

Do you think today is a lousy day? If you learn all the daily reports from the news channels, you might think the time we live in is just terrible. However, we cannot deny that the time we live in is much better than the times of the past.

While the rates of cruelty, scarcity of food, and starvation are decreasing, we are experiencing the highest levels of longevity, general prosperity, and well-being.

Of course, we need to take care of the earth, but even in this regard, it can be seen that the pollution rates tend to decrease gradually, compared to the past half-century. So instead of being anxious and hopeless about the present, you can imagine a developing world where deadly illnesses are a thing of the past and scarcity and starvation are drastically reduced.

So how did all these positive developments come about? We owe a lot to the Enlightenment, which introduced the civilization, knowledge, and science necessary to free us from the dark middle ages and have a better future.

## Chapter 1 - The Enlightenment period, born in Europe in the eighteenth century, is the source of sophistication we are now experiencing.

If you have read something about European history, you probably know that there is a historical period called Enlightenment. This period, commonly known as the "age of reason", was a turning point in the past. It is an important period affecting the present development of the Western world.

The ideas of enlightenment that spread at the beginning of the eighteenth century became a solution to the pervasive situations of horror, delusions, and ignorance in society.

Before the Enlightenment Age, it was believed that the stormy weather was caused by spells of witches or angry gods in the sky, that wicked beings lived in the seas and jungles, and large numbers of people were persecuted and massacred by the church for religious reasons. Now it was time to get rid of this cruel situation, so the four basic streams of Enlightenment started to spread: humanism, logic, science, and development.

Logic shows us that there are indisputable things in the world. Rather than what the holy scriptures or despotic patriarchs say, only reason can explain what is most true. Slavery can be one of the best examples of this situation. Before the Enlightenment, slavery was considered an indispensable element of life. But as Enlightenment ideas spread, logic weakened the application of this outdated understanding and enabled it to abolish.

The importance given to science has increased the value of knowledge as it is related to universal human characteristics. First studies in cultural anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience led to the development of humanism, which showed a non-religious way for humans to communicate better and respect each other. In the past, the enthusiasm of

religion was in charge of the massacres caused by the Crusades, and humanism provided a moral basis for accepting that mass murder and cruel defeats were unacceptable.

Humanism also prepared the ground for sophistication, which has found its place in modern understanding. Sophistication saved people from dogmatism that pitted one group of people against others by not accepting the tribal understanding. According to this understanding, all

people are of equal status. The fact that someone was born in a different country opposes the understanding that he or she will enjoy less of some rights.

## Chapter 2 - While many people claim that the present situation has turned out to be worse than in the past, we are guided by the events of the Enlightenment period.

Although its significance was not sufficiently understood at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it has a very important purpose to create a cosmopolitan international trade and mutual interest system. So, what is it? The fact that a system is diverse and interconnected means that it is immune to entropy/chaos.

Entropy is a term defined in the laws of thermodynamics, and a closed system will sooner or later collapse under the influence of external powers. If you construct a sandcastle by the sea and leave it there, the wind or waves, or animals or people will destroy your sandcastle.

This law of thermodynamics applies to people living on earth and the whole universe, so some people will continue to insist that everything is getting worse. Another critic says that the light emitted during the Enlightenment period is now extinguished and we are now in vain. For them, it is sufficient to browse through the news channels to prove that logic is not superior and that the understanding of tribalism, corruption, conflict, and brutality continues.

However, there are a lot of gaps for this point of view to fill. We'll cover them in the following pages. But first, it must be said that a life form is not like a closed system, and therefore it is obvious that it can resist entropy. That is why the light of the Enlightenment period continues to reach today.

Thanks to the energy it receives from various sources, a life form can increase the permanence of the order instead of destroying it. Today, if we examine the data based on various graphs and concrete facts about the world's situation in more than a hundred years, we can understand that we are still benefiting from energy and continuing development.

Almost everything that symbolizes a happy life, be it longevity, violation, and happiness levels, prosperity, or life, is gradually increasing and is not likely to stop anytime soon. Let's examine some of these ratios.

## Chapter 3 - In the historical period, we know as Enlightenment, our expectation of life, well-being, and maintenance increased.

