



Ten Things That Are Right With the World

Recently, I was asked by someone to compile a list of 10 — *10!* — things that are right with the world. I have to believe — I would like to believe — that most of my colleagues will find this as daunting a task as do I. After all, those of us who practice philosophy and write cultural commentary are accustomed to sniffing out problems: The glass is always half empty for us.

That it is a *challenge* to think of a few positive aspects of the world, to say nothing of 10 such things, is sobering enough. That this invitation would strike me as peculiar to boot is more self-revealing than I would care for it to be. Still, peculiar or not, hard or easy, that I have the opportunity to reorient my thinking toward life proves that there is at least one thing that is right with the world:



The world supplies us with *opportunities, numerous opportunities, to grow.*

In fact, given current technology and the ease with which it provides ever-growing numbers of people with access to both a bottomless sea of information as well as other human beings from around the globe, the case can be made that there are even more opportunities for intellectual, moral, professional, and spiritual growth today than ever before.

This is the first thing that is right with our world. It is, thankfully, by no means the last.

The second, I suppose, would be *the technology* itself that makes possible the dramatic expansion of opportunities for personal development alluded to in the first.

Third, outside of Heaven, the world will always be ridden with human suffering. While tragic, this fact is also doubtless. Equally doubtless, however, is that there is *more awareness of this suffering*, more sensitivity to it, than at any time in the past. Our imagistic age renders this unavoidable.

And it isn't just human suffering to which untold legions of people now attend. *Animal* suffering is also on our radar for perhaps the first time, historically speaking.

Fifth, while there is no evidence that plants suffer, there are more people in our generation concerned with *preserving wildlife* than can be found in any from the past. This is part of a larger trend of mindfulness for the environment that, while not infrequently misguided, is still generally a good thing.

Sixth, illiteracy was the norm in times gone by. Not so today. Never in the history of the Earth have there been as many *literate people* as there are in our own day.

Seventh, *Christianity* is right with the world. Whether one is a Christian or not, that Christianity has made incalculable contributions to the betterment of humanity over its 2,000 year history is a fact that



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every remotely open-minded person should be able to concede. No tradition, religious or otherwise, is without its flaws. Every one can and has been exploited for wicked purposes. But Christianity is alone among the world's religious and ethical traditions insofar as its emphasis on charity is concerned. There is not now, nor has there ever been, any other system of belief that attaches as much weight to loving the stranger — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc. — as does Christianity.

The world has been enriched by its presence.

Eighth, for all of its problems, *Western civilization* is right with the world. There is no other place on the planet that has provided more opportunities for more people from every conceivable walk of life than the West. Immigration is an issue only in Western countries, for it is only to the lands of the Occident that millions upon millions of people from all around the Earth are risking their very lives to get.

Ninth, *America* is right with the world. Again, it should go without saying that in acknowledging the goodness or rightness of a thing, we by no means intend to assign perfection to it. But America has indeed served — and continues to serve — as a beacon of hope for countless millions of human beings of every racial, ethnic, and religious background.

Finally, that the vast majority of us never cease to be stunned by the world's imperfections, that we never cease to be horrified by the innumerable injustices to which we are exposed on a daily basis, proves that on this "third rock from the sun," to quote the name of the popular television series, there is no short measure of *decency* or *justice*. There is justice in the world. There are people who are willing to right the world's wrongs.

This is the last, but certainly not the least, thing that I will include on my list of the 10 things that are right with the world.



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