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**THE IDEA OF PROGRESS AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE WAR:
THE CASE OF GEOGRAPHY**

Abstract:

Contemporary culture wars constitute a permanent element of the social reality of the 21st century. One of the manifestations of this is semantic chaos, part of which is terminological confusion in science. Incorrect application of terms and concepts, and especially the introduction of numerous new ones, is also a feature of modern geography, which undoubtedly influences geopolitics. Geopolitics, in fact, originates from geography and uses many geographical concepts. The article analyzes the concept of progress, which is one of the most fundamental from the point of view of understanding social reality. Changes in understanding progress from antiquity, through French Enlightenment thinkers, to contemporary geography are presented. The concept of progress widely accepted in geography and a large part of the academic community, consistent with the so-called political correctness, contrasted with the interpretation of progress used in philosophy and medicine, in which progress is not a synonym, but the

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opposite of development. In this context, the concept of progress in the form used by supporters of Marxism and its contemporary versions (eg postmodernism), as well as representatives of left-liberal ideology, turns out to be an effective means of conducting information warfare aimed at combating conservative and national ideas in society.

Key words: progress, development, geography, geopolitics, cultural war, information war, semantic chaos.

Introduction

The history of each area of knowledge consists of two trends: an empirical-analytical and philosophical-synthetic. The first of them amounts to conduct reliable research concerning strictly-defined objects, in accordance with the methodological requirements. The aim of this research is to document and explain the phenomena, relations and processes. So, the product of this trend is new knowledge. Due to technological innovations of the last decades the growth of new knowledge has been significantly accelerated and the availability of this knowledge has become widespread. The feasibility of obtaining knowledge of any topic at any time is a great prey of science. However, its success has also been accompanied by side effects, which include the annoying information overload. In fact, people nowadays are unable to assimilate the huge amounts of the inflowing

information. They seem to be incapable of neither processing them in an individual way, nor understanding and utilizing them. According to a Polish writer, Nobel Prize Winner, Czesław Miłosz, contemporary information overload constitutes the kind of mental pollution. This is the pollution of human minds with the by-products of science, which is even more dangerous than the pollution of the environment with the by-products of technology (Miłosz 1990). This problem is caused by the fact that those two trends of the knowledge diverged, and the empirical-analytical mainstream became far ahead and dominated the philosophical-synthetic streamlet. For that reason there is more and more knowledge which remains dispersed. Science shows to be in no position to put particular results of research together, to give them structure, to show their overall importance, their meaning and place in the general body of knowledge. This situation is particularly true as far as the contemporary geography in Poland is concerned. We have a lot of kinds and directions of geographical research, and simultaneously the geography itself is losing its identity, coherence and social relevance (Wilczyński 2011). The empirical-analytical knowledge has completely overpowered the philosophical-synthetic concepts. Moreover the latter are often being expressed in a way completely not understandable and incompatible not only for the empirical analysts but also for the broader audiences. The “Lelevel Society” Research Group is trying to make the empirical-analytical and philosophical-synthetic trends compatible by way of the appropriate

studies in the philosophy and history of geographical thought (from 2016 the Group exists in the structure of Polish Geopolitical Society).

The way of structuring and organizing knowledge depends on the prevailing intellectual atmosphere that is shaped by the dominant philosophy and widely accepted ways of interpretation of the most general notions. One of these concepts which determined the modern geographical thought is the idea of progress.

Sources and the evolution of the idea of progress

Progress is one of the general concepts of Western civilization, which have huge literature but, in spite of that, is still the source of confusion. We are not sure which spheres of life and fields of the knowledge could be characterized with the use of this concept. Most of the available books concerning the idea of progress do not explain what does it exactly mean. According to one of the classical books, the idea of human progress

...is a theory which is based on an interpretation of history, which regards men as slowly advancing... in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely (Bury, 2008, p. 6).

