

## Rational Optimism

### a Thomas Paine Institute essay

Optimism has been a central feature of America since its founding. Virtually every generation has subscribed to the belief that their children will enjoy a better life than they had, and this belief has been proven right over and over again. Beginning with the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing through the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, mankind has benefitted from enormous progress in health, life span, communication, transportation, working conditions, and overall standard of living. Technological innovations have enabled us to send men to the moon and unmanned probes into outer space, peer into the living brain by means of MRI, and modify individual genes at will using the tools of molecular biology. Technology continues to advance as seen in the emergence of advanced artificial intelligence and in preparations to send a manned mission to Mars.

Optimism can be defined as “the quality of being full of hope and emphasizing the good parts of a situation, or a belief that something good will happen” (Cambridge Dictionary; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/optimism>). Optimism in our personal lives is a desirable quality, as it is associated with better health and a lower risk of dying.<sup>1</sup> However, optimism should be more than just hope. As the saying goes, “hope is not a strategy.” Therefore, an optimistic outlook needs to be combined with rationality; that is, a well thought out evaluation of one’s goals, challenges, and the means to overcome those challenges.

The [Thomas Paine Institute](#) (TPI) was established in the optimistic belief that a new society based on the principles of individual freedom and a purely capitalistic socioeconomic system CAN be formed from scratch somewhere in the world. Like the Founding Fathers, our optimism is rationally grounded in a deep understanding of the challenges we face, but tempered with the certainty that these challenges can be overcome through hard work and the brilliant minds of those who share our values of freedom and individual rights. We invite you to join us on this exciting journey to create a new society that will truly be a beacon of light to the whole world.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Craig, R. Freak-Poli, A.Z. Z. Phyo, J. Ryan, and D. Gasevic (2021). The association of optimism and pessimism and all-cause mortality: A systematic review. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 177: 110788.