

Alex Battler

SOCIETY:
Progress and Force

Criteria and First Principles

A New Edition and Translation

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Alex Battler

Society: Progress and Force (Criteria and First Principles)

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The present book, being a sequel to *Dialectics of Force: Ontóbia*, is dedicated to the topics of progress and force of society – topics that may appear trivial at first sight, for a mountain of literature has been written on them. The author, however, having conscientiously presented the views on progress and force of all prominent thinkers over the past and the present, chose to follow a distinct path and formulated the criteria of progress based on entirely different scientific paradigms. Moreover, he dared to formulate the two Principles of Social Development, which are akin in their fundamental nature to the first and second laws of thermodynamics. The result is a book that is very complex in content. Nonetheless, the style of presentation used throughout most of the work makes it accessible even to those who have never read Hegel.

This book is intended for instructors and students of philosophy and social sciences, and also for all those who are interested in problems of man and mankind.

Dedicated to my teachers

David I. Goldberg
and
Alexander G. Yakovlev

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To the Reader

In my book *Dialectics of Force: Ontóbia*, I promised to follow the topic of force into the area of social relations. I meant to show the phenomena of social life through which ontological force expresses its essence and believed that I would be able to write that new book quickly since its scientific content appeared to me less difficult than the analysis of force in the inorganic world. Besides, I have studied social relations for a living all my life – albeit in the sphere of international politics. However, I miscalculated.

First, this topic induced me to study problems tied to progress in society – an area in which everyone is an expert – so I had to delve deep into the literature on progress. A bit of curious information: I started work on the book in July 2005 and Googled the topic “idea of progress.” I got 22,900,000 hits. When I did it again at the time I was finishing work on the book (late August 2007), the number of hits was 109,000,000 – a nearly fivefold increase in just two years! It turned out I was not the only one involved with this topic. However, the mentions that I obtained mostly referenced the works of modern authors. I myself had to start with the Adam and Eve of philosophy, i.e., the ancient Greeks. Second, at a certain stage when I touched on the subject of Force of Love – a seemingly collateral topic – I discovered the horrifying statistics on divorce in Russia. I decided to react to this with a small book titled *On Love, Family, and the State*, in which I was required finally to supply an answer from the perspective of philosophy to that mystical question: what is love? Third, I was compelled constantly to respond with articles to current events in Russia and the world, as their coverage and interpretation in the press were inadequate. As a result, the publication of this current book was delayed, and it has not been executed in the way it was intended. In addition to the chapter on family and love, it should have included chapters on religion, revolutions, and social formations. These themes are presented in one form or another in this book. However, I will have to revisit them later, dedicating a separate, sizable work to each of these topics.

A few words are now in order about the language of the book. Many readers of *Dialectics of Force* and even readers of *On Love, Family, and the State* complained to me – through Internet contact or in person – that the text was difficult to understand, especially in the philosophical parts. “Can you write more simply?” – a common question from not just lay readers but also science workers, so to say.

Ordinarily, I try to write even scholarly books as “simply” as I can, taking care not to use too much scientific terminology. This does not mean, however, that simplification must be carried to the level of ABC. It is in the West, by the way, that many books, even those of scientific content, are written in this fashion – especially textbooks, which at first seem intended for students with “arrested development.” When one uses such textbooks and “scholarly” books, development simply does not take place. Testimony to this is the annually increasing number of people who are incapable of thinking. Even statistics are not necessary to be convinced of this; it suffices to read certain Internet forums. Therefore, I have to note right away: please, do not waste your time if you have never picked up a philosophy book in your life (I do not even mean Hegel or Kant, but such easy reads as Voltaire, Rousseau, Marcuse, Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, etc.) – this book is not for you.

This book is also complicated because it encompasses different branches of knowledge: philosophy, political science, sociology, demography, and even psychology. It is not because I am a big fan of all these “logies”; it is just that the problems of Force and Progress in society stand at the juncture of the sciences mentioned. Without addressing to them it would not have been possible to formulate the fundamental laws of Force and Progress that are the First and Second Principles of social development. These principles are as integral to society as the first and second laws of thermodynamics are fundamental to the Universe.

Staying out of any given scientific paradigms – their methods and ideologies – that occur in colleges or universities, I conduct my research on an independent basis and following the methodology of dialectic and historical materialism, but I never reject other methods if they help me to elucidate the problem.

Usually my conclusions, deductions, and formulated laws and regularities are at odds with commonly accepted views on the problems I address. Hence, the “institutionalized” researchers generally pronounce irritation, dislike, and sometimes hostility toward me. Well, I cannot make people love me.

