

Moral Progress and Social Transformation

Friday, April 22 • 4:00-5:30 pm • Assembly Room, The Nittany Lion Inn



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Dr. Jaeggi's paper will deal with a question which has repeatedly preoccupied contemporary philosophical discussion and which seems to be indispensable for a critical theory of society in the tradition of left-Hegelian critique in particular—namely, the question of moral progress. The question Dr. Jaeggi would like to ask is: How should we conceive of social change and moral progress? How do they come about? How are the two phenomena, moral progress and social change, related to each other and how can they be evaluated—as change for the better? In fact, Dr. Jaeggi's thesis is already implicit in the combination of the above-mentioned aspects: (1) Moral progress, Dr. Jaeggi wants to claim, can be understood, assuming it can be understood, only in the context of a more comprehensive dynamic of social change. (2) Social change is, in turn, a reaction to crises, i.e. it is a reaction to the pressure of problems that necessitates change. (3) Whether such change is merely a matter of alteration of circumstances or in fact constitutes “progress” in the sense of a change for the better can be seen only from the form assumed by this dynamic of change itself—although perhaps only through a negative diagnosis of phenomena of regression. Dr. Jaeggi's aim in these remarks is to lay the groundwork for a non-teleological, pragmatist-materialistic, and in this sense plural or multidimensional (hence, no longer ethnocentric), concept of progress. This lecture is part of the “Symposium on the Critical Theory of Rahel Jaeggi: From Alienation to Forms of Life.”

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