

“If you were an alien biologist, dropping by Earth every ten thousand years or so to observe the progress of life on our planet, there might be a page in your field notebook like this:

Homo sapiens sapiens: big-brained, upright primates, vocal language, sometimes aggressive

Visit # Population

1	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
2	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
3	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
4	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
5	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
6	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
7	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
8	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
9	<10 million	hunter gatherer bands, some primitive tools
10	>7 billion	global industrial, economy, advanced technology w/ nuclear power, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, extraterrestrial travel, large-scale social/political institutions, democratic governance, advanced scientific inquiry, widespread literacy, and advanced art (see addendum)

For all but the past ten thousand years of our existence, it didn't look like we would amount to much. Yet here we are, sitting in our climate-controlled artificially illuminated homes, reading and writing books about ourselves. Our progress goes well beyond creature comforts. Contrary to popular lamentation, humans are getting better and better at getting along. Violence has declined over the course of human history, including recent history, and participation in modern market economies, far from turning us into selfish bean counters, has expanded the scope of human kindness.”

from *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*, 2013, by Joshua Greene, professor of psychology