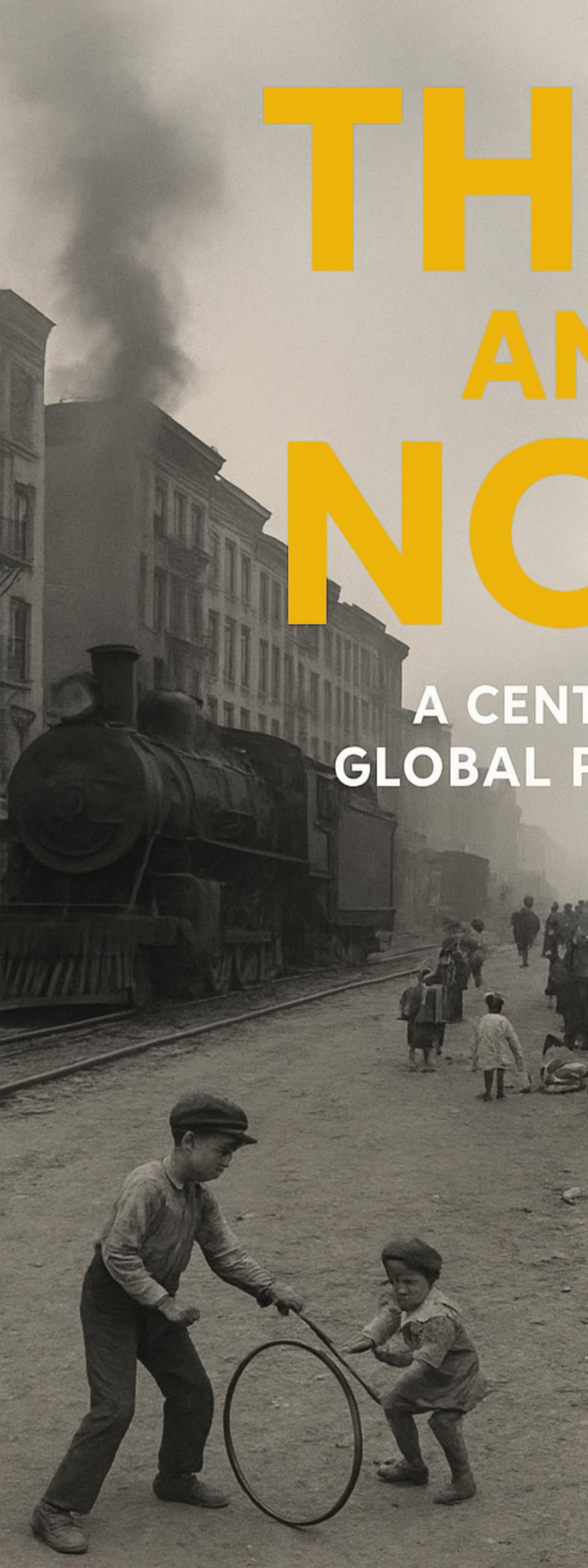


THEN AND NOW

A CENTURY OF
GLOBAL PROGRESS



Then and Now

A Century of Global Progress

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Introduction: Why Compare?

One hundred years may feel like a long stretch of time, but in the grand arc of human history it is barely a heartbeat. A century ago, in the 1920s, the world was still reeling from the devastation of the First World War and on the cusp of the Great Depression. Much of daily life was shaped by limitations that are almost unimaginable to people today. Electricity was still rare outside of major cities. Running water and indoor plumbing were luxuries. In many parts of the world, families cooked over open fires, fetched water from wells and lit their homes with oil lamps. International travel was something reserved for the wealthy elite, requiring weeks on ocean liners rather than hours on airplanes. Diseases that are now curable or preventable - tuberculosis, polio, influenza - claimed millions of lives.

For the average person in 1925, life was local, slow and often precarious. A farmer in India rose at dawn to work the fields with hand tools and oxen, hoping the rains would come. A factory worker in Manchester or Detroit endured long hours in unsafe conditions, with little recourse if they were injured. In rural China, families struggled to survive floods and famine, while in Africa, much of the continent remained under colonial rule, with local populations subjected to restrictions on movement, ownership and opportunity. Even in advanced economies, infant mortality rates were high and life expectancy hovered around forty to fifty years. Women in many countries had only just won the right to vote. Millions of people were excluded from education or civil participation simply because of their gender, class or race.

And yet, these lives were also rich with meaning. Communities were tightly knit, families depended on one another and cultural traditions provided identity and continuity. The past should not be remembered only for its hardships, but also for the resilience, innovation and spirit of those who lived through it. Every advance we benefit from today was made possible because people then dreamed of something better.

Fast forward to the present. A person born today is likely to live more than seventy years. Infant mortality has dropped dramatically in every region. Electricity and clean water reach billions of homes. Airplanes carry people across continents in hours. Messages travel instantly through the internet and education is accessible to a broader share of humanity than ever before. Democracies, despite their flaws, have spread across much of the globe and human rights movements have reshaped the way societies think about equality, justice and freedom. Hunger, while still a challenge in some places, has declined as agricultural innovation and global trade feed more people than at any point in history.

The contrast between then and now is astonishing. But because progress often comes slowly, generation by generation, many of us fail to notice it. Instead, we see today's problems - climate change, inequality, political division - without realising how much worse the challenges of the past often were. This book is an invitation to step back, to compare life as it was a century ago with the life most people experience today and to cultivate a sense of gratitude for the progress humanity has made.

The chapters that follow will take you across continents and through time, exploring how societies have shifted in housing, transport, food, health, human rights, communication and culture. Each chapter will weave together stories from different regions, reminding us that progress has not been uniform but that the overall trajectory is undeniable. By the end, my hope is that you will see our modern world with fresh eyes - not as perfect, but as extraordinary when compared with the lives our grandparents and great-grandparents knew.

We are the inheritors of a century of change. And by remembering where we came from, we can better appreciate the present and perhaps even imagine what the next hundred years might bring.

Chapter 1: Homes and Living Standards

A century ago, the word “home” meant something very different from what it does today. For most people, housing was not defined by comfort but by necessity. Shelter provided protection from the elements, but little more. Modern amenities that many now take for granted - electric lighting, running water, sanitation, heating and cooling - were rare luxuries. Where you lived depended not only on geography, but on class, gender, race and even colonial authority.

In 1925, a family in London or New York might live in a small brick house or cramped apartment. Many city dwellings were poorly ventilated, damp and overcrowded. Working-class families often shared a single room, while wealthier households employed servants to maintain larger homes. Indoor plumbing was spreading, but it was far from universal; in poorer districts, outhouses and shared pumps were still common. Heating came from coal stoves or fireplaces, filling the air with soot.

In rural Europe, peasant families lived in cottages with thatched roofs or farmhouses built of stone and timber. These houses were often draughty and cold, heated by open fires. Furniture was sparse, beds were shared and space was limited. In Eastern Europe, wooden houses with dirt floors were still widespread, with livestock sometimes kept indoors during winter for warmth.

Across Asia, living standards varied enormously. In India, many families lived in mud-brick or bamboo huts, sometimes without windows or proper roofing. Extended families often shared single-room homes. In China, courtyard houses in cities provided community living, while rural villages relied on earth-built homes vulnerable to floods and storms. In Japan, traditional wooden houses with tatami floors were common, but earthquake risks and fires made them precarious.

Africa presented another range of realities. Under colonial rule, many indigenous populations were forced into cramped settlements or restricted areas, often with little regard for sanitation or comfort. Traditional housing - mud huts, thatched roofs, communal compounds - remained the norm, but these were increasingly undermined by colonial policies and urban crowding.

Meanwhile, in North America and parts of Western Europe, the seeds of modern housing were being planted. By the 1920s, suburban neighbourhoods were beginning to appear around cities, though still limited to middle and upper classes. Homes were built with electricity, indoor bathrooms and more durable materials. This was the exception, not the rule - but it marked the start of a transformation.

Fast forward to today and the contrast is extraordinary. In much of the world, homes are no longer fragile shelters but spaces designed for comfort, privacy and convenience. Electricity now reaches more than 90% of the global population. Clean running water and sanitation, once privileges, are rights that billions enjoy daily. Central heating and air conditioning create stable indoor climates. Kitchens are fitted with refrigerators, stoves and appliances that would have seemed futuristic in 1925.

