15.2 | *Progress, Regress, and Cycles in History*

One of the central issues in the philosophy of history concerns the pattern of change that has occurred in human affairs in the course of time. According to one view, the pattern is cyclical, like that of birth, growth, decline, and death in the life of living organisms. The point is not simply that history repeats itself in the recurrence of similar events, but that the whole sequence of historical development endlessly repeats itself. According to another view, history manifests a regression, a falling away from a golden age. According to still another view, history advances from age to age, either in a line of steady and uninterrupted progress or with intervals of stability or even of regression.

Of these three main views, the first is the one that predominates in the quotations drawn from antiquity, though there are also some expressions of the second view in ancient texts, notably the ones by Hesiod and Ovid; and in addition, the opinion that in all essential respects the future will resemble the past. It is not until the seventeenth century that we find explicit affirmations of progress in human affairs—in the sphere of science, in human institutions, in population, in the production of wealth. Though progress has many votaries among modern writers, it also has its doubters or deniers—those who point out that regressive change counterbalances the evidences of progress, or that advances in such external matters as science, technology, and wealth do not carry with them essential improvements in the quality of human life.

---

1 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

Ecclesiastes 1:10–11

2 When gods alike and mortals rose to birth,
Th' immortals form'd a golden race on earth
Of many-languaged men; they lived of old
When Saturn reign'd in heaven; an age of gold.
Like gods they lived, with calm, untroubled mind,
Free from the toil and anguish of our kind:
Nor e'er decrepid age mis-shaped their frame,
The hand's, the foot's proportions, still the same.
Pleased with earth's unbought feasts; all ills removed,
Wealthy in flocks, and of the bless'd beloved.
Death as a slumber press'd their eyelids down;
All nature's common blessings were their own.
The life-bestowing tilth its fruitage bore,
A full, spontaneous, and ungrudging store:
They with abundant goods, midst quiet lands,
All willing shared the gatherings of their hands.
When earth's dark breast had closed this race around,
Great Jove as demons raised them from the ground.
Earth-hovering spirits, they their charge began,
The ministers of good, and guards of man.
Mantled with mist of darkling air they glide,
And compass earth, and pass on every side;
And mark, with earnest vigilance of eyes,
Where just deeds live, or crooked wrongs arise;
And shower the wealth of seasons from above,
Their kingly office, delegate from Jove.
The gods then form'd a second race of man,
Degenerate far, and silver years began;
Unlike the mortals of a golden kind,
Unlike in frame of limbs, and mould of mind.
Yet still a hundred years beheld the boy
Beneath the mother's roof, her infant joy,
All tender and unform'd: but when the flower
Of manhood bloom'd, it wither'd in an hour.
Their frantic follies wrought them pain and woe;
Nor mutual outrage would their hands forego:
Nor would they serve the gods, nor altars raise,
That in just cities shed their holy blaze.
Them angry Jove ingulf'd; who dared refuse
The gods their glory and their sacred dues:
Yet named the second bless'd, in earth they lie,
And second honours grace their memory.

The sire of heaven and earth created then

judged what things come verily true from dreams; and to men I gave meaning to the ominous cries, hard to interpret. It was I who set in order the omens of the highway and the flight of crooked-taloned birds, which of them were propitious or lucky by nature, and what manner of life each led, and what were their mutual hates, loves, and companionships; also I taught of the smoothness of the vitals and what color they should have to pleasure the Gods and the dappled beauty of the gall and the lobe. It was I who burned thighs wrapped in fat and the long shank bone and set mortals on the road to this murky craft. It was I who made visible to men's eyes the flaming signs of the sky that were before dim. So much for these. Beneath the earth, man's hidden blessing, copper, iron; silver, and gold—will anyone claim to have discovered these before I did? No one, I am very sure, who wants to speak truly and to the purpose. One brief word will tell the whole story: all arts that mortals have come from Prometheus.

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound,* 445

4 I shall go forward with my history, describing equally the greater and the lesser cities. For the cities which were formerly great have most of them become insignificant; and such as are at present powerful, were weak in the olden time. I shall therefore discourse equally of both, convinced that human happiness never continues long in one stay.

Herodotus, *History,* I, 5

5 *Critias.* Just when you and other nations are beginning to be provided with letters and the other requisites of civilized life, after the usual interval, the stream from heaven, like a pestilence, comes pouring down, and leaves only those of you who are destitute of letters and education; and so you have to begin all over again like children, and know nothing of what happened in ancient times, either among us or among yourselves.

Plato, *Timaeus,* 23A

6 Human affairs form a circle, and . . . there is a circle in all other things that have a natural movement and coming into being and passing away. This is because all other things are discriminated by time, and end and begin as though conforming to a cycle; for even time itself is thought to be a circle. And this opinion again is held because time is the measure of this kind of locomotion and is itself measured by such. So that to say that the things that come into being form a circle is to say that there is a circle of time; and this is to say that it is measured by the circular movement; for apart from the measure nothing else to be measured is observed; the whole is just a plurality of measures.

Aristotle, *Physics,* $223^{b}25$

7 In most respects the future will be like what the past has been.

Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* $1394^{a}8$

8 We must suppose that human nature . . . was taught and constrained to do many things of every kind merely by circumstances; and that later on reasoning elaborated what had been suggested by nature and made further inventions, in some matters quickly, in others slowly, at some epochs and times making great advances, and lesser again at others.

Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*

9 There is in every body, or polity, or business a natural stage of growth, zenith, and decay.

Polybius, *Histories,* VI, 51

10 The aged ploughman shakes his head and sighs again and again to think that the labours of his hands have come to nothing; and when he compares present times with times past, he often praises the fortunes of his sire and harps on the theme, how the men of old rich in piety comfortably supported life on a scanty plot of ground, since the allotment of land to each man was far less of yore than now. The sorrowful planter too of the exhausted and shrivelled vine impeaches the march of time and wearies heaven, and comprehends not that all things are gradually wasting away and passing to the grave, quite forspent by age and length of days.

Lucretius, *Nature of Things,* II

11 Our father's age, than their sires' not so good,
Bred us ev'n worse than they; a brood
We'll leave that's viler still.

Horace, *Odes,* III, 6

12 What is free from the risk of change? Neither earth, nor sky, nor the whole fabric of our universe, though it be controlled by the hand of God. It will not always preserve its present order; it will be thrown from its course in days to come. All things move in accord with their appointed times; they are destined to be born, to grow, and to be destroyed. The stars which you see moving above us, and this seemingly immovable earth to which we cling and on which we are set, will be consumed and will cease to exist. There is nothing that does not have its old age; the intervals are merely unequal at which Nature sends forth all these things towards the same goal. Whatever is will cease to be, and yet it will not perish, but will be resolved into its elements.

Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius,* 71

13 The elements of the earth must all be dissolved or utterly destroyed in order that they may be created anew in innocence, and that no remnant may be left to tutor men in vice. . . . A single day will

see the burial of all mankind. All that the long forbearance of fortune has produced, all that has been reared to eminence, all that is famous and all that is beautiful, great thrones, great nations—all will descend into the one abyss, will be overthrown in one hour. . . .

When the destruction of the human race is consummated, and when wild beasts, whose nature men had come to share, have been consigned together to a like fate, the earth will once more drink up the waters. Nature will force the sea to stay its course, and to expend its rage within its wonted bounds. Ocean will be banished from our abodes into his own secret dwelling place. The ancient order of things will be recalled. Every living creature will be created afresh. The earth will receive a new man ignorant of sin, born under happier stars. But they, too, will retain their innocence only while they are new.

Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales,* III, 29–30

14 In the beginning was the Golden Age, when men of their own accord, without threat of punishment, without laws, maintained good faith and did what was right. There were no penalties to be afraid of, no bronze tablets were erected, carrying threats of legal action, no crowd of wrong-doers, anxious for mercy, trembled before the face of their judge: indeed, there were no judges, men lived securely without them. Never yet had any pine tree, cut down from its home on the mountains, been launched on ocean's waves, to visit foreign lands: men knew only their own shores. Their cities were not yet surrounded by sheer moats, they had no straight brass trumpets, no coiling brass horns, no helmets and no swords. The peoples of the world, untroubled by any fears, enjoyed a leisurely and peaceful existence, and had no use for soldiers. The earth itself, without compulsion, untouched by the hoe, unfurrowed by any share, produced all things spontaneously, and men were content with foods that grew without cultivation. They gathered arbute berries and mountain strawberries, wild cherries and blackberries that cling to thorny bramble bushes: or acorns, fallen from Jupiter's spreading oak. It was a season of everlasting spring, when peaceful zephyrs, with their warm breath, caressed the flowers that sprang up without having been planted. In time the earth, though untilled, produced corn too, and fields that never lay fallow whitened with heavy ears of grain. Then there flowed rivers of milk and rivers of nectar, and golden honey dripped from the green holm-oak.

When Saturn was consigned to the darkness of Tartarus, and the world passed under the rule of Jove, the age of silver replaced that of gold, inferior to it, but superior to the age of tawny bronze. Jupiter shortened the springtime which had prevailed of old, and instituted a cycle of four seasons in the year, winter, summer, changeable autumn, and a brief spring. Then, for the first time, the air became parched and arid, and glowed with white heat, then hanging icicles formed under the chilling blasts of the wind. It was in those days that men first sought covered dwelling places: they made their homes in caves and thick shrubberies, or bound branches together with bark. Then corn, the gift of Ceres, first began to be sown in long furrows, and straining bullocks groaned beneath the yoke.

After that came the third age, the age of bronze, when men were of a fiercer character, more ready to turn to cruel warfare, but still free from any taint of wickedness.

Last of all arose the age of hard iron: immediately, in this period which took its name from a baser ore, all manner of crime broke out; modesty, truth, and loyalty fled. Treachery and trickery took their place, deceit and violence and criminal greed. Now sailors spread their canvas to the winds, though they had as yet but little knowledge of these, and trees which had once clothed the high mountains were fashioned into ships, and tossed upon the ocean waves, far removed from their own element. The land, which had previously been common to all, like the sunlight and the breezes, was now divided up far and wide by boundaries, set by cautious surveyors. Nor was it only corn and their due nourishment that men demanded of the rich earth: they explored its very bowels, and dug out the wealth which it had hidden away, close to the Stygian shades; and this wealth was a further incitement to wickedness. By this time iron had been discovered, to the hurt of mankind, and gold, more hurtful still than iron. War made its appearance, using both those metals in its conflict, and shaking clashing weapons in bloodstained hands. Men lived on what they could plunder: friend was not safe from friend, nor father-in-law from son-in-law, and even between brothers affection was rare. Husbands waited eagerly for the death of their wives, and wives for that of their husbands. Ruthless stepmothers mixed brews of deadly aconite, and sons pried into their fathers' horoscopes, impatient for them to die. All proper affection lay vanquished and, last of the immortals, the maiden Justice left the blood-soaked earth.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* I

15 These two things then thou must bear in mind; the one, that all things from eternity are of like forms and come round in a circle, and that it makes no difference whether a man shall see the same things during a hundred years or two hundred, or an infinite time; and the second, that the longest liver and he who will die soonest lose just the same.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* II, 14

16 On the occasion of everything which happens

keep this in mind, that it is that which thou hast often seen. Everywhere up and down thou wilt find the same things, with which the old histories are filled, those of the middle ages and those of our own day. . . . There is nothing new: all things are both familiar and short-lived.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* VII, 1

17 Constantly consider how all things such as they now are, in time past also were; and consider that they will be the same again. And place before thy eyes entire dramas and stages of the same form, whatever thou hast learned from thy experience or from older history . . . for all those were such dramas as we see now, only with different actors.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* X, 27

18 This controversy some philosophers have seen no other approved means of solving than by introducing cycles of time, in which there should be a constant renewal and repetition of the order of nature; and they have therefore asserted that theses cycles will ceaselessly recur, one passing away and another coming, though they are not agreed as to whether one permanent world shall pass through all these cycles, or whether the world shall at fixed intervals die out and be renewed so as to exhibit a recurrence of the same phenomena—the things which have been and those which are to be coinciding. And from this fantastic vicissitude they exempt not even the immortal soul that has attained wisdom, consigning it to a ceaseless transmigration between delusive blessedness and real misery. For how can that be truly called blessed which has no assurance of being so eternally, and is either in ignorance of the truth, and blind to the misery that is approaching, or, knowing it, is in misery and fear? Or if it passes to bliss, and leaves miseries forever, then there happens in time a new thing which time shall not end. Why not, then, the world also? Why may not man, too, be a similar thing? So that, by following the straight path of sound doctrine, we escape, I know not what circuitous paths, discovered by deceiving and deceived sages.

Augustine, *City of God,* XII, 13

19 Over and above those arts which are called virtues, and which teach us how we may spend our life well, and attain to endless happiness—arts which are given to the children of the promise and the kingdom by the sole grace of God which is in Christ—has not the genius of man invented and applied countless astonishing arts, partly the result of necessity, partly the result of exuberant invention, so that this vigour of mind, which is so active in the discovery not merely of superfluous but even of dangerous and destructive things, betokens an inexhaustible wealth in the nature which can invent, learn, or employ such arts? What wonderful—one might say stupefying—advances has human industry made in the arts of weaving and building, of agriculture and navigation! With what endless variety are designs in pottery, painting, and sculpture produced, and with what skill executed! What wonderful spectacles are exhibited in the theatres, which those who have not seen them cannot credit! How skillful the contrivances for catching, killing, or taming wild beasts! And for the injury of men, also, how many kinds of poisons, weapons, engines of destruction, have been invented, while for the preservation or restoration of health the appliances and remedies are infinite! To provoke appetite and please the palate, what a variety of seasonings have been concocted! To express and gain entrance for thoughts, what a multitude and variety of signs there are, among which speaking and writing hold the first place! what ornaments has eloquence at command to delight the mind! what wealth of song is there to captivate the ear! how many musical instruments and strains of harmony have been devised! What skill has been attained in measures and numbers! with what sagacity have the movements and connections of the stars been discovered! Who could tell the thought that has been spent upon nature, even though, despairing of recounting it in detail, he endeavoured only to give a general view of it? In fine, even the defence of errors and misapprehensions, which has illustrated the genius of heretics and philosophers, cannot be sufficiently declared. For at present it is the nature of the human mind which adorns this mortal life which we are extolling, and not the faith and the way of truth which lead to immortality. And since this great nature has certainly been created by the true and supreme God, Who administers all things He has made with absolute power and justice, it could never have fallen into these miseries, nor have gone out of them to miseries eternal—saving only those who are redeemed—had not an exceeding great sin been found in the first man from whom the rest have sprung.

Augustine, *City of God,* XXII, 24

20 This Sabbath shall appear still more clearly if we count the ages as days, in accordance with the periods of time defined in Scripture, for that period will be found to be the seventh. The first age, as the first day, extends from Adam to the deluge; the second from the deluge to Abraham, equalling the first, not in length of time, but in the number of generations, there being ten in each. From Abraham to the advent of Christ there are, as the evangelist Matthew calculates, three periods, in each of which are fourteen generations—one period from Abraham to David, a second from David to the captivity, a third from the captivity to the birth of Christ in the flesh. There are thus five ages in all. The sixth is now passing, and cannot be measured by any number of generations, as it

has been said, "It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in His own power." After this period God shall rest as on the seventh day, when He shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. But there is not now space to treat of these ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord's day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?

