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Karl Popper's Vision of Democracy as the Ideal Society

**By,
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*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.A degree in
Philosophy of the University of Nairobi.*

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Declaration.

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Date: 23.2.99.....

Dedication.

To,
My family, with love.

But,
*This work belongs to all who recognise with concern the central role
of philosophy in society.*

Content.

Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	v
Definition of Terms	vii
<u>Chapter One.</u>	
Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	1
1.2 Objectives	3
1.3 Methodology	3
1.4 Theoretical Framework	3
1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Literature Review	6
Notes	15
<u>Chapter Two.</u>	
Popper's Theory of Knowledge	17
2.1 The 'Three World' concept	18
2.2 Common Sense Realism	22
2.3 Growth of Knowledge	24
2.4 Corroboration and Verisimilitude	29
2.5 Critical Remarks	31
Notes	40
<u>Chapter Three.</u>	
Epistemological Origins of Popper's Social-Political Philosophy	44
3.1 Who Should Rule?	45
3.2 Science, Scientific Attitude, and Society	49
3.3 The Three World Influences on Society	52
3.4 Critical Remarks	57
Notes	62
<u>Chapter Four.</u>	
The Open Society - Popper's Ideal Society	64
4.1 Popper's Democracy	65
4.2 Institutions of the Open Society	66
4.3 Piecemeal Vs Utopian Social Engineering	70
4.4 Popper's Political Maxims	74
4.5 Polyarchy	76
4.6 Political Paradoxes	79
4.7 The Enemies of the Open Society	83
4.8 Critical Remarks	90
Notes	100
<u>Chapter Five</u>	
Summary and Recommendations	104
Bibliography	107

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I am, however, responsible for any errors of fact, interpretation, or judgement in this work.

v

Abstract.

This work attempts to reveal and explicate Popper's Ideal Society. This is done against the backdrop of an unended quest, by social philosophers, for an Ideal Society. The study shows that unlike most past philosophers who envisaged the Ideal Society to be a utopian changeless and perfect entity, Popper conceives it as an imperfect, changing [growing] and Open Society. This Popperian Society is what the study has called Polyarchy - a term borrowed from Robert Dahl's *A Preface to Democratic Theory* and which symbolizes the epitome of the democratic process.

The work recognizes Popper's contention that the classical conception of the Ideal Society was authoritarian and mistaken. It accepts his argument to the effect that this classical conception was prompted by a faulty epistemic theory. This theory takes the validity of knowledge to be a function of its source and therefore dependant on authority. It thus tends to justify might as being right. When moved to social and political philosophy, it leads to the question 'who should rule?' and therefore to the search for charismatic, intelligent, powerful and benevolent leaders. The study notices Popper's caution that if this line is taken then it degenerates into authoritarian rule and the propagation of the 'closed' Society.

In contrast to this, the study shows that Popper's 'open' Society is based on an objective theory of knowledge. Here knowledge takes on a public outlook as emphasis is laid not on the person or source but on debate and criticism. In this perspective, Knowledge is never certain, it is perpetually hypothetical and conjectural. Since it is public, what is crucial are the social institutions that protect the method of its acquisition. These institutions also govern the conduct of the persons who proclaim this new knowledge.

The study then goes ahead to show that this conception of the problem of knowledge leads, in social and political philosophy, to the question: How can we best control our leaders? This results into the demand that a society be administered through social

institutions which protect the freedom of its members. These institutions should be controlled by the public as they themselves know what is best for them.

Although the mood that permeates through the whole work is of shared assumptions, the study challenges many of Poppers' convictions. It takes great exception to his reduction of epistemology to just methodology, his rejection of psychologism and personalism and especially his demand for near pure institutionalism. It disagrees with his belief in the rationality and objectivity of man especially when it comes to politics. It also rejects his assumption of the autonomy of the Open Society. In this process, it develops Popper's ideas further by arguing that falsification alone is not enough in the search for knowledge. It also shows that institutionalism when it disregards the personal factor cannot be a foundation of an Ideal Society.

But in the end the study adopts most of Popper's ideas and hopes that, because of their heuristic value, they will be embraced by leaders, particularly in strife torn regions of Africa, and where authoritarian regimes persist.

Definition of Terms

As some of the terms to be used in this study have not had a lot of currency, while others have a specific meaning in the study, it is pertinent to give working definitions of these cardinal terms, albeit in a preliminary way, right at the outset.

The term **Polity** is used here in the ordinary man's language to mean political organization. This usage is borrowed from the *Chambers dictionary* definition of the same.

The term **State** has been defined differently by different scholars. Max Weber, for instance, sees the State as a corporate group that has compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization and claims a monopoly of force over a territory and its population.¹ Ian Brownlie, on the other hand visualizes the State to be like a 'legal person' recognised by international law and has a definite territory, an effective government and the independence or right to enter into relations with other States.² In both conceptions, one can see that the State is viewed as a structure exercising sovereignty in society. For our purposes, we will harmonise these two views and take the State to loosely refer to "a group of people occupying a geographically defined territory recognized by other States as being independent and sovereign with a government."³

The term **Government** will be used to refer simply to "the organization within the State responsible for the management of State affairs."⁴

The term **Society** has been defined by Nwabuzor and Mueller "as a sizable community of persons who have interacted together for some considerable period of time, possessing common institutions and generally accepting common values and norms which regulate their

¹ Marx weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, NewYork: Free Press, 1964, p.156

² Ian Brownlie, *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopedia*, London: Hurst, 1979, p.74

³ C., Odegi-Awuondo, *Syracuse Memos*, Nairobi: Basic Books, 1995, p.13

⁴ Ibid.

interaction.”⁵ In order for a group of people to constitute a society, they must have attained a sense of community. And a community in this case is a group of people who have a common attachment to a given area [herein understood as a country] and who possess strong ties of identity. Even though we agree with this definition, the study has not set any special store for this term.

Past social political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau and many others used this term interchangeably with the term State, and it is in this light that this work views it (i.e society). Nnoli in his book *Introduction to Politics*, when giving a philosophical definition of the State, uses the terms State and Society as synonyms. For example under the title, ‘The Platonic State;’ Nnoli begins his sentence as follows; “Plato conceived society as...”⁶ This study intends to adapt the same usage.

⁵ E. J., Nwabuzor and M. Mueller, *An Introduction to Political Science for African Students*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p.30

⁶ O. Nnoli, *Introduction to Politics*, London: Longman, 1985, p.21

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is in a philosopher's business not only to know the best constitution but to ask what form of government nearly approaches the ideal.

Aristotle

The problem of what constitutes an ideal society and by extension good governance has always been a troublesome and a controversial issue down the centuries. Indeed the history of social and political philosophy has been a history of the quest for an ideal society. It has been a history that has endeavored "to describe the necessary and sufficient characteristics of the ideal state, the good state, or the perfect state."¹ There has always been spirited attempts by philosophers and thinkers to posit the most suitable system of government that could enhance freedom, liberty, equality, justice and happiness of its citizens.

1.1 Statement of the Problem.

Sir Karl Raimund Popper is a contemporary philosopher who has tried, like many past social philosophers, to provide a solution to the age-old problem of the ideal society. While he has contributed so much to the social political theory, he is paradoxically acclaimed mostly [and widely] for his contribution to epistemology and philosophy of science and rarely for his social philosophy. It seems to us that his philosophy of science and epistemology has absorbed philosophers' attention almost entirely to the neglect of his other important contribution to the quest for the ideal society. He is generally not considered a social-political philosopher of note. Indeed histories of social and political thought do not give him pride of place, but generally mention him only incidentally, if at all.

This is attested to by the literature that has been produced and which has focused on his ideas in epistemology and philosophy of science with very little on his social philosophy. In fact in most cases where Popper's social philosophy has been discussed, it has always been indirectly as most

philosophers have concentrated on his criticism of what Peter Winch² calls “a connected set of doctrines” or “isms” like ‘Historicism’, ‘Essentialism’, ‘Tribalism’, ‘Totalitarianism’, etc. and / or certain great philosophers like Plato, Hegel, and Marx whom he singled out for attack. Ronald B. Levinson’s book, *In Defense of Plato* and Maurice Cornforth’s *The Open Philosophy and The Open Society* are classic examples of the misplaced emphasis we are alluding to in the above statement. These scholars have failed to see the defense of democracy [Popper’s ideal society] embodied in *The Open Society and its Enemies* and also in *The Poverty of Historicism*. It is the belief of this study that this is an inadequate treatment of Popper’s social philosophy since to grasp his contribution to the problem of the ideal society, one needs to approach his philosophy as a whole because Popper’s ideal society is solidly based on his conception of the scientific method and the growth of knowledge, elucidated in his philosophy of science and epistemology.

The lack of academic scrutiny of Popper’s ideal society can also be attributed to the fact that his works in philosophy of science and epistemology are so puissant that they have made his less exacting social and political writings appear less weighty. This has led to the belief that they are not central to his thought and therefore not worthy of attention. It is the contention of this study that this assumption is greatly mistaken. The study argues that Popper’s ideal society and generally his social philosophy is not an accidental by-product; rather it grows organically out of his philosophy of science and epistemology. This is aptly shown by Popper himself in his autobiography, where he states that his social-political ideas “grew out of the theory of knowledge of *Logik der Forschung* and out of my conviction that our often unconscious views on the theory of knowledge and its central problems [‘what can we know?’, ‘how certain is our knowledge?'] are decisive for our attitude towards ourselves and towards politics.”³

Our problem, therefore, stems from the premise that there is a paucity of research, especially in Africa as pertains to Popper’s social philosophy and more particularly to his conception of an ideal society. It is our contention that Popper’s ideal society illuminated in various works has not received the necessary attention it merits. We believe that as a contemporary philosopher who has tried to address social issues present and immediate to us, Popper demands a serious academic undertaking of the kind we would like to attempt. This work, therefore, sets out to explore,

interpret and critically examine Popper's social philosophy with an aim of exposing his vision of an ideal society.