The same author argued also that progress must be the necessary outcome of the psychical and social nature of man. So, the idea of progress is just the conviction, that mankind has advanced in the past, is now advancing, and may be expected to continue

advancing in the future. This is then nothing more than the view that human beings and civilization are improving and advancing toward a better goal. The problem becomes more complex when one asks, what does that “advance” and “improvement” mean. According to the eminent American historian of ideas, Robert Nisbet, in its most common form the idea of progress has referred to the advance of knowledge, more particularly the kind of practical knowledge contained in the arts and sciences (Nisbet, 2010). So then, in approaching the problem of progress and geography, we might have been expected, as professional geographers, to think of some famous geographers’ contributions to cultural and technological advancement. Keeping in mind the present-day unfavorable situation in geography, its problems concerning its identity, unity and autonomy, as well as its creativity and social relevance, it might have been thought more appropriate for us to concentrate on the very meaning of the word progress. Our aim is to formulate answers to the question of what is, and what should be progress in geography, and what should be done in order to make geography really advancing and improving. Strict definition of progress in geography seems to be necessary, since numerous processes and changes which occurred in geography in the last decades by no means could be perceived as progressive in the positive sense.

Progress is thought to be the peculiarly Western idea. We have no knowledge concerning the possible “progressivist” attitudes in

other civilizations. For some of them, quite different ideas seem to be more important, e.g. the idea of harmony and equilibrium. As Robert Nisbet wrote,

...only in Western Civilization [...] all history may be seen as one of humanity improving itself, step by step, stage by stage, through immanent forces (Nisbet 2010, p. 2).

The idea of progress in the West was initiated in Antiquity. According to Ludwig Edelstein,

the ancients formulated most of the thoughts and sentiments that later generations down to the nineteenth century were accustomed to associate with the blessed and cursed word progress (Edelstein 1964, p. 3).

One of the sources of our Western strive after improvement is the ancient Greek belief, that the gods did not reveal to men all things in the beginning, but men through their own search find in the course of time that which is better. This declaration, attributed usually to Xenophanes (VI-V BC), is just the essence of one of the most popular Greek myths, that is to say, the Promethæan myth. According to this, Prometheus was the hero, who have brought to mankind arts and fire, and thus stimulated men to rise culturally to emulate the very gods. The myth, propogated in the literary form by Aeschylus (V-IV B.C.), became the source of the prometheanism idea, which then became particularly important during the Enlightenment epoch. The greatest Greek contributors to the idea of progress, according to Nisbet, were

both the most famous sophist, Protagoras (V B.C.) and the greatest ancient philosopher, Plato (V-IV B.C.). According to their convictions, man's history is one of escape from primeval ignorance, and of gradual ascent to the advancement of knowledge. As a consequence, mankind living previously in deprivation like barbarians and savages, steadily became capable of ascend the scale of culture, learning crafts and arts, reaching the ever-better life conditions. In Nisbet's interpretation (Nisbet, op. cit, p. 5), Plato delineates a historical account of the progress of mankind from lowly origins to its contemporary heights in the dialogue *Protagoras* and *The Statesman*. The first of the mentioned works contains short parable by Protagoras concerning the history of Epimetheus and Prometheus, who had stolen fire and skills from the gods, to deliver them to people (Platon, 1999, p. 10-12). The same mythical event is mentioned by The Visitor in the other dialogue *The Statesman* (Plato, op.cit. p. 98). So, it could be reasonable to formulate a question, if such brief episodes are sufficient to formulate the thesis, that both Protagoras and Plato were adherents of the idea of progress. Moreover, it is worthy to emphasize, that Plato saw the history of civilization as the history of technological progress and simultaneous moral decline.

The greatest contribution to the literature of human progress to be found in ancient thought is "On the Nature of Things" by Titus Lucretius Carus (I B.C.). This philosopher did not share the pessimist opinion of Plato concerning the moral aspect of human history. Book 5

of his evolutionary treatise is devoted to the mankind's cultural progress. From the primitive level of barbarity, men formed religious forms of mental protection from the constant fear of the elements, and step by step (*mentis pedetemptim progredientis*), advanced the creation of particular technological and mental achievements (Lukrecjusz 1957).

