

## THE PROGRESS REPORT

# Practical Enlightenment

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Learning a few basic principles about reason, ethics, economics, governance, language, finances, activity, health, the human body, and relationships will endow you with practical enlightenment. Some religions and philosophies require many years, even a lifetime or several lifetimes, to achieve ultimate enlightenment and being one with all and absolute truth. But one can become an enlightened practical soul without years of difficult meditation and study.

For enlightened reasoning, base your beliefs in logic and evidence. Ask "how do you know?" and "what do you mean?" both when you read and listen and when you create. Ponder whether the premises of arguments are complete and necessary. Practice the principle of charity, to interpret the arguments of others in their best light.

Enlightened ethics recognizes the existence of a universal moral law based on the nature of persons. Human nature endows us with independent minds which have an equal moral status. A universal ethic must transcend cultural or personal views. This implies one rule for evil: only acts which harmfully invade others are evil. Punishment must be based only on restitution and protection. Acts which are welcome benefits are good. All other acts are morally neutral. We have a natural right to be free from coercive harm.

To become enlightened in economics, realize that we properly own our bodies, lives, and products, but equality makes us equal owners of the benefits from natural land. This implies no arbitrary tax or restriction on wages and capital, and an equal sharing of the land rent. Damagers of nature owe restitution to the rest. The rent and damage charges can adequately provide for collective goods. Trade provides mutual gains, and the real cost of anything is not the price but what you must give up. Human desires are unlimited, but for any good, desire diminishes with quantity. Interest is a natural premium for preferring goods now rather than later. The pure free market economy provides wealth for all.

Political enlightenment tells us to bring government as close to the people as possible. We must structure voting only in small groups where the electors know their representatives. Governance is then bottom-up and multi-level as lower levels elect upper levels and funds flow from bottom to top. The constitution must also implement the universal ethic of liberty and natural rights.

Linguistic enlightenment sees value in a common universal neutral language. Esperanto is the most successful of these, so the enlightened person learns this simple tool to communicate with all our fellow human beings. Be open to speaking with all others.

Become financially enlightened by having the humility to realize one cannot predict prices tomorrow or the next day. Diversify your wealth and let the broad market carry you to financial security. Borrow for capital projects; otherwise spend just what you earn.

Enlightenment in activity achieves efficiently with these rules: plan ahead, write it down, think laterally, and be alert. When you err or forget, list it so you will grow wiser by not repeating it.

To be healthy, stay as close to nature as possible. Eat fruits and vegetables in their unpoisoned natural state. When you cook, avoid excessive fat and burning. Some supplements can help. Be skeptical of crutches and shortcuts, such as artificial sweets.

The enlightened person knows that God and nature did not create evil minds, and neither do they create evil bodies. The nude human body is simply flesh; any obscenity in the natural body is entirely in the mind of the beholder. Enlightened folks are not shamed or shocked by the naked human body. It is the dignity of nature.

Be enlightened in your relationships, with equality and charity. With strangers be skeptical as the mean between being naive and being cynical. Realize that families run on love, but society cannot all be family. Benevolent acts give what the recipient, not the donor, wants. "Live and let live" is the enlightened motto.

These principles of practical enlightenment do not come from tradition or authority, but are grounded in logic and evidence. If you are in touch with the universe, truth will come to you of its own accord. What good is enlightenment if it can only come when you are old and already lived most of your life? If your mind is open to rational thinking, then practical enlightenment can come quickly and easily by grasping just a few basic principles.