1.2 Research Objectives

Following from the statement of the problem, this study intends to achieve two objectives;

1. Reveal Popper's ideal society - through an analysis and synthesis of his philosophy.
2. Explicate this society and try to prove (or disprove) it's viability.

The two objectives aim at giving Popper's views a fitting and deserved position within the history of social and political philosophy.

1.3 Methodology

To achieve the above objectives, the study employs the philosophical method of critical and logical analysis and synthesis. It therefore reads and subjects Popper's works to a textual and conceptual analysis.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study calls to its aid the sociological and philosophical approaches, in its data analysis. These two theoretical practices are not compartmentalized and exclusive; rather they intersect and compliment each other in an attempt to give a balanced and all-round analysis of the material. The fusion of the philosophical method with the sociological theory has been found imperative because, one of our main concern is a thematic interpretation of Popper's works with special emphasis on those that are essentially social-political, ethical as well as historical. It is our belief that to understand Popper's ideal society, it is necessary to see it in the context of the 20th century thought and against the background of his own general philosophy.

In the main therefore, this work will operate within the sociological-philosophical (theoretical) model. According to this model, written (philosophical) works are a product of the society since the writers themselves belong to that same society. Plamenatz has accordingly argued that:

Every thinker, even the most abstract, is deeply influenced by the circumstances of his day. To understand why Machiavelli or Hobbes or Rousseau wrote as he did, we must know something of [sic] social and political conditions of their day and country and of the controversies then to the fore.⁴

In his monumental work, *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell also underscores the importance of recognizing the milieu from which a philosopher emerged. In the preface to the above book, he considers every philosopher as being “an outcome of his milieu” and that in him “were crystallized and concentrated thoughts and feelings, which in a vague and diffused form were common to the community of which he was part.”⁵

Thus this approach views philosophical works as a reflection of the sum-total societal experiences and values because the society and its experiences is the well from which philosophy draws its raw materials. It is inappropriate, therefore, for any critic to analyze philosophy without placing it within its social background and historical period. Time and place are important in philosophical analysis since they determine to a very large extent the nature and content of a work. This theoretical model assumes that philosophy can only be properly understood within a framework that transcends the philosophical text, a framework that takes cognizance of the society and cultural reality from which that philosophical work emerges. In the sociological-philosophical approach therefore, philosophy and society have an intimate relationship.

The sociological dimension of the model reflects the thoughts, feelings and customs of the age in which a work was written. However, it is not just a question of works reflecting their time. What counts is what a philosopher makes of the thoughts, emotions and traditions of his age. Social philosophy should thus reflect social reality and therefore, there should never be a philosopher, worth his salt and who by nature of his vocation is a critic of the society and a moral guide, who avoids the burning issues of the day.

This theoretical framework, therefore, assumes [to paraphrase Russell] philosophy to be not just an affair of the schools or 'disputation between a handful of learned men' but as 'an integral part of the life of the community.'⁶

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

The question of an ideal society has been accompanied by a proliferation of solutions, which have received a lot of discussion through out the history of political philosophy. However, there is little that is known about the contribution by Popper to this old conundrum. A majority of studies on Popper's ideas are focused on his contribution to philosophy of science and epistemology. This research is justifiable on the grounds that the few researches that have been done on Popper's social philosophy have been rather indirect as indicated in the statement of the problem. In Africa, especially, there is little that is known about Popper's contribution to social political philosophy and thus, the study hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the same.

We also believe that a scholarly pre-occupation with Popper's social philosophy is significant because he presents himself as a philosopher who has a prescription (read method) that can help alleviate many ills bedeviling a developing society. He has tried to solve problems that many societies encounter in their endeavors to civilize. These problems arise, according to him from the 'strain of civilization' which tries to force these societies back to what he calls the 'closed society.' In his works, Popper shows that one consequence of this 'strain' is the waging of political and social conflicts, which results into a society decaying politically, socially or morally and economically. He then goes ahead to suggest solutions to these problems.⁷ His contributions to policy formulation becomes quite significant here and the implication of this to developing societies especially strife torn regions cannot be over-emphasized. It is thus hoped that this work will spawn further research into the practical application of Karl Popper's ideas to society today.

It would be fitting to finish the rationale of this study with a quotation from the last paragraph of John Dewey's book, *A Common Faith*, which it is hoped gives voice to much of the arguments raised above. He writes that:

We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that interacts with nature. The things in civilization we prize most are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace of doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. *Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, and expanding the heritage of values we have received [so] that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it.*⁸ (emphasis ours)

1.6 Literature Review

As mentioned in the background to the problem, the crucial question, “What is the best form of government?” cannot be confined to the modern period; it has plagued philosophical minds for centuries. Plato in the *Republic*, for instance, sets forth his vision of an ideal State. Plato envisaged the most ideal form of government to be an Aristocracy of philosopher - kings who were highly educated and profoundly rational individuals. They were to be helped in ruling by the soldiers who were their auxiliaries. He arrived at this conclusion after analyzing the soul of an individual which he saw as a reflection of the society.

Plato divided the human soul into three elements, one consisting of raw appetites (the appetitive element), another consisting of drives and emotions (the spirited element) and a third consisting of thought or intellect (the rational element). In a virtuous person, Plato says that, each of these parts fulfills its own special duties and only does so under the guidance of reason.⁹

He then parallels this analysis of a virtuous individual to that of the ideal State, which he conceives of composing three classes, the rulers corresponding to the rational element of the soul, the soldiers whom he equaled to spirited element and the citizens who are like the appetitive element. Plato then goes ahead to show that, just like in the ideal person, an ideal State is one in which these three parts perform their unique functions harmoniously though under the dictates of the ruling class. He delineates the functions as follows, the rulers main job is to administer the State with the help of the police-soldiers who are supposed to defend the State and keep the peace. The citizens are to provide food, shelter and other essentials.

He argues that in an ideal State there can never be conflict since “each class by doing what it is best fitted to do, would be happy and contented.”¹⁰

In such a State, Plato advises that the ruling class and the soldiers should “neither have private property nor private families.”¹¹ To him, properties, wives and children are possessions which are supposed to be held in common among the rulers of the State. This according to Plato, is because the private possession of property, wives and children would disrupt civil life.¹² He argues that reproduction among the guardians in his ideal State should be specially arranged. This is for the purpose of improving “the bloodline of their posterity in intelligence, courage and other qualities apt for leadership.”¹³ Plato puts forward an elaborate education program which would prepare the leaders for their duties.¹⁴ Leadership, in Plato’s ideal State can only be taken up at the age of 50 years after many years of public service. He gave the philosopher - kings absolute powers as they were the only ones trained to know what was best for the State.

Some objections may be leveled against Plato’s political theory. Plato, it may be contended, was not egalitarian. He did not believe in the equality of all humans in their social political and economic rights. In fact his assumption that every class would be contented with their respective positions was completely misconstrued. We would like to agree with Karl Marx¹⁵ that humans are always aspiring for better positions in the society and with time, Plato’s ideal State was bound to be hit by conflict and struggle for power by the various classes. Another problem which Popper also points out in Plato’s political program, concerns the powers Plato accords his philosopher - kings. Popper finds this ideal State authoritarian as the subjects are stripped of all freedom and powers which are then handed to the kings.

Aristotle, in trying to answer the same question, found Plato’s Aristocracy of philosopher - kings too utopian and far from being practical.¹⁶ For him, much learning was not enough to make a good political leader. He argued that, leadership required the judicious application of knowledge, experience and the laws. He contended that the State was constituted for the sole purpose of facilitating self sufficiency of man, who was by nature a political animal and who often found himself entangled in politics.

Aristotle applied his principle of the Golden Mean to arrive at his conception of an ideal State. This principle advocates for moderation and choosing of the mean in all our actions. Accordingly therefore, “the happy life is the life according to virtue lived without impediment.”¹⁷ As virtue is a mean, then “the life in a mean, and a mean attainable by everyone must be the best.”¹⁸ He proceeds to argue that these “principles of virtue and vice are characteristics of cities and constitutions for the constitution is in a figure the life of a city.”¹⁹

He stressed that the ideal city must be righteous and must make its members righteous. It should be “an institution which aims at the highest good (happiness) for itself and the individual.”²⁰ Its best life should be a life of virtue properly furnished and it must have “evolved from aristocracy to tyranny and from tyranny to democracy.”²¹

In his *Politics*, Aristotle identifies three elements that make up any State. One class is very rich, another very poor and a third in a mean (the middle class). He argues that an ideal government should have a majority of the middle class, who are in the mean, as rulers. This is because “where the middle class is large there are least likely to be factions and dissensions.”²² Also “the poor and the rich quarrel with one another, and whichever side gets the better, instead of establishing a just or popular government regards political supremacy as the prize of victory,”²³ thus the poor set up a mobocracy while the rich set up an oligarchy.

Aristotle stresses that for a State to be ideal it must apply the law or constitution in all aspects of its life. He postulates that rulers are supposed to enhance the permanence of the constitution as the law “is reason unaffected by desires.”²⁴ He takes the law to be sovereign and argues that the moral requirement which makes law necessary must be incorporated as part of the moral ideas of the State.²⁵ He also argues for freedom and consent on the part of the subjects. To him, the subjects should be free to engage in politics. This in the long run would allow for subordination to the law by a willing populace. In a nutshell, Aristotle thought that the ideal government was a “constitutional democracy”²⁶ which had public interest at heart. It was supposed to be based on consensus.

Just like Plato, Aristotle did not believe people had equal rights and privileges. In his State, he relegated slaves and women to the periphery of the society. This is because, Aristotle considered the slaves to be “totally devoid of any faculty of reasoning, while free women have just a very little of it.”²⁷ Popper disagrees with this thesis and argues that all human beings have rationality and are therefore equal and free to engage in politics. On the whole, this work contends that Aristotle’s best government is not ideal as it was discriminatory and only meant for free male population.

The contract theorists (Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau) although mainly concerned with the origin of the civil society also saw the need for a good government. They all agreed that, the best government could only be realized through some kind of a social agreement or covenant but they differed on the nature and content of this contract.

