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For two hundred years the pessimists have dominated public discourse, insisting that things will soon be getting much worse. But in fact, life is getting better_and at an accelerating rate. Food availability, income, and life span are up; disease, child mortality, and violence are down all across the globe. Africa is following Asia out of poverty; the Internet, the mobile phone, and container shipping are enriching people's lives as never before.

In his bold and bracing exploration into how human culture evolves positively through exchange and specialization, bestselling author Matt Ridley does more than describe how things are getting better. He explains why. An astute, refreshing, and revelatory work that covers the entire sweep of human history_from the Stone Age to the Internet_The Rational Optimist will change your way of thinking about the world for the better.