

## THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF GRADUAL ENGINEERING IN POPPER'S THOUGHT

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This article seeks to examine the political consequences of the gradual engineering of Popper's thought. Popper's solution is realistic and intends to reduce problems by giving some power to the state in facing social disasters. Ultimately, Popper's strategy of achieving the goals of the welfare state is the so-called gradual social engineering, a method of searching for and combating the greatest and most profound societal pitfalls. Given this, the main question addressed in this paper is what the political consequence of the gradual engineering in Popper's thought is. In response, this hypothesis has been suggested that the political system based on liberal democracy is the political consequence of the gradual engineering of Popper's thought. In Popper's liberal-democratic political system, which is the end result of gradual engineering, the government has a duty to reduce human suffering and achieve prosperity. In Popper's social engineering, first, an ideal goal is set for the future and then it is tried to move towards that goal. In his view, when gradual engineering is properly implemented by the government, true liberal democracy can be achieved and human suffering can be reduced.

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### ***Introduction***

In Popper's view, the concept of gradual social engineering is a practical and critical perspective. Popper identifies a kind of idealistic social engineering in the theories and philosophies of Plato, Hegel, and Marx. In his critique, he seeks to discover historical roots of totalitarianism and the impact of this kind of generalist engineering. In general, Popper is suspicious of any massive and idealistic theory and considers it the beginning of the growth of the foundations of totalitarianism. Nowhere social engineering is a way that Plato uses to design and direct society to achieve his ideal ideas. According to Popper, this approach is specific to closed and tribal societies. Popper therefore presents a gradual and fractional theory of social engineering in opposition to it and in line with its epistemic foundations. He believes that this approach is appropriate for open and democratic societies. According to Popper's view of gradual social engineering, a kind of rational approach to problem solving has a technological significance. For Popper, fractional engineering or rational technology has been the main cause of western economic growth and development. Popper argues that what is needed is a type of social technology whose results can be tested by gradual or fractional social engineering. The design of human society and its engineering indicates that one can benefit from practical knowledge. From Popper's point of view, social engineering, if it is to respect individual liberty, must have a social trait, and be relevant to society and all the means of living in it, namely politics, economics, culture, and so on. This paper aims to put one of the desired aspects, namely politics, into the framework of the analytic gradual engineering theory, and show the consequence(s) of engineering in politics.

### ***Gradual Engineering***

Fractional engineering or gradual engineering is a term used by Popper to refer to utopian engineering (or general engineering) which means that the society needs to be gradually reformed and progressed over time. It is impossible to prescribe a set of general laws and apply them to all societies because the limitations of human knowledge on the one hand and the dynamics and evolution of societies on the other hand deprive humans of the ability to design such general laws. One has only to complete his knowledge through trial and error, and to theorize about new phenomena and events in societies, to reconstruct

them. Popper calls this process fractional engineering. According to Popper's definition of gradual social engineering, the purpose of this type of engineering is to find the greatest and most urgent evils of society and to fight them, not to find the greatest virtues and strive to attain them (Karbasi 2011: 117).

The ideal of guiding human beings and rescuing human beings from the misleading and inculcating of superior values has generally led to religious wars, inquisition, harsh treatment and torture in history, and the most important ethical principles have been violated by invading human privacy. Popper therefore opposes giving moral guidance and responsibility to governments; because in addition to expanding the scope of the laws and overshadowing the main responsibilities of the state, it leads to the weakening of morality and the destruction of one's conscientious responsibilities (Shojayi Zand 2003: 128).

### *Profitability*

Profitability is one of teleological ethics schools that believe that an action is morally just and fair if most people benefit from it.

Utilitarianism is not an integrated whole and it encompasses different and sometimes conflicting types. However, the common chapter of all these different types is the fundamental principle of utilitarianism, the principle of "maximizing the good for all" (Peik-Herfe 2018: 37).

### *Negative Profitability*

The concept of negative profit-making stands in contrast to Bentham's doctrine of profit-making or utilitarianism, which is called "positive profit-making". According to Bentham's theory, government profit is the most profitable or most satisfying for most citizens. In contrast to this Benthamian principle, negative profiteering takes the view that the work of the state is not to provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number of citizens but to prevent the greatest inevitable suffering. This principle is not too short. For example, providing higher education for all can be part of a program to prevent the greatest suffering. Popper also acknowledges government intervention in the economy to stifle capitalism, but insists that the intervention should not be so limited as to undermine consumer freedom of choice in the market or competition among producers to attract consumers (Pouladi 2018: 134–135).