Hobbes, who lived much of his time in an unpleasant turmoil,²⁸ was greatly concerned with peace and security. To him, civil peace was a primary objective of people and therefore advocated for a strong government with all its powers held by one king or an assembly of men. In the *Leviathan*, he declared that the best form of government that could ensure peace and security was a dictatorship with absolute power which can force the citizens to honor their commitments and live in peace. He was against the idea of separation of power in a State as this, he reasoned, could weaken the authority of the ruler(s).

Hobbes arrived at his conclusion after analyzing man prior to the institution of civil society. During this time, which he calls the ‘State of Nature,’ men had unlimited freedom. Due to man’s nature, which Hobbes saw as being beastly, and man’s strive for self preservation, there arose unbridled warfare of each against all, a state of chaos, mistrust and violence, in which each person stopped at nothing to gain the upper hand and life was ‘solitary, poor, short, nasty and brutish.’

In his view, for their own welfare, people transfer their collective strength and their right to defend themselves to a sovereign, the Leviathan, that use the acquired power to compel the

citizens to live together peacefully. The transfer of power and right to the sovereign means that people have entered a social contract with the ruler. This contract delivers people from the evil of the natural state to civil society and peace. The Leviathan then lays down any laws which the citizens are duly expected to obey. Hobbes stresses that the Leviathan can neither act unjustly nor can his laws be unjust as it is the custodian of the covenant. Hobbes gives the citizens the right to remove the Leviathan if it failed to provide security to them.

One objection that could be pointed out in Hobbes's theory is that, the function of a government is not just or only to maintain security - that is law and order, but also that any government has a major responsibility in her citizens welfare in terms of social, political and economic activities and status of its subjects. Hobbes also fails to see the danger of a sovereign wielding absolute (coercive) powers and more so in a situation where it is not morally or legally obliged to its subjects. The temptation to abuse and misuse this power is very high.

Locke in the *Two Treatises of Government*, and more specifically the second one, outlines his vision of a good legitimate government. For him, the best form of government is a limited government, set up by consent, which is divided into separate powers and has a system of checks and balances. He maintains that a State is created and acquires its legitimacy by an agreement or social compact on the part of its citizens. The main purpose of the covenant, for Locke, is not only to ensure the 'public good'²⁹ but also to protect natural rights. Unlike Hobbes, who thought that each subject gives up his right to the Leviathan in exchange for peace and security, Locke asserted that each subject entrusts his rights to the State for safeguarding.

In the limited government that Locke espoused, government authority was to be divided into separate branches with the main ones being the executive and the legislature. He sees the central function of government as law making for "it is only through the law that people are assured of equal, fair and impartial treatment and are protected from the arbitrary exercise of power by the government."³⁰ He stresses that the people who make the laws should not execute them as well. He gives the Federative branch the power to make war and peace. He

maintains that the best form of government must be a servant of the people as its powers are entrusted to it by them. The will of the people is to be determined by the majority. Locke strongly advocates for the natural right to property although he believes that this depends on one's ingenuity and industriousness. He therefore allows for unequal distribution of wealth and by extension capitalism. In fact, we would say that Locke's political theory contains "most of the important elements of democratic principles as we know them today."³¹

Although Popper agrees with much of Locke's assertions, there are two things that he objects to. The first, concerns John Locke's insistence on private property. Locke argues that a major reason for people coming together to form a commonwealth is the protection of private property. He fails to see the extent to which economic power can be a danger to good governance. Locke also fails to see what Popper calls the paradox of democracy. For Locke as long as the majority vote is respected then that would make an ideal government. Popper then posits the question ; what if the majority vote for a party that may destroy the democratic institutions that Locke vehemently tries to protect? For instance in Nazi Germany.

Initially Rousseau held that in the state of nature where there was no civil society, people were innocent, good, happy, healthy and enjoyed perfect freedom. All this changed with the advent of private property. Later in *The Social Contract*, he came to think that in an ideal society, people surrender their individual liberty for a more important collective liberty. This is realized through a social contract where people agree to unite into a collective whole called 'a state.'³² Through this State they enact laws which reflect the general will which represents the true will of each person. The general will is determined through a majority vote. Rousseau was opposed to the division or separation of power in a State although he allowed the State to commission a few people to enforce the law. He gave the citizens the right to terminate the social contract thereby removing the officials of the State.

One danger that can be pointed out in this social arrangement is that, it dissolves each associate plus all his rights in the community which is paradoxically an entity in its own right. As the State is a moral person independent of the individuals who make it, there is the problem of alienation. In fact it is the contention of this work that this thesis provides

justification for totalitarianism as experienced in the Eastern European countries especially the former Soviet Union. Popper also disagrees with Rousseau's position and finds it irrational and totalitarian. For him (Popper) the most important thing in any social setting is the individual and not the body politic. Popper thus advocates for a political theory that recognizes the centrality of individuals (and reason), and at the same time one that tries to unite these individuals into an "open society."

Mill, who was a utilitarian maintained that happiness was the ultimate end of all action and desire. For him, the best form of government was one founded and based on the principle of utility. This was because, it was only such a government that could produce the greatest benefit to its citizens. He argued that an ideal State could only be attained by a representative democracy. Mill realized the dangers to liberty posed by the suppression of the minority points of view by the majority and thus emphasized checks and balances to the government. These were like proportional representation, universal suffrage and State directed education.

This type of government was supposed to limit or confine its authority to the provision of essentials and not to deal with anything that could be done more effectively by private individuals themselves. This government was to permit unrestrained personal liberty up to the point where an individual's activities could bring unhappiness to others. Liberty, to Mill, was very essential to the general happiness.

Mills' doctrine of "freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects" can easily lead to anarchy since it is hard to give a clear extent to which individual freedom will bring disastrous effects and unhappiness. This can encourage unhealthy competition in a society close to Hobbes' "state of nature."

For Karl Marx, the ideal society, which is yet to come will have no classes, no wages, money, private property and above all no exploitation. He argued that, in this society the State will provide each subject with an adequate material existence and would have avail to every citizen chances to develop freely and completely his physical and mental facilities. Marx held that this ideal society will finally arise as a consequence of the historical process that consists of the

dialectical interplay between social institutions and the forces of production.³³ According to Marx, the dialectical interplay between the social relations and the economic activity involves class warfare and in the long run will result in the overthrowing of capitalism by the working class - the Proletariat. Ultimately a classless society will be created. The class struggle drives history to what Odera Oruka in his book *The Philosophy of Liberty* call the 'communist social order' where the proletariat after liberating itself puts an end to itself as a class. This liberation and the abolition of class domination results into the liberation and freedom for all.

Although Marx's political theory is plausible, it has some weaknesses. Firstly, Marx seems to be saying that history will end in its development with the coming of a communist social order. This is so because the force, or class struggle, which drives history will cease to exist in this classless society. This conclusion is not tenable as it cannot be proved logically and/or scientifically as Popper has pointed out in *The Poverty of Historicism*. Secondly, Marx seems to believe in the "automatic radical transformation of all social systems."³⁴ He predicted that capitalism as a system was going to crumble in a very near future. However, experience shows that capitalism has been able to outsmart the predictions of its demise while socialism or communism is crumbling in its strong hold in Eastern Europe. Marxism ignores the "possibility of the human will in diverting or containing what is historically necessitated."³⁵

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The foregoing historical sketch shows that the question: what is the best form of government constitutes a problem which has not been solved. Popper on his part follows and builds on the earlier philosophers' contributions although he rejects many of their assumptions. He discards most of these assumptions because they are prompted and informed by a faulty epistemic belief - the belief that in our quest for knowledge we can attain certitude and therefore on the authoritarian proof of our knowledge claims. According to Popper, this belief has tended to lead towards authoritarianism and the neglect of human reason. It is obtained from 'organismic' or subjective knowledge, which demands the knower to establish its truth with certainty; hence acquiring the status of a justified belief.

This knowledge defies critical discussion as it is contained in us. Popper contends that this has a direct bearing on our political outlook. For instance, the above fetters rationality which is man's

greatest endowment, and which can only thrive in a free environment. Freedom, Popper observes, sets free man's critical powers - which makes him learn from his mistakes - and thus allows for improvement and non violent change in society.

Poppers ideal society, therefore, is one founded on the belief in human reason and which allows rationality [or critical discussion] to prevail and non-violent reform to take place. This society can only be founded on an objective approach to knowledge, where our claims to knowledge are put to examination by others. To grasp this relation, we are going to discuss in the next two chapters the connection between subjective knowledge, of traditional epistemology, and authoritarianism or totalitarianism, and Popper's objective knowledge and his concept of the open society. But first, lets examine his theory of knowledge which will shade light on the other issues that will be raised in the course of this discourse.

Notes.

- O. Nnoli, *Introduction to Politics*, London: Longman, 1985, p.21.
- P. Winch, "Popper and the Scientific Method in the Social Sciences," in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, P. A. Schlipp (ed.), Illinois: Open Court, 1974, p.889.
- K. Popper, *Un Ended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*, London: Routledge, 1992, p.115.
- J. Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, Vol. 2., London: Longman, 1961, p.xv.
- B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961, p.7.
- Cf., *ibid.*, p.8.
- Cf., K. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London: Routeledge, 1966 and also his *Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Paul, 1960.
- J. Dewey, *A Common Faith*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1939, p. 93
- Cf., Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, Warmington, E. H. (ed.), New York: The New American Library, 1956, pp.66-8
- F. Ochieng'- Odhiambo, *A Handbook on some Social Political Philosophers*, Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1994, p.6.
- B. N. Moore, *Philosophy, The Power of Ideas*, California: Mayfield, 1990, p.286
- W. Boyd, *Plato's Republic for Today*, London: Heinmann, 1962, p.84
- Moore, Op. Cit., pp286-287
- Plato starts to describe his education system that would prepare his rulers for leadership from the end of book two through book three and then book five and part of book six in *Republic*.
- The Marxist school sees man as historically locked in social conflict. Social antagonism are expected to increase as history unfolds.
- Cf., Aristotle, *The Pocket Aristotle*, Kaplan, J. (ed), New York: Pocket Books, 1958, p.330
- ibid.*
- ibid.*
- ibid.*, pp. 333-4
- J. Nyasani, *The Metaphysics of the Cosmos and Related Issues of Metaphysics*, Nairobi: School of Journalism, (U.O.N), 1996, p.96

ibid.