Augustine, *City of God,* XXII, 30

21 Whoever considers the past and the present will readily observe that all cities and all peoples are and ever have been animated by the same desires and the same passions; so that it is easy, by diligent study of the past, to foresee what is likely to happen in the future in any republic, and to apply those remedies that were used by the ancients, or, not finding any that were employed by them, to devise new ones from the similarity of the events.

Machiavelli, *Discourses,* I, 39

22 Nations, as a rule, when making a change in their system of government pass from order to disorder, and afterwards from disorder to order, because nature permits no stability in human affairs. When nations reach their final perfection and can mount no higher they commence to descend; and equally when they have descended and reached a depth where they can fall no lower, necessity compels them to rise again. Thus states will always be falling from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity they will ascend again to prosperity. Because valour brings peace, peace idleness, idleness disorder, and disorder ruin; once more from ruin arises good order, from order valour, and from valour success and glory.

Machiavelli, *Florentine History,* V

23 And now Don *Quixote* having satisfy'd his Appetite, he took a Handful of Acorns, and looking earnestly upon 'em; O happy Age, cry'd he, which our first Parents call'd the Age of Gold! not because Gold, so much ador'd in this Iron-Age, was then easily purchas'd, but because those two fatal Words, Mine and Thine, were Distinctions unknown to the People of those fortunate Times; for all Things were in common in that holy Age: Men, for their Sustenance, needed only to lift their Hands, and take it from the sturdy Oak, whose spreading Arms liberally invited them to gather the wholsome savoury Fruit; while the clear Springs, and silver Rivulets, with luxuriant Plenty, offer'd them their pure refreshing Water. In hollow Trees, and in the Clefts of Rocks, the labouring and industrious Bees erected their little Commonwealths, that Men might reap with Pleasure and with Ease the sweet and fertile Harvest of their Toils. The tough and strenuous Cork-Trees did of themselves, and without other Art than their native Liberality, dismiss and impart their broad light Bark, which serv'd to cover those lowly Huts, propp'd up with rough-hewn Stakes, that were first built as a Shelter against the Inclemencies of the Air: All then was Union, all Peace, all Love and Friendship in the World: As yet no rude Plough-share presum'd with Violence to pry into the pious Bowels of our Mother Earth, for she without Compulsion kindly yielded from every Part of her fruitful and spacious Bosom, whatever might at once satisfy, sustain and indulge her frugal Children. Then was the Time when innocent beautiful young Shepherdesses went tripping o'er the Hills and Vales: Their lovely Hair sometimes plaited, sometimes loose and flowing, clad in no other Vestment but what was necessary to cover decently what Modesty would always have conceal'd: The *Tyrian* Die, and the rich glossy Hue of Silk, martyr'd and dissembled into every Colour, which are now esteem'd so fine and magnificent, were unknown to the innocent Plainness of that Age; yet bedeck'd with more becoming Leaves and Flowers, they may be said to outshine the proudest of the vain-dressing Ladies of our Age, array'd in the most magnificent Garbs and all the most sumptuous Adorings which Idleness and Luxury have taught succeeding Pride: Lovers then express'd the Passion of their Souls in the unaffected Language of the Heart, with the native Plainness and Sincerity in which they were conceiv'd and divested of all that artificial Contexture, which enervates what it labours to enforce: Imposture, Deceit and Malice had not yet crept in, and impos'd themselves unbrib'd upon Mankind in the Disguise of Truth and Simplicity: Justice, unbiass'd either by Favour or Interest, which now so fatally pervert it, was equally and impartially dispensed; nor was the Judges Fancy Law, for then there were neither Judges, nor Causes to be judg'd; the modest Maid might walk where-ever she pleas'd alone, free from the Attacks of lewd lascivious Importuners. But in this degenerate Age, Fraud and a Legion of Ills infecting the World, no Virtue can be safe, no Honour be secure; while wanton Desires, diffus'd into the Hearts of Men, corrupt the strictest Watches, and the closest Retreats; which, though as intricate and unknown as the Labyrinth of *Crete,* are no Security for Chastity. Thus that Primitive Innocence being vanish'd, and Oppression daily prevailing, there was a Necessity to oppose the Torrent of Violence: For which Reason the Order of Knighthood-Errant was instituted, to defend the Honour of Virgins, protect Wid-

ows, relieve Orphans, and assist all the Distress'd in general. Now I my self am one of this Order, honest Friends; and though all People are oblig'd by the Law of Nature to be kind to Persons of My Order; yet since you, without knowing any thing of this Obligation, have so generously entertain'd me, I ought to pay you my utmost Acknowledgment; and, accordingly, return you my most hearty Thanks for the same.

Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* I, 11

24 By far the greatest obstacle to the advancement of the sciences, and the undertaking of any new attempt or department, is to be found in men's despair and the idea of impossibility; for men of a prudent and exact turn of thought are altogether diffident in matters of this nature, considering the obscurity of nature, the shortness of life, the deception of the senses, and weakness of the judgment. They think, therefore, that in the revolutions of ages and of the world there are certain floods and ebbs of the sciences, and that they grow and flourish at one time, and wither and fall off at another, that when they have attained a certain degree and condition they can proceed no further.

Bacon, *Novum Organum,* I, 92

25 We should notice the force, effect, and consequences of inventions, which are nowhere more conspicuous than in those three which were unknown to the ancients; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the compass. For these three have changed the appearance and state of the whole world: first in literature, then in warfare, and lastly in navigation; and innumerable changes have been thence derived, so that no empire, sect, or star, appears to have exercised a greater power and influence on human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.

Bacon, *Novum Organum,* I, 129

26 Beehives were as well laid out a thousand years ago as today, and each bee forms that hexagon as exactly the first time as the last. It is the same with everything animals make by that hidden motion. Nature teaches them in response to the pressure of necessity; but this frail knowledge dies with its need: as they receive it without study, they do not have the happiness of preserving it; and every time they are given it, they find it new, because nature, whose object is merely to maintain animals in an order of limited perfection, infuses in them this necessary knowledge, always the same, lest they perish, and does not allow them to add to it lest they go beyond the boundaries prescribed to them. It is different with man, made only for infinity. He is ignorant in his life's first age, but he never ceases to learn as he goes forward, for he has the advantage not only of his own experience but also of his predecessors', because he always keeps in his memory the knowledge he has once acquired, and that of the ancients is always at hand in the books they have left. And since he keeps his knowledge, he can also easily increase it, so that men today are in a certain sense in the same condition in which those ancient philosophers would be if they could have prolonged their old age until now, adding to the knowledge they had what their studies might have won for them by the grace of so many centuries. Hence it is that by a special prerogative not only does each man advance from day to day in the sciences, but all men together make a continual progress as the universe grows old, because the same thing happens in the succession of men as in the different ages of an individual man. So that the whole series of men during the course of so many centuries should be considered as one self-same man, always in existence and continually learning. Whence it is seen with what injustice we respect antiquity in the persons of its philosophers; for since old age is the age furthest removed from childhood, who does not see that the old age of this universal man should be sought not in the times near his birth but in those which are most distant from it? Those whom we call ancients were in truth new in every respect, and actually formed the childhood of man; and since we have added to their knowledge the experience of the succeeding centuries, it is in ourselves that that antiquity can be found which we revere in others.

