

EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF "PROGRESS"

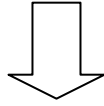
Evolution

Idea that, from the Greeks, has been considered from different points of views, adding in her different shades:

Ancient Greeks: Plato, Aristotle... (BC – circa 3th century)	Idea of a perfectible world, in gradual stages World can improve its situation and advance
Jewish religious tradition (BCE and CE)	The providence, the divine will exists, and it is irreversible The world is predetermined
Judeo-Christian: Saint Agustin... (4 th century)	The world is perfectible, but everything is irreversible
The Late Middle Ages (circa XIV-XV)	Knowledge is cumulative and is growing Utopical ideas, idealized, of the "perfect society". They criticize their present society.
The Age of Discoveries , the Age of Exploration (XV-early XVII)	Variety in the world exists but it must be due to different stages from development in which societies are. Idea of ethnocentric homogeneity. Europe. The Early Modern Period.
The Enlightenment (XVIII..)	The Humanity follows a common model of development and improvement (+liberty, +science...).
Origin of Sociology, Social Work, Social Sciences... (XIX...)	The idea of progress prevails over different scopes of the world. Romantic optimistic spirit. Belief in the reason and the human power, in science and technology.

Other notions included

- Necessity and irreversibility of change.
- Emphasis in endogenous causes: internal potentiality of the society.
- Directionality.



Progress from a directional model (models of one-directional change) implies the transformation from low to high levels of civilization, and the belief that this evolution will follow the same line in the future.

REMEMBER:

The concept of "Progress" is different from the concept of "Social Process"

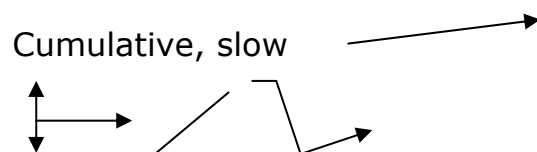
Some *Social Processes*¹ are classified from a point of view of "Progress" (optimism)

The causes of Progress

The providence , the supernatural thing, the destiny .	Mechanical and automatic progress, that "occurs". Men have nothing to do to avoid it. Passive, adaptive notion
The nature (divinities)	
The social construction that makes individual and collective human (social agents)	Active, creative, constructive progress, that "is obtained" The men cause it .

Form or profile of the progress:

- Uniform – gradual - incremental
- Irregular - Revolution - Dialectics



Means to obtain the progress:

- Pacifically, harmoniously
- After tensions and conflicts.

¹ **Sequence** - evolution of **interrelated changes**: a plurality of changes, referred to a same system.

Crisis of the idea of progress in century XX (Rethinking...)

The negative aspects of some phenomena or processes (industrialization, secularization...) are now perceived, whereas they were seen before positively.

Arises the idea from a "chronic crisis", like a pessimistic and critical image of the world and its changes: social insecurity, development of terrorism, AIDS, pollution, criminal affairs, drugs, accidents, poverty, etc.

Alternative to the traditional idea of progress The "post-desarrollism" (Sztompka)

- Progress is nondeterminist nor finalist
- Progress as the idea of "improvement" because human beings have the possibility of looking for and finding solutions to their problems.
- Posibilism (conception): the improvement opportunities exist.
- Use of dynamic and relative criteria of progress (non-universal). It is a progress constructed by the human action. So that the human agency takes place, towards the transformation and the action:
 - o Creative, independent and self-conscious actors.
 - o Rich and flexible social structures
 - o Anticipation and optimistic planning of the future
 - o ...

An Active Society, really

<u>Temporal Schema</u>		
Yesterday (Past)	Today (Present)	Tomorrow (Future)
It was	Is	Will be
Aspirations Hopes	Aspirations Hopes	Aspirations Hopes
→	→	→
Achieved progress	Achieved progress	Achieved progress
T1	T2	T3

Exercise. Apply this temporal schema to explain a concrete event. For instance: modernization, secularization, democratization, innovation... Try to do that from a "post-desarrollist" point of view and from an evolutionist perspective.