Aristotle, *Op. Cit.*, p.332

ibid.

Ochieng'-Odhiambo, *Op. Cit.*, p.10

Cf., *Ibid.*, pp 11-12

By constitutional democracy, we mean a legitimate government based on laws set up by a convention. Legitimacy is acquired through an acceptance of leadership by a willing populace.

Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, *Op. Cit.*, p.3

During Hobbes' time, Europe was swept by a period of chaos and warfare. For example, in England, there was a rebellion against King Charles which resulted into the 1642 civil war. Political anarchy therefore may have forced Thomas Hobbes to think that civil peace should be of utmost importance to any person.

Locke argues that the purpose of government is to make laws for the regulation and preservation of property, to defend the community against external aggression and to protect man's natural rights.

J. Locke, *Two treatise of Government*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1960, p.97

Ochieng'- Odhiambo, *Op. Cit.*, p. 34

B. Russell, *Op. Cit.*, p.670

Unlike Hegel who conceived the driving force in history as being the 'world spirit', Marx and Engels saw it as class conflict. This conflict occurs only between men in an economic structure. In every stage of historical development, each class seek to satisfy its needs at the expense of the others. This results into conflict.

H. Odera Oruka, *The Philosophy of Liberty*, Nairobi: Standard Textbooks, 1991, pp.33-34

ibid., p.34

Chapter Two.

Popper's Theory of Knowledge.

I see the problem of knowledge in a way different from that of my predecessors... Epistemology I take to be the theory of scientific knowledge.

Karl Popper

Indeed this study has recognised the fact above and from the outset insists that in order to grasp Popper's theory of knowledge, one must view it in contrast with the classical conception of epistemology.

Traditional epistemology has tended to see the problem of cognition as revolving around the theory of ordinary or common sense knowledge. It has grappled with the question; How is reliable knowledge possible? This has arisen mainly when philosophers reflect on the ability of the human mind to attain certitude. Human knowledge, therefore, has been seen as what everybody, should 'know': that 'the cat is on the mat'; 'grass is green' et cetera. On the contrary, Popper approaches the theory of knowledge as the problem of the growth of Scientific knowledge. For him, epistemology is supposed to be concerned with the growth or progress of knowledge and how to achieve it. He consequently argues that, "the central problem of epistemology has always been and still is the problem of the growth of knowledge" and to him, "the growth of knowledge can be best studied by studying the growth of Scientific knowledge."¹

At this moment, it is imperative to note that Popper takes the idea of growth of knowledge to be the central aspect of his epistemology. He asserts that the "fundamental problem of the theory of knowledge is the clarification of investigation of this process by which it is here claimed, our theories grow or progress."² This assertion is opposed to the epistemology of earlier philosophers like Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Descartes, the logical positivists and Russell which was concerned with the genesis, affirmation at times

negation of the possibility of knowledge and the quest for a secure and stable basis for such knowledge.

From the foregoing, Popper identifies the existence of two different senses of knowledge. The first, which he terms, 'knowledge in the subjective sense'; consists of " a state of mind or of consciousness or a disposition to behave or to react."³ This is the common sense or ordinary usage of the word, 'I know' or 'I am thinking.' It is subjective because it stems from the subjectivist or relativist position which conceive "of knowledge only as a special kind of mental state, or as a disposition, or as a special kind of belief characterised, for example by its history or by its relation to other beliefs."⁴

The second is what he calls 'knowledge in the objective sense.' This objective knowledge consists of problems, and linguistically formulated expectations submitted to critical discussion. It is human knowledge made up of "the logical content of our theories, conjectures, guesses, [and if you like, of the logical content of our genetic code]."⁵ This knowledge is exemplified by theories published in books, monographs, journals or stored in microfilms, computers etc. Popper argues that this knowledge is "totally independent of anybody's claim to know, it is also independent of anybody's belief or disposition to assent or to act. Knowledge in the objective sense is knowledge without a knower; It is knowledge without a knowing subject."⁶ At this juncture, we would like to outline, albeit briefly, Popper's idea of the "three worlds" which we hope will elucidate his categorisation of knowledge into subjective and objective poles (senses).

2.1 The 'Three World' Concept.

In contrast to the common cartesian dualistic view that there are only two worlds: the world of matter and energy and the subjective world of conscious experience, Popper proposes three worlds as follows:

World 1 or the material world consist of physical objects and states, biological structures and actions of living beings. It also includes tools, machines, books, computers, libraries and even our bodies and brains. This is the cartesian world of matter and energy.

World 2 is the mental world, the world of conscious experiences and includes our perceptual experiences - visual, auditory, tactile, pain, hunger, joy and also our memories, thoughts and planned actions or our 'dispositional intentions.' This is the world of subjective knowledge or subjective world of conscious experience.

World 3 is the world of objective knowledge or 'public' knowledge and consists of the objective contents of thoughts especially those thoughts that underlie scientific, artistic and poetic expressions. It is in this world that all theoretical systems, problems, and problem situations, critical arguments and the contents of journals, books, museums et cetera are to be found. This is the universe of the products of our minds as it is here that records of human intellectual efforts are contained. This records can be in the form of written records, paintings, sculptures, ceramics, ornaments, tools, etc.

However it is important to recognise that the knowledge coded on the structures is what constitutes world 3. The material structures, in themselves, are products of world 1. To clarify this better, we would say that the whole effort of archaeology, for instance, should be considered as an attempt to uncover and discover the world 3 of ancient civilisations. Knowledge in the third world, therefore, has an objective existence regardless of anybody's claim to know it [or about it.] Although autonomous, world 3 is a man made product resulting many times from the planned and unplanned human actions.

Popper states that the world three theories can never fully be justified or verified but they can be tested.⁷ Their 'objectivity' consists in the fact that they can be inter-subjectively tested and submitted to rational discussion and criticism. It is for this reason that;

what we call 'scientific objectivity' is not a product of the individual scientists impartiality, but a product of

the social or public character of scientific method and the individual scientists impartiality is, so far as it exists, not the source but rather the result of this socially or institutionally organised objectivity of Science.⁸

Popper continues to argue that there is interaction between these worlds with world 2 being the mediator between world 1 and world 3. At this point we would like to highlight that Popper is a dualist and thinks; (a) that our mental activities do somehow make a difference in the physical world; and (b) that the world of ideas exerts an immense though indirect influence upon the physical world (world 1) through the mental world (world 2), as in the case of technology or as in the case of the application of theories.

We would like to raise one objection to this popperian categorisation which we find to be highly abstract and speculative. He takes mediation and influence as clearly causal concepts. And if we are to take seriously this three-worlds hypothesis, mental activities must be seen to be as somehow causally efficacious in bringing about changes in the physical world. But Popper does not explain in which form this interaction takes place i.e. physical or spiritual. Human language belongs to all the three worlds; to world 1 in its use of physical actions and symbols; to world 2 in its expression of subjective or psychological states; and to world 3 in its descriptive and argumentative function.

This three world conception of the universe augments Popper's contention, which will be discussed in a little while, that "the traditional epistemology of Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Russell is irrelevant" and also that "a large part of contemporary epistemology is irrelevant also."⁹ This is because traditional epistemology has been studying knowledge in the subjective sense which to Popper is not in the province of epistemology but psychology. He relegates traditional theory of knowledge to psychology because it concentrated on world two which is our mental world. He points out this in his book *Objective Knowledge*, where he writes that,

Since Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and their school which includes not only David Hume but also

Thomas Reid, the theory of knowledge has been regarded as a specially kind of human belief, and scientific knowledge as a specially secure kind of human knowledge. The essays in this book break with a tradition that can be traced back to Aristotle - the tradition of this common sense theory of knowledge.¹⁰

This common sense conception of knowledge and which Popper has termed the 'bucket theory of the mind' holds that there is nothing in our intellect which has not entered it through the senses. Man therefore learns, most, if not all, of what he 'knows' through the entry of 'experience'¹¹ into our sense openings. Knowledge is, thus, made up of ideas, impressions, sense data which are contained in us. The subjectivists, especially empiricists proceed to declare that there is immediate or given undiluted or direct knowledge that is certain, secure and stable. To them, knowledge is acquired by the association of ideas. This association is strengthened by repetition. In the long run, this results into the creation of expectations in us, and in this way belief emerge.¹² True belief, therefore, consists in our trust in unfailing association and vice versa for false belief.

Popper regards this subjectivist position mistaken and a blunder which has dominated Western philosophy. He maintains that the above position has nothing to do with his scientific knowledge. He rejects the subjectivist - common sense - theory of knowledge because it is premised on false assumptions: that the subject is involved in the quest for certainty. This, he argues, has led to the belief, that sense data or elements provided a stable and secure basis of all knowledge. But to Popper, "far from this, these data or elements do not exist at all. They are inventions of hopeful philosophers who have managed to bequeath them to psychologists."¹³ He also takes cognisance of the fact that physiology has shown that our sense organs are fallible. This tells us that our subjective 'data' can never act as a standard of certainty. To make matters worse, our theories transcend our experience or common sense knowledge, and are theory laden. He notes that scientific hypotheses typically go far beyond available evidence, not only in their universality, but in their exactitude, and they typically involve highly theoretical ideas that have no analogue in experience.

It follows from the above reasons that common sense cannot be elevated to a secure starting point in the sense of a standard truth. Thus the earlier philosophers like Descartes, Kant, Hume, and even the logical positivists erred in their choice of subjective experiences as stable and secure frames of reference. In fact for Popper, 'security and justification of claims to knowledge' are not his problem. He states that traditional epistemology with its concentration on knowledge in the subjective sense is irrelevant to the study of scientific knowledge and epistemology.