Pascal, *Preface to the Treatise on the Vacuum*

27 *Chorus of All.* All, all of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a beast in view;
Thy wars brought nothing about;
Thy lovers were all untrue.
'T is well an old age is out,
And time to begin a new.

Dryden, *The Secular Masque (1700)*

28 To realize in its completeness the universal beauty and perfection of the works of God, we must recognize a certain perpetual and very free progress of the whole universe, such that it is always going forward to greater improvement. So even now a great part of our earth has received cultivation and will receive it more and more. And although it is true that sometimes certain parts of it grow wild again, or again suffer destruction or degeneration, yet this is to be understood in the way in which affliction was explained above, that is to say, that this very destruction and degeneration leads to some greater end, so that somehow we profit by the loss itself.

And to the possible objection that, if this were so, the world ought long ago to have become a paradise, there is a ready answer. Although many substances have already attained a great perfection, yet on account of the infinite divisibility of the continuous, there always remain in the abyss of things slumbering parts which have yet to be

awakened, to grow in size and worth, and, in a word, to advance to a more perfect state. And hence no end of progress is ever reached.

Leibniz, *On the Ultimate Origination of Things*

29 I have perused many of their [the Lorbrulgrudians'] books, especially those in history and morality. Among the latter I was much diverted with a little old treatise, which always lay in Glumdalclitch's bed-chamber, and belonged to her governess, a grave elderly gentlewoman, who dealt in writings of morality and devotion. The book treats of the weakness of human kind; and is in little esteem, except among women and the vulgar. However, I was curious to see what an author of that country could say upon such a subject. This writer went through all the usual topicks of European moralists; shewing how diminutive, contemptible, and helpless an animal was man in his own nature; how unable to defend himself from inclemencies of the air, or the fury of wild beasts; how much he was excelled by one creature in strength, by another in speed, by a third in foresight, by a fourth in industry. He added, that nature was degenerated in these latter declining ages of the world, and could now produce only small abortive births, in comparison of those in ancient times. He said, it was very reasonable to think, not only that the species of man were originally much larger, but also, that there must have been giants in former ages; which, as it is asserted by history and tradition, so it hath been confirmed by huge bones and sculls, casually dug up in several parts of the kingdom, far exceeding the common dwindled race of man in our days.

Swift, *Gulliver's Travels,* II, 7

30 Our Science . . . comes to describe . . . an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every nation in its rise, progress, maturity, decline and fall. Indeed we go so far as to assert that whoever meditates this Science tells himself this ideal eternal history only so far as he makes it by that proof "it had, has, and will have to be."

Vico, *The New Science,* I

31 This world without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves; which narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human race upon this earth. Men mean to gratify their bestial lust and abandon their offspring, and they inaugurate the chastity of marriage from which the families arise. The fathers mean to exercise without restraint their paternal power over their clients, and they subject them to the civil powers from which the cities arise. The reigning orders of nobles mean to abuse their lordly freedom over the plebeians, and they are obliged to submit to the laws which establish popular liberty. The free peoples mean to shake off the yoke of their laws, and they become subject to monarchs. The monarchs mean to strengthen their own positions by debasing their subjects with all the vices of dissoluteness, and they dispose them to endure slavery at the hands of stronger nations. The nations mean to dissolve themselves, and their remnants flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again.

Vico, *The New Science,* Conclusion

32 Thus—thus, my fellow-labourers and associates in this great harvest of our learning, now ripening before our eyes; thus it is, by slow steps of casual increase, that our knowledge physical, metaphysical, physiological, polemical, nautical, mathematical, enigmatical, technical, biographical, romantical, chemical, and obstetrical, with fifty other branches of it, (most of 'em ending as these do, in *ical*) have for these two centuries and more, gradually been creeping upwards towards that acme of their perfections, from which, if we may form a conjecture from the advances of these last seven years, we cannot possibly be far off.

When that happens, it is to be hoped, it will put an end to all kind of writings whatsoever;—the want of all kind of writing will put an end to all kind of reading;—and that in time, As war begets poverty; poverty peace,—must, in course, put an end to all kind of knowledge,—and then—we shall have all to begin over again; or, in other words, be exactly where we started.

Sterne, *Tristram Shandy,* I, 21

33 A famous author, reckoning up the good and evil of human life, and comparing the aggregates, finds that our pains greatly exceed our pleasures: so that, all things considered, human life is not at all a valuable gift. This conclusion does not surprise me; for the writer drew all his arguments from man in civilisation. Had he gone back to the state of nature, his inquiries would clearly have had a different result, and man would have been seen to be subject to very few evils not of his own creation. It has indeed cost us not a little trouble to make ourselves as wretched as we are. When we consider, on the one hand, the immense labours of mankind, the many sciences brought to perfection, the arts invented, the powers employed, the deeps filled up, the mountains levelled, the rocks shattered, the rivers made navigable, the tracts of land cleared, the lakes emptied, the marshes drained, the enormous structures erected on land, and the teeming vessels that cover the sea; and, on the other hand, estimate with ever so little thought, the real advantages that have accrued from all these works to mankind, we cannot help being amazed at the vast disproportion there is between these things, and deploring the infatuation of man, which, to gratify his silly

pride and vain self-admiration, induces him eagerly to pursue all the miseries he is capable of feeling, though beneficent nature had kindly placed them out of his way.

Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality,* Appendix

34 Savage man, when he has dined, is at peace with all nature, and the friend of all his fellow-creatures. If a dispute arises about a meal, he rarely comes to blows, without having first compared the difficulty of conquering his antagonist with the trouble of finding subsistence elsewhere: and, as pride does not come in, it all ends in a few blows; the victor eats, and the vanquished seeks provision somewhere else, and all is at peace. The case is quite different with man in the state of society, for whom first necessaries have to be provided, and then superfluities; delicacies follow next, then immense wealth, then subjects, and then slaves. He enjoys not a moment's relaxation; and what is yet stranger, the less natural and pressing his wants, the more headstrong are his passions, and, still worse, the more he has it in his power to gratify them; so that after a long course of prosperity, after having swallowed up treasures and ruined multitudes, the hero ends up by cutting every throat till he finds himself, at last, sole master of the world. Such is in miniature the moral picture, if not of human life, at least of the secret pretensions of the heart of civilised man.

Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality,* Appendix

35 *Johnson.* It is in refinement and elegance that the civilized man differs from the savage. A great part of our industry, and all our ingenuity is exercised in procuring pleasure; and, Sir, a hungry man has not the same pleasure in eating a plain dinner, that a hungry man has in eating a luxurious dinner.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson (Apr. 14, 1778)*

36 Natural phenomena, governed by constant laws, traverse forever certain fixed cycles of change. All things perish, all things revive; and in those successive generations which mark the reproduction of plants and of animals, time but restores continually the likeness of what it has annihilated.

The succession of mankind, on the contrary, presents from age to age an ever-varied spectacle. Reason, the passions, liberty, continually give rise to new events. All the ages are linked together by a chain of causes and effects which unite the existing state of the world with all that has gone before. The arbitrary signs of speech and of writing, in giving to men the means of insuring the possession of their ideas and of communicating them to others, have made a common treasure-store of all individual knowledge, which one generation bequeaths to the next, a heritage constantly augmented by the discoveries of each age; and mankind, viewed from its origin, appears to the eyes of a philosopher as one vast whole, which itself, like each individual, has its infancy and its growth.