Let us argue.

In all my previous books, I have consistently demonstrated my enthusiasm for any polemic in any print or Internet arena. I have many opponents, and I always appreciate that researchers and scientists address me directly, but only after the works have been published. However, for some reason, they avoid it, preferring instead to badmouth me among them. I cannot follow this method of searching for scientific truth.

At the end of the Foreword or Address to the Reader in all my books, I have always thanked my wife for her help. This time, I want to thank her again, even though I consider her help as the natural function of a sane wife. Cooperation between husband and wife is the norm, not heroism. Nonetheless, my warmest thanks go to her.

Welcome to all who are interested!

Alex Battler

Paris, 15 September 2007

Foreword

The history of mankind is nothing other than the history of progress.

The author

In my book *Dialectics of Force*, the categories Force and Progress with reference to society were defined only schematically. I saw no problems with the category Force in this book since I realized that political scientists and sociologists are not likely to analyze it on the ontological level; they will most likely limit themselves to pure gnoseology – or epistemology, in the accepted parlance of the West. So, indeed, it turned out; I present their epistemological analysis in the corresponding chapter. However, to define Progress as a category has been the most difficult question.

Almost all researchers of progress, starting with the Era of Enlightenment, have lamented in the forewords to their works that to their time, there had been no clear understanding of the word *progress*. The phenomenon is unique indeed: throughout many centuries, mankind has been talking about progress while having no notion of what it is. Alternatively, more correctly, there is an abundance of notions about progress, but none of them survive elementary criticism. This is precisely why every generation of philosophers and social scientists has attempted – and still attempts – to give its own definition of progress in the hope that it will finally acquire scientific status. To this day, this has not happened – and that is not accidentally. The category Progress belongs to those phenomena whose ontological essence has always been difficult to recognize. Usually this word means a very wide circle of phenomena. To some degree, the etymology of the word itself is to blame for this dead-end situation in defining it. Translated from Latin, it means

stage-wise forward motion.¹ The word presupposes *a priori* that the thing that moves forward is progressive. The question arises right away: what is “forward” and what is “backward”? Progress needs a starting point. Assume we choose the Big Bang for that purpose. That was about 14 billion years ago (13.7 billion years, according to more precise data). After the explosion, the inorganic world emerged (all kinds of particles, then galaxies, planets, etc.); then – in our galaxy, at least – the organic world came into being; and finally on the planet Earth, the social world appeared. This seems to be a movement forward, i.e., progress. However, according to the second law of thermodynamics, our Universe is destined to perish eventually. It is not important whether it happens 40 billion or 80 billion years hereafter. The Universe will unavoidably die. Any phenomenon that has a beginning inevitably and by the nature of things has an end. In other words, movement forward in time – i.e., toward the future – leads to death, to the end. Is that progress? Is the term even applicable to the inorganic world? Which galaxy is more “progressive,” the one that has more stars or the one that has more black holes? Or is it only the Milky Way that has managed to produce the organic world from which man hatched?

And what if man had not “hatched out”? Would the Milky Way then merit the name of a “progressive” galaxy? Natural scientists debate these topics rather tempestuously.

Social scientists (philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, scholars of science, etc.) analyze progress in the context of mankind’s evolution, not burdening themselves with reflections on its ties to the inorganic and organic worlds. Among them, though, there is no unanimity regarding the understanding of progress, due to both different methodological tools used to cognize the phenomenon and – to an even greater degree – to political-ideological biases determined by the historical context and the scholar’s role in the political structure of this or that state. It is quite obvious that the same phenomenon may be called progress or regress depending on which sociopolitical camp a scholar follows. For example, any revolution in the history of the world is often evaluated in quite opposite ways. This happens because there are still no universal criteria developed for evaluating any phenomenon, any event in world history. Is the forward movement of human history progress? Could a movement in human history be called progress? (From the perspective of historical time, it does indeed move only

1 Some researchers believe that it was first used in Lucretius’s famous poem *On the Nature of the Universe* as “progredientis.” See TITVS LVCRETIVS CARVS. DE RERVM NATVRA. Liber V.

forward, according to the second law of thermodynamics.) At first sight, the answer is yes, but right away new questions arise: why do many states disappear from the world arena in the process of forward movement? Are the fortunate survivors progressive? Is Africa progressing? If the answer is yes, please indicate the criteria of progress.