Christian philosophers and prophets also contributed to the idea of progress. Among them there is St. Augustine (VI-V A.D.) and Joachim de Fiore (XII A.D.), who developed the concept of historical necessity of changes leading to the utopian period that is the culmination of man's progress on earth. According to R. Nisbet, when these ideas have become secularized in the late eighteenth century, *...the way has been cleared for the emergence of such modern secular millenarianisms as those associated with the names of Saint-Simon, Comte, and Marx* (Nisbet, op.cit. p. 7).

Trying to define the characteristics of the ancient and medieval idea of progress, Nisbet emphasized its following crucial elements: cumulative growth, continuity in time, necessity, and the unfolding potentiality. All of them took shape within the Christian tradition, and their modern, secular forms would be inconceivable in the historical sense apart from their Christian roots (Nisbet, op.cit., p. 10). This is in spite of the fact, that some ancient and Christian concepts were impaired. Bernard Fontenelle in the end of 17th century first formulated the idea of unlimited progress of humanity, as opposed to

the St. Augustine's, who declared mankind to be in its very old age, when the degeneration of faculties, and eventually death, is possible. Fontenelle declared mankind will have neither old age nor will degenerate (Sorel, 1969). By the 18th century intellectuals mostly accepted the modernist view, that due to both natural and human causes, mankind has advanced in culture, is now advancing, and will continue to advance during a long future ahead. By the beginning of the 18th century this optimistic view was supreme among a growing number of intellectuals and became an important element of the intellectual atmosphere during the Enlightenment epoch. It was expressed best in the A.R.J. Turgot's discourse before the audience at the Sorbonne in 1750, entitled *A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of Human Mind*, that is probably the first and complete statement of progress, covering not only the arts and sciences, but the whole of culture – habits, laws, institutions, economy and society. Turgot saw progress as a result of natural order of things and, like Adam Smith, considered the reasons of stagnation were unwise edict, law and custom (Meek, ed., 1973). The idea of progress as a slow, gradual, continuous change that is cumulative, purposive and self-driven is now widely seen as one of the most important intellectual formulations of the Enlightenment, which has dominated Western thought throughout the modern era. The progress rendered as inevitable onward and upward march of civilization through a series of discrete levels were also called development and social evolution,

and no-one of the Enlightenment thinkers made distinctions between these notions. Even today, they are seen as synonyms, particularly in its scientific and technological aspects. First of all, the word progress has been utilized as a synonym of technological and scientific advancement. And because both science and technology have been thought to improve greatly the standards of life, the notion of progress in its scientific-technological aspect has gained an almost univocal positive connotation in social consciousness. Until now, progress is considered to be something positive and good, as opposed to such terms like stagnation, backwardness, and recession. Such a positive value of progress in social consciousness is not limited to the sciences and technology. There appeared also the idea of “social progress” identified with the spread of the leftist ideology, which in the Eastern European countries was tantamount with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Ideologists had utilized the “progressivist” phraseology to discredit all conservative ideas, called “bourgeois”, “reactionary”, or “American”. There are numerous statements in which the notion of progress has been ideologically abused. As a result of this ideological pressure, this notion has greatly influenced not only the ordinary people’s way of thinking, but also the modes of argumentation in scientific research. The general aspiration for being “progressive” and the colloquial understanding of progress, in spite of its inaccuracy, has permeated scientific language, mostly in the area of social sciences, including geography. Such understanding was

typical for the founders of the well-known journal entitled *Progress in Human Geography*, and is still valid in the current scientific discourse in geography (Wise, 1977). Geographers do not realize the possible differences between such terms like progress and development, and this is expressed by the creation of a new notions like “progressive developmentalism” (Heffernan, 1994, p.328). Such unrestricted utilization of words and introduction of new terminology with no strict definitions seems to be contradictory to the basic principles of scientific discourse. In particular, it seems to be unreasonable to try to replace one undefined notion (idea of progress) with the new one, but also devoid of definition (“progressive developmentalism” or “developmental progressivism”). Such a creativity is not useful for comprehension and seems to strengthen the state of terminological confusion.