Turgot, *Progress of the Human Mind,* I

37 What a host of inventions unknown to the ancients, and credited to an age of barbarism! Our art of recording music, our bills of exchange, our paper, window-glass, plate-glass, windmills, watches, spectacles, gunpowder, the magnetic needle and the consequent perfection of navigation and commerce. The arts are but the utilization of nature, and the exercise of the arts is a series of physical experiments which progressively unveil her. Facts were accumulating in the darkness of the age of ignorance, and the sciences, whose progress, for all that it was hidden, was none the less actual, were destined to reappear in time increased by these new riches; like those rivers which, after having disappeared from view for a space in some subterranean channel, reappear farther on augmented by all the waters which have filtered through the earth.

Turgot, *Progress of the Human Mind,* I

38 The uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition, the principle from which public and national, as well as private opulence is originally derived, is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progress of things towards improvement, in spite both of the extravagance of government and of the greatest errors of administration. Like the unknown principle of animal life, it frequently restores health and vigour to the constitution, in spite, not only of the disease, but of the absurd prescriptions of the doctor.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* II, 3

39 Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.

Jefferson, *Letter to Samuel Kercheval (July 12, 1816)*

40 We imperceptibly advance from youth to age without observing the gradual, but incessant, change of human affairs; and even in our larger experience of history, the imagination is accustomed, by a perpetual series of causes and effects. to unite the most distant revolutions. But if the interval between two memorable eras could be instantly annihilated; if it were possible, after a momentary slumber of two hundred years, to display the *new* world to the eyes of a spectator who still retained a lively and recent impression of the *old,* his surprise and his reflections would furnish the

pleasing subject of a philosophical romance.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* XXXIII

41 Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal have diffused among the savages of the Old and New World these inestimable gifts: they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* XXXVIII

42 The history of the human race, viewed as a whole, may be regarded as the realization of a hidden plan of nature to bring about a political constitution, internally, and, for this purpose, also externally perfect, as the only state in which all the capacities implanted by her in mankind can be fully developed.

Kant, *Idea of a Universal History,* VIII

43 I will . . . venture to assume that as the human race is continually advancing in civilisation and culture as its natural purpose, so it is continually making progress for the better in relation to the moral end of its existence, and that this progress although it may be sometimes interrupted, will never be entirely broken off or stopped. It is not necessary for me to prove this assumption; the burden of proof lies on its opponents. For I take my stand upon my innate sense of duty in this connection. Every member in the series of generations to which I belong as a man—although mayhap not so well equipped with the requisite moral qualifications as I ought to be, and consequently might be—is, in fact, prompted by his sense of duty so to act in reference to posterity that they may always become better, and the possibility of this must be assumed. This duty can thus be rightfully transmitted from one member of the generations to another. Now whatever doubts may be drawn from history against my hopes, and were they even of such a kind as, in case of their being demonstrated, might move me to desist from efforts which according to all appearances would be vain, yet so long as this is not made out with complete certainty, I am not entitled to give up the guidance of duty which is clear, and to adopt the prudential rule of not working at the impracticable, since this is not clear but is mere hypothesis. And, however uncertain I may always be as to whether we may rightly hope that the human race will attain to a better condition, yet this individual uncertainty cannot detract from the general rule of conduct, or from the necessary assumption in the practical relation that such a condition *is* practicable.

Kant, *On the Saying: That a Thing may be Right in Theory, but may not Hold in Practice*

44 The question next arises as to the means by which this continuous progress to the better may be maintained and even hastened. When carefully considered, we soon see that as this process must go on to an incalculable distance of time, it cannot depend so much on what we may do of ourselves, for instance, on the education we give to the younger generation, or on the method by which we may proceed in order to realise it, as on what human *Nature* as such will do *in* and with us, to compel us to move in a track into which we would not readily have betaken ourselves. For, it is from human Nature in general, or rather—since supreme wisdom is requisite for the accomplishment of this end—it is from *Providence* alone that we can expect a result which proceeds by relation to the whole and reacts through the whole upon the parts. Men with their *plans* start, on the contrary, only from the parts, and even continue to regard the parts alone, while the whole as such is viewed as too great for them to influence and as attainable by them only in idea.

Kant, *On the Saying: That a Thing may be Right in Theory, but may not Hold in Practice*

45 Human Reason pursues her course in the species in general: she invents, before she can apply; she discovers, though evil hands may long abuse her discoveries. Abuse will correct itself; and, through the unwearied zeal of ever-growing Reason, disorder will in time become order. By contending against passions, she strengthens and enlightens herself: from being oppressed in this place, she will fly to that, and extend the sphere of her sway over the Earth. There is nothing enthusiastical in the hope, that, wherever men dwell, at some future period will dwell men rational, just, and happy: happy, not through the means of their own reason alone, but of the common reason of their whole fraternal race.

Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man,* XV

46 The organic perfectibility or degeneration of species in the case of plants or of animals can be regarded as one of the general laws of nature.

This law extends to the human race, and no one probably will doubt that progress in preventive medicine, the use of more healthful foods and habitations, a mode of living which should develop the strength through exercise without impairing it through excess, that, finally, the destruction of the two most active causes of degeneracy, extreme poverty and excessive wealth, will necessarily prolong the average duration of man's life and secure him a more constant health and a more robust constitution. It is felt that the progress of preventive medicine, become more efficacious

through the progress of reason and that of the social order, must do away in time with transmissible or contagious diseases, and those general disorders which owe their origin to climates, foods, or the nature of occupations. It would not be difficult to prove that this hope may be extended to nearly all the other maladies, the distant causes of which it is probable will be discovered hereafter. Would it be absurd, then, to suppose that this improvement of the human race may be regarded as susceptible of indefinite progress, that there may come a time when death shall be no more than the result either of extraordinary accidents or of the ever more gradual decay of the vital forces, and that, finally, the average interval elapsing between birth and this decay may itself have no assignable limit? Doubtless man will never become immortal, but may not the distance between the moment when he first receives life and the common period when in the course of nature, without illness and without accident, he finds it no longer possible to exist, grow constantly wider?

Condorcet, *Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind,* 10

47 [The] average duration of human life is destined to increase continually, if physical revolutions do not oppose themselves thereto; but we do not know what limit it is that it can never pass; we do not even know if the general laws of nature have fixed such a limit.

Condorcet, *Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind,* 10

48 It is, undoubtedly, a most disheartening reflection that the great obstacle in the way to any extraordinary improvement in society is of a nature that we can never hope to overcome. The perpetual tendency in the race of man to increase beyond the means of subsistence is one of the general laws of animated nature which we can have no reason to expect will change. Yet, discouraging as the contemplation of this difficulty must be to those whose exertions are laudably directed to the improvement of the human species, it is evident that no possible good can arise from any endeavors to slur it over or keep it in the background.

Malthus, *Population,* XVII

49 *Chorus.* The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning-star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendor of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

Shelley, *Hellas,* 1060

50 In order to understand the true value and character of the Positive Philosophy, we must take a brief general view of the progressive course of the human mind, regarded as a whole; for no conception can be understood otherwise than through its history.

From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject, and which has a solid foundation of proof, both in the facts of our organization and in our historical experience. The law is this:—that each of our leading conceptions—each branch of our knowledge—passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological, or ficitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive. In other words, the human mind, by its nature, employs in its progress three methods of philosophizing, the character of which is essentially different, and even radically opposed: viz., the theological method, the metaphysical, and the positive. Hence arise three philosophies, or general systems of conceptions on the aggregate of phenomena, each of which excludes the others. The first is the necessary point of departure of the hu-

man understanding; and the third is its fixed and definite state. The second is merely a state of transition.