What is relevant to epistemology is "the study of scientific problems and problems situations of scientific conjectures, of scientific discussions, of critical arguments and of the role played by evidence in arguments; and therefore of scientific journals and books and of experiments and their evaluation in scientific arguments."¹⁴ In brief what Popper emphasises is that the study of world 3 of objective knowledge is of great importance to epistemology. He therefore erects a theory of knowledge in which the knowing subject, the observer, plays an important but a very restricted role. This is the common sense realism or the search light theory of knowledge.

2.2 Common Sense Realism [The search Light Theory]

This theory holds that as children we learn to decode the chaotic messages which we encounter from the environment. We learn to sift them and pick out those which are of biological importance to us. Learning to decode messages is complicated but is based upon innate dispositions. Our subjective knowledge thus consists of maturing innate dispositions. This process becomes excellent with time such that we decode messages as if it were 'immediate' or 'given'.

Popper regards this process by which we learn as a certain kind of change or modification in our dispositions to react and not as an [ordered or classified or associated] accumulation of memory traces, left over by past perceptions. These modifications are

closely related to our 'expectation' particularly disappointed expectation. An expectation, in this case, is a preparation for reaction which is adapted to or which anticipates a state of the environment yet to come about. The process of learning largely consists in corrections or rather, in the elimination of certain disappointed expectations.

When he moves to science, Popper finds the "bucket theory" inadequate in explaining the process of acquiring experience and also the method used in research and discovery. He states that experience cannot, in itself constitute raw material out of which we can construct science. He contends that in science, it is observation and not perception which is important. He defines an observation as a planned and prepared perception. Observation is, thus, always preceded by a particular interest, a question or a problem. Generally, an observation presupposes the existence of some system of expectations. At every stage of scientific development, therefore, we live in a 'horizon of expectation'.¹⁵ Normally the "horizon of expectation" act as our frame of reference. The function of observation therefore is to test the validity of our expectation, which are mainly formulated in the form of hypothesis. In some cases, especially when observations clash with certain expectations, our frame of reference is destroyed. In such instances we are forced to reconstruct or rebuild our horizon of expectations: "that is to say, we may have to correct our expectations and fit them together again into something like a consistent whole."¹⁶

In this way our horizon of expectation is raised to and reconstructed on a higher level. When this occurs we can claim to have reached a new stage in the evolution of our knowledge. This whole process is characteristic of Popper's scientific method where theories or hypotheses (i.e. horizon of expectation) guide and lead to new observational results. Hypotheses thus undergo the test of observation in the course of their being critically examined. If they fail the examination, then new hypotheses are put forward. And this, in essence, is what Popper calls growth or progress in science. It leads us directly to the question of Popper's conception of growth of knowledge

2.3 Growth of Knowledge.

We would like to indicate from the beginning that Popper adopts certain basic assumptions in his epistemology. First, he believes in realism¹⁷ - the theory that there is an objective reality existing out there, in time and space, and which is independent of us. Secondly, Popper holds that there is no secure starting point, although our starting point is common sense and that our great instrument for progress is criticisms.¹⁸ He asserts that our knowledge begins from a vague starting point and builds on insecure foundations as common-sense assumptions can be challenged, criticised and at sometime rejected. Thirdly, he assumes that science and philosophy are in search for truth.¹⁹ He takes truth to be correspondence with the facts [i.e. the rehabilitated and refined correspondence theory of truth by Alfred Tarski].²⁰

Following from the last assumption, Popper erects a metaphysical idea of ideal truth: according to it, previous or existing knowledge is modified, rejected, improved on in the hope of approaching nearer to truth. This whole process employs the 'method of science' which is essentially "the method of bold conjectures and ingenious severe attempts to refute them."²¹ Here it is necessary, and important, to mention that Popper's scientific method is opposed to the commonly employed principle of induction, which, like Hume, he proves to be logically untenable. We will not go into a detailed exposition of Popper's solution to this problem of induction since it is not immediate to the purposes of our present study.

But briefly, in his solution to what has been called Hume's problem or the problem of induction, Popper shows that the claim that an explanatory universal theory is true cannot be justified by assuming the truth of certain test statements or observational statements. He argues rightly that universal statements cannot be derived from singular statements but can be contradicted by a singular statement. Now, this means that he denies the existence of inductive logic. This is as a result of the fact that, Popper presumes that the failure of its predictions is enough to show that a theory is false but that the success of its

predictions is never enough to show that a theory is true. No matter how many successful predictions you might have, it is always possible that they are due to the truth of some other theory that makes the same predictions. Thus, invoking the logical rule of Modus Tollens [i.e. $P \rightarrow Q, \sim Q, \therefore \sim P$] and the asymmetry between verifiability and falsifiability in relation to the logical form of universal statements, he submits that verification [and/or justification] is impossible as scientists can only subject their theories to falsification by testing them but can never verify them.

He then builds a theory of Hypothetical Deductivism which allows scientific status to theories that are capable of being falsified, refuted or tested. From this theory of hypothetical deduction, human knowledge is found to be permanently hypothetical or conjectural. This is very well captured by his contention that;

we shall have to get accustomed to the idea that we must not look upon science as 'a body of knowledge' but rather as a system of hypotheses; that is to say, as a system of guesses or anticipation's which in principle cannot be justified, but which we work as long as they stand up to tests and of which we are never justified in saying that we know that they are 'true' or 'more or less certain' or even 'probable'.²²

After destroying the foundations of inductivist epistemology Popper reconstructs an evolutionary epistemology on this basis. As no number of confirming instances can prove with certainty the truth of a synthetic proposition and therefore destroys verification and justification he takes, on logical grounds, falsification to be his rule of the growth of knowledge. Hence while in traditional epistemology knowledge grows by an accumulation of sufficient positive evidence that prove or verify a belief, in Popperian epistemology, we are constantly in a state of uncertainty, continually modifying, altering or rejecting our theories in the light of critical discussion of them. Knowledge, therefore grows by "the repeated overthrow of scientific theories and their replacement by better or more satisfactory ones."²³

This brings us to the idea of preference of one theory over another. How and why do we accept one theory in preference to others? Popper argues that this:

preference is certainly not due to anything like an experimental justification of the statements composing the theory; it is not due to a logical reduction of the theory to experience. We choose the theory which best holds its own in competition with other theories, the one which not only has hitherto stood up to the severest tests but one which is also testable in the most rigorous way. A theory is a tool which we test by applying it and which we judge as to its fitness by the results of its applications.²⁴

Knowledge, for Popper, grows through a method of trial and error, where by an unfit theory is eliminated through criticism. The paradigm of knowledge-growth is, therefore, taken to be the Neo-Darwinian theory of evolution through natural selection. According to this theory, the composition of a population during the course of time is determined and controlled by natural selection whereby certain variants are eliminated and others become more prevalent. Neo-Darwinians take plants and animals as always developing changes or mutations due to the demands of the environment. Accordingly, those rare mutations that facilitate better adaptation to the conditions of life are those likely to resist elimination by natural selection. The less adapted mutations are eliminated by extinction of the plants or animals, which are the carriers of such bad mutations. They either fail to survive, or produce so few offspring's that they ultimately die out.

To illustrate his notion of the growth of knowledge, Popper compares the plant and animal world with the struggle for existence of our hypotheses. He takes a hypothesis to be comparable to a mutation. Instead of producing new mutations, human beings sometimes advance new hypothesis or theories. If they are uncritical, those who support ill adopted or bad hypotheses are eliminated. Rational critical discussion, therefore, enables us to eliminate bad hypotheses and to dismiss them as erroneous without eliminating their proponents. In other words, the critical method enables us to recognise the falsity of our hypotheses and to condemn them - without condemning those who

support them. To clearly capture the relation between the Neo-Darwinian theory of evolution and Popper's idea of the growth of knowledge, we will outline twelve theses that he has put forward so as to clarify his position.

- (1) "All organisms are constantly, day and night, engaged in problem-solving, and so are all those evolutionary sequences of organisms...
- (2) These problems are problems in the objective sense: they can be, hypothetically, reconstructed by hindsight...
- (3) Problem-solving always proceeds by the method of trial and error: new reactions, new forms, new organs, new modes of behaviour, new hypotheses, are tentatively put forward and controlled by error elimination.
- (4) Error-elimination may proceed either by the complete elimination of unsuccessful forms (the killing-off of unsuccessful forms by natural selection) or by the (tentative) evolution of controls which modify or suppress unsuccessful organs, or forms of behaviour, or hypotheses.
- (5) The single organism telescopes into one body the controls developed during the evolution of its phylum...
- (6) The single organism is a kind of spearhead of the evolutionary sequence of organism to which it belongs (its phylum) it is itself a tentative solution probing into new environmental niches, choosing an environment and modifying it. The individual organism, and its behaviour, are both trials, which may be eliminated by error elimination.
- (7) Using **P** for problem, **TS** for tentative solutions, **EE** for error-elimination, we can describe the fundamental evolutionary sequence of events as follows:

$$P_1 \rightarrow TS \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$$

- (8) To give an idea of the multiplicity of the tentative solutions or trials possible, the scheme could be rewritten as :

$$\begin{array}{c}
 TS_1 \\
 P_1 \rightarrow TS_2 \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2 \\
 \cdot \\
 TS_n
 \end{array}$$

- (9) The schema can be compared with that of Neo-Darwinism where there is in the main one problem: the problem of survival. There is as in our system, a multiplicity of tentative

solutions - the variations or mutations. But there is only one way of error elimination - the killing of the organism.

- (10) In the system, not all problems are survival problems. Note that the solution to an early problem P_1 may lead to a new problem P_2 ...
- (11) The theory here proposed distinguishes between P_1 and P_2 and it shows that the problems (or problem situations) which the organism is trying to deal with are often new and arise themselves as products of the evolution
- (12) The schema allows for the development of error-elimination controls; that is, controls which can eliminate errors without killing the organism; and it makes it possible, ultimately for our hypotheses to die in our stead."²⁵

This schema describes and captures in a formula the process of how knowledge grows through error-elimination and systematic rational criticism. In essence, what Popper asserts is that knowledge (science) progresses from problem to problem. "It is the problem which challenges us to learn; to advance our knowledge; to experiment and to observe."²⁶ This process consist mainly in the modification and refining of our existing knowledge towards the goal of truth which Popper says is unattainable. Popper's knowledge has no secure or solid foundation; everything is guesswork (or conjecture) and everything can be false.²⁷ If this is the case, the question that comes to ones mind is: what is the mark of progress if all our theories remain forever guesses, hypotheses?