According to the negative profitability index, Popper seeks to reduce alarms and avoid further complications. From his point of view, the pre-emptive aspect of political action is the epistemic and idealistic aspect of governments. In the politico-economic context, Popper's motto against the advocates of utilitarianism, who advocated maximal happiness for the maximum, is to

strive to reduce poverty and misery, and therefore seek to address existing social failures against the cause. Let's be a desirable city. Popper believes that such a mechanism is fundamentally rational. Democracy's place in the epistemic domain is based on its delinquent actions, namely the prohibition of the spread of social and economic pests, in particular the dictatorship and restrictions on freedom (Shahramnya & Hajizadeh 2010: 75).

In this way, Popper's justification goes: "Try more to remove the concrete and concrete evils, not to realize the single good" (Popper 2016: 448). In one of his articles, Popper offers a list of the greatest evils that can be cured for gradual engineering: poverty, unemployment and some similar forms of insecurity, illness and suffering, criminal justice, slavery, religious discrimination and racism, lack of educational opportunities, fierce class divisions and war (Popper 2016: 456–459).

Popper is loyal to many of the ideals of the Enlightenment. However, he departs from the classical and modern liberalism by believing in "negative profitability" and defending the principle of "protectionism". Negative Profitability versus (Positive) Profitability.... The views of those like Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill spoke of providing the greatest happiness to most. From this point of view, we should seek to eliminate the greatest suffering and the misery of most people rather than focusing on the greatest happiness for the greatest number. The reasons for Popper's attention to negative profitability lie in his belief in critical rationality and accountability. We cannot "know" what and how it will make people happy. We can only suggest a way to this end by trial and error. This theory plays an active role for the state – contrary to the view of classical and modern liberalism. The government must defend the freedom of citizens and alleviate their suffering. Popper advocates intervention to protect citizens' freedom and alleviate their suffering (Esmailzadeh 2009: 17). Popper considers intervention necessary to maintain individual freedom. "Freedom will be infringed if it is unlimited. The meaning of unlimited freedom is that the strong can speak to the weak by force and intimidation and deprive them of freedom. To this end, our desire is that the government restrict freedom to some extent so that the law will protect everyone" (Popper 2016: 917).

### *Gradual Engineering in Closed Communities*

According to Popper, the topic of "social engineering" encompasses the two branches of nowhere social engineering and gradual social engineering. With his critique of history as the source of utopian engineering, Popper believes that historians view history as a river that flows from a source and is moving in a direction that he thinks could determine its future trajectory. He

considers himself very intelligent because he is able to predict the future (Popper 2017a: 83–84).

As such, Popper seems to think that human historians are involved in a definite trajectory that is beyond human will, and that they are historians, who believe in the ability to foresee the future. That is to say, human beings themselves, and especially intellectuals, must take measures, such as dismantling, to alleviate human suffering (Najafzadeh & Khatibi Gojادی 2014: 100).

According to Popper, closed society was built according to the general rules of administration, but open society was built on the basis of fractional engineering. By designing and describing the concept of gradual engineering, it should be said that, according to Popper, he considered human misery to be his method, gradual or partial engineering was the right way and rational choice to be made. If it is to be in a real position, admittedly, they should encompass the whole society, which is a testament to nowhere engineering. Popper considers the creation of a new type of life insurance or criminal and similar reforms as societal experiments that leave their reflections throughout without altering the general form of society.

### ***Gradual Engineering in Politics***

In the context of Popper's slogan policy, the benefit of advocating the principle of maximizing happiness for most people is that you should strive to reduce poverty and misery. In other words, instead of trying to create an ideal city, we must address the existing social failures. In the book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, he says: "Among all political aspirations, the ideal of making people happy is probably the most dangerous. Such an aspiration leads to an attempt to impose our higher values on others so that they will find what we think is most important to their well-being.... Such an ideal leads to utopianism and romantic tendencies. We are sure that everyone in our perfect and imaginative society will be lucky, if we love each other, paradise will be established on earth... but the attempt to establish paradise on earth will be hell instead of hell. Slows down; leads to intolerance; engages in religious wars; leads to salvation through the establishment of the Inquisition" (Popper 2017b). Disaster relief creates a stronger practical and emotional motivation in social adjusters than happiness and prosperity. So, instead of talking about maximizing happiness for the maximum people (in Bentham's way), one should talk about trying to reduce the maximum suffering and misery of the maximum people (Bashirye 2019: 78–79).