Comte, *Positive Philosophy,* Introduction, 1

51 We have nothing to do here with the metaphysical controversy about the absolute happiness of Man at different stages of civilization. As the happiness of every man depends on the harmony between the development of his various faculties and the entire system of the circumstances which govern his life; and as, on the other hand, this equilibrium always establishes itself spontaneously to a certain extent, it is impossible to compare in a positive way, either by sentiment or reasoning, the individual welfare which belongs to social situations that can never be brought into direct comparison: and therefore the question of the happiness of different animal organisms, or of their two sexes, is merely impracticable and unintelligible. The only question, therefore, is of the effect of the social evolution, which is so undeniable that there is no reasoning with any one who does not admit it as the basis of the inquiry. The only ground of discussion is whether development and improvement,—the theoretical and the practical aspect,—are one; whether the development is necessarily accompanied by a corresponding amelioration, or progress, properly so called. To me it appears that the amelioration is as unquestionable as the development from which it proceeds, provided we regard it as subject, like the development itself, to limits, general and special, which science will be found to prescribe. The chimerical notion of unlimited perfectibility is thus at once excluded. Taking the human race as a whole, and not any one people, it appears that human development brings after it, in two ways, an ever-growing amelioration, first, in the radical condition of Man, which no one disputes; and next, in his corresponding faculties, which is a view much less attended to. There is no need to dwell upon the improvement in the conditions of human existence, both by the increasing action of Man on his environment through the advancement of the sciences and arts, and by the constant amelioration of his customs and manners; and again, by the gradual improvement in social organization. We shall presently see that in the Middle Ages, which are charged with political retrogression, the progress was more political than any other. One fact is enough to silence sophistical declamation on this subject; the continuous increase of population all over the globe, as a consequence of civilization, while the wants of individuals are, as a whole, better satisfied at the same time. The tendency to improvement must be highly spontaneous and irresistible to have persevered notwithstanding the enormous faults—political faults especially—which have at all times absorbed or neutralized the greater part of our social forces. Even throughout the revolutionary period, in spite of the marked discordance between the political system and the general state of civilization, the improvement has proceeded, not only in physical and intellectual, but also in moral respects, though the transient disorganization could not but disturb the natural evolution. As for the other aspect of the question, the gradual and slow improvement of human nature, within narrow limits, it seems to me impossible to reject altogether the principle proposed (with great exaggeration, however) by Lamarck, of the necessary influence of a homogeneous and continuous exercise in producing, in every animal organism, and especially in Man, an organic improvement, susceptible of being established in the race, after a sufficient persistence. If we take the best-marked case—that of intellectual development, it seems to be unquestionable that there is a superior aptitude for mental combinations, independent of all culture, among highly-civilized people; or, what comes to the same thing, an inferior aptitude among nations that are less advanced,—the average intellect of the members of those societies being taken for observation. The intellectual faculties are, it is true, more modified than the others by the social evolution: but then they have the smallest relative effect in the individual human constitution: so that we are authorized to infer from their amelioration a proportionate improvement in aptitudes that are more marked and equally exercised. In regard to morals, particularly, I think it indisputable that the gradual development of humanity favors a growing preponderance of the noblest tendencies of our nature,—as I hope to prove further on. The lower instincts continue to manifest themselves in modified action, but their less sustained and more repressed exercise must tend to debilitate them by degrees; and their increasing regulation certainly brings them into involuntary concurrence in the maintenance of a good social economy; and especially in the case of the least marked organisms, which constitute a vast majority. These two aspects of social evolution, then,—the *development* which brings after it the *improvement,*—we may consider to be admitted as facts.

Comte, *Positive Philosophy,* VI, 3

52 The progress of the race must be considered susceptible of modification only with regard to its speed, and without any reversal in the order of development, or any interval of any importance being overleaped.

Comte, *Positive Philosophy,* VI, 3

53 Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken. Society acquires new

arts and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two men and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a broad-axe and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

54 The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky.

Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

55 There is not a piece of science but its flank may be turned to-morrow; there is not any literary reputation, not the so-called eternal names of fame, that may not be revised and condemned. The very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manners and morals of mankind are all at the mercy of a new generalization.

Emerson, *Circles*

56 As long as our civilization is essentially one of property, of fences, of exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions. Our riches will leave us sick; there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth. Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men.

Emerson, *Napoleon; or, The Man of the World*

57 Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Tennyson, *Locksley Hall,* 181

58 Shad are still taken in the basin of Concord River, at Lowell, where they are said to be a month earlier than the Merrimack shad, on account of the warmth of the water. Still patiently, almost pathetically, with instinct not to be discouraged, not to be *reasoned* with, revisiting their old haunts, as if their stern fates would relent, and still met by the Corporation with its dam. Poor shad! where is thy redress? When Nature gave thee instinct, gave she thee the heart to bear thy fate? Still wandering the sea in thy scaly armor to inquire humbly at the mouths of rivers if man has perchance left them free for thee to enter. By countless shoals loitering uncertain meanwhile, merely stemming the tide there, in danger from sea foes in spite of thy bright armor, awaiting new instructions, until the sands, until the water itself, tell thee if it be so or not. Thus by whole migrating nations, full of instinct, which is thy faith, in this backward spring, turned adrift, and perchance knowest not where men do *not* dwell, where there are *not* factories, in these days. Armed with no sword, no electric shock, but mere shad, armed only with innocence and a just cause, with tender dumb mouth only forward, and scales easy to be detached. I for one am with thee, and who knows what may avail a crowbar against that Billerica dam?—Not despairing when whole myriads have gone to feed those sea monsters during thy suspense, but still brave, indifferent, on easy fin there, like shad reserved for higher destinies. Willing to be decimated for man's behoof after the spawning season. Away with the superficial and selfish philanthropy of men—who knows what admirable virtue of fishes may be below low-water-mark, bearing up against a hard destiny, not admired by that fellow-creature who alone can appreciate it! Who hears the fishes when they cry? It will not be forgotten by some memory that we were contemporaries. Thou shalt ere long have thy way up the rivers, up all the rivers of the globe, if I am not mistaken. Yea, even thy dull watery dream shall be more than realized. If it were not so, but thou wert to be overlooked at first and at last, then would not I take their heaven. Yes, I say so, who think I know better than thou canst. Keep a stiff fin, then, and stem all the tides thou mayst meet.

Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (Saturday)*

59 In the savage state every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its coarser and simpler wants; but I think that I speak within bounds when I say that, though the birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, and the savages their wigwams, in modern civilized society not more than one half the families own a shelter. In the large towns and cities, where civilization especially prevails, the number of those who own a shelter is a very small fraction of the whole. The rest pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, become indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams, but now helps to keep them poor as long as they live. I do not mean to insist here on the disadvantage of hiring compared with owning, but it is evident that the savage owns his shelter because

it costs so little, while the civilized man hires his commonly because he cannot afford to own it; nor can he, in the long run, any better afford to hire. But, answers one, by merely paying this tax the poor civilized man secures an abode which is a palace compared with the savage's. An annual rent of from twenty-five to a hundred dollars (these are the country rates) entitles him to the benefit of the improvements of centuries, spacious apartments, clean paint and paper, Rumford fireplace, back plastering, Venetian blinds, copper pump, spring lock, a commodious cellar, and many other things. But how happens it that he who is said to enjoy these things is so commonly a *poor* civilized man, while the savage, who has them not, is rich as a savage? If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man—and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages—it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. An average house in this neighborhood costs perhaps eight hundred dollars, and to lay up this sum will take from ten to fifteen years of the laborer's life, even if he is not encumbered with a family—estimating the pecuniary value of every man's labor at one dollar a day, for if some receive more, others receive less;—so that he must have spent more than half his life commonly before *his* wigwam will be earned. If we suppose him to pay a rent instead, this is but a doubtful choice of evils. Would the savage have been wise to exchange his wigwam for a palace on these terms?