A modern apartment in Seoul, Singapore or Berlin might be small, but it is fitted with plumbing, reliable electricity, internet access and climate control. Even modest homes in rural areas of Latin America, Africa or Asia increasingly include concrete walls, tin or tile roofing and solar-powered lighting. While slums and informal settlements remain in many fast-growing cities, the overall standard of housing has risen dramatically.

What is often overlooked is how much space people have gained. In 1925, families of six or more often shared one or two rooms. Privacy was rare and children commonly slept in the same bed. Today, the average household in developed countries occupies several rooms and even in many developing countries, multi-room homes are becoming standard.

Technology has also reshaped the concept of home. The ability to cook with gas or electricity, store food in refrigerators and wash clothes with machines has freed countless hours of labor, especially for women, who carried the burden of domestic work in earlier generations. The home has shifted from a place of constant survival chores to one of comfort, entertainment and connection.

Globally, the rise of urbanisation has also redefined housing. In 1925, most of the world lived in rural areas. Today, more than half of humanity lives in cities, in apartments and high-rises that connect them to modern infrastructure. This shift has created challenges - crowding, rising costs and housing inequality - but it has also enabled access to services, education and healthcare that rural populations a century ago could only dream of.

The story of housing is not just about bricks and mortar. It reflects the broader transformation of human life over the last century. From dirt floors and open fires to insulated walls, electric lights and streaming television, the home has evolved into a symbol of how far humanity has come. Where once survival was the measure of shelter, today the measure is comfort and choice.

It is easy to forget that the warmth of a hot shower, the flick of a light switch or the hum of a refrigerator would have been almost miraculous to someone living in 1925. By remembering that, we see more clearly that progress is not an abstract idea - it is built, quite literally, into the walls around us.

Chapter 2: Transport and Mobility

In the mid-1920s, the world was on the edge of a transportation revolution, but most people still moved through life at the pace of their ancestors. The vast majority walked where they needed to go or relied on bicycles, carts, horses or animal-drawn wagons. For long distances, trains and steamships connected cities and nations, but these were slow and often costly. Automobiles existed, but they were expensive luxuries, noisy and unreliable machines that only the wealthy or adventurous could afford. Airplanes had just proven their usefulness in war, but commercial air travel was in its infancy, often experimental and dangerous.

For ordinary people, mobility was limited. A villager in rural India might never leave their district in a lifetime. In Africa, colonial infrastructure meant roads and railways were designed to extract resources, not to serve local populations. In China, millions still traveled by foot, bicycle or riverboats, journeys measured in days or weeks. In South America, horse-drawn transport remained widespread, with trains slowly carving paths across mountains and plains.

Even in the industrialised West, where transport networks were more advanced, speed and convenience were relative. A trip from New York to Los Angeles required days on a train. A farmer in the American Midwest relied on wagons or early trucks to reach the nearest town. Urban commuters in London or Paris might board trams, buses or underground trains, but outside city limits, roads were often muddy, rutted and difficult to traverse.

The early automobile symbolised possibility but not yet reality. In 1925, Henry Ford's Model T had made cars cheaper, but ownership was still rare outside North America. Roads suitable for cars were limited and journeys were punctuated by breakdowns, flat tires and long waits for parts. Owning a car was as much a test of patience as it was a convenience.

Air travel was a marvel reserved for pioneers. Charles Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic would not take place until 1927. The few who dared fly sat in open cockpits, wrapped in coats and goggles against the wind. Crossing an ocean still meant boarding a steamship and enduring weeks at sea. To imagine that within a century, billions would board airplanes every year would have seemed pure fantasy.

Today, mobility defines modern life. Automobiles have become nearly universal, with more than 1.4 billion cars on the world's roads. Highways and paved roads connect even remote towns, making personal travel faster and more reliable. The family car is no longer a symbol of luxury but a tool of everyday life, accessible to millions across income levels.

Public transportation has transformed cities. Subways, buses and light rail systems move billions daily, while high-speed trains crisscross countries like Japan, China and France at speeds that would have seemed impossible in 1925. A journey that once took days can now take hours. Rural areas, too, have seen dramatic change. Motorbikes and scooters, cheap and efficient, have extended mobility across Asia and Africa, where they serve as family vehicles, taxis and delivery systems.

Perhaps the most astonishing change has been air travel. Once experimental, flying has become routine. In 1925, crossing the Atlantic took weeks. Today, it takes less than eight hours. Airports now handle hundreds of millions of passengers each year, with budget airlines offering fares cheaper than many train tickets. Airplanes have shrunk the world, making international travel accessible to the middle class, not just the elite. A student can fly across continents for education; families can visit relatives oceans away; tourists explore destinations once unreachable.

Mobility has also reshaped economies and societies. Migrant workers can travel farther and faster to find employment. Goods move quickly through vast supply chains, bringing products from one side of the world to shelves on the other. Humanitarian aid can be delivered by air within hours to disaster zones. Where mobility was once limited by geography and privilege, today it is increasingly a right of participation in global life.

The daily experience of movement has changed too. In many countries, people think nothing of commuting an hour or more to work, distances unthinkable for a villager or labourer in 1925. Children are driven or bused to schools miles away, while families routinely take weekend trips or holidays by car or plane. The notion of being "stuck" in one place has diminished.

Of course, mobility has brought challenges. Traffic congestion, pollution and climate change are costs of the car age. Air travel has made pandemics spread faster, as the COVID-19 crisis reminded us. Inequalities still exist - millions remain without access to safe, reliable transport. Yet even with these problems, the contrast with the past is striking.

To step into the shoes of someone living a century ago is to realise how radical this transformation has been. A farmer who once walked half a day to market could today ride a motorbike in minutes. A businesswoman who once waited weeks for a letter from abroad can now board a flight and arrive the same day. A family who once dreamed of seeing the sea can drive to the coast on a weekend.

Mobility has not just changed how we move - it has changed how we imagine our lives. In 1925, the world was vast, slow and out of reach for most. In 2025, the world feels smaller, connected and open to exploration. The freedom to move, so casually exercised today, is one of the greatest gifts of progress.

Chapter 3: Food and Nutrition

Food is the foundation of life, yet for most of human history it was also a source of uncertainty and struggle. A century ago, hunger was a familiar shadow in much of the world. Seasonal harvests determined whether families had enough to eat and diets were shaped by what could be grown or preserved locally. Malnutrition was common and food variety was limited. Today, supermarkets brim with choices from every corner of the globe, refrigerators hum in nearly every home and for many, the challenge is not scarcity but abundance.

Food 100 Years Ago

In 1925, most people lived close to the land. Farmers in Europe and North America worked small plots, producing wheat, potatoes, corn and livestock. Preservation was a constant concern - without reliable refrigeration, food spoiled quickly. Families stored root vegetables in cellars, salted or smoked meat and bottled fruit for the winter. Fresh produce was seasonal; strawberries in January or bananas in Finland were unheard of luxuries.

In Asia, rice was the daily staple for hundreds of millions, supplemented with vegetables, fish or tofu in Japan and China or lentils, pulses and spices in India. Meat was eaten sparingly by most, often reserved for special occasions. In rural villages, hunger was common when crops failed or monsoons disappointed.

In Africa, diets varied widely - millet, sorghum, maize, cassava and yams formed the basis of meals, often cooked into porridge or flatbread. Colonial economies disrupted traditional farming, pushing cash crops like cocoa, coffee and cotton, which left local populations more vulnerable to famine.

In Latin America, maize, beans and potatoes fed rural populations, while urban dwellers bought fresh produce from bustling markets. Yet many families, especially the poor, ate the same few foods day after day.

Even in wealthy countries, malnutrition and food insecurity were widespread. In the United States and Europe, rickets from lack of vitamin D, goiter from iodine deficiency and pellagra from insufficient niacin were common diseases. Many children were stunted in growth and maternal mortality was worsened by poor diets. A glass of milk, an orange or a piece of chocolate was a treat, not a routine part of life.

Food Today

The transformation since then is breathtaking. Global food production has more than tripled in the last century, driven by advances in agriculture, refrigeration, transportation and trade. Today, the average person consumes more calories, more protein and more variety than their great-grandparents could imagine.

