

The Right To Opt Out of “Progress”

In order for “progress” to be worthwhile, it must meet some requirements. One of those requirements is testability – there must be a control group against which to test the claims of progress. Another is consent – it shouldn’t have to rely on forced adoption.

With these two things in place, attempts at progress can proceed without dooming anybody. If we ever come to a world in which the Amish have no right to opt out of the “progress” and act as if tech does not exist, then we will know we are definitely not progressing.

Difficult problems emerge when technology becomes harder to opt out of. What about genetically modified organisms? These can breed with non-modified organisms and so force even conscientious objectors into the game. If one day a major environmental or agricultural disaster sprang from some genetic “innovation” it would be hard to contain the problem just to willing participants in “the future.”

Of course, we are coming to times when it is (or is claimed) that the only way an “innovation” can work is if **everyone** adopts it (maybe one day universal virtual schooling, or universal mandatory vaccinations or gene edits). The principle of “opt-out” will become even more important as it becomes even more endangered.

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