In answering this question, Popper states that progress in science is determined and dominated by the 'criterion of relative potential satisfactioness'. This criterion chooses as preferable the theory "which contains a greater amount of empirical content (information), which is logically stronger, which has the greater explanatory and predictive power; and which can therefore be more severely tested by comparing predicted facts with observations."²⁸ Popper emphasises that this criterion should not be confused with high probability in the sense of the calculus of probability: for content increases with increasing improbability. What this means is that, a theory should make daring predictions which prohibit certain things from occurring. The more it prohibits,

the more the probability of it to be falsified. Hence the higher the content, the higher the improbability or rather the possibility of falsification. Therefore,

since a low probability means a high probability of being falsified, it follows that a high degree of falsifiability or refutability or testability is one of the aims in fact precisely the same aim as a high informative content. The criterion of potential satisfactionness is thus testability or improbability.²⁹

He augments the above contentions by invoking his ideas of corroboration and verisimilitude, which the study would like to outline in brief.

2.4 Corroboration and Verisimilitude

The study has shown that, for Popper, all human knowledge consists of guesses, conjectures or hypotheses. But at the same time it has shown that, it is possible on purely logical grounds to prefer some guesses or conjectures to others. As indicated earlier, a testable but an unrefuted theory with greater explanatory power will be preferred to its falsified rival. Drawing from his fallibilism which warns us of the possibility of falsity in a preferred theory, it is prudent Popper proceeds to argue, to continue testing and falsifying it. Hence a theory that has withstood many severe tests is said to be well 'corroborated'. Such a corroborated theory, Popper submits, should also be compatible with certain accepted basic statements which can be derived from it. According to Popper this degree of corroboration does not however depend on the number of corroborating instances but on the severity of the various tests to which the hypothesis in question can be, and has been subjected. This severity of tests is in its turn measured by the degree of testability of a theory and therefore on its simplicity. He contends that "the hypothesis which is falsifiable in a higher degree, or the simpler hypothesis, is also the one which is corroborable in a higher degree."³⁰

The degree of corroboration is therefore not equivalent to probability, for a well corroborated theory is in most cases the less probable in evidence. Preference between competing theories is therefore made on the basis of corroboration. But, Popper advises us to note that corroboration does not prove the reliability of a theory. In fact, for him, we can never be certain that we are progressing toward better theories or that our knowledge is actually growing. "There is no assurance that we shall be able to make progress toward better theories."³¹

What then underlies this quest for more refined knowledge? Popper argues that the whole process of preference and corroboration is driven by the idea of truth; which to him, as we indicated earlier, is illusive and unattainable. He therefore prefers to talk of verisimilitude or truth likeness or approximation to truth. He asserts that a theory with greater content and explanatory power will also possess greater verisimilitude if it is best corroborated. For him, therefore, "the search for verisimilitude is a clearer and a more realistic aim than the search for truth."³²

He thus shows that while we can never have sufficient arguments for claiming that we have actually reached the truth, we can have strong and reasonable arguments for claiming that we have made progress towards the truth. This, he does by putting forth three requirements which must be met for knowledge to have progressed. They are; one, theories should be developed with greater content from some simple new and powerful unifying idea about some connection or relation between hitherto unconnected things or facts or new theoretical entities. Secondly, new theories should be independently tested. Lastly the new theories should pass some new severe tests.³³ In short what these requirements ask of a new theory is to account for everything that the old rival theory had accomplished and something more.

Thus we have reached a point where one can see that Popper's epistemology assumes the aim of a scientist as being not to discover absolute certainty but to discover better and better theories capable of being put to more and more severe tests. This means that these

theories must be falsifiable since it is through their falsification that science [and knowledge in general] progresses. As a closing remark for this exposition, it would be appropriate to quote Xenophanes of Colophone who captures the mood of Karl Popper's epistemology in the following phrase:

The gods did not reveal, from the beginning,
 All things to us ;but in the course of time,
 Through seeking we may learn, and know things better.
 But as for certain truth, no man has known it,
 Nor will he know it; neither of the gods,
 Nor yet of all the things of which I speak.
 And even if by chance, he were to utter,
 The perfect truth, he would himself not know it:
 For all is but a woven web of guesses.³⁴

2.5 Critical Remarks

In these critical considerations the two guiding questions will be: how does Popper's alteration of the problem of knowledge fair given his rejection of the traditional theory of knowledge? Secondly, how can we reconcile his epistemology with his rejection of the principle of induction [rather his solution to the problem of induction.]

After dismissing classical epistemology as irrelevant, it is worth noting that Popper reduces the whole problem of knowledge to just a theory of scientific method. Epistemology for him becomes the logic or rather the rules that govern scientific discovery. This means that epistemology is to be understood merely as the methodology used in 'the game of science'³⁵. This reduction has many implications.

First, Popper narrows his approach to the problem of knowledge and ignores the traditional relation between the knower and the known which he sees as not worthy of consideration.³⁶ In this regard he fails to see the history of epistemology as being, in a large measure, a history of the great debate about whether man could know anything in the ordinary sense of 'know' with two parties at play - dogmatists and sceptics.³⁷ This

narrow approach to the problem of knowledge excludes so much of human knowledge that was the essence of classical epistemology.

This³⁸ can be readily understood if one remembers, as Osotsi Mojola³⁹ has aptly shown, Popper's close relationship with empiricists and particularly the logical-positivists. Logical positivists admitted knowledge only that which satisfied the conditions of their verification principle. Unfortunately for them this principle excluded a large number of propositions including certain scientific theories and all metaphysical assumptions. What they admitted as knowledge was scientific knowledge in general, in so far as it was grounded in the empiricist-positivistic belief in the primacy of sense knowledge and of course if it passed the criterion of meaningfulness. On his part, Popper adopts the same procedure but replaces the criterion with his - which is testability or refutability or falsifiability. This, we insist, is also just like the logical-positivist approach which he claimed to have killed, very limited a scope for an elaborate theory of knowledge, the kind traditional epistemology grappled with.

The narrowness of Popperian epistemology, according to J. Habermas, stems from the fact that Popper is operating within the limitations and confines of technical reasons and positivistic science. In his book, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Habermas⁴⁰ believes that knowledge is determined by interests, with three types of sciences corresponding to the three fundamental human interests. First, there is the empirical analytic sciences, which is driven by the motive of technical control. Here the prevailing 'paradigm' lays down rules for determining the meaning of possible statements, the construction of theories and their critical testing. Moreover, this knowledge must possess predictive value in a hypothetical deductive manner. This approach to knowledge strives for detachment, objectivity and universality.

Secondly, there are the historical-hermeneutic sciences, which is predominated by practical interests with the act of understanding and interpreting becoming supreme. In this category, detachment and objectivity are not necessary, as Popper insists, since these

sciences consider the interpreters pre-understanding, his world, culture, and language. Lastly there is the systematic sciences of action or the critically oriented sciences like sociology, political science, and economics. These sciences are determined by an emancipatory cognitive interests and employ the power of self reflection. They produce nomological knowledge and are also concerned "with going beyond this goal to determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such, and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed."⁴¹ They seek to release man from 'dependence on hypostatized powers.' They therefore have an emancipatory cognitive interest.

This reduction becomes problematic when Popper refuses to confine himself to the growth of knowledge in science but proclaims to be referring to all human knowledge. He becomes mistaken when he asks us to employ his criterion of the sciences as a basis for validating or assessing all human knowledge. For instance he states that;

although I shall confine my discussion to the growth of knowledge in Science, my remarks are applicable without much change, I believe, to the growth of pre-scientific knowledge-that is to say, to the general way in which men and even animals acquire new factual knowledge about the world. The method of learning by trial and error, of learning from our mistakes - seems to be fundamentally the same whether it is practised by lower or higher animals, by chimpanzees or men of science. My interest is not merely in the theory of scientific knowledge but rather in the theory of knowledge in general. Yet the study of the growth of scientific knowledge is, I believe, the most fruitful way of studying the growth of knowledge in general. For the growth of scientific knowledge may be said to be the growth of ordinary human knowledge *Writ large*.⁴²

Such an approach is mistaken because to understand ourselves and our reality, our orientation in knowledge must be broad and holistic and not narrow as Popper tries to advance.

Some other scholars like Habert Marcuse, T.W. Adorno, and Jean Piaget have also pointed out the constricted nature of Popper's epistemology. Piaget⁴³ in fact denounces Poppers narrow approach to knowledge and argues that the study of the growth of

knowledge cannot be confined to purely deductive or logical considerations alone. For him, sciences should be conceived as being in a circle of complementarity with interdependence between the various sciences, which also have a reciprocal relationship with each other. All the above, point to the limited scope of Popperian epistemology.

But assuming we accepted Popper's reduction of epistemology to conventions. Here also there is a host of issues to be raised. For one, he moves the epistemological problem into the realm of metaphysics. This is because, as we have already shown, his epistemology can be simplified to mere methodology which is neither scientific nor epistemological but metaphysical as he has rightly conceded.⁴⁴ This methodology cannot be tested or verified, it is based on a faith, on a metaphysical belief in the validity of logic. In fact the criterion does not justify science but is justified by science, as Popper invokes the history of science to strengthen his position.

Further, the main pre-occupation of this 'metaphysical' theory of knowledge is to shoot down our theories. Popper assigns science the task of clearing away the older growth of mistaken theories and their replacement by better ones. "It is not the accumulation of observations which I have in mind when I speak of the growth of scientific knowledge, but the repeated, overthrow of scientific theories and their replacement by better or more satisfactory ones."⁴⁵

The trouble with this negative methodology is that it is pre-occupied with the idea of testing. What it asks of a scientific theory and the criterion by which it judges it, is that it shall stand up to test. Yet testing in science, as in any human activity, is by nature only a diagnostic procedure. It does not express the function of the activity, it only marks out conditions for it. Scientific theories, we would like to argue, are not invented for the purpose of passing tests any more than courses in driving or medicine. Whatever it is for which we want theories, it is not to test them: so that this certainly cannot be a criterion to show that a theory does what we want of it.