In modern cities, supermarkets stock bananas from Ecuador, rice from Thailand, salmon from Norway and spices from India - all in the same aisle. Refrigeration and global shipping mean strawberries are available year-round and frozen vegetables arrive with vitamins intact. Fast food chains and restaurants serve cheap meals to millions daily, offering calories that once required hours of farm labor to produce.

Nutrition has improved dramatically. Deficiencies that plagued earlier generations have been curbed through fortified foods, wider access to fruits and vegetables and better understanding of diet. Infant and child mortality has dropped not just because of medicine but because children are simply better fed.

In Asia, rice is still central, but diets have diversified. Meat consumption has increased in China, Japan and South Korea, with pork, chicken and seafood more available than ever before. In India, vegetarian traditions continue, but urban families have more access to dairy, pulses and fortified products.

In Africa, food security remains a challenge in some regions, but maize, cassava and rice are increasingly supported by improved irrigation, hybrid seeds and international aid. Urban centres now have supermarkets stocked with global goods and even rural households are more likely to own a refrigerator or access preserved foods than a generation ago.

Latin America has undergone a culinary expansion as well. Traditional foods like maize and beans remain staples, but supermarkets, fast food and international cuisine have changed diets, for better and worse.

The rise of convenience food is one of the greatest contrasts. In 1925, preparing a meal required hours of labor - fetching water, lighting fires, grinding grains, baking bread. Today, many families heat ready-made meals in minutes. While this has freed up time, it has also introduced challenges like obesity and diet-related disease. Hunger has not disappeared, but in much of the world it has been replaced by overconsumption as the greater health concern.

The Global Shift

The shift in food is not only about quantity but about meaning. In 1925, eating was survival. Families worried about the next harvest, the next paycheque, the next loaf of bread. Today, in many societies, food is identity, culture and pleasure. People explore cuisines from other continents, share meals in restaurants and use food as a way to connect socially.

Yet it is important to remember that this transformation is uneven. While billions enjoy abundant diets, more than 700 million people still face hunger today. At the same time, billions more struggle with obesity and diet-related illnesses. This paradox underscores that progress, while real, is complex.

A child born in 1925 might have grown up never tasting chocolate, citrus fruit or a dish from another country. A child born today might snack on sushi, pizza or tropical fruit before they even reach school age. That single contrast captures a century of progress in food and nutrition: from scarcity and repetition to variety and abundance.

What was once a fragile struggle against hunger has become, for much of the world, a feast of choice. And with that choice comes not only gratitude, but also responsibility - to ensure that progress continues and that no one is left behind in the journey from scarcity to plenty.

Chapter 4: Health and Medicine

If there is one area where the progress of the last century is most visible, it is in human health. In 1925, life expectancy in most countries was under 50 years. Infectious diseases claimed millions of lives every year, infants died in staggering numbers and medical science, though advancing, was still limited in what it could offer. Hospitals were often places of last resort, antibiotics had not yet been discovered and pain relief was basic. The odds of surviving illness, injury or childbirth were far lower than they are today.

Health 100 Years Ago

In Europe and North America, the aftermath of the First World War had left hospitals strained, with countless veterans suffering from injuries, amputations and psychological trauma that medicine could barely address. The 1918 influenza pandemic was a fresh memory, having killed tens of millions. Tuberculosis was rampant, taking one in seven lives in some regions. Polio outbreaks paralysed children, while smallpox continued to claim victims worldwide.

For a woman giving birth in 1925, the risks were immense. In many countries, maternal mortality was as high as one in one hundred births. Childbirth was often done at home, with little medical support and complications could be fatal. For infants, survival was far from guaranteed. In countries like India, Nigeria and China, up to one in four children did not survive past the age of five.

Medical treatments were limited. Surgeons operated without antibiotics to fight infection, relying on rudimentary techniques and antiseptics. Vaccines existed for some diseases - smallpox, diphtheria, rabies - but many killers had no prevention. Insulin had only just been discovered in 1921, offering the first hope for diabetics. Pain relief came in the form of morphine or aspirin, but there was nothing like modern anaesthesia or advanced pharmaceuticals.

In poorer regions, access to care was almost nonexistent. In Africa, colonial governments built hospitals largely for settlers and soldiers, leaving local populations to rely on traditional medicine. In rural Asia and Latin America, doctors were scarce and families turned to herbal remedies or community healers. Even in wealthy countries, a broken leg or infected wound could mean disability or death.

Health Today

The difference today is astonishing. Life expectancy has doubled in many countries. A child born in 2025 can expect to live well into their seventies and in some nations, beyond eighty. Infant mortality has plummeted worldwide. Diseases that once struck terror - smallpox, polio, measles - have been eliminated or drastically reduced through vaccination.

Antibiotics, discovered in the 1930s and 40s, revolutionised medicine, turning once-deadly infections into treatable conditions. Modern surgery, supported by anaesthesia, sterile techniques and advanced imaging, allows doctors to perform transplants, heart bypasses and joint replacements that would have been unimaginable in 1925.

Hospitals have transformed from places of last resort to centres of healing. Equipped with ventilators, dialysis machines, imaging technologies like MRI and CT scans and digital monitoring, they offer care that saves millions of lives each year. Emergency medicine means that accidents and injuries are no longer automatic death sentences.

Public health has also improved dramatically. Clean water, sanitation systems and vaccination campaigns have wiped out epidemics that once devastated entire regions. Nutrition, education and maternal care have reduced deaths at birth to a fraction of their historical levels.

The spread of medical knowledge has been another revolution. In 1925, information traveled slowly, locked in medical journals or the minds of specialists. Today, research spreads instantly across the globe and doctors in

rural clinics can access treatment guidelines on a smartphone. Telemedicine connects patients in remote villages with specialists in major cities.

A Global Perspective

Not all progress has been equal, of course. Wealthy countries have advanced faster, with access to high-tech treatments, while poorer regions still struggle with underfunded health systems. Malaria, HIV/AIDS and maternal deaths remain major challenges in parts of Africa and South Asia. Access to expensive drugs or surgeries is often limited by cost.

Yet even with these gaps, the baseline has shifted upward everywhere. A child in rural Kenya, Peru or Vietnam has a far better chance of surviving childhood than their grandparents did. Vaccination campaigns have reached billions and global initiatives have pushed treatments for diseases like HIV and tuberculosis into communities once cut off from modern medicine.

The Human Experience of Health

The human experience of illness has been transformed. A sore throat in 1925 could spiral into deadly rheumatic fever; today, a short course of antibiotics cures it. A child with polio faced a lifetime of paralysis; today, vaccination prevents it entirely. A farmer who once lost his wife in childbirth may now see her walk out of a hospital holding a healthy baby.

This transformation is not just about science - it is about hope. In 1925, sickness was a constant reminder of life's fragility. Today, while health challenges remain, illness is less a daily fear and more a challenge to be managed, often successfully.

The story of health and medicine over the last century is one of humanity's greatest triumphs. We have not conquered death, but we have extended life, reduced suffering and given billions the chance to live fuller, healthier lives. Where once people feared epidemics with no defence, today they trust in doctors, hospitals and treatments that would have seemed miraculous.

Progress is not perfect and never complete - but when we look back to 1925, it is clear that humanity has moved from a world of fragility to one of resilience. That shift is one of the deepest reasons to feel gratitude for the age we live in.

Chapter 5: Work and Opportunity

Work has always been central to human life, but the meaning of work - and the opportunities it provides - have shifted dramatically over the last century. In 1925, the vast majority of people laboured in agriculture, factories or domestic service. Work was often long, exhausting and dangerous, with little protection for workers' rights. Education was limited, career choice was rare and social mobility was constrained by class, gender and race.

Today, work is increasingly defined by choice, knowledge and mobility. The global economy has opened doors to careers that would have been unimaginable a century ago. From office jobs to digital freelancing, from medicine to engineering, from creative industries to entrepreneurship, the landscape of opportunity has expanded in ways that continue to transform societies.

Work 100 Years Ago

In 1925, most people worked simply to survive. In Asia, Africa and Latin America, small-scale farming dominated. Families toiled from dawn to dusk, often using hand tools or animal labor. Harvests depended on weather and droughts or floods could spell disaster. Wages for agricultural labourers were meagre and many lived in cycles of poverty and debt.

In industrialised nations, factories were the beating heart of the economy. In Manchester, Detroit or Osaka, thousands worked in textile mills, steel plants or automobile assembly lines. Conditions were harsh: shifts could last 10 to 12 hours, safety measures were minimal and child labor was still common in many places. Workplace accidents, silicosis and chemical exposure shortened lives.

