



SEVENTEENTH SEMI-ANNUAL MUNK DEBATE ANNOUNCED

ARE HUMANKIND'S BEST DAYS BEHIND US?

Malcolm Gladwell, Alain de Botton, Steven Pinker and Matt Ridley convene in Toronto, Canada, to debate the future of progress

October 7, 2015 – Toronto, Canada

The Munk Debates announced today the resolution and debaters for the seventeenth semi-annual event, to be held in Toronto on Friday, November 6, 2015. To encourage the timeless debate of our era, the fall 2015 Munk Debate will move the motion: ***be it resolved humankind's best days lie ahead.***

Progress. It is one of the animating concepts of the modern era. From the Enlightenment onwards, the West has had an enduring belief that through the evolution of institutions, innovations and ideas, the human condition is improving. This process is supposedly accelerating as new technologies, individual freedoms and the spread of global norms empowers individuals and societies around the world. But is progress inevitable? Its critics argue that human civilization has become different, not better, over the last two and a half centuries. What is seen as breakthrough or innovation in one period becomes a setback or limitation in another. In short, progress is an ideology not a fact; a way of thinking about the world as opposed to a description of reality.

Arguing **for the resolution** will be **Steven Pinker**, a pioneering cognitive scientist named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World". He will be joined by the author of *The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves*, **Matt Ridley**, whose books have sold over one million copies, been translated into 30 languages and shortlisted for nine major literary prizes.

Speaking **against the resolution** will be **Malcolm Gladwell**, author of five *New York Times* bestsellers and one of *Foreign Policy* magazine's "Top 100 Global Thinkers." Gladwell will be joined by **Alain de Botton**, founder of The School of Life, who has written a bestselling body of work on the philosophy of everyday life.

Rudyard Griffiths, director and moderator of the Munk Debates, comments: "You would be hard-pressed to find four bigger brains than the group we will assemble on Roy Thomson Hall's main stage on November 6th. This promises to be an important and far-ranging debate about the defining ideas and trends of our times."

The Munk Debates offer a lively and substantive forum for leading thinkers to discuss the pressing issues of our time. Two debates are held each year in Toronto, one in the spring and one in the fall. Previous Munk Debate participants include former British prime minister Tony Blair, Henry Kissinger, Christopher Hitchens, Paul Krugman, Fareed Zakaria, Dambisa Moyo, Mia Farrow, and Glenn Greenwald.

The Munk Debates is a signature initiative of the Aurea Foundation, founded in 2006 by Peter and Melanie Munk to support Canadian institutions involved in the study and development of public policy.

“Our philanthropy is aimed primarily at improving the quality and vitality of public debate in Canada,” said **Peter Munk**, speaking about the rationale for the Munk Debates. “Whether it is the support we provide to the Munk School at the University of Toronto or the creation of the Munk Debates through our Aurea Foundation, Melanie and I are committed to broadening public knowledge, education, and informed discourse.”

The Munk Debates are open to the public. The Debate on Progress will take place in Toronto at Roy Thomson Hall on **Friday, November 6, 2015** at 7:00 pm EST. **Tickets go on sale to Munk Debate Premium Members at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, October 14. Any remaining tickets will go on sale to the public at 12:00 noon on Friday, October 16.** For information on purchasing tickets, or premium membership, please visit www.munkdebates.com. Seating is limited.

The debate will also be broadcast live over the Internet for global viewing audiences. For more information on the livestream of the Munk Debate on Progress visit www.munkdebates.com.

Our archive of commercial-free, HD videos of past Munk Debates is now free for unlimited viewing to all Munk Debate members. For a free membership, and to view past debates, visit www.munkdebates.com.

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