Contemporary criticism

Due to political and economic shifts in Eastern Europe after 1989, the progress, like many other general concepts, have become the object of reconsideration and contestation. The idea of progress is now in the state of crisis both in Eastern Europe and in the West in the narrower sense (McBride, 1992). Its source is the general distrust of technological innovation based on quasi-religious reverence for pre-technological nature. Such attitudes are based on both the Western cultural heritage (e.g. writings by J.J. Rousseau and Romantic

transcendentalists, and also by Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber) and the different Eastern concepts. According to numerous environmentalists and creators of eco-philosophies, progress is made at the expense of the traditional value system and leads the young generation to a complete isolation of the individual from his social establishment, to a radical separation from any higher values, to reducing the spiritual to bodily needs, and to a losing any contact with the natural world. Even economic aspect of the progress has been called an illusion, since it does not take into account the depreciation of natural capital, including the so-called non-renewable resources (Brown, 1990). At the heart of contemporary skepticism in relation to progress lie three interrelated convictions. Firstly, according to numerous analyses, we have reached the limits of economic advancement, and each new advance in technology weakens the social and moral values which once seemed entirely congruent with economic development. Secondly, there is growing literature on rapid depletion nature and her resources. Some presents a truly convincing refutation of the depletion argument (Simon 1998), but it has had little if any effect upon the majority who follow that argument. Thirdly, there is constantly enlarging belief that science has reached the limits of its own capacity to advance, that science has reached the point, where further achievements will be adverse rather than beneficial so far as human morality is concerned. A very perceptible dethronement of knowledge is taking place, both in the sphere of the

visible scientific output (huge amounts of invaluable publications) and in the institutional aspect (appearance of the so-called *diploma mills*, which rapidly replace traditional universities, or the *predatory journals* which propagate the so-called science, the dissemination of the practice of quantifying scientific achievements, which leads to the pathology of collecting points and multiplying the citation by researchers). Economic crises, the announced environmental depletion, and the decadence in science, are not all reasons for the criticism in relation to the idea of progress. Robert Nisbet sees the additional factor, that is the growing boredom spreading in Western society. To explain this factor Nisbet wrote:

...through technology and the cult of leisure we are pushing work into a constantly diminishing place [...] But all present evidence is that few if any human beings can endure leisure without becoming bored, succumbing to alcohol and drugs, or turning to violence and terrorism in mounting degree (Nisbet, op.cit. p. 25-26).

This vision seems to be conformable to the pessimistic idea of the Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset, expressed in his famous book, *La rebelión de las masas* (2006). Nowadays, these processes are described in a convincing way by Ryszard Legutko (2012). The studies of American authors, Alan Ch. Kors (2001) and James Kurth (2001) are also very instructive.

What is thought to be progress in geography in Poland

The notion of progress did not appear too frequently in geography in Poland. It became particularly useless after the Marxist ideologists stopped criticizing concepts which did not conform with their philosophy. Progress for them was an instrument of propaganda and ideological struggle against “reactionary” and “American” concepts. Due to this, after 1980s Polish geographers were not inclined to judge, what was progressive and what was not. We have no geographical journal with the word “progress” in its title, and there exist no research project aimed at finding “progressive” solutions. We also have no institute and department dealing with philosophy of geography and history of ideas, and there exists no journal interested in publication of philosophical-historical studies (Wilczyński 2011). So, there are no Polish counterparts for such figures like Michael Wise and Michael Heffernan – authors of the above mentioned works concerning geography and progress.

The only Polish author, who had the courage to use the concept of progress after the political crisis of the 1980s, was Z. Chojnicki – the leading figure in the field of philosophy of geography in Poland for the previous 50 years. He decided to restore the concept of progress in a book, which was to summarize the former output of, and show directions for further research works in Polish geography (Chojnicki, 1991). In spite of the fact that it appeared in print in 1991, it remains one of the most frequently cited methodological text in geography in

Poland for several years. Chojnicki argued that for Polish geographers *...the most important thing in future serious research will be the progress in methods which could help us to gain factual data, and [...] introduction the rigorous techniques of field observation and remote sensing methods* (Chojnicki, op.cit. p. 376).