For women, opportunities were few. In many countries, married women were expected to remain at home. Those who did work were concentrated in low-paid sectors - textiles, domestic service, nursing and teaching. In rural India or Africa, women laboured in fields alongside men, while also bearing the weight of childcare and household work. Few had the chance to pursue higher education or professional careers.

Colonial economies restricted opportunities for millions. In much of Africa and Asia, laws prevented local populations from owning land, entering professions or receiving higher pay. Social hierarchies meant that race, caste and class determined what kind of work a person could do. A young man born in Lagos or Calcutta in 1925 might expect to live and die in the same occupation as his father, with little chance of advancement.

Even in wealthy societies, unemployment and insecurity were ever-present threats. The Great Depression, beginning in 1929, would throw millions out of work, showing how fragile livelihoods were in an era without strong social safety nets.

Work Today

The transformation since then is remarkable. Agriculture, once the dominant form of work, now employs less than a third of the global population, thanks to mechanisation and advances in farming. Tractors, irrigation systems and fertilisers allow fewer farmers to feed billions, freeing others to pursue careers beyond the fields.

Factories remain, but automation, safety regulations and labor rights have reshaped them. Workdays are shorter, conditions are safer and in many countries, unions and laws protect against exploitation. Child labor, while still present in some regions, is vastly reduced.

The service sector has exploded. Today, most people work in jobs centred around knowledge, technology or human interaction. Offices, schools, hospitals and businesses employ far more people than factories or farms. Careers exist in fields that would have been unimaginable in 1925: software engineering, digital marketing, aerospace design, biotechnology and countless others.

For women, opportunities have expanded dramatically. In many societies, women now make up nearly half the workforce and they are represented in professions once closed to them - medicine, law, politics, science and

leadership. Gender gaps remain, but the transformation is undeniable. A girl born today in Nairobi, Buenos Aires or Seoul has opportunities her great-grandmother could scarcely imagine.

Globalisation has also broadened horizons. A young person in Manila can work for a company in California. A designer in Lagos can sell products to clients in Europe. Remote work and digital platforms have created new forms of employment that transcend borders.

Education has played a central role. In 1925, only a minority completed secondary school and university was reserved for elites. Today, literacy is nearly universal in many regions and higher education is accessible to millions worldwide. This has unlocked careers and social mobility for countless families.

The Human Side of Opportunity

The difference is not only in the jobs themselves, but in what work represents. In 1925, work was survival. Today, for many, it is also identity, ambition and fulfilment. People pursue careers that match their talents or passions, not just the occupations handed down by birth or circumstance.

At the same time, modern work has created new challenges. Stress, burnout and job insecurity affect millions in a fast-paced global economy. Inequalities persist between rich and poor, between nations with access to opportunity and those still struggling. Yet the overall trajectory is clear: opportunity has expanded and with it, the freedom to imagine different futures.

The Century's Shift

Consider this contrast: A child in rural Mexico in 1925 might have started work in the fields at age ten, with little chance of ever attending high school. A child in the same village today is far more likely to stay in school, to use a smartphone and to dream of becoming a teacher, a doctor or even an engineer working abroad.

This is the essence of progress in work and opportunity. A century ago, survival defined labor. Today, for billions, work is not just about surviving - but about striving, achieving and even choosing. That change, perhaps more than any other, marks the extraordinary arc of human progress.

Chapter 6: Human Rights and Freedoms

The story of the last century is not only about material progress but also about dignity, justice and the expansion of human rights. In 1925, much of the world lived under systems that denied basic freedoms. Women had only just begun to win the right to vote in some countries. Colonial empires controlled vast populations across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Segregation and racial discrimination were enshrined in law in many societies. Political dissent was suppressed and millions lived under monarchies, dictatorships or colonial administrations with little voice in how they were governed.

Today, the world looks profoundly different. While inequalities and injustices remain, more people enjoy rights and freedoms than at any other time in history. The last century has seen revolutions in democracy, gender equality, civil rights and self-determination.

The World in 1925

In Europe and North America, democracy was limited. Women had just won the right to vote in the United States (1920), the United Kingdom (1918, with restrictions until 1928) and Canada (1918–1922), while in many other nations, women were still excluded from political life. In much of the world, women could not own property, enter certain professions or even make legal decisions without a husband's approval.

Racial inequality was entrenched. In the United States, segregation laws restricted where Black Americans could live, work and study. Lynchings and racial violence were common and voting rights were suppressed through intimidation and discriminatory laws. In South Africa, the seeds of apartheid were already being sown. In Australia, Indigenous people were excluded from citizenship and subjected to policies of forced assimilation.

Globally, more than half of humanity lived under colonial rule. The British Empire stretched across Africa and Asia; the French controlled vast territories; the Dutch, Belgians, Portuguese and others held colonies. Local populations had little political power, often subjected to forced labor, heavy taxation and cultural suppression. Independence movements were growing, but most had not yet succeeded.

Political freedoms were fragile even in democracies. Workers' rights were weak, unions were often suppressed and dissenters could face imprisonment. In Russia, the new Soviet Union had already established authoritarian control, silencing opposition. Fascist movements were rising in Italy and elsewhere. Freedom of speech and assembly, where they existed, were far from guaranteed.

The Expansion of Rights

The changes since then are extraordinary. Decolonisation after World War II reshaped the global map, as nations across Asia, Africa and the Middle East won independence. India, Ghana, Kenya, Algeria and dozens more nations threw off colonial rule, giving billions the right to self-determination.

Civil rights movements transformed societies. In the United States, the struggle led by Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and countless others dismantled legal segregation. In South Africa, decades of activism and resistance ended apartheid. Across Latin America, Indigenous rights gained recognition and in many countries, constitutions now enshrine protections once denied.

Women's rights expanded dramatically. By the late 20th century, women had won the right to vote in almost every nation. Legal barriers to education, employment and property ownership fell. Women entered politics, business and academia in growing numbers. Issues such as reproductive rights, equal pay and protection from violence remain contested, but the shift from exclusion to participation is unmistakable.

New movements have further expanded the boundaries of human rights. LGBTQ+ communities, long marginalised or criminalised, have achieved recognition and legal protections in many countries. Same-sex marriage, once unthinkable, is now legal in dozens of nations. Disability rights movements have pushed for

accessibility, inclusion and equal treatment. Children's rights have been enshrined in international law, protecting millions from labor and exploitation.

Freedom of expression has also grown, aided by technology. In 1925, only a few could publish or broadcast widely. Today, billions can share their voices instantly through social media. While censorship and repression persist in some states, the global reach of communication has given individuals unprecedented power to speak, organise and demand change.

A World Still in Progress

The expansion of rights has not been universal. Authoritarian regimes still suppress dissent. Women in some countries remain excluded from education or political life. Ethnic minorities face persecution, refugees are displaced and freedom of the press is under threat in many regions. Progress is uneven and gains can be fragile.

Yet when viewed across a century, the trajectory is clear. More people today live in democracies than in 1925. More people can vote, own property, receive education and demand justice than ever before. The principles of equality and human dignity have moved from the margins to the mainstream of global thought.

The Human Experience of Freedom

For a woman in Britain in 1925, voting for the first time was a milestone that hinted at broader changes to come. For a man in India under British rule, political participation was a distant dream. For a Black child in Alabama, segregation shaped every aspect of life.

Compare this to today: a woman in India can serve as president, a Black man has led the United States as president and LGBTQ+ couples can marry in countries across the globe. These changes do not erase ongoing injustices, but they highlight how profoundly human rights have expanded.

The last century has been a story not only of survival and technology but of dignity. Humanity has struggled, fought and pushed for greater freedom and while the struggle continues, the arc of history has bent toward inclusion. That arc is worth remembering, because it reminds us that rights we take for granted today - whether the ability to vote, speak freely or pursue education - were denied to millions just a century ago.

The expansion of human rights is one of the greatest legacies of the last hundred years. It shows that progress is not just about material comfort, but about who we are allowed to be.

Chapter 7: Communication and Information

Few areas of life illustrate the pace of change over the last century as vividly as communication. In 1925, most people relied on handwritten letters, delivered by postal services that could take days, weeks or even months to reach their destination. News traveled through newspapers, radio broadcasts or word of mouth. Information was scarce, slow and often controlled by a small number of publishers, governments or broadcasters.