In half of the eighteenth century, when the Enlightenment period began, the overall lifespan of people living on earth was 29 years. Such a short time unfortunately sucks. Even our ancestors who spent their lives as hunter-gatherers are thought to live an average of 32.5 years!

However, the life span of all people living in the world has risen rapidly with the Enlightenment period.

According to the statistics, one of the biggest factors that increase the life expectancy of people is the prevention of child deaths. The death of newborns can now be prevented, while mothers who have just given birth manage to survive compared to a hundred years ago. Even if you are 50, 60, or 70 years old, you can live longer than in the past.

A 30-year-old who was in Britain in 1845 was likely to live another 30 years, while an 80-year-old would have been expected to live only five more. By 2011, a 30-year-old could live 52 more years, while an 80-year-old was hoped to live another nine years.

These developments in a lifetime all over the world are similar: In 1950, a ten-year-old child living in Ethiopia is thought to live 34 more years, and today a ten-year-old child living there has 51 more years to live.

Also, in parallel with this increase in life expectancy, people have a healthier life than in the past. This is due to the acquisition of information that ensures the complete or almost disappearance of diseases such as rubella, smallpox, polio, and measles.

In the 1800s and early 1900s, the world's poorest and wealthiest were at the same risk of death from a minor infection. The death of the son of the thirtieth US president Calvin Coolidge is a good example of this. His son Calvin Jr. died of an infection at the age of 16 because of the water he got a blister in his body after a tennis game.

Now, the place of science and knowledge is very important. People understood the importance of washing their hands, attaching mosquito swatter to their windows, and disinfecting them by boiling their water.

Also, scarcity becomes almost entirely a historical phenomenon.

Just 150 years ago, it would not be wrong to say that children in Sweden died of starvation during the long and harsh winter months. And just 45 years ago, 35 percent of people in the world didn't have enough food. This rate was the lowest 13 percent seen in 2015 so far. The fact that five billion more people joined the world's population at that time is the most impressive part of this.

The reason for these developments is the incredible progress in agriculture and especially in using less land and water to grow more nutritious crops.

## Chapter 4 - Thanks to the Enlightenment, prosperity in the world increased and inequality declined.

Before the Enlightenment, poor people living under the rule of a state had to work very hard jobs with little or no pay. While poor people living in England were grinding bones for use as fertilizer, those living in Paris were used to cleanse the city's canals by being chained to each other.

In 1820, almost the whole of the world was in great deprivation. It was also the year that the Enlightenment idea started to spread. From 1820 to 1900, national gains tripled.

A powerful state such as Britain made progress in the field of trade to improve its relations with other states, ignoring the contrasts arising from religious differences for common interests. Since this sophisticated and tolerant understanding was accepted by other nations, the huge amount of wealth gained began to increase in every state.

Revenue from 1900 to 1950 was again tripled. In the next 33 years, the national income tripled again. Today, while South Korea and Singapore are growing faster, the earnings of countries like Vietnam, Rwanda, and El Salvador double every 18 years. Also, it takes 35 years for the national income of the other 40 countries to double.

This incredible development and wealth have brought with it inequality. However, over time, this inequality is resolved automatically. This is exactly what we experience now. This situation is known as the Kuznets curve, due to the work of economist Simon Kuznets.

In the 1970s, the problem of inequality became a terrible issue when almost all states suddenly gained huge incomes. But in those years to date, inequality has been like the Kuznets curve: information obtained proves that income inequality is gradually decreasing. This reduction is also directly proportional to poverty.

Another theory that we can see in practice is that a country that increases its income rapidly will succeed in funding social institutions that provide aid to the poor people. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the budget allocated by European countries to programs that support the poor was only 1.5 percent. Today, the amount allocated to support poor people has increased to 22 percent.

## Chapter 5 - As the tendency towards brutality gradually decreased with the Enlightenment, we are experiencing the most comfortable times so far today.

Of course, it is impossible to think of anything positive about the war in Syria. According to optimistic estimates, the number of people who died in 2016 was 250,000. However, when

analyzed with an impartial eye, it can be seen that the tendency towards violence is much less than it was in the past.

You may believe that there are masses of refugees that have never been seen before because of wars today. However, in 1971, not too far from today, 10 million people left their country and became refugees due to the Bangladesh War. Due to the re-determination of the borders of India in 1947, 14 million people became refugees. We also know that 60 million people had to leave their country during the Second World War.