At the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, the 20th century was proclaimed "the Century of Progress." From the point of view of science and technology of the 20th century, in fact, it surpasses all previous human history. However, the same century is called by remarkably many people "the Century of Genocide," as it had two world wars, the Great Depression of 1929–1933, Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, and a number of events that indicated regress rather than progress. So who is correct?

One could go on posing difficult questions about progress; however, it is already clear that this is a tricky term. It is not as simple as a carrier of "common sense" might think.

In this regard, however, the question frequently arises: why should progress generally be defined at all? This question arises, however, regarding any ideas; allegedly, all these "word games" only distract from understanding the essence of phenomena – especially since we have lived for several millennia without definitions, and we can carry on living without them. I have read and heard this judgment many times – in particular, from Russian sciolists. I have no intention of getting involved in debates on this subject with adherents of such opinions. It is not related to science. They belong to the cohort of idle talkers feeding off science and polluting its space with their puffy writings. Knowledge is formed into a science that is based on concepts and categories, and these are the foundation for uncovering laws and describing the regularities in the sphere of cognition.

It is not opinion or judgment but more precisely the notion (*der Begriff*) that is the kernel of reflection in the search for scientific truth. Hegel in his time long ago already pointed out that an opinion (that is, something belonging to "me") is subjective, formed usually based on "sensual eyeing" and, therefore, devoid of objectivity, i.e., truth. Science has no opinions – the same as philosophy if it pretends to the status of science. Moreover, as Hegel asserted with perfect justification, "Philosophy is the objective science of truth; it is science of necessity, conceiving knowledge, and neither opinion nor the spinning out of opinions."¹

In this work, I hope to find out from the philosophical/theoretical

1 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, book 1, 78. Subsequently translated quotations from the Lectures: Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Selections).

level exactly what Progress is as a notion. At this point, there is a decidedly exasperating thing that many authors of works on progress do not even think. For example, they analyze the perception of progress among the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome while there were no such definitions at that time. Modern authors interpret their views from the position of their own understanding of progress, ascribing to the ancients what they obviously never thought. Then they criticize the ancients for something they have failed to follow in their own time in much the same way some Marxists criticized their predecessors. Thus, a distortion of the ancients' views on being and on society occurs. What to do then? Hegel gives remarkably straightforward advice: "Such insight also prevents us from ascribing any blame to the philosophies when we miss determinations in them which were not yet present to their culture, and similarly it prevents our burdening them with deductions and assertions which were neither made nor thought of by them....It is necessary to set to work on an historical basis, and to ascribe to Philosophy what is immediately given to us, and that alone" (ibid., 102–3).

There is one more question that can arise: the ancient Greeks did not know what progress is; the prehistoric people did not know what progress is; even we do not know what progress is – so perhaps it does not exist at all; perhaps there is rather some fable about Nature along the lines of fables about gods, dragons, and wicked witches? The objects do not exist apart from the subjects perceiving them – it is a philosophical doctrine of the subjective idealists of the Berkeleian type, a doctrine of those who are adherents of "sensual eyeing."

The answer might be that neither the ancient Greeks nor many people to the present time knew – or know – the essence of the laws of Newton, the laws of Einstein, etc. However, the phenomena described by these laws existed back then as they exist today. Man was subject to these laws in his actions even though he did not know of their existence. The same thing with progress: with the emergence of man, the objective reality that is progress came into being (this thesis will be subsequently proven). The fact that man and humankind exist to this day proves the presence of progress. Even without comprehending it as a concept, man was subject to the law of progress the same as he was subject to the laws of Newton – not on the level of knowledge but on the level of intuition, practice, and, after a certain time, knowledge about Nature. I could have formulated the law right here at this point, but it will not be understood by the reader without first acquainting himself with reflections on this theme by preceding philosophers and social scientists.

I repeat: to this day, the concept of Progress does not have a universal definition, i.e., a definition that covers all phenomena of human life. To use Hegelian language, there is no definition of progress as the *universal*. However, there have existed – and exist today – definitions on the level of the *particular*, i.e., understandings of progress in the context of certain historical epochs and as the *concrete* for a distinct country. In other words, the concept of Progress is also a historical concept. It not only embodies the experience of each epoch and each nation; at the same time, it can be used to determine the level of development of various human societies.

In this book, I will try to uncover the concept of Progress in all three facets: the universal, the particular, and the concrete. This will allow us to understand in which direction a particular society – and mankind as a whole – goes. When you do not know the way, it is easy to fall into a pit. This knowledge gives us directions not only for avoiding pitfalls but also for optimal ways to protect the human race.