Today, communication is instant, borderless and almost limitless. Billions of people carry smartphones - devices that serve as post office, printing press, camera, telephone and library all in one. News and ideas travel in seconds, reaching global audiences with a single message. Where once information was the privilege of the few, it has become the possession of the many.

The World in 1925

A century ago, the written letter was still the primary mode of personal communication. A person in Buenos Aires writing to a relative in Madrid might wait weeks for a reply. For many families, letters carried the weight of connection - sometimes the only tie between loved ones separated by migration, war or work.

The telephone existed but was limited. In wealthier countries, urban households were beginning to install telephones, though international calls were expensive and rare. In rural areas of Africa, Asia or South America, the idea of a telephone was almost unimaginable. Most people never heard a phone ring in their lifetime.

Newspapers and radio dominated information. Daily papers were printed in major cities, reaching those who could read. Radio was the newest technology, thrilling families who gathered around receivers to hear music, speeches or news. But access was unequal: radios were expensive and broadcasts were controlled by governments or powerful corporations. Propaganda could spread as easily as truth.

Knowledge itself was scarce. Libraries were limited, books were expensive and illiteracy was common in many regions. For much of the world, education stopped at the primary level, leaving people reliant on hearsay and rumour.

The World Today

Fast forward to the 21st century and communication has become almost unrecognisable.

The internet has transformed how people connect. A message that once took weeks now travels in seconds. Families separated by oceans can video chat for free. Social media allows billions to share updates, photographs and ideas instantly.

Telephones have evolved into smartphones - pocket-sized computers with the power to access knowledge once stored in the world's greatest libraries. A farmer in rural Kenya can check crop prices online. A student in Dhaka can take a university-level course via video. A nurse in Brazil can join an online community to learn new techniques.

The democratisation of information is perhaps the most profound shift. Where once newspapers and radio set the narrative, today anyone can publish a blog, post a video or create a podcast. Platforms such as YouTube, Twitter and TikTok have turned ordinary people into global voices.

Literacy has expanded dramatically. A century ago, hundreds of millions were unable to read or write. Today, the majority of the world's population can access written information, opening doors that were once closed.

The Double-Edged Sword

Yet with this explosion of communication comes complexity. The same networks that spread truth can also spread falsehood. Disinformation, conspiracy theories and manipulation flow as freely as facts. Social media connects, but also divides, amplifying conflict and polarisation.

Privacy has shifted as well. In 1925, most communication was private - letters sealed in envelopes, conversations spoken face to face. Today, much of what people say or write exists on public platforms, stored in digital archives, tracked by companies and governments. Freedom of communication has expanded, but so too have questions about surveillance and control.

The Human Side of Connection

The contrast is staggering. Imagine a young woman in 1925 waiting months for news of her brother who had emigrated to another continent. Letters might arrive sporadically, faded with time and distance. Compare her to a young woman today, who can see her brother's face in real time on a smartphone screen, chat daily and even send money instantly if he is in need.

Or picture a villager in China in 1925, whose only access to news was a government-approved newspaper - if he could read it at all. Today, his grandson scrolls through multiple news sources online, translates them instantly into different languages and debates world events with friends across continents.

The Century's Shift

Communication has moved from scarcity to abundance, from slowness to immediacy, from control to openness. It has reshaped families, businesses, education and politics. It has created opportunities for empowerment, while also introducing new challenges of overload, misinformation and inequality of access.

But the central truth is this: the barriers of distance and information that defined life in 1925 have been torn down. The world has never been so connected and humanity has never had such power to share, learn and speak.

Chapter 8: Leisure, Culture and Entertainment

Work sustains us, but leisure enriches us. The way people spend their free time tells as much about human progress as how they labor. In 1925, leisure was often a luxury - limited by long working hours, lower incomes and fewer opportunities for travel or recreation. Entertainment was local, modest and shaped by tradition.

Today, leisure and culture are global industries. Music, sport, cinema and travel connect billions across borders. A century ago, a person's cultural experiences were mostly confined to their town or region. Today, people stream films from Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood, listen to music from every continent and travel the world at speeds that would have amazed their great-grandparents.

Leisure in 1925

For many, leisure was rare. In rural communities across Africa, Asia and Latin America, daily life was dominated by farming and household chores. Festivals, markets and religious celebrations provided moments of joy, but most days were filled with work from sunrise to sunset.

In industrial cities, workers had little free time. The eight-hour day was only just becoming law in some countries and many still worked six days a week. Sundays or evenings might offer respite - time spent with family, at a local pub or in community halls.

Entertainment was local and physical. Children played outdoor games with improvised toys. Adults gathered for dances, fairs and theatre performances. Sports were gaining popularity: football (soccer) in Europe and South America, baseball in the United States, cricket in the British Empire and wrestling in Japan. But professional sports were still young and access was limited.

Cinema was emerging as a new art form. Silent films were thrilling audiences from New York to Paris to Bombay. Stars like Charlie Chaplin became household names, offering laughter and escape during difficult times. Radio brought music and stories into homes, though receivers were expensive and mostly owned by urban families.

Books and newspapers were key sources of leisure for those who could read. But literacy gaps, especially in colonised and rural regions, meant millions had no access to print culture.

Leisure Today

The transformation of leisure has been profound. For most people, work hours are shorter, incomes higher and travel more accessible, creating vast new possibilities for recreation.

Cinema, once silent black-and-white reels, has become a global, billion-dollar industry. Hollywood films reach audiences everywhere, but so too do Bollywood blockbusters, Korean dramas and Nigerian comedies. Streaming services allow anyone with a phone to watch films instantly, erasing the boundaries of geography.

Music, too, has gone global. In 1925, music was heard live or on gramophones. Today, entire catalogs of human creativity can be streamed instantly. A teenager in Brazil might listen to K-pop, American hip hop and local samba in the same playlist. Musicians no longer need record labels to reach audiences - platforms like YouTube and Spotify give them global stages.

Sports have grown into worldwide spectacles. Football's FIFA World Cup, the Olympics and cricket tournaments draw billions of viewers. Athletes are global icons, inspiring children in villages and cities alike. Recreational sports and gyms, once reserved for elites, are now part of everyday life for millions.

Travel and tourism have expanded enormously. In 1925, an international journey was expensive and reserved for the wealthy. Today, millions of people fly across continents for vacations, study or work. Backpacking, package tours and budget airlines have turned travel into a cultural norm rather than a rare privilege.

Video games, digital platforms and online communities have created entirely new forms of leisure. What began as simple arcade games in the mid-20th century has become a vast industry, connecting players across borders in shared digital worlds.

Culture and Identity

Leisure today also reflects broader social changes. In 1925, cultural life was shaped by class, gender and race. Certain theatres, clubs or events were closed to women or minorities. Colonised populations often had their cultural traditions suppressed.

Today, while inequalities remain, more people have the freedom to celebrate, preserve and share their cultures. Indigenous festivals, African art, Indian cuisine and Latin American music now influence global tastes. Cultural exchange has accelerated, turning once-local traditions into worldwide experiences.

At the same time, mass entertainment raises questions of identity. Global culture, spread by media giants, sometimes overshadows local traditions. Yet many communities are blending the global with the local, creating hybrid identities that enrich both.

The Human Side of Leisure

Consider this contrast: a young worker in Berlin in 1925 might spend a Sunday at a local football match, reading the newspaper if he could afford it. His great-granddaughter in 2025 might spend her weekend streaming a live concert from Tokyo, playing an online game with friends in Brazil and flying to Italy for a short vacation - all within the span of days.

Or imagine a farmer in rural India in 1925, whose only leisure came from village festivals. His grandson today might still attend those festivals, but he also watches Bollywood films on his smartphone and cheers for the national cricket team broadcast live from another continent.

The Century's Shift

Leisure has moved from scarcity to abundance, from local to global, from occasional respite to a vital part of life. Entertainment is no longer just a break from work - it is a powerful force shaping identity, community and connection.

The last century has not only given us more free time but also more ways to enjoy it. Leisure and culture, once confined to local traditions, are now woven into a global web of creativity. And while challenges of inequality and cultural preservation remain, humanity has never had so many ways to share joy, art and celebration.

