



Can Love Make Progress?, by Thomas Jay Oord

The idea that humans can make progress strikes some as naïve. With every war and its chaotic aftermath, looming ecological disasters, and the deviance reportedly inherent in human nature, it seems absurd that things can get better. In fact, say some, things seem to be getting worse. Of course, even pessimists admit that improvement of a certain sort has been made. Humans have made progress, if we mean an increase in the quantity of commodities. Some speak of the inevitable progress of technology, and who can question that more people have access to more information than ever before? But, say pessimists, increases in commodities or access to information do not indicate genuine progress. Either nothing can make the world a better place, or the world will necessarily become better. To say it another way, progress is either impossible or inevitable. Which do we choose? A third option exists. This option says that progress is possible, but not inevitable. In terms of moral progress, we might say that love can make progress. But we can also step backwards, fail to love, and witness evil's increase. In either possibility, there is no inevitability. Love may or may not make progress. Most, if not all, of us actually want to witness love making progress. Progress in love, in other words, presupposes that we have at least a vague notion about which actions promote wellbeing and which do not. --Thomas Jay Oord