I proceed in my usual method of analysis to provide a historical overview of philosophers on the subject so that the reader can understand the complexity of this problem. I want to say right away: my approach is cardinally different from that of all my predecessors since my understanding of the nature of being is distinct from theirs. This enables me to take a different approach to the category Force in Nature, imparting to it the same attributes possessed by the categories Motion, Time, Space, and Matter. One of the consequences of this innovation is my definition of Progress based on the universal criterion: the *life delta* of mankind. In this work, I will have to repeat my arguments and definition of Progress that I initially made in the book *Dialectics of Force*. As I have already stated, I intend to present a panorama of views on progress held by philosophers, historians, and sociologists who thought in their own logical and terminological space. I do so not only to show their logic and reasoning, but also to show their correspondences to various scientific paradigms.

For this panorama, which runs from the ancients to modernity, I have made use of two substantial works: one by the Englishman John Bury (*The Idea of Progress*, 1920), the other by the American Robert Nisbet (*The History of the Idea of Progress*, 1980). Naturally, I did not limit myself to these two works.

I devote my attention to Herbert Spencer, the only scientist whose methods (though not methodology) of analysis coincided with mine. Among the modern books on this subject, the work of Robert Bierstedt (which is titled very similarly to this book) was also highly important to me. I hope that the reasoning of Russian philosophers who have devoted some

attention to the topic of progress will also be of some interest to the reader. All this will be presented in the first part of the book.

The second part presents my own view on Force and Progress, delving deep into their ontological essences. This analysis should lead to the determination of the general criterion of development, which manifests itself in the fundamental laws to which all other laws are subject. I have succeeded in this by formulating the principal laws of Force and Progress as the Two Principles of Social Development.

The third part consists of the demonstration of the laws of Force and Progress in practice over the entire history of mankind. In that part, I also touch on those aspects of social being that are formed to a large degree through the effects of Force and Progress. Each of these aspects is deserving of a separate work. However, in this book, it is necessary for me to show the precise effect itself and its trends. This part is loaded with statistics, but without them, many conclusions could have been perceived merely as opinions. Opinions are legion while Truth is singular.

On the manner of presentation: I have already touched tangentially on one of its aspects – the language – in my address “To the Reader.” I will now say a few words about another aspect of my presentation – the polemical style of the work. In the West, starting from the second half of the 20th century, hypocritical political correctness prescribes one to refrain from arguments with opponents. Debates still happen sometimes, but they are extremely rare. The usual position is this: even though I disagree with you, you are entitled to your opinion, to your own approach. As a result, they are all correct, but the problem remains unsolved. For example, the problem of mind/body has been debated for hundreds of years; everyone appears to be correct, yet we still have not managed to find a solution.

Even though I consider myself a researcher of the Western type, my approach to debates and arguments is cardinally different. We researchers strive for the truth, and we cannot all be correct and pat each other soothingly on the shoulder. The truth is singular, and it is attained through combat. Any combat naturally requires an attacking style and corresponding language – especially in the sphere of the social sciences, in which everyone without exception is ideologically engaged. This does not mean that there can be no truth in the social sciences – i.e., no science as such – it all depends on the ideology. I tried to avoid polemics in *Dialectics of Force* since it dealt mainly with the problems of the natural sciences. This book, however, is highly polemical, in which I have allowed myself ideological attacks on liberal bourgeois scholars from the standpoint of Marxist science – especially since those scholars are not shy in their language directed against scholars of the

socialist persuasion. It is not just about ideology, though; it is about science itself, which is not thinkable without “scientific enemies” and comrades-in-arms. Karl Jaspers – whose philosophy I do not share, by the way – conveys this idea quite precisely. He wrote in one of his books:

The combat finds its ultimate confirmation in the combat of the scientist with his own theses. It has become the decisive hallmark of the scientific man that in his research he seeks out his antagonists, and that he seeks most ardently for those who call everything in question with concrete and clearly defined ideas. Here something apparently self-destructive becomes productive. And it is the hallmark of loss of science when discussion is avoided, even declined, when thought is confined to like-minded circles and destructive aggressiveness turned inside out into vague generalities.¹

This is precisely the phenomenon we observe in the West: absence of debates and a happy “consensus” on almost all problems of social being. Political correctness is being observed – within the frameworks of institutional paradigms, naturally. Since I am myself outside these paradigms, I am allowed to disregard their rules and give the works of bourgeois scholars the evaluation they deserve.

¹ Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, 93.

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