Chapter 9: Science, Technology and Innovation

Few forces have shaped the last century as profoundly as science and technology. In 1925, the modern world was beginning to take shape - electric lights illuminated cities, automobiles rumbled along new roads and radio connected people in ways unimaginable only decades earlier. Scientific breakthroughs were laying the foundations for medicine, physics and chemistry that would transform the 20th century.

Yet life in 1925 was still defined by limits. Polio and tuberculosis claimed lives, electricity had not reached many rural areas and most households lived without refrigeration, telephones or cars. Science was advancing, but its benefits were unevenly shared.

Today, technology is woven into nearly every aspect of daily life. We live longer, communicate faster and work more efficiently than our ancestors could have dreamed. Scientific discovery has extended human life, probed the depths of space and mapped the human genome. Where once innovation was slow and localised, it is now global, collaborative and relentless.

The World in 1925

The early 20th century was an age of invention. Electricity was spreading through cities, though many rural communities in Asia, Africa and Latin America lived without it. Light bulbs, electric trams and early appliances symbolised modernity, but only for a privileged few.

Transportation was undergoing a revolution. Automobiles were becoming more common in Europe and North America, though horse-drawn carts still dominated rural landscapes. Air travel was in its infancy - short flights were possible, but commercial aviation was rare and dangerous. Long-distance journeys were mostly by ship or train.

Medicine was advancing, but with limits. Vaccines for smallpox and diphtheria existed, yet antibiotics had not been discovered. A simple infection could be fatal. Life expectancy was far shorter and infant mortality rates were high. Hospitals lacked many of the technologies we take for granted today: blood transfusions, modern anaesthesia and imaging techniques like X-rays were only beginning to emerge.

Scientific understanding was expanding rapidly. Einstein's theory of relativity was still new, quantum mechanics was being developed and early computers were mechanical calculators filling entire rooms. Yet for most ordinary people, science felt distant - something happening in universities and laboratories, not in their homes.

The World Today

The contrast is staggering. Science and technology have moved from the margins of daily life to its very centre.

Electricity and running water now reach billions worldwide, powering homes, schools and hospitals. Refrigeration preserves food safely, extending lifespans and reducing disease. Automobiles, trains and airplanes carry millions daily, shrinking the planet into a connected whole.

Medicine has undergone a revolution. Antibiotics, vaccines and advanced surgeries have eliminated or controlled diseases that once ravaged humanity. Life expectancy has risen dramatically - by decades in many regions. Diseases like smallpox have been eradicated; others like polio are close to extinction. Medical imaging, genetic testing and organ transplants represent leaps forward that would have seemed like science fiction a century ago.

Information technology has redefined modern life. Computers, once room-sized machines, now fit into pockets as smartphones. The internet has created a vast web of global knowledge, linking billions of people in real time. Artificial intelligence, robotics and biotechnology are shaping industries and even redefining what it means to be human.

Space exploration has expanded our horizons. Humans have walked on the moon, sent probes to Mars and mapped distant galaxies with telescopes orbiting Earth. Satellites guide airplanes, monitor weather and allow instant communication across continents.

Everyday Innovation

What is striking is how deeply these changes affect everyday routines. A farmer in Ethiopia can check weather forecasts on a phone. A mother in Vietnam can vaccinate her child against diseases that once killed millions. A teenager in Nigeria can learn coding online and contribute to the global tech economy.

Even the simplest objects - electric stoves, clean drinking water or solar lamps - represent innovations that dramatically improve life. In 1925, many households cooked over smoky fires, carried water from wells and relied on candles for light. Today, billions live in homes powered by technology, with comforts unimaginable to their ancestors.

Challenges of Innovation

Science and technology also bring dilemmas. The same advances that cure disease can create new ethical questions - genetic editing, artificial intelligence and automation raise debates about fairness and the future of work. Technology has widened inequalities: while many enjoy its benefits, others remain excluded, living without internet access or reliable electricity.

Environmental consequences are another challenge. Industrial growth, fuelled by technology, has contributed to climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The progress of the last century has come with costs that humanity must now address.

The Human Side of Discovery

The human experience of technology is deeply personal. A grandmother in 1925 might have been amazed to see electric lights for the first time; her granddaughter today might take for granted that she can video call relatives across the world. A doctor in 1925 relied on stethoscopes and physical observation; today, her counterpart uses MRI machines, genetic testing and telemedicine.

The Century's Shift

The story of science and technology over the last hundred years is one of acceleration, democratisation and transformation. Innovation has moved from being the privilege of elites to shaping the daily lives of billions. It has lifted humanity's horizons - from survival to exploration, from isolation to connection.

If there is one lesson, it is this: the pace of discovery shows no sign of slowing. Just as 1925 could not have imagined 2025, our present cannot fully grasp what the next century will bring. But the trajectory is clear - science and technology have become humanity's most powerful tools for progress.

Chapter 10: Global Challenges and Resilience

Progress is rarely a smooth journey. The past hundred years have been marked not only by remarkable advances but also by profound crises - wars, pandemics, economic collapses and natural disasters that tested the strength of societies. What defines humanity, however, is not only the challenges we face but also the resilience we show in overcoming them.

In 1925, the world was still reeling from the devastation of World War I. Entire cities had been destroyed, millions of lives lost and economies shattered. The influenza pandemic of 1918–1920 had killed more people than the war itself. Political instability simmered across continents and new conflicts were already brewing. Poverty, hunger and colonial exploitation meant that billions lived with uncertainty as a daily companion.

Yet across the last century, humanity has endured, adapted and rebuilt. Each challenge has reshaped our world - sometimes painfully, sometimes for the better - leaving lessons of resilience that continue to guide us.

The World in 1925: Recovery and Uncertainty

World War I had ended only seven years earlier, leaving Europe scarred. Cities like Ypres and Verdun lay in ruins. Millions of soldiers returned home disabled, traumatised or unemployed. Widows and orphans carried the burden of loss. Nations faced crippling debts and political turmoil, with revolutions and uprisings shaking societies.

The Spanish flu pandemic lingered fresh in memory, having killed at least 50 million people worldwide. Public health systems were fragile, with little understanding of viruses or treatments. Life expectancy remained low in much of the world.

Economic inequality was stark. While the United States and parts of Europe experienced the “Roaring Twenties,” a boom in consumer goods and culture, many others were excluded. Colonised populations in Asia and Africa endured heavy taxes, forced labor and food shortages. In China, India and much of Africa, famines and epidemics were frequent.

Nature, too, was unforgiving. Floods, droughts and earthquakes regularly devastated communities, with limited relief efforts available. Without international coordination, most disaster response was local and often inadequate.

A Century of Crises

The years after 1925 brought new global tests. The Great Depression (1929–1939) caused mass unemployment and hunger worldwide, proving how fragile economies could be. World War II (1939–1945) unleashed destruction on an unprecedented scale - tens of millions dead, entire cities flattened and the horrors of genocide exposed.

The second half of the century saw further conflicts - the Cold War, wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and Africa - alongside natural and human-made disasters. Earthquakes in China, tsunamis in the Pacific, droughts in Africa and nuclear accidents like Chernobyl reminded humanity of both nature’s power and our own capacity for catastrophe.

The early 21st century added new challenges: terrorism, financial crises, accelerating climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted lives on a global scale.

Resilience and Recovery

What stands out, however, is humanity’s ability to endure and adapt. After World War II, nations rebuilt with astonishing speed. The Marshall Plan helped Europe recover, while Japan transformed itself from ruins into a global economic power. International organisations like the United Nations were created to prevent future conflicts and foster cooperation.

Medical science advanced in response to crises. The devastation of the Spanish flu spurred investment in virology and public health. Later, global campaigns eradicated smallpox and fought polio, malaria and HIV/AIDS. The rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines showed how far scientific collaboration has come.

Disaster relief has also transformed. Where once local communities bore the burden alone, today global networks provide aid. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, international teams rushed to help. Satellite monitoring now provides early warnings for hurricanes, earthquakes and floods, saving countless lives.

Economically, nations have learned to stabilise systems after shocks. Global trade networks, financial safeguards and international cooperation have reduced the risk of complete collapse, even if inequality persists.

The Human Spirit

At the heart of resilience is the human spirit. Stories from across the last century testify to courage and determination:

- Families in Hiroshima and Nagasaki rebuilding their lives after atomic devastation.
- Villages in Bangladesh adapting to floods with floating schools and homes.
- Survivors of apartheid in South Africa turning suffering into a movement for justice.
- Healthcare workers in West Africa confronting Ebola outbreaks at great personal risk.