Popper says alleviating the human suffering we all agree on is the primary task of a politician and ruler, and these are the fundamental issues that the social sciences must address and start their work from them. In one of his

lectures *The Logic of the Social Sciences*, presented in 27 theses, he makes this clear: "The issues we seek to address must not be theoretical ones, serious scientific issues such as poverty, illiteracy, political domination and insecurity of rights are the most important sources and starting points in social science research" (Popper 2017a: 129).

Thus, Popper's role of protecting the state from citizens in the face of abuses of economic power requires actions and measures beyond the policies of even the welfare state. The role that political institutions should take on this issue is so serious and, in Popper's view, critical of Marxists: they have overlooked the possibilities of politics and its central role in pushing for social reform (formerly). Popper says: "If the government considers itself only a proponent of property rights, the minority will be able to freely exploit the majority. So the government must prevent the exploitation of the subordinate by creating social institutions and relying on its own legal power" (Ibid.). To fulfill this important task, he even calls for the need for program policies that are an anti-liberal policy in the field of economics. Rational political programs can be written and implemented to support economic weakness, he says. Workers should not be freely abused because of their severe need for work. In his view of the necessity of accepting the supervision and protection of the rights of the poor and the weak, he affirms the patriarchal dignity of the government, albeit for ethical reasons. He even has some concepts in this regard.

### ***Gradual Engineering and Liberalism***

The result of Popper's gradual engineering and gradual engineering is the move to liberal democracy. Due to his extreme right-wing defence of classical and blatant liberalism and his ideological struggles, taking any role or mission for the state in the economy, in order to lessen the relative burden of poverty and injustice caused by the great capitalist systems, Popper has become the central figure of twentieth-century imperial neoliberalism. Popper sees only liberal-democratic governments as an example of freedom and strongly opposes the democracy of Hegel and Marx (Zarshenas 2018: 85).

One of the ultimate goals of open society and its enemies is to explain the philosophical foundations of totalitarianism and fascism and the causes of their mass inclination. The most important psychological and sociological cause of totalitarianism is the escape of the masses from the terror of freedom and unwanted responsibility, and their desire for security. After the departure of man from the traditional authoritarian and closed society and the beginning of the critical tradition, new conditions and needs arose that created deep anxieties and tensions in man, so that the desire to return to the womb of lost security awakened in him. In a society ruled by tradition and hierarchy and

religion as supporters of individual security, it is possible to critique and explore different and unprecedented ways of life, in ancient religions. Society tends to fail due to the pressures of civilization; and the individual and society seek refuge from dogmatism and freedom from security. The tendency towards closed society has long been opposed to civilization's tendency to freedom and criticism. Come, that is, the desire for utopia and amenity, the desire for a closed society, out of the reach of freedom of thought and criticism of retrospective and utopianism, that is, to escape the traditions of the past and to seek the utopia of the future. And, both resort to violence to eradicate free thought. Both are anti-change and want a static society. Both lead to totalitarianism (right and left), which is the practical manifestation of one fascism and the other a communism (Bashiryeh 2019: 67–68).

Popper writes about liberalism: "I fully agree with this theory – liberalism. In fact, while I am well aware of its many drawbacks, I think – vote with Foster and Pablo Casals – democracy is the best and most honorable form of social life that has ever appeared in human history. I am not a prophet, and I cannot deny the possibility of its destruction at some future time. I think the main driving force that allows democratic societies to continue to prosper is this particular philosophy that I have outlined briefly: belief in the dignity and sanctity of truth, along with a belief in too optimistic that the truth is obvious, even though it may be temporarily left behind by prejudices (Popper 2016: 362–363).