Popper's epistemology, therefore merely, consists of a set of rules for appraisal of already articulated theories. It just gives advice to guide our reasoning and to make our experiments productive, but in the end the advice is always about the testing of theories and not about their content. Popper thus explicitly eschews the problem which concerned traditional epistemology for centuries.

Another dangerous, and at the same time tragic, consequence of Popper's theory of knowledge is its inherent [total] scepticism. Popper holds that all theories are not only unprovable but are also improbable and refutable or disprovable. They are just guesses, hypothetical and provisional in nature. To him therefore

science does not rest upon solid bed rock. The bold structure of its theories rises as it were above a swamp. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp but not to any natural or given base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure at least for the time being.⁴⁶

Following from this, he concludes that the search for certainties or solid bases or foundations should be abandoned. What we should strive for is truth, which in the long run will always be elusive. Scientific knowledge should therefore be taken as being hypothetical as it will remain forever questionable, uncertain and unverifiable. It is built on a hope, a guess based on other conjectures and which can possibly be false. Popper's truth thus becomes an illusion which can be replaced by conjecture. Deducing from this one can, in passing, conclude that there is no difference between guesswork, opinion and knowledge in Popper's epistemology.

This epistemology, therefore, fails to appreciate the traditional epistemology, which was pre-occupied with the definition and distinction or differentiation of truth [knowledge] from opinion or belief or guesswork, '*episteme*' from '*doxa*.' This distinction which lay at the core of many a theory of knowledge is what Popper negates. This we declare is a scandal characteristic of Popper's general philosophy which dismisses a very serious issue

[problem] in philosophy as not important or irrelevant.⁴⁷ In fact we contend that Popper's advice to regard all knowledge as 'provisional guesswork' is unreasonable. It seems to us that he maintains this position because he tends to regard a theory as an end in itself.

Things are made worse when one considers Popper's dismissal of induction as irrational, following Hume's rejection of the same. Popper then, to rehabilitate rationality, proposes his hypothetical deductive method in knowledge which employs the idea of falsification. We would like to argue that, although on the surface he seems to have evolved a viable solution to the problem of induction; Popper has utterly failed. First, the application of scientific laws do involve the anticipation of future successes and therefore induction. Secondly, instead of facing the problem of induction head on, Popper bypasses or evades it. Thirdly, he fails to see the implication of an epistemology without induction which has been forcefully brought to light by Russell and others who prove that without induction, knowledge is impossible; they argue that we cannot speak of growth of knowledge or even that deductive inference will lead to true conclusions. In any case, Russell asserts, belief in logic can only be validated on inductive grounds.

Imre Lakatos, for example tried to solve this dilemma of an epistemology without induction and ended up adopting 'a conjectural principle of induction' in the context of Popper's theory of knowledge with the idea that our knowledge can actually grow without our knowing it. This led him to denounce Popper's fallibilism⁴⁸ as being "nothing more than scepticism with an eulogy of science," and dismissed Popper's theory of verisimilitude as being "a metaphysical-logical theory which has nothing to do with epistemology."⁴⁹ It is no wonder then that, Witkins, a student and most ardent follower of Popper admitted that "in critical discussion of Popper's epistemology [we usually find] the suspicion that far from solving the problem of rational choice between competing hypotheses his methodology really leads to thorough going scepticism."⁵⁰

Hence this and other cited reasons forced Lakatos to arrive at the conclusion that "the logic of the growth of knowledge must include - in addition to Popper's logico-

metaphysical theory of verisimilitude, some speculative genuinely epistemological theory connecting scientific standards with verisimilitude.”⁵¹ He also judged that without such a speculative inductive principle, Popper’s theory would lead to total scepticism. For him therefore “only some such conjectural metaphysics connecting corroboration and verisimilitude would separate Popper from the sceptics and establish his point of view in Feigh’s words ‘*as atertium quid*’ between Hume’s and Kant’s epistemologies.”⁵²

All this came after he had realised⁵³ the scepticism and pessimism, which we had alluded to earlier, inherent in Popper’s epistemology. P. Feyerabend,⁵⁴ with his anarchistic epistemology also bears out what has been discussed. There are many other Philosophers like C. S. Pierce, A. Levinson, and T. Settle who find Popper’s epistemology without induction not acceptable. We will not discuss them all as we hope we have underscored our point.

The point we are actually belabouring is that knowing involves both inductive and deductive approaches. There are certain things that science and human knowledge in general assume inductively [and metaphysically] although we may not be able to prove them with certainty. Kuhn⁵⁵ seems to have grasped this in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* where he differentiates between Normal science, where scientists operate or work within a paradigm, and Revolutionary science; here the paradigm that used to guide scientists is hit by anomalies forcing some scientists to rebel and shift to a new emerging paradigm that also lasts as long as it helps in ‘puzzle solving’ and serious anomalies are not discovered, as yet.

Lastly, we would like to point out that even after rejecting verificationism and inductionism, it is interesting to note that Popper unconsciously and at times consciously admits this same principle. For example he acknowledges that the “scientific method presupposes the immutability of natural process, or the principle of the uniformity of nature.... It expresses the metaphysical faith in the existence of regularities in our world [a faith which I share, and without which practical action is hardly conceivable.]”⁵⁶ One

is then forced to wonder how this faith is acquired if not through some kind of concretization of our beliefs [into faith] by the repeated association of confirming or positive instances and thus verification!

Other cases where his acceptance of induction has come to the surface in his writings include his answer to J. Agassi in *Conjectures and refutations* where he writes that "I admit that there may be a whiff of verificationism here; but this seems to me a case where we have to put up with it...." On the same page he admits that "science would stagnate and lose its empirical character if we should fail to obtain verifications of new predictions."⁵⁷ The study would like to argue that this Popperian use of both deduction and whiffs or residues of induction points to inconsistency in his thought, as at one time he vehemently discards induction, and therefore we question its integrity and "unity." We also contend that this inconsistency augments our earlier assertion that a theory of knowledge cannot do without both induction and deduction i.e. verification and falsification. Popper's falsification and especially his claim to have solved the problem of induction should be seen as it is - as some kind of 'glue' which he is using to join together an earth's surface broken or cracked by a serious earthquake.

We would like to argue that Popper's pre-occupation with science and especially the reduction of epistemology to methodology is responsible for his mistaken theory of knowledge. In fact, Popper's methodology is not strictly speaking an epistemology in the classical conception of a theory of knowledge; rather it is a meta-epistemology or more precisely a philosophy of science, as it is concerned with the nature and more importantly the logical analysis of scientific theories and explanations which fall directly within the scope of philosophy of science. And if this may be the case, then Popper's theory of knowledge is just half the story, as presently it seems to be only a matter of taste whether one favours Popper's position or Kuhn's, Lakatos' or Feyerabend's.

But as a last remark it is imperative to acknowledge that, in spite of what we have just said as pertains to Popper's 'epistemology'; we would like to admit that, in so far as, it is

a method for helping to construct and appraise scientific theories or hypothesis, this falsificationism is very productive and informative. This is not only because it takes into consideration man's susceptibility to error and therefore warns him in advance, but also because it is well corroborated by the history of science. For purposes of our present concern we will concentrate on this successful and productive side of it that bellies his ideal society as his social philosophy is "an application of the ideas of the *logic der Furshung*."

In the following chapter, therefore, we are going to discuss how this answer to the epistemological question influenced Popper's conception of the ideal society. This analysis is imperative because, firstly, as one easily sees, most great social-political philosopher's [from Plato to Marx] have had their roots in related views not only of social and political development but of logic and science and ultimately of epistemology; and Popper is no exception. Secondly, if according to popperian thesis theories remain hypothetical and subject to falsification then it means that people actually living in the real world are operating with imperfect knowledge. And if the people living in the world are operating with imperfect knowledge, then you need a society that accommodates these conditions, the human conditions. This leads us directly to Popper's concept of the open society. But before we move to an exposition of this popperian society, we would like to clearly show, in the following chapter, how his epistemology informed his society. This will therefore be done through a discussion of the connection between his theory of knowledge and his open society.

Notes

- ¹ K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London: Gutchingson & Co., 1957, p.15.
- ² K. Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1972, p.35.
- ³ Ibid., p.108.
- ⁴ K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, New York: Harper Torch Books, 1965, p.225.
- ⁵ Popper, *Objective Knowledge*. Op. Cit., p.109.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ He discusses this in his solution of induction in his books; *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., and *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit.
- ⁸ K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2, London: Routledge, 1966, p.220.
- ⁹ Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p.108.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., preface.
- ¹¹ Experience in this case is taken to consist of all information received through the senses.
- ¹² Cf., Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., pp.62-63 and also pp.341-361.
- ¹³ Ibid., p.63.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.111.
- ¹⁵ For a scientist the horizon of expectation consists to a considerable extent of linguistically formulated theories or hypotheses.
- ¹⁶ Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p.345.
- ¹⁷ Cf., Ibid., pp.37-44.
- ¹⁸ Cf., Ibid., pp.33-34.
- ¹⁹ Cf., Ibid., p.44 and also p.319.

