

Response to *Montreal Gazette*, November 11, 2006

An edited version of the following letter was published in the Montreal Gazette on November 11, 2006.

Letters Editor:

In his review of my new book, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization* ("Catastrophe as Catalyst," November 4), Harold Heft profoundly misrepresents both the book itself and my larger body of research. He suggests that I predicted the imminent demise of humankind in my previous book, *The Ingenuity Gap* — a prediction that has clearly been falsified by the fact that "we're still here" six years later. But I made no such prediction in that book. I simply outlined how humankind is creating problems that are, in some cases, too difficult for us to solve at the speed we need to solve them.

Heft also says I argue in *The Upside of Down* that "massive catastrophe is inevitable." In reality, I repeatedly distinguish in the book between catastrophic collapse of our societies and more limited forms of breakdown that can generate the motive and opportunity for creative change. I also argue that we can do a great deal now to keep catastrophic collapse from happening decades hence—especially by making our technological, economic, and social systems more resilient.

It's easy, and perhaps somehow satisfying, to caricature as catastrophists and doomsayers people who think problems like climate change represent grave threats to our civilization's survival. But it doesn't make the future any safer for our children.

Thomas Homer-Dixon
University of Toronto