Popper's views on democracy under the defences of liberalism and the link he places between liberalism and his philosophy of science are searchable because he explores the roots of social and political order in philosophical thought and theory. Therefore, to attack totalitarianism, as evidenced in the twentieth century by the fascist Italian and Stalinist regimes and the Nazi Hitler, it attacks philosophical and intellectual foundations of these systems in philosophical history and blows three with tremendous criticism. These three are Plato, Hegel, and Marx (Nouri 2010: 32).

As we have seen, Popper believes that the government plays a major role in reducing human suffering and achieving prosperity. In his view, gradual engineering should pave the way for pain reduction. In some of the tasks he outlined in his writings on the state for society and its constituents, Popper raised concerns of orthodox liberals and the problem of turning away from the principles of liberalism. It requires action beyond the policies of even a welfare state. The role that political institutions have to take on this issue is so serious in Popper's view that, in his critique of Marxists, he states that they have overlooked the possibilities of politics and its central role in advancing social terms. Popper says: "If the government considers itself the sole proprietor of property rights for the minority, they will freely exploit the majority. Thus, the state must prevent the subjugation of the subordinates by establishing social

institutions, relying on the legal power of social institutions and relying on its legal power” (Popper 2016: 918). To accomplish this important task, he even calls for the need for program policies that are an anti-liberal policy in the field of economics, and says that rational political programs can be written and implemented to support economic weakness (Ibid.: 919). Workers should not be freely exploited because of their extreme need for work (Ibid.: 918).

### *Gradual Engineering and Democracy*

Achieving prosperity can be attributed to Popper's views, the prosperity made possible by his famous “gradual social engineering” social theory. As with all his theories, he derives it from the philosophy of his science. His whole view of welfare is summed up in a sentence: “Reduce the amount of hardship and avoidable pressure to a minimum”. Those who are familiar with the type of thought, innovation, and breakthrough structure will quickly find similarities to Popper's “falsification” rule (Fouladyan et al. 2008: 148).

From Popper's point of view, “democracy” is, by definition, “ruled by the people” or “popular sovereignty”, in distinction to “aristocracy” (ruled by the best or most prominent) and royal (ruled by one person). However, the meaning of the word does not help us much, because people do not rule anywhere. It is the governments that always rule (and, unfortunately, bureaucrats or government officials, who are hard-pressed to take responsibility – if they believe in accountability at all). Governments actually fall into two types: governments that transmit power without bloodshed and governments that do not. This is what matters, not what the form of government is called. Usually, the first form of “democracy” and the second form of “dictatorship” or “despotism” are called for. There are several ways for the possible overthrow of government. The best way is through the ballot box. New elections or voting in a previously elected parliament can remove a government from power. This is definitely important. Therefore, it is wrong to insist on who should rule like many intellectuals, from Plato to Marx and even to later thinkers, argued (Popper 2018: 158).

Popper calls for a program of political intervention (complementing his ideas about protectionism) that not only protects individual liberty but also protects people from economic exploitation. In other words, Popper says: “No one should be in the dominion of others, but everyone has the right to support the government”. These ideas should extend to the realm of economics. According to him, it is unacceptable that “the one who is economically strong will still be free to force anyone who is economically weak and intimidate and deprive him of his liberty” or “force the hungry without violence”. Forced to accept ‘freely’ servitude.

Popper's response to such a situation — which he describes as “the most pivotal point in our analysis” — is to build such social institutions as to rely on economic weakness against those who have economic power. They gain legal power in the government. The government must ensure that no one has to resort to unfair economic arrangements for fear of starvation or the home of economic ruin... we must seek some kind of economic intervention to replace the legacy of capitalism (Popper 2018: 246).

Popper believes that misery and impoverishment and moral suffering directly appeal to us to try to alleviate it, though he fights with the idea that it is a positive obligation on our part to promote the happiness of others. Popper's belief in the slippability of epistemology also contributes here (Shearmur 2017: 144).

Popper insists on the importance of democratic rule. Democratic government, he said, should be seen as a rule that people can change by vote, not by force: a government that holds citizens accountable for their government's actions, if they are dissatisfied with their results, is not democracy itself. Count it a reproach. He also, in the face of Marxists, insists on the importance of such “form” of democracy and its ability to effect real change. He argues in support of this position, sometimes arguing against the authenticity of history and the authenticity of nature, and sometimes arguing that there have been real and ethically significant changes since Marx. Popper also argues that refraining it is important to resort to violence unless it is against an authoritarian government that cannot be transformed into a democratic government by any means other than force. In addition, he advocates an activist theory of government under the heading Support. According to Popper, there is an important ethical program that not requires protection against oppression, including exploitation. In this regard, he is critical of what he said in the first version of open society (Ibid.: 71).