The above statement allows us to understand clearly the way the main Polish methodologist conceive progress. First of all, he emphasizes its two necessary conditions: firstly, it is the quantity and quality of factual data, and secondly, the methods of reprocessing and utilizing them. Shortly, according to Chojnicki, geography in Poland suffers from a growing deficit of facts and methods. In his paper he has mentioned also the need of “theoretical progress”, but he failed to explain what does that mean. He emphasized the importance of factual data and methods in spite of the fact, that we have just experienced the consequences of “quantitative revolution”, when the number of publications composed of new experimental data started to grow exponentially. Instead of a shortage, the true problem has become an excess of information. One of the reasons of this is the bureaucratic management of scientific institutions, which forces us to gain more and more publications. It must be also kept in mind, that there are also additional reasons which have strong ethical and ideological basis (Pelc 1994; Znosko 1994, see also Wilczyński 1998). Similar views have also been expressed in the scientific literature in

English speaking countries. American astronomer and philosopher, T. van Flandern declared that

...something is wrong with science – fundamentally wrong (...). It has been my sad observation that by the mid-career there are very few professionals left truly working for the advancement of science, as opposed to the advancement of self (van Flandern 1993, xv-xvi).

The effectiveness of scientific works, mainly due to institutional and ethical reasons, is no longer measured by the number and quality of formulated and resolved scientific problems. Instead, the main criterion of assessment of the value of research activities became the number of publications. As a result, there appears a glaring disproportion between the number of scientists, the costs of research, and the value of significant output. The scores of insignificant research gain power and the banks of information swell. It has become increasingly difficult to find a truly creative works in the boundless sea of information added each year to the existing scores. As stated by the eminent Polish geologist, it is very difficult now to find any essential contents in the mountains of senseless printed matter (Jaroszewski 1993). It should be noted, that the great majority of this scientific output has found no application and most of the publications have not been utilized at all. There are symptoms of the lack of the authenticity of research works, and it calls into question the sense of continuation of studies, the social relevance and real scientific value of which seem to be plain postulate.

In the light of this situation, the way the progress is conceived in geographical circles in Poland must be recognized as highly paradoxical. On the one side geography in Poland is experiencing a lack of new ideas which could make it possible to utilize, or even to grasp the huge amounts of the available information. At the same time however, the growing quantity of new facts and methods is proclaimed to be the necessary condition of future progress. It must be emphasized, that if Chojnicki is right in his statement and the idea of progress understood in such colloquial sense (which is not far from its Promethean and Enlightenment meaning) is proper and just, the best way to be progressive is nothing more but the production of new factual data and reprocessing them with the use of newer and newer means and methods in the frame of analytical and experimental research. So, if we want such analytical experimentalism was no longer the main direction in contemporary geographical thought, the necessary condition is to replace the Enlightenment idea of progress with any other concept.

Essential analysis of the progressiveness in geography and geopolitics²

To find the alternative concept of progress necessary for the formulation of another vision of geography as a science, we need to

² The geographic aspect has already been developed in my study: Wilczyński 2002.

specify the characteristics of the colloquial understanding of progress that is typical in geographical circles in Poland. The first and the most obvious characteristic, which is a direct consequence of the geographers' efforts of being progressive in the colloquial sense of the word, which is also accepted by Chojnicki, is **multidirectional, quantitative expansion in amounts of factual data and methods**, but also equipments, staff and grants. This is tantamount with the narrowing of fields of interests which leads to distraction of scientific aims and effort, and to excessive specialization and **disintegration in the structure of geography**, which no longer constitutes the unified and integral area of knowledge. It is expressed by the appearance of numerous specialized institutions, commissions, journals, sub-fields, each with its own esoteric seminars, languages, and an exponential growth in the number of publications. One of the newest Polish geographical encyclopedia defines more than 30 sub-fields and directions within geography except the classical specializations of physical and human branches. Particular elements of such disintegrated geography can act freely but they are not completely independent. Instead, there appears **severe competition** between them for more financial aid, which leads to the **loss of the economic principle** and the unreasonable distribution of funds. Competing institutions often needlessly spend money independently for the same aims, having no knowledge about the research being conducted on the other side of the hedge. Our corrupted political system allows

institutions to waste huge amounts of money, and the competition between institutions, sub-fields and single scientists for more subsidies reminds one of the fight between politicians and parties for power and influence, where neither the creative potential nor real needs are important, but only personal connections and political correctness mean.