These examples show that resilience is not just about survival - it is about rebuilding with hope, learning from hardship and striving for a better future.

The Century's Shift

The challenges of 1925 - war, disease, poverty and disaster - have not disappeared. They persist, often in new forms. But the way humanity responds has changed profoundly. We are better equipped, more connected and more knowledgeable. Global crises now meet global responses.

Where once famine might kill millions unnoticed beyond local borders, today international relief can arrive within days. Where once pandemics swept the world unchecked, today vaccines can be developed in record time. Where once war destroyed without accountability, today international laws and courts seek to hold aggressors responsible.

Resilience is the quiet story of progress. It is not found only in grand inventions or political changes, but in the everyday strength of people who rebuild homes, care for the sick, fight for justice and refuse to surrender to despair. The last century has shown that while challenges are inevitable, collapse is not. Humanity has proved again and again that it can rise from tragedy - and often emerge stronger.

Chapter 11: The Environment and Sustainability

The relationship between humanity and the natural world has always been central to survival. In 1925, most people still lived close to the land. Farmers depended on the seasons, communities drew water from rivers and wells and forests, oceans and soils provided the essentials of life. Industrialisation was spreading, but the global population - about two billion people - placed far less strain on the planet than today.

A century later, the human footprint is immense. More than eight billion people inhabit Earth and our industries, cities and consumption patterns have transformed landscapes, climates and ecosystems. The last hundred years have seen extraordinary progress in human well-being, but also mounting pressures on the environment that sustains us.

The World in 1925

In 1925, environmental awareness was limited. The primary concern for most people was survival - harvesting enough food, securing clean water and enduring natural disasters. Scientific understanding of ecology and climate was in its infancy.

Farming was labor-intensive and vulnerable. Crop failures from drought or pests could devastate entire communities. Fertilizers and pesticides were rudimentary and irrigation was basic in many regions. Famines were still a recurring reality in Asia, Africa and parts of Europe.

Industries polluted without regulation. Smoke from coal-powered factories blackened skies in industrial cities like London, Pittsburgh and Tokyo. Rivers carried untreated sewage and industrial waste. But with fewer factories overall, the scale of global pollution was smaller than it is today.

Forests, grasslands and oceans seemed inexhaustible. Logging, whaling and hunting were common, often without limits. Wildlife conservation efforts were minimal - many species were already endangered, but the concept of biodiversity had not yet entered public consciousness.

Natural disasters regularly reshaped lives. Floods in China, droughts in Africa and earthquakes in Japan caused devastation, with little capacity for large-scale relief. Communities endured, but there was little global coordination or prevention.

The World Today

The transformation since then is dramatic.

On one hand, environmental degradation has intensified. Industrialisation, urbanisation and global trade have raised living standards but placed immense strain on ecosystems. Deforestation, overfishing, pollution and carbon emissions have altered the planet at an unprecedented scale. Climate change has brought rising temperatures, shifting weather patterns, stronger storms and melting ice caps. Species extinction is accelerating, with habitats shrinking under human expansion.

On the other hand, environmental awareness and action have grown enormously. The 20th century saw the birth of conservation movements, national parks and international agreements. Today, climate change is a global priority, with nations negotiating treaties, scientists monitoring ecosystems and activists demanding accountability.

Technological innovation has created both problems and solutions. Fossil fuels powered growth but also drove emissions. Now, renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro and geothermal - is expanding rapidly. Electric vehicles, sustainable farming and circular economies are reshaping industries once defined by extraction and waste.

Global cooperation has emerged as a defining feature. International bodies track carbon emissions, NGOs protect endangered species and global campaigns raise awareness about plastic waste, deforestation and ocean health.

Where once environmental issues were invisible to most people, they are now front-page news and part of everyday choices.

Everyday Experience of Nature

For ordinary people, the environmental shift is tangible. A farmer in 1925 depended on rainfall and traditional knowledge; today, her grandson may use satellite forecasts and drought-resistant crops. A family in London in 1925 breathed coal smoke daily; today, air quality is cleaner in many cities, though new forms of pollution remain.

Yet challenges are visible too. Rising seas threaten Pacific Island nations. Prolonged droughts affect farmers in Africa. Extreme heat pushes cities in India to adapt. While technology shields many from nature's extremes, millions still live on the frontlines of environmental change.

Resilience and Sustainability

The last century has also been a story of resilience. Forests have been replanted, polluted rivers restored and endangered species brought back from the brink. Community-led movements - from Indigenous land stewardship in the Amazon to grassroots recycling in Asia - show how people everywhere contribute to sustainability.

Young generations are at the forefront of demanding change. Climate strikes, renewable innovations and sustainable business practices reflect a growing realisation that progress must balance with preservation. Unlike in 1925, sustainability is now seen as essential to humanity's future.

The Century's Shift

In 1925, nature seemed limitless and humanity's power modest. By 2025, humanity has become a planetary force, capable of altering climates, reshaping ecosystems and endangering its own survival. Yet this power also brings responsibility - and the ability to repair, protect and renew.

The story of the last century is therefore twofold: unprecedented strain on the environment and unprecedented awareness of our duty to safeguard it. If the 20th century was about growth, the 21st must be about balance.

The shift is clear: from extraction without thought, to sustainability as a necessity. How well humanity embraces this challenge will shape not only the next century of progress, but the very future of life on Earth.

Chapter 12: Looking Ahead

History is not only a record of what has been, but a compass for what might be. Over the last hundred years, humanity has moved from fragility to resilience, from scarcity to abundance and from isolation to interconnection. The progress documented in housing, health, rights, education, technology and the environment shows that change is possible - sometimes faster than expected, sometimes slower than hoped, but always driven by human effort and imagination.

As we stand in 2025 and look ahead, the key question is not simply *what has changed*, but *what can we change next?*

Progress as a Living Process

One lesson of the last century is that progress is not guaranteed. It is earned - through hard work, sacrifice and sometimes painful struggle. The freedoms, comforts and opportunities many enjoy today were unimaginable to most in 1925. But they were achieved not by chance, but through choices: expanding education, investing in science, fighting injustice and demanding fairness.

The next hundred years will demand the same. The problems before us - climate change, inequality, digital ethics, demographic shifts - are daunting. Yet so were those faced by earlier generations. What they achieved in lifting billions out of poverty, extending life expectancy and building global institutions suggests that the challenges of the 21st century, though immense, are not insurmountable.

The Power of Perspective

Another lesson is perspective. In 1925, people endured hunger, epidemics and wars without the protections we often take for granted today. Looking back reminds us that what seems ordinary now - antibiotics, internet access, gender equality in education, clean water, human rights protections - was extraordinary a century ago.

This perspective breeds gratitude, but also responsibility. If we recognise the gifts handed down to us by previous generations, then we must also ask: *What will we hand down to those who come after us?* Will we leave behind depleted soils, rising seas and fractured societies or a planet and culture renewed by foresight and care?

A Global Community

Perhaps the most striking shift since 1925 is that the world now feels like a single community. Where once information crawled across borders, today it flashes instantly. Where once diseases ravaged unnoticed until too late, today global alerts mobilise responses. Where once nations stood largely alone, today international cooperation, though imperfect, is woven into almost every aspect of life.

This interconnectedness is both a strength and a vulnerability. A crisis in one part of the world can ripple everywhere - but so too can innovation, solidarity and hope. Recognising this interdependence may be the most powerful step toward a sustainable and equitable future.

What the Next Century May Hold

If the last century was about building the foundations of modern life, the next may be about refining them. Technologies will advance - artificial intelligence, biotechnology, clean energy - but their value will depend on how wisely we use them. Societies will continue to evolve - toward greater equality, inclusion and participation - but only if we choose to defend and expand those ideals.

Perhaps most importantly, the meaning of progress itself will evolve. In 1925, progress was measured in machines, medicines and miles of rail. By 2025, progress is measured also in health, education, rights and sustainability. By 2125, perhaps progress will be judged by something deeper: the ability of humanity to live well without undermining the Earth that sustains us and to flourish without leaving others behind.

The Century's Greatest Gift

The greatest gift of the last hundred years is the proof that change is possible. From the end of empires to the rise of democracies, from penicillin to gene editing, from candlelight to electric grids, humanity has shown that no obstacle is fixed.