In the Age of Enlightenment, it was understood that dealing with problems was a basic rule for settling and correcting conflicts between people and states. By the twenty-first century, dealing with problems was mostly successful. The United Nations was established in 1945, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed. Created by very diverse societies, including Mohandas Gandhi, Aldous Huxley, and Muslim scholars, this manifesto is probably one of the most humane and compatible with Enlightenment doctrines ever written.

Since its establishment, this organization has become the first point of reference for the correction of international problems as an institution that leads to the establishment of healthy international relations and the easy conclusion of trade and trade agreements between states.

So, in the 70 years since its foundation, wars have decreased considerably compared to the past. And it declined significantly after the end of a series of civil wars, including those in Sri Lanka, Chad, Angola, and Peru in 2009.

Thanks to the rising incomes of the world's states, the possibility of opposing groups to initiate a revolt and to encourage the people to participate in this revolt against the state has decreased. Since the treasures of the states are full, the health and education services that governments have to offer to the public become better, and as the number of dissatisfied people decreases, the likelihood of revolt becomes less.

The data obtained on violence today proves this positive situation. As states get richer, the decrease in crime rates is visible.

## Chapter 6 - With the Enlightenment, there are important developments such as equal rights, democracy, and more comfortable life.

We cannot say that the 1970s were the best times of democracy. West Germany Chancellor Willy Brandt claimed that democracy was "an interesting form of government without continuity". But Brandt was wrong about this. Upon closer examination, democracy as an Enlightenment doctrine that took its place in every nation was spreading with incredible speed.

Democracy is largely the best form of government found by Enlightenment thinkers who aimed to prevent violence that has prevailed in the world since the advent of Christianity. Nations hated persecutions, slavery, human victims, and the public killing of incompatible people.

The other worst-case that nations want to get rid of is regime changes that once caused brutal revolutions and violence in China and Mexico.

From this point of view, it can be said that democracy is a solution that saves people from both despotism and tyranny. And it has been confirmed that democracy is the only useful form of government for faster economic development, fewer human deaths, and better education service.

While there were 12 democratic administrations during the fascist regimes that prevailed in the 1920s, by 2015 this number reached 103. This situation is pretty good.

The transition to democracy was a blessing of the Enlightenment, and racist and sexist attitudes have declined considerably, as it made states more tolerant.

To sum up, racism and sexism are not understandings that can be supported. It is impossible to have a reasonable or appropriate defense of them, as they are not worth examining. In this globalized world, where many people encounter more travel, people become more involved with sophisticated understandings and backward thinking can be easily eliminated by questioning.

In this way, there is less about ethnic and racial discrimination in the books of sophisticated civilizations. In 1950, half of the states that supported all forms of discrimination had such laws, but by 2003, the articles on this issue decreased to less than one-fifth. And today, outside of Vatican City, women can exercise their voting rights anywhere, just like men.

## Chapter 7 - Dangers to the environment and existence can be overcome with a constructive mindset instead of negativity and boredom.

News channels say things that worry you every day. But if you do some research and find the cause of the real problem, you'll realize that you have no reason to worry too much. The best example of this is terrorism. The existence of ISIS and other terrorist organizations is of course terrible, but how logical is it for Americans to think that ISIS is the greatest danger to the US existence? In fact, according to a survey conducted in 2016, most Americans thought that.

However, the likelihood of an American being killed by lightning or a small bee sting is greater than the likelihood of being killed by terrorists. According to data from around the world, people are 125 times more probable to die in an accident than to be killed by a terrorist.

People are concerned by the media that present threats to their existence in a frightening way. The news n always goes to extremes when they present people with all the news about life safety.

We are aware that we have read articles about artificial intelligence (AI) that are full of Terminator-like fiction and that we are reading articles that claim to be true that with an artificial intelligence program, humans will begin to be killed by robots. Even important names such as Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking have made worrying comments about artificial intelligence.

However, it is unreasonable to think that artificial intelligence is a real danger to humans as it can drive a car or beat someone in the Go board game. Thanks to the further development of technology, the possibility of advanced failure control have increased. We now have the technology to monitor and neutralize if anything means danger.

