Moral Progress: Technology and Method

Sometimes it is difficult to believe in moral progress. In the face of the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine that caused the highest number of refugees in Europe since World War II and prompted the governments of liberal democracies to announce enormous increases in military spending, the idea of moral progress seems like an illusion. Yet if we look at human history, we do find examples of it, the abolition of slavery perhaps being the most obvious one. Philip Kitcher made a first step in developing a practical methodology for attaining moral progress more systematically and sure-footedly. In my talk, I shall take up this idea of a methodology for moral progress and consider the role that technology could play in it. My focus will be on what have been called *socially disruptive technologies*. I shall argue that such technologies can facilitate morally progressive developments, and that this insight should inform the further development of a methodology for moral progress. If we want to exploit the progressive potential of some socially disruptive technologies, we need to study how they disrupt human practices and develop methods for shaping these disruptions. Here imagination and experimentation play a central role.

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