



Call for Papers: International Summer School Critical Theory 2017 (JULY 17TH - JULY 21ST)



PROGRESS, REGRESSION, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Is there such a thing as moral or social *progress*? How do we understand phenomena that might be seen as instances of social *regression*? And how, after all, are we to conceptualize *social change*?

While some Critical Theorists hold that we need a notion of *progressive social change* (and its counterpart) in order to understand and evaluate the dynamics of the transformations we undergo, the very notion of progress (as it is entrenched in the self-understanding of western modernity) seems to be ambivalent and is strongly contested.

So, while it is not easy to see how progress – as a certain kind of “learning process” that has played a central role in Critical Theory from its very beginning – could be dispensed with, our understanding of it certainly needs to be reconstructed.

It is not only the normative question in the narrower sense, though, that is at stake here. By asking how we can possibly conceive of social transformations as “change for the better”, we are not only addressing the issue of normative standards for evaluation of “the good society”. If we – in the tradition of Critical Theory – don’t want to rely on freestanding normative standards, we also have to re-investigate our concepts of history and social transformation. That means: we should take seriously the notion that “progress” as well as “regression” are bound up with some account of social change as a result of the erosion of institutions and social practices that have been outlived or de-legitimized. Whether this amounts to an accumulative process, as the terms “regression” and “progress” seem to suggest, is one of a variety of questions that we mean to address at our summer school.

To apply for participation, graduate students and junior scholars are invited to submit short essays (3-5 pages) representing their research interests which focus on the following themes or questions:

- Philosophies of history/dialectics (Hegel/Kant)
- Theories of revolution and social change (f.i. Historical Materialism)
- Progress and regression (Benjamin and Adorno, Foucault)
- Moral and institutional progress (as in Honneth, Anderson, Appiah)
- Naturalist accounts of progress and accounts of social evolution (f.i. Kitcher, Habermas)

Deadline for submissions: March 15th 2017, please email to: CTsummerschool@hu-berlin.de

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Application deadline March 15th 2017:
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For more information:

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