

We all think of certain social groups, or even entire societies, to go through phases of moral progress or decline. This important but vague idea can be elucidated as follows. We may assign a weight or value to every one of the moral rules in force in the given moral group at the times of interest, e.g. nowadays and 20 years ago--or nowadays and at some time in the future. Then we may add all such values, to obtain the moral state at the time of interest. Finally we may compare the moral states at different times, to ascertain whether there has been progress or decline. In other words, the task to be performed is as follows.

T.O.P.

Moral rule R_i , Value of R_i at time $t_1 = V_i(t_1)$

Moral state of the social group at time $t_1 = \sum_{i=1}^n V_i(t_1) = M_1$

Moral rule R_j , Value of R_j at time $t_2 = V_j(t_2)$

Moral state of the social group at time $t_2 = \sum_{j=1}^n V_j(t_2) = M_2$

Moral progress of the social group between t_1 and t_2 iff $M_1 < M_2$

Moral stagnation " " " " iff $M_1 = M_2$

Moral decline of the social group between t_1 and t_2 iff $M_1 > M_2$

The above formulas make room for the cases when the rules, their values, or both, change in the course of time.