If you follow the headlines, the world in the 21st century appears to be sinking into chaos, hatred, and irrationality. But this is an illusion: a symptom of historical amnesia and statistical fallacies. If you follow the trend lines, you discover that our lives have become longer, healthier, safer, richer, happier, and more peaceful—not just in the West, but worldwide. This progress is no accident. It’s the gift of a set of ideas that many of us embrace without even realizing it. These are the ideals of the Enlightenment: reason, science, and humanism. They impel us to use our faculties of reason and sympathy to solve the problems that inevitably come with being products of evolution in an indifferent universe. The challenges we face today are formidable, including climate change and nuclear weapons. But the way to deal with them is not to moan that we’re doomed or to lurch back to a mythical age of greatness. It’s to treat them as problems to solve, as we have solved other problems in the past. We will never have a perfect world, but—defying the chorus of fatalism and reaction—we can continue to make a better world.