Looking ahead, that same spirit can guide us. The task is not to return to a simpler past, nor to accelerate endlessly into an unchecked future, but to remember that progress is a shared journey. Each generation inherits not only the fruits of earlier struggles but also the unfinished work of making the world fairer, healthier and more sustainable.

Closing Reflection

Then and now, humanity has always lived with challenges. But the century between 1925 and 2025 proves that progress is possible even in the face of difficulty. The comforts and freedoms enjoyed by billions today are not the endpoint of history - they are a foundation.

The next hundred years will bring new tests, but also new triumphs. And if history is any guide, humanity will continue to rise - sometimes stumbling, sometimes soaring, but always moving forward.

The story of progress is, in truth, the story of us all.

Conclusion: The Gift of Perspective

A century ago, the world was harsher, narrower and more uncertain. Life expectancy was short, opportunities were scarce and the comforts many of us take for granted - electricity, medicine, education, safety - were far beyond the reach of most. Yet step by step, decade by decade, humanity has built a different reality.

Looking back is not about nostalgia for a simpler time, nor about glossing over the injustices and hardships that remain. It is about perspective. To recognise that progress has been real, hard-won and transformative is to see our present in a new light. We are not merely lucky; we are the beneficiaries of struggles fought by those before us. Every hospital, every school, every right defended, every technology invented - these are the bricks of a legacy built across generations.

But perspective also demands responsibility. History teaches us that progress is fragile. Wars can undo peace. Pandemics can erode stability. Neglect of the environment can undermine prosperity. Rights won can be lost. To honour the past is not only to celebrate it, but to protect and expand its achievements for those who will come after us.

If the story of the last hundred years teaches anything, it is that change is possible. Poverty can be reduced, diseases cured, injustices confronted and knowledge expanded. Humanity has the tools, the creativity and the resilience to continue moving forward - if we choose to use them wisely.

So as we close this century-long journey from 1925 to 2025, let us carry two truths: that we are fortunate to live in a world of possibilities our ancestors could not have imagined and that we are entrusted with the task of ensuring the next hundred years are not only richer, but wiser, kinder and more sustainable.

Progress is not a finish line. It is a path we walk together. Then and now and tomorrow still.

Forward

Other Books and Audiobooks by: **Ylia Callan.**

100 Years of Truth - A Century Through Technology and Society.

Explores how television, the internet and blockchain transformed the way humanity shares and understands truth. Blending history with future projections, it reveals how technology shapes power, culture and global cooperation and how it may guide us toward a fairer, more sustainable world.

Balancing Planet - How Climate Shapes Life and Life Shapes Climate.

Explore the history of Earth's climate, humanity's impact and the solutions that can secure a sustainable future. Balancing Planet blends science, history and mythology to inspire understanding, action and hope.

The 3.8 Billion Year Story of Life and Evolution.

A sweeping journey through 3.8 billion years of evolution, from the first microbes to the rise of humans. Explore mass extinctions, ancient ecosystems and the major milestones that shaped life on Earth in this clear and compelling story of survival, adaptation and deep-time wonder.

Firing the Cloud - How Humanity Survived and Accelerated.

A bold exploration of humanity's survival and acceleration, from the first fires to the digital cloud. *Firing the Cloud* examines how each era reshaped us and asks how we can master technological acceleration while preserving our humanity.

Evolution of Stress - A Journey Through Human Stress and the Art of Mastering It.

A fascinating journey through the history, science and solutions to stress. Learn how to use breathing, sleep, nutrition, movement and connection to turn stress into strength and live with clarity, calm and resilience.

Whole Health - A Complete Guide to Body, Mind and Longevity.

A timeless, practical guide to holistic health - exploring nutrition, stress, sleep, gut health, longevity, emotional healing and how body and mind are deeply connected.

The Breath of Reality - A Scientific and Spiritual Guide to Breathing, Meditation and Manifestation.

A transformative guide uniting breath science, energy and meditation. The Breath of Reality reveals how conscious breathing rewires the brain, heals the body and manifests the future. Grounded in cutting-edge research and spiritual insight, this book maps powerful breath-meditation practices to change your life - one breath at a time.

The Music of Reality - Frequency, Vibration and the Hidden Architecture of the Universe.

A poetic exploration of sound, science and spirit, The Music of Reality reveals how frequency and vibration form the hidden architecture of the cosmos - and of ourselves. From the rhythm of breath to the harmony of galaxies, this book invites a new way to listen.

Dreaming the Universe - Exploring the Hidden Secrets of Sleep.

What if dreams were the universe programming us while we sleep? Dreaming the Universe explores déjà vu, lucid dreams and subconscious programming through a cosmic and poetic lens - blending science, spirituality and the mystery of sleep.

Wings of Knowing - How Birds Reflect a Deeper Intelligence in Nature.

A poetic and mind-opening journey into the lives of birds as ancient, intelligent beings tuned to nature's rhythms. From brain frequencies to migratory miracles, Wings of Knowing asks whether birds reflect a deeper layer of perception we've only just begun to understand.

The Reflective Pulse - The Mirror of Emotions.

What if emotion is not just a feeling - but a fundamental force of nature? In *The Reflective Pulse*, emotion becomes the mirror of mind, the binding force of relationship and the hidden architecture of the cosmos. A poetic and philosophical journey into the field of love, sentience and symmetry.

Money - The Shaper of Civilisation.

From barter to Bitcoin, this book reveals the dramatic history of money - how it evolved, how it shapes civilisation and how crypto could redefine its future. A must-read for anyone curious about the forces that move our world.

Six-Sided World - A Reflection of Human Systems.

An alchemical journey through world history, mapping global zones and economic cycles, to decode the hidden patterns in civilisation's rise and fall.

From Penal Colony to Paper Justice - The Hidden Truth of Australia's Justice System.

An exposé of Australia's justice system, from its origins as a penal colony to today's courtrooms. This book reveals how colonial power, outdated laws and systemic control still shape justice - and how ordinary people pay the price.

Empire of Rum - The Unofficial Economy of Early Australia.

From the Rum Corps to today's courtrooms, alcohol has always been more than a drink in Australia - it has been a currency of control. *Empire of Rum* uncovers how rum built the colony and how alcohol still fuels crime, family breakdown and systemic dysfunction today.

Songlines to Cities - The History of Australia.

Tracing the extraordinary journey of the continent from the world's oldest living cultures to a modern, multicultural nation. From ancient Aboriginal songlines and migration paths to colonial settlement, gold rushes, Federation and the rise of contemporary Australia, this sweeping history explores the struggles, resilience and triumphs that shaped a unique land and people.

Consciousness - Where Did It Come From and Where Is It Going?

A poetic and philosophical journey into the mystery of consciousness. Blending science, spirituality and mind, this book explores where consciousness came from, how it evolves and whether the universe is waking up through us.

The Sacred Alphabet - Language, Meaning and Mind.

Explore the sacred power of language from its primal origins to its futuristic possibilities. This book reveals how words shape mind, emotion and culture - and what they might become in the future.

The Fractal Mind - How Ancient Wisdom Predicted Modern Science.

A poetic exploration of how ancient knowledge - from myth to geometry - predicted modern science. *The Fractal Mind* bridges spirit and reason, myth and math, offering a timeless vision of the cosmos as consciousness in motion.

The Reflective Cosmos - A Unified Theory of Space, Life and Mind.

The Reflective Cosmos presents a bold new theory uniting space, life and mind. By exploring pressure-driven gravity, recursion and the reflective nature of consciousness, it reimagines the universe as a living, intelligent medium - where matter, energy and awareness emerge from the same cosmic logic.

The Mirror Thesis - A Recursive Model of Consciousness, Computation and Reality.

The Mirror Thesis explores how recursive reflection may underlie consciousness, computation and the structure of reality itself. Blending physics, AI and philosophy, it introduces a three-state logic system called Troanary Logic and proposes that awareness arises not from complexity alone, but from systems that reflect upon themselves.

The Sun Engine - The Story of Life, Light and Cosmic Cycles of Creation.

A cosmic journey exploring how the Sun powers life, sparks civilisation and shapes the universe. From ancient fire to modern solar energy, from the birth of stars to the edge of black holes, The Sun Engine reveals the deep connections between light, life and the cycles of creation.