Thoreau, *Walden:* Economy

60 Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion. Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

Thoreau, *Walden:* Conclusion

61 To believe that man was aboriginally civilised and then suffered utter degradation in so many regions, is to take a pitiably low view of human nature. It is apparently a truer and more cheerful view that progress has been much more general than retrogression; that man has risen, though by slow and interrupted steps, from a lowly condition to the highest standard as yet attained by him in knowledge, morals and religion.

Darwin, *Descent of Man,* I, 5

62 Thoughtful men, once escaped from the blinding influences of traditional prejudice, will find in the lowly stock whence Man has sprung, the best evidence of the splendour of his capacities; and will discern in his long progress through the Past, a reasonable ground of faith in his attainment of a nobler Future.

T. H. Huxley, *Relations of Man to the Lower Animals*

63 Men in society are undoubtedly subject to the cosmic process. As among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support. The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence. The strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to tread down the weaker. But the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilization. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best.

T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*

64 In support of the position that Order is intrinsically different from Progress, and that preservation of existing and acquisition of additional good are sufficiently distinct to afford the basis of a fundamental classification, we shall perhaps be reminded that Progress may be at the expense of Order; that while we are acquiring, or striving to acquire, good of one kind, we may be losing ground in respect to others: thus there may be progress in wealth, while there is deterioration in virtue. Granting this, what it proves is not that Progress is generically a different thing from Permanence, but that wealth is a different thing from virtue. Progress is permanence and something more; and it is no answer to this to say that Progress in one thing does not imply Permanence in everything. No more does Progress in one thing imply Progress in everything. Progress of any kind includes Permanence in that same kind; whenever Permanence is sacrificed to some particular kind of Progress, other Progress is still more sacrificed to it; and if it be not worth the sacrifice, not the interest of Permanence alone has been disregarded, but the general interest of Progress has been mistaken.

Mill, *Representative Government,* II

65 No one whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration can doubt that most of the great positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of

society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals. Even that most intractable of enemies, disease, may be indefinitely reduced in dimensions by good physical and moral education, and proper control of noxious influences; while the progress of science holds out a promise for the future of still more direct conquests over this detestable foe. And every advance in that direction relieves us from some, not only of the chances which cut short our own lives, but, what concerns us still more, which deprive us of those in whom our happiness is wrapt up. As for vicissitudes of fortune, and other disappointments connected with worldly circumstances, these are principally the effect either of gross imprudence, of ill-regulated desires, or of bad or imperfect social institutions.

Mill, *Utilitarianism,* II

66 It is my belief indeed that the general tendency is, and will continue to be, saving occasional and temporary exceptions, one of improvement—a tendency towards a better and happier state. This, however, is not a question of the method of the social science, but a theorem of the science itself. For our purpose it is sufficient that there is a progressive change, both in the character of the human race and in their outward circumstances so far as moulded by themselves; that in each successive age the principal phenomena of society are different from what they were in the age preceding, and still more different from any previous age: the periods which most distinctly mark these successive changes being intervals of one generation, during which a new set of human beings have been educated, have grown up from childhood, and taken possession of society.

Mill, *System of Logic,* Bk. VI, X, 3

67 A Philosophy of History is generally admitted to be at once the verification and the initial form of the Philosophy of the Progress of Society.

Mill, *System of Logic,* Bk. VI, X, 8

68 Progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.

Browning, *Paracelsus,* V

69 Man knows partly but conceives beside,
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

Browning, *A Death in the Desert*

70 The pursuit of perfection . . . is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail.* It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive.

Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy,* I

71 Progress . . . is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization being artificial, it is a part of nature; all of a piece with the development of the embryo or the unfolding of a flower. The modifications mankind have undergone, and are still undergoing, result from a law underlying the whole organic creation; and provided the human race continues, and the constitution of things remains the same, those modifications must end in completeness. As surely as the tree becomes bulky when it stands alone, and slender if one of a group; as surely as the same creature assumes the different forms of cart-horse and race-horse, according as its habits demand strength or speed; as surely as a blacksmith's arm grows large, and the skin of a labourer's hand thick; as surely as the eye tends to become long-sighted in the sailor, and short-sighted in the student; as surely as the blind attain a more delicate sense of touch; as surely as a clerk acquires rapidity in writing and calculation; as surely as the musician learns to detect an error of a semi-tone amidst what seems to others a very babel of sounds; as surely as a passion grows by indulgence and diminishes when restrained; as surely as a disregarded conscience becomes inert, and one that is obeyed active; as surely as there is any efficacy in educational culture, or any meaning in such terms as habit, custom, practice; so surely must the human faculties be moulded into complete fitness for the social state; so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect.

Spencer, *Social Statics,* I, 2

72 The plexus of causes returneth in which I am intertwined,—it will again create me! I myself pertain to the causes of the eternal return.

I come again with this sun, with this earth, with

this eagle, with this serpent—*not* to a new life, or a better life, or a similar life:

—I come again eternally to this identical and selfsame life, in its greatest and its smallest, to teach again the eternal return of all things,—

—To speak again the word of the great noontide of earth and man, to announce again to man the Superman.

Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* III, 57

73 This life, as thou livest it now, as thou hast lived it, thou needst must live again, and an infinite number of times; and there will be in it nothing new; but every grief and every joy, every thought and every sigh, all the infinitely great and the infinitely little in thy life must return for thee, and all this in the same sequence and the same order. And also this spider and the moonlight through the trees, and also this moment and myself. The eternal hour-glass of existence will ever be turned again, and thou with it, dust of dust.

Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom,* 341

74 The more ignorant men are, the move convinced are they that their little parish and their little chapel is an apex to which civilization and philosophy has painfully struggled up the pyramid of time from a desert of savagery. Savagery, they think, became barbarism; barbarism became ancient civilization; ancient civilization became Pauline Christianity; Pauline Christianity became Roman Catholicism; Roman Catholicism became the Dark Ages; and the Dark Ages were finally enlightened by the Protestant instincts of the English race. The whole process is summed up as Progress with a capital P. And any elderly gentleman of Progressive temperament will testify that the improvement since he was a boy is enormous. . . .

The notion that there has been any such Progress since Cæsar's time (less than 20 centuries) is too absurd for discussion. All the savagery, barbarism, dark ages and the rest of it of which we have any record as existing in the past exists at the present moment.

Shaw, *Caesar and Cleopatra,* Notes

75 We must . . . frankly give up the notion that Man as he exists is capable of net progress. There will always be an illusion of progress, because wherever we are conscious of an evil we remedy it, and therefore always seem to ourselves to be progressing, forgetting that most of the evils we see are the effects, finally become acute, of long-unnoticed retrogressions; that our compromising remedies seldom fully recover the lost ground; above all, that on the lines along which we are degenerating, good has become evil in our eyes, and is being undone in the name of progress precisely as evil is undone and replaced by good on the lines along which we are evolving. This is indeed the Illusion of Illusions; for it gives us infallible and appalling assurance that if our political ruin is to come, it will be effected by ardent reformers and supported by enthusiastic patriots as a series of necessary steps in our progress. Let the Reformer, the Progressive, the Meliorist then reconsider himself and his eternal ifs and ans which never become pots and pans. Whilst Man remains what he is, there can be no progress beyond the point already attained and fallen headlong from at every attempt at civilization; and since even that point is but a pinnacle to which a few people cling in giddy terror above an abyss of squalor, mere progress should no longer charm us.