To recapitulate we can ascertain that the progress in geography implies three interrelated processes: 1) multidirectional quantitative expansion; 2) functional disintegration and appearance of numerous units with different characteristics and aims; 3) competition between these units which leads to the loss of economic principle. Such a definition of progress which consists of three interrelated processes is very similar to the idea of progress which is accepted in theoretical biology and utilized in medicine. The only difference is that in geography progress is thought to be something good, while in medicine progressive changes are synonymous with pathological processes, such as the uncontrolled growth of abnormal tissue in living things, which leads to a malignant tumor. To show that geographical and medical concepts of progress do not differ greatly let us consider the medical description of neoplasm growth in a monstrous tumor called teratoma. In this skin tumor there are growing
....conglomerations of cerebral tissue which are not organized in the functional structure of a brain, many teeth, some of them even fixed in alveolus sockets but with no jaws and muscles which could move them.

There are numerous pieces of organs, strands of muscular tissue which can even contract, perspiratory and sebaceous glands which secrete great amounts of perspiration and tall, skin cells which produce strands of long hair.... That monstrous conglomerate does not however create any intergrated organic system... (Lenartowicz 1986, p. 159-160).

Instead of organic system and functional whole, this monstrous tumor, like contemporary geography, constitutes a loose conglomerate of units with different characteristics and aims. What is similar for all of them, as well as for all the elements consisting contemporary geography, is the unrestrained anxiety to grow and internal competition. In teratoma, like in contemporary geography, there are numerous different components which are chaotically distributed and sometimes can make impression of an organic structure. Modern and progressive geography, like teratoma, can be characterized by uncontrolled growth, sometimes showing the appearance of functional organization. Teratoma can grow thanks to the organism, in which it originated. When the organism exhausted by teratoma dies, it is also the end of teratoma. The organism in which originated contemporary geography is a system embracing knowledge and education. Geography is still too small to become dangerous for its host-organism, but the signs of its impairment during the last decades are evident. As we can see from the memoirs of Professor Alfred Jahn

...just after the World War II Polish universities had lost the right to select research workers, and the consequences of this appeared only in several years [...] At the universities had appeared numerous persons only thanks to their ideological connections [...] A lot of accidentally employed people had even reached professorship...[...] and, as a result, just in 1960s there had originated the crisis in science, ...which at the end of 1970s had assumed the proportions of disaster (...). The reasons for this crisis was neither lack of subsidies nor equipments (...) As I see, that crisis is tantamount to the crisis of human individual, I reduce it to the moral decline of man. The crisis affected most people, who were being infirm of purpose. Only some outstanding individuals [...] did not turn traitors these days (Jahn, 1991, pp.165-166, 180).

This way the nestor of Polish geographers during 1990s explained, why in Poland ... *the level of scientific research has fallen down dramatically and the professorship lost its former esteem (Vetulani 1992, p. 71-72).*

The purpose of the above overview of modern geography with a description of the tumor was to demonstrate that the idea of progress as adopted by geographers in Poland contributed to the disintegration of geography, to the loss of its identity and further consequences of the decline in the quality of research and in the social relevance and prestige. It turned out that one of the sources of the most basic problems of contemporary geography is the idea of

progress initiated in Antiquity and formulated in its modern shape by thinkers of the Enlightenment. As geographers we can now realize the many-faceted nature of progress, and understand why Ludwig Edelstein wrote that the idea of progress was both blessed and cursed (Edelstein 1964, op.cit.). Answering the question of why from the point of view of geography it is much more cursed than blessed, one should pay attention to the fact that geographers adopted it as typical of the Enlightenment and a bit simplified, overly optimistic, and a little naïve. Not to conclude these considerations in a funeral mood, it should be indicated that there is one comforting aspect of the situation faced by the contemporary, “progressive” geography. Namely, progress in biological, but also in philosophical meaning denotes changes, that usually end tragically, but are not irreversible (Podsiad, Więckowski 1983, p. 343).

