



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen
Institute for Human Sciences

The Standpoint of Moral Progress. A Defense in Kantian Spirit

The Institute for Human Sciences is delighted to invite you to the 35th Jan Patočka Memorial Lecture, delivered by Axel Honneth. On Monday, 16 December 2024, the distinguished sociologist, Columbia professor, and former director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt will speak about the idea of moral progress from a Kantian viewpoint. The lecture series honors the intellectual legacy of the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, whose thinking has occupied a central role within the Institute's work since its founding days.

Today, the idea that there has been moral progress in human history is highly controversial and contested. Many intellectuals from various camps consider it impossible, if not immoral, to claim that there has been anything in the historical past that can be called an improvement in moral attitudes and the application of moral principles. The reasons for this strong rejection of the idea of moral progress are either empirical or normative: either it is claimed that the historical facts strongly contradict such progress or that there is no sufficiently impartial perspective from which to judge such progress. This lecture will try to show that both objections can be refuted if one has a proper understanding of the perspective from which to claim a past process of moral progress; this perspective must not only be constantly self-critical, but must also construct the history to be told about the moral past very differently from all previous such narratives.



Axel Honneth is Jack C. Weinstein Professor of the Humanities in the Department of Philosophy at Columbia University. Until the end of 2018, he was a professor of social philosophy at Goethe University and the Director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main. His English works include *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflict* (MIT Press, 1996), *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (Columbia University Press, 2015), *The Idea of Socialism: Towards a Renewal* (Polity, 2017) and *The Working Sovereign. Labor and Democratic Citizenship* (Polity, 2023).

(Photo: Jürgen Bauer/Suhrkamp Verlag)

About the IWM Jan Patočka Memorial Lecture Series:

The Lecture honors the legacy of Czech thinker **Jan Patočka (1907-1977)**, who was a co-founder and spokesman of the civil rights movement Charter 77 and is widely considered one of the most important modern philosophers in Central Europe. His works have been researched and published at the Institute for Human Sciences since the 1980s. The lecture series was inaugurated by Hans-Georg Gadamer in 1987 and is taking place for the 35th time this year. Previous speakers include esteemed

scholars like Nancy Fraser, Lord Dahrendorf, Edward W. Said, Martin Walser, Albert O. Hirschman, François Furet, Jacques Derrida, Leszek Kołakowski, Chantal Mouffe, and Aleida Assmann.

Save the date:

The Standpoint of Moral Progress. A Defense in Kantian Spirit

Jan Patočka Memorial Lecture by Axel Honneth (in English)

Date: Monday, 16 December 2024, 18:00

Location: IWM Library, Spittelauer Lände 3, 1090 Vienna

[Please register for the lecture here.](#)

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