In his open-ended society, Popper offers democracy not as a rational political philosophy, but only as an empirical model, and that such a model is far better than what has been proposed by Western philosophers, but in fact he himself in the image and defence of democracy, it has nothing to say, but sometimes contradicts. His statement that “majority voting destroys democratic institutions” is an unsolvable paradox, as if in Western political logic, democratic institutions can be achieved without the consent of the majority and have an independent identity that, by the way, supersedes the majority vote. Do not the principles of social life of human beings have a root in the religious principles that Popper's proverbs elude and therefore do not admit this fact? If democracy, in Popper's theory, is the majority's preference, then the majority vote is the basis for the formation of democratic institutions, and then “the destruction of democratic institutions by the majority” is an unforgivable inadvertence that no philosopher expresses.

### *Conclusion*

In general, gradual engineering of Karl Popper leads to liberal democracy. In Popper's view, liberal democracy requires a critical approach in which it is possible to void the votes and overthrow the rulers. So, the election of governors is not a sufficient condition for democracy. He stresses on how to choose, and also on the possibility of government rejection and cancellation. The established government and its rulers must constantly be subject to criticism and testing under the trial and error process so that if the error is discovered, it can be revoked by referring to Popper's epistemological interpretation. From Popper's point of view, the possibility of eliminating rulers and overthrowing governments is a prerequisite of democracy.

From Popper's point of view, a democratic way of building and preserving political institutions prevents arbitrary governance. Although not claiming impeccable political institutions, choosing a democratic approach in politics means that, even when efforts are made to bring about peaceful changes, even accepting a wrong policy of democracy is preferable to surrendering to a violent ruler, though wise and cynical. With this approach, egalitarian methods of democratic oversight, such as general elections and elected government, should be nothing more than experienced and relatively effective guarantees of coercion through institutions, which are not just always reformable, but they themselves have a good way of correcting them. From this point, democracy provides an institutional framework for reforming institutions. It enables them to be reformed without resorting to violence, and in this way, to make use of wisdom in designing new institutions and modifying older ones.

Popper also believes that the issue of restraining rulers and monitoring their authority is an institutional, not a personal issue. This also applies to economic power. In fact, government intervention in the economy through centralized planning entails increasing economic power, but from Popper's point of view, there must be a difference between the two forms of economic intervention in affairs. The first is designing a specific (legal) framework composed of institutions and for support. The second method is to achieve the goals set by the rulers to act as they see fit. The first can be termed "institutional" or "indirect" and the second is "personal" or "direct". It is found that in all cases democratic intervention requires applying the first method, unless this idea is not effective. In terms of gradual or fractional social engineering, the difference between these two approaches is very important.

According to Popper, nowhere social engineering is irrational and unscientific. According to him, the foundations of Plato's political philosophy, the greatest and most influential enemy of open society, is based on utopianism and historicism, both of which are considered intellectual enemies of open

society and democracy. Within the framework of a gradual social engineering model, it is always possible to verify positive observations or remove and revoke negative observations. Here are five functions of Popper's deterrent democracy in the light of the gradual social engineering perspective:

1. Democracy has the function of enabling us to change the political regime through institutions such as elections, not resorting to violence.
2. Through fractional social engineering we will be able to improve and refine our institutions to achieve our goals.
3. Accepting the critical position of citizens in government practice.
4. The gradual and democratic restraint of economic power through political power in order to tackle and partially address socio-economic problems.
5. Democratic refusal to emerge totalitarianism and prevent dictatorship.

Popper's efforts are focused on peaceful criticism and correction and avoiding harm and negative consequences without any violence. This is well reflected in his theory of democracy. According to his methodological philosophy, namely error elimination, the best way to achieve a gradual redevelopment of society is a gradual resolution of issues that it is facing. As progress in science requires continued criticism, in politics and society, the way to grow and develop is to criticize and deploy the necessary institutions and various solutions to problems and to make a gradual change based on them.

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