In the Polish geopolitical literature, publications on progress have not yet appeared. This word is most often used in its shallow, commonsense and uniquely positive meaning, as a synonym of development. Meanwhile, the definition of *progressive geopolitics* has already become established in Anglo-Saxon geopolitics. Its creator is Irish explorer Gerry Kearns (2009). Progressive geopolitics is one of the many expressions that has emerged in recent decades in science, due to the increasing pressure from the left-liberal circles that today dominate the majority of universities. Progressive geopolitics, like critical geopolitics, feminist geopolitics, is designed mainly to provide

an alternative to classical geopolitics, usually referred to as "conservative". As Kearns writes, progressive geopolitics can challenge both the ideals and the account of reality offered by "conservative" geopolitics. This statement reveals that the goal of the Kearns project is not scientific but rather ideological. He criticizes classical geopolitics for "conservatism" and for recognizing states as the basic elements of the international scene and entities deciding about the matters of this world. It is also unacceptable for him to assume that the most important relations that determine the structure of the world are power relations. This author proposes a different view of the world in which relations between states and people are shaped not by political power and economic power, but by cosmopolitan ideals resulting from a politically correct vision of reality.

As the examples from Polish geographic literature and Anglo-Saxon geopolitics show, progress is one of the concepts whose meaning is freely juggled to achieve specific ideological goals. A change in the way of understanding progress is necessary for the ideologues of the modern information war to fight against the conservative worldview, on which not only science was founded as a specific form of culture, but the entire Western civilization. Ideologists of progress, who a few decades ago were a minority sect, today dominate in universities, media, the Internet, and in many international organizations, trying to impose their own style of discourse on everyone. The only salvation for scientific truth in this

situation is critical thinking and opposition to any attempts to change the meaning of the most frequently used words.

Toward the solution of the problem

From the point of view of the future of geography and geopolitics, progress in its Enlightenment meaning can not be recognized as the useful idea. If geography will grow further by way of such progress, its future may be that of an organism which happened to fall victim to cancer. So, not to trust only in the reversibility of such growth, we are forced to find for geography any better trajectory. Much more advantageous seems to be the understanding of progress typical for Herbert Spencer. This great nineteenth century popularizer and synthesizer of science used to make distinction between two notions: evolution and progress. The former denotes the process of development in the natural world, and the latter in the social reality. Progress in society is then a necessity, which is the result of the natural law underlying the whole reality (Young 1990). Contrary to the Enlightenment interpretation, progress is here the kind of development. And development, according to the available philosophical publications, is the concept contradictory in relation to the Enlightenment concept of progress (see for example Cackowski 1987). Both development and progress denote movement and change, but the Enlightenment progress denotes reversible, quantitative and multi-directional expansion, while development is

the **process of irreversible, qualitative and quantitative changes with a fixed direction**. The result of the progressive growth is the disintegration, while development leads to the creation of integrative factors, increase in complexity and integration of structures (anti-entropic tendency), tantamount with the reaching the higher level of organization (or information capacity). As it was earlier shown, the progress leads to the competition of particular elements and to the loss of economic principle. Development, on the other side, by way of the diversification and integration processes, becomes the source and the necessary condition of energetic and material economy in creation of hierarchic structures.

The philosophical idea of development provides a variety of concepts that can show to be useful in the situation of the identity crisis of geography, its disintegration, abandonment of traditional synthetic objectives and deterioration of its position in the system of knowledge.

We should guard the meaning of science-set concepts such as progress in order to avoid the situation of terminological chaos and thus contribute to the development of science. In the geopolitical context, the struggle for the true meaning of words is an element of the ongoing information war, the results of which will determine the fate of our civilization. This information war, and especially the changed meanings of the concepts and words we use, makes the intellectual atmosphere of our time intertwined with indoctrination,

tendentiousness, and fantasy. The only weapon that we can use, not to succumb to it, and to restore words to their true meaning, is the independence of critical intellect and the willingness to learn open-mindedly from experience of a reality independent of the human will.

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