People smart enough to make a very successful AI program also have solutions for immediate response to any danger.

## Chapter 8 - Pay attention to politics and institutions that slander science and logic.

The truth is that science aims to use knowledge to learn more information. It is not intended to challenge the doctrines of religion or beliefs of yours. And science is not the cause of racism, sexism, or genocide, as many people claim.

You may think it silly, but the ignorance and misperceptions of people trying to achieve their goals have been threatening the history of science. Because science is one of the Enlightenment principles, it is vital to resolve this confusion and truth.

Science served as the battery for the success of Hitler's Nazi goals, according to a widely known claim, although Hitler was an enemy of science, reason, advancement, and so an enemy of Enlightenment.

Still, some people believe that science was the cause of the great genocide known as the Holocaust according to the Aryan belief discovered by Arthur de Gobineau, defended by Wagner, and practiced by Hitler. According to this Aryan belief, the Aryan race was superior before it mixed with other races. This thought was the opposite of Darwinism, which argued that all human beings have the same basic motives and that no race is more perfect than others.

While the notion of breeding the human race, proposed by Francis Galton, a Victorian statistician, and sage, is known for its incentive to breed intelligent people, people blame those who are intent on improving the generation for the crimes committed by Hitler. The eugenics does not aim to "sterilize people who are not enough", contrary to the claims of some people that are not even closely related to science.

Criticism of science today is similar to efforts to reduce the importance of a very just problem like climate change.

One of the most vital responsibilities that humanity has to do is to reduce CO2 emissions by 50 percent by 2050 and eliminate these emissions by 2100. If we do not fulfill this responsibility, we may face the risk of global warming with 2 degrees Celsius added to the temperature. Global warming will pave the way for melting ice masses, rising sea levels due to melting glaciers and all kinds of other disasters. This is unlike the Chinese threat posed by Donald Trump. This is true proof of scientific data.

## Chapter 9 - Contrary to the views under the influence of populism, the Enlightenment is still a light to development.

It is said that Donald Trump, whom the writer clearly thinks of as an enemy of Enlightenment, won the US presidency. But we can relax a little with the thought that the public has lost substantial support and is the American President with one of the lowest approval rates ever.

Another benefit of democracy is that it has a control mechanism to prevent authoritarian regimes from causing too much damage. And we've witnessed the justice system limiting his actions.

There are some movements in Europe against the principles of the Enlightenment, but there are also some indicators proving that these attempts are not continuous.

Some parties that supported nationalist, tribal, un-tolerated views across Europe were only able to get about 13 percent of the vote and eventually lost as many legislative seats as they won. Even if they have a say in the governments of Poland and Hungary, those with unsophisticated views are generally older and do not create hope for the future.

Although the Brexit vote in the UK was quite troubled, only 29 percent of university graduates voted to exit the European Union. Even if the groups who want to leave the European Union in 2016 protested that they do not accept the tolerance of the world towards different nations, the world will continue to maintain this feature of enlightenment.

Unlike older people, younger generations of countries around the world adopt more tolerant, more developmental, and less religious views and attitudes. WIN-Gallup International Global Religiosity and Atheism Index found that the proportion of people who describe themselves as religious greatly reduced between the years 2005 and 2012 in the traditional religious societies like Russia, Turkey, and Poland. Therefore, as the generations continue, the people who shape their thoughts according to science, humanism, logic, and reason will continue to increase. Although religious teachings are not opposed to Enlightenment principles, when people link their views to a human interpretation of religious inscriptions, their development paths can be blocked.

Despite the pessimism of the media that produces doomsday scenarios with criticism of oppositional people, reason and science have been dominating for the last century. And

there is no indication that this development will suddenly stop and disappear. In fact, the thoughts and views of the younger generations are more suited to Enlightenment principles than their ancestors who brought them to their present positions.

## Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress by Steven Pinker Book Review

Today, people still suffer from poverty, violence, war, and when we compare them with what happened in the past, we can see that they are happening to a much lesser extent. Since the age of Enlightenment, which was founded in the eighteenth century, we have been experiencing developments aimed at preventing war, poverty, and diseases. When fallacy, intolerance, and support of war were blocked, the world has become more reliable and enlightened than it was in the past.

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