Shaw, *Man and Superman,* Revolutionist's Handbook

76 The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

Shaw, *Man and Superman,* Maxims for Revolutionists

77 The differences between the nations and races of mankind are required to preserve the conditions under which higher development is possible. One main factor in the upward trend of animal life has been the power of wandering. Perhaps this is why the armour-plated monsters fared badly. They could not wander. Animals wander into new conditions. They have to adapt themselves or die. Mankind has wandered from the trees to the plains, from the plains to the seacoast, from climate to climate, from continent to continent, and from habit of life to habit of life. When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being. Physical wandering is still important, but greater still is the power of man's spiritual adventures—adventures of thought, adventures of passionate feeling, adventures of aesthetic experience. A diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the Odyssey of the human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies: they are godsends. Men require of their neighbours something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration. We must not expect, however, all the virtues. We should even be satisfied if there is something odd enough to be interesting.

Modern science has imposed on humanity the necessity for wandering. Its progressive thought and its progressive technology make the transition through time, from generation to generation, a true migration into uncharted seas of adventure. The very benefit of wandering is that it is dangerous and needs skill to avert evils. We must expect, therefore, that the future will disclose dangers. It is the business of the future to be dangerous; and

it is among the merits of science that it equips the future for its duties. The prosperous middle classes, who ruled the nineteenth century, placed an excessive value upon placidity of existence. They refused to face the necessities for social reform imposed by the new industrial system, and they are now refusing to face the necessities for intellectual reform imposed by the new knowledge. The middle class pessimism over the future of the world comes from a confusion between civilisation and security. In the immediate future there will be less security than in the immediate past, less stability. It must be admitted that there is a degree of instability which is inconsistent with civilisation. But, on the whole, the great ages have been unstable ages.

Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World,* XIII

78 The foundation of all understanding . . . is that no static maintenance of perfection is possible. This axiom is rooted in the nature of things. Advance or Decadence are the only choices offered to mankind. The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe.

Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* XIX, 2

79 That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.

Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*

80 Civilization is the fruit of renunciation of instinctual satisfaction, and from each newcomer in turn it exacts the same renunciation. Throughout the life of the individual, there is a constant replacement of the external compulsion by the internal. The influences of civilization cause an ever-increasing transmutation of egoistic trends into altruistic and social ones, and this by an admixture of erotic elements. In the last resort it may be said that every internal compulsion which has been of service in the development of human beings was originally, that is, in the evolution of the human race, nothing but an external one. Those who are born today bring with them as an inherited constitution some degree of a tendency (disposition) towards transmutation of egoistic into social instincts, and this disposition is easily stimulated to achieve that effect. A further measure of this transformation must be accomplished during the life of the individual himself. And so the human being is subject not only to the pressure of his immediate environment, but also to the influence of the cultural development attained by his forefathers.

Freud, *Thoughts on War and Death,* I

81 It sounds like a fairy-tale, but not only that; this story of what man by his science and practical inventions has achieved on this earth, where he first appeared as a weakly member of the animal kingdom, and on which each individual of his species must ever again appear as a helpless infant—O inch of nature!—is a direct fulfilment of all, or of most, of the dearest wishes in his fairy-tales. All these possessions he has acquired through culture. Long ago he formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods. Whatever seemed unattainable to his desires—or forbidden to him—he attributed to these gods. One may say, therefore, that these gods were the ideals of his culture. Now he has himself approached very near to realizing this ideal, he has nearly become a god himself. But only, it is true, in the way that ideals are usually realized in the general experience of humanity. Not completely; in some respects not at all, in others only by halves. Man has become a god by means of artificial limbs, so to speak, quite magnificent when equipped with all his accessory organs; but they do not grow on him and they still give him trouble at times. However, he is entitled to console himself with the thought that this evolution will not come to an end in A.D. 1930.

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* III

82 Future ages will produce further great advances in this realm of culture, probably inconceivable now, and will increase man's likeness to a god still more.

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* III

83 The fateful question of the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. In this connection, perhaps the phase through which we are at this moment passing deserves special interest. Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this—hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension. And now it may be expected that the other of the two *heavenly forces,* eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself

alongside of his equally immortal adversary.

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* VIII

84 If civilization has profoundly modified man, it is by accumulating in his social surroundings, as in a reservoir, the habits and knowledge which society pours into the individual at each new generation. Scratch the surface, abolish everything we owe to an education which is perpetual and unceasing, and you find in the depth of our nature primitive humanity, or something very near it.

Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion,* II

85 The longing to be primitive is a disease of culture; it is archaism in morals. To be so preoccupied with vitality is a symptom of anæmia. When life was really vigorous and young, in Homeric times for instance, no one seemed to fear that it might be squeezed out of existence either by the incubus of matter or by the petrifying blight of intelligence. Life was like the light of day, something to use, or to waste, or to enjoy. It was not a thing to worship; and often the chief luxury of living consisted in dealing death about vigorously. Life indeed was loved, and the beauty and pathos of it were felt exquisitely; but its beauty and pathos lay in the divineness of its model and in its own fragility. No one paid it the equivocal compliment of thinking it a substance or a material force. Nobility was not then impossible in sentiment, because there were ideals in life higher and more indestructible than life itself, which life might illustrate and to which it might fitly be sacrificed. Nothing can be meaner than the anxiety to live on, to live on anyhow and in any shape; a spirit with any honour is not willing to live except in its own way, and a spirit with any wisdom is not over-eager to live at all. In those days men recognised immortal gods and resigned themselves to being mortal. Yet those were the truly vital and instinctive days of the human spirit. Only when vitality is low do people find material things oppressive and ideal things unsubstantial.

Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine,* I

86 Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Santayana, *Life of Reason,* I, 12

87 The cry was for vacant freedom and indeterminate progress . . . *Full speed ahead!,* without asking whether directly before you was a bottomless pit.

Santayana, *My Host the World,* Epilogue

88 Everything is transitory and everything is preserved in progress, and if humanity is untiring and has always something further to undertake, if every one of its achievements gives rise to doubt and dissatisfaction and the demand for new achievement, yet now and again there is achievement; something is possessed and enjoyed and the apparently precipitous race is in reality a succession of reposes, of satisfactions in the midst of dissatisfactions, of fleeting moments spent in the joy of contemplation.

Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty,* I, 10

89 It must be realised by any student of civilisation that we pay heavily for our heterogeneous, rapidly changing civilisation; we pay in high proportions of crime and delinquency, we pay in the conflicts of youth, we pay in an ever-increasing number of neuroses, we pay in the lack of a coherent tradition without which the development of art is sadly handicapped. In such a list of prices, we must count our gains carefully, not to be discouraged. And chief among our gains must be reckoned this possibility of choice, the recognition of many possible ways of life, where other civilisations have recognised only one. Where other civilisations give a satisfactory outlet to only one temperamental type, be he mystic or soldier, business man or artist, a civilisation in which there are many standards offers a possibility of satisfactory adjustment to individuals of many different temperamental types, of diverse gifts and varying interests.

Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa,* XIV

90 We are quite willing to admit now that the revolution of the earth about the sun, or the animal ancestry of man, has next to nothing to do with the uniqueness of our human achievements. If we inhabit one chance planet out of a myriad solar systems, so much the greater glory, and if all the ill-assorted human races are linked by evolution with the animal, the provable differences between ourselves and them are the more extreme and the uniqueness of our institutions the more remarkable. But *our* achievements, *our* institutions are unique; they are of a different order from those of lesser races and must be protected at all costs.

Benedict, *Patterns of Culture,* I

91 There is no doubt about the cultural continuity of the civilization, no matter who its carriers were at the moment. We must accept all the implications of our human inheritance, one of the most important of which is the small scope of biologically transmitted behaviour, and the enormous rôle of the cultural process of the transmission of tradition.

Benedict, *Patterns of Culture,* I