will become a part of everyone when the spirit of brotherhood and companionship drive people to sacrifice their individual wants for those in need. A world where a young boy is quick to help a starving child is an optimistic world. Such a world could only be brought about by culling mass media of its cherry-picked disasters, unrelenting politics, and constant outflow of information. Doing so would free the mind from unnecessary distractions and irrelevant sidetracks. It would allow people to focus on what truly matters: the replenishing of human livelihood.  
 Thinkers, makers, and doers are the ones pulling countries out of poverty, vaccinating people from sickness, and educating young minds to pursue greatness. They are the ones generating more human capital for the world. However, some argue that in shelling out aid to foreign countries is a bad policy because it prevents our own infrastructure from being more sophisticated. The return on investing back into ourselves is stronger and more secure in comparison to investing elsewhere. The [top receivers of US financial aid](https://explorer.usaid.gov/aid-trends.html) also have the lowest GDP. Jordan, Iraq, Nigeria and South Sudan are among the most desolate countries in the world. Therefore, the money being spent on these nations has had minimal effect in making them self-sufficient, right? Instead of funding the militaries of foreign regimes and protecting their interests, our funds can protect our own interests and nurture young minds.

Those statements assume that the world is a place with limited resources. They follow classic Malthusianism in believing the limited resources of the world would need to be shared by more people as the population increases. Since population needs to be controlled, helping countries out of poverty wouldn’t alleviate suffering, but further it. However, that doesn’t account for human ingenuity. Reducing poverty is in the best interests of everyone because the world is a [positive-sum game](https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth). An increasing population is not just a liability, but also an asset because it means more minds available for cultivation. Cultivating the youth will bring light to everyone’s future because they will become self-sufficient problem solvers, builders, thinkers, and advocates. This investment will have a magnanimously large return because the human mind is the single greatest resource afforded to any community.

Furthermore, a decrease in poverty often coincides with an increase in health and well-being of individuals. In this way, families will choose to have fewer children because there is a lowed likelihood of infant mortality. This means that bringing countries out of poverty won’t negatively impact the long-term distribution of resources because populations will stabilize based on the economic conditions surrounding them. In this way, the fear that bringing countries out of poverty would result in an unsustainable population explosion is baseless.

The effects of ending world poverty would result in more educated minds and a more stable population. These effects have no negative consequences on prosperous countries. Rather, having a larger pool of competent minds would improve quality of life for everyone. It would mean more and better inventions to alleviate the stressors of life. A constant state of improvement would be the most ideal human condition because it results in the benefit of everyone. Having a more mindful approach to solving problems by understanding them objectively is the key to bringing about such a world. Combined with more accurate news reporting, the pace of our world’s improvement can be maintained at a more constant pace. Ultimately, the world has no mind of its own; all it has are the inhabitants making their existence on it. Therefore, the world isn’t going to destroy itself; someone must deliberately do the deed. The world won’t save itself either; we must unite in collectivity to ameliorate our condition.

Document Analysis.

My paper is written in the shadow of Steven Pinker’s prose on the human condition and the accumulation of wealth worldwide. In his works, Pinker argues against misconceptions people hold about the world. Among his more popular theses is that the Enlightenment, a movement that took place during the late 18th century, is bearing fruit in our world today. His tools to argue for this consist of data, analysis, and counter-arguments.

Firstly, Pinker’s main sources of data are publicly available charts, graphs, and statistics. Using sources like the World Health Organization, Our World in Data, and federal government websites adds credibility to Pinker’s argument because the audience can fact check him. Accumulating publicly available data also ensures that organizations do not have conflicts of interests. Had he used journals and encyclopedias that required a paid membership or the creation of an account, Pinker’s words would not have been received as well. This transparency puts greater pressure on the author to check their own facts because their word won’t be taken for granted. However, it adds to Pinker’s ethos because it shows that he is capable of sifting through gigabytes of data to find relevant details. A fifth of the pages in his most recently published book, *Enlightenment Now*, are occupied by the references he uses to back up his argument for science, reason, and objectivity. In my editorial, I have also used publicly available facts and figures to back up claims. Having access to hyperlinks makes my job comparatively easier than Pinker’s because I don’t have to separately keep track of my sources.

Pinker’s analysis consists of stories on how the data could present itself to a bystander. Often, he would put the data in perspective by building a world around it. When talking about the reduced infant death rate, for example, Pinker highlights that the current rate of progress saves 120 million babies each year. 120 million babies that would have died each year, if not for the advancements made by science. Reading this for the first time caused me to be awed at how little I understood of the chart I saw when viewed out of context. By identifying concepts that audiences have trouble grasping (like large numbers), Pinker targets his analysis to fill in the holes to leave the reader with a more complete understanding.

Finally, Pinker’s use of counter arguments strengthen his claims by showing his consideration for the opposite side. This makes for deeper comprehension of his topics because Pinker does things in a very methodical way. It is far too easy to get swept off in a tangent when addressing a point that conflicts one’s view. However, Pinker’s organized points ensure that he does not get swept away speaking about the semantics. Instead, for every point he makes, Pinker addresses a directly conflicting point of view. Not only does this stretch his argument to encompass more situations, but it also makes for a smooth transition for the next point when done coherently. For example, he claims a point on infant deaths, refutes a counter-claim on infant deaths, and then moves on to speak about maternal mortality. This works well because it develops a gradual shift in focus. The reader recognizes that a new claim has been made, but isn’t put off by the jagged change in topic.