- 20 Cf. A. Tarski, "The concept of Truth in formalised languages" in *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*. Clarendon: Oxford, 1956, pp.67-89. See also K. Popper, *A World of Propensities*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.33.
- 21 Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p.81.
- 22 Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.262.
- 23 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.215.
- 24 Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.107 and also p.131.
- 25 Cf., *Ibid.*, pp.242-244.
- 26 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit. p.222.
- 27 Popper argues that we are merely groping around in the dark since our theories are mere conjectures and that every thing can be false as we have no criterion of proving our claims to knowledge especially in the light of our fallibility. To him, the history of science is a history of irresponsible dreams, of obstinacy, and of error.
- 28 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.217.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p.219.
- 30 Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.262.
- 31 Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p.17.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p.57.
- 33 Cf., Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.240-248. These requirements are also explained in Popper's, *In Search of a Better World*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.39.
- 34 As quoted from Popper's *In Search of a Better World*. Op. Cit., p.47.
- 35 Cf., Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit.
- 36 Cf., Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p. 111.
- 37 Cf., A. Musgrave, *Common Sense, Science, and Scepticism; A History of the Theory of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1993
- 38 We are referring to Popper's action of reducing epistemology to a set of rules.

- 39 Cf., A. O. Mojola, *Popper's Theory of Knowledge*, Unpublished M.A thesis; U.O.N, 1977. p.39
- 40 Cf., J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, London: Heinmann, 1972.
- 41 Ibid., p.310.
- 42 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., pp.216.
- 43 See his numerous works where his Genetic Epistemology is elaborated. The cited argument was found in his book *Psychology and Epistemology*;
- 44 Cf., Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.278.
- 45 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.215.
- 46 Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.111.
- 47 He has also dismissed the earlier demand by Philosophers, for the clarification and definition of the words one is using to express himself.
- 48 Popper means by fallibilism the idea that all men are fallible; that they are susceptible to error and therefore , we should always take this fact in consideration in our search for truth.
- 49 I. Lakatos, "Popper on Demarcation and Induction," in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, Book 1, P. A. Schlipp (ed), Illinois: The Open Court Publishing co., p.257.
- 50 C. Witkins, "Hume, Canarp, and Popper" in *The Problem of Inductive Logic*, Lakatos (ed), Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1968, pp.277-78.
- 51 Lakatos, "Popper on Demarcation and Induction," Op. Cit., p.261.
- 52 Ibid., p.260.
- 53 Cf., Lakatos, "Falsification and the Method of Scientific Research Programs" in *Criticism and Growth of Knowledge*, Musgrave (ed), London: Routledge, 1971.
- 54 Cf., P Fayerbend; *Against Method*, London; New Leaf Books, 1977.
- 55 Cf., T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago; Chicago University Press, 1970.
- 56 Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Op. Cit., p.252.
- 57 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.248.

Chapter Three

Epistemological Origins of Popper's Social-Political Philosophy

The theory of knowledge sketched in the preceding sections seems to me to have important consequences for the evaluation of the social situation of our time, a situation influenced to a large extent by the decline of authoritarian religion. This decline has led to a wide spread nihilism: to the decline of all beliefs, even the belief in the human reason, and thus in ourselves. But... the relativistic and the nihilistic arguments are all based on faulty reasoning.

Karl Popper

Indeed, Popper holds¹ that the traditional question of political theory - 'who should rule?' has a certain similarity with the traditional question of the theory of knowledge. This similarity he contends can help us find a new and more appropriate guide to our quest for an ideal society.

The traditional epistemological question according to Popper, was and still is: "what are the best sources of our knowledge - the most reliable ones those, which will not lead us into error and to which we can turn in case of doubt, as a last court of appeal."² As shown earlier, he assumes that no such ideal and infallible sources of knowledge exist; and that all 'sources' of our knowledge may lead us into error at times. He thus replaces the question of the source of our knowledge by the question: "is there a way of detecting and eliminating error?"³

He argues, correctly that, the question of the sources of our knowledge, like many authoritarian questions is a question about origin. This question asks for the origin of our knowledge in the belief that knowledge may legitimise itself by its pedigree. He observes that in most cases there is an unconscious metaphysical idea behind this question, which presumes the existence of "pure certain knowledge, an unattained knowledge, a knowledge which derives from the highest authority of an independent nobility."⁴

On the other hand, his modified question, 'how can we detect error?' derives from the conviction that pure, unattained and certain sources do not exist, and that questions of origin and purity should not be confounded with the questions of validity and truth. The proper answer to this new formulation of the question about knowledge, according to Popper, becomes: "by criticising the theories and the conjectures of others and if we can train ourselves to do so by criticising our own theories and speculative attempts to solve problems."⁵ This position is what he calls 'critical rationalism.'

Employing this critical rationalist approach, his answer to the traditional epistemological questions such as; 'how do you know that? What is the source or the basis of your assertion? or upon what observation is your claim founded?' becomes:

of course I am not saying that I know anything, my assertion was only meant as a conjecture, a hypothesis. But if you are interested in the problem that I tried to solve by my tentative conjecture, then you can help me. Try to criticise it as severely and as objectively as you can! And if you can devise an experiment which you think might refute my assertion then I am prepared to do anything in my power to help you refute it.⁶

He draws relation between the above traditional fundamental question about authoritarian sources of our knowledge and fundamental question in social political theory of 'who should rule.'

3.1 Who Should Rule?

By and large, political philosophers have regarded the most important question as being who should rule? or rather who should be supreme? with their differing philosophies seeking to justify different answers: a single man, the well born, the rich, the wise, the strong, the good, the majority, the proletariat, and so on. Popper observes that such an approach wrongly assumes that political ruler's are sufficiently 'good' or 'wise' or 'infallible.' He contends that the above question is mistaken. First it leads to the paradox of sovereignty. Where,

if say power is put in the hands of the wisest man he may, from the depth of his wisdom adjudge: 'not me but the morally good should rule!' If the morally good has the power, he may say, 'being saintly it is wrong for me to impose my will on others. Not I but the majority should rule!' The majority having power, may say, 'we want a strong man to impose order and tell us what to do.'⁷

Popper cautions that, the form of the theory of sovereignty which demands the superiority of the law is open to the same objection.

Secondly, the question, 'who should rule?' or more specially, 'where should sovereignty lie rest on the assumption that ultimate power must be somewhere. Those who believe that this question is fundamental, tacitly assume that political power is essentially unchecked. They assume that someone has power and that he who has the power, whether an individual or collective body can very nearly do what he wills, and that he can strengthen his power and thereby approximate it further to unlimited or unchecked power. They also assume political power to be essentially sovereign. This leads to the idea of how to get power into the best hands.

Popper contends that if this assumption is made, then it leads to the question 'who should be sovereign?' Hence the belief in the theory of unchecked sovereignty. He points⁷ out that such a theory of sovereignty omits a very important question: of whether we should not strive toward institutional control of the rulers by balancing their powers against other powers. In fact for him, the question 'where should power ultimately lie?' eliminates before it even rises, the possibility of control over rulers, whereas this is the most important thing to establish. This is the theory of checks and balances, which he advocates. In this case, there is division of power, both political and economical, with no one governmental institution being left strong enough to influence or direct another. Society is therefore made up of different or even conflicting power centres which impose checks and balances to each other.

Lastly, Popper finds the question 'who should rule?' as mistaken because, it implicitly implies the idea that there exists a common good, which is the function and obligation of rulers to bring about. Yet how to interpret the obligation of rulers to seek the common good, poses formidable problems. He finds little meaning in the notion of a common good especially when seen in the light of modern societies which have a diversity of groups, associations and interests. Moreover politics in the modern State stimulates the formation of relatively autonomous associations of all kinds - political, social, cultural, economical etc. The idea of monist common good thus clashes with the pluralist reality, where conflicts rather than consensus has gradually come to be understood as normal, and for Popper, even a healthy characteristic of political life.

In view of the foregoing, Popper concludes that the old political question is wrongly put. He therefore proposes to replace it with a modest question which borrows from his picture of the theory of knowledge. This question is: "How can we organise our political institutions so that bad or incompetent rulers [whom we should try to avoid, of course but whom we might get all the same] can do minimum amount of damage?"⁸ In other words, how can we minimise both the likelihood of the occurrence of misrule and, when it does, its consequences? According to him, an answer to this question will give a better and reasonable theory of the State and its institutions. He is of the opinion that the only theoretical foundation for any ideal society lies in the answer to this 'much modest question.'

His answer to this question finds solace in a democracy, or the open society, since it is only the democratic institutions that are designed to enable us to get rid of bad or incompetent or tyrannical rulers without bloodshed. He argues that "democracy provides an institutional framework that permits reform without violence, and so the use of reason in political matters."⁹ At this moment, the study will not examine this answer as this will be done in the next chapter. But if we may proceed, it is instructive to note that for reason to prevail in society, Popper impresses upon us to adopt a scientific attitude to the conception and solution of social political problems in [this] society.

This attitude is essentially of conscious trial and error; and it consists in formulating social policies in the form of hypotheses, which are susceptible to falsification and which are then put to rigorous tests, or attempted to be falsified. When any policy or hypothesis has been falsified, a new one is formulated in the light of the resulting social or epistemological situation. Just like scientific theories Popper argues that, these hypotheses or social policies should always be advanced in a form which makes it possible for the investigator to learn from his mistakes.

In essence, this is what forms the hinge on which his attack on utopian holistic social engineering, which will be examined later, turns. In anticipation of our later discussion, we would like to point out that Popper regards the properly scientific attitude to questions of governance and of social policy as being that of 'piecemeal social engineering,' which consists of concentrating on one social problem at a time and making little changes and adjustments. He emphasises changing particular institutions rather than society as a whole: that is, we should deal with problems of one institution one at a time, leaving the rest of social life alone - at least for the time being. For him, complex structures, whether intellectual, social, administrative etc., are only to be created and changed by stages, through a critical feedback process of successive adjustments. ¹¹

He sees an analogy between the scientific institutions and the political institutions of democracy. While the scientific institutions makes it possible for the communication, discussion and free criticism of hypothesis within the scientific community, the democratic institutions allow the discussion, criticism and modification of social policies. To augment this relation, lets examine, albeit briefly, his conception of science and society.

3.2 Science, Scientific Attitude and Society.

Popper does not look upon science as a finished enterprise. Indeed, he does not conceive it as an enterprise that could possibly be finished. "Science" he states, "is not a system of certain or well established statements; nor is it a system which steadily advances toward a state of finality."¹⁰ He looks upon the history of science as being progressive and revolutionary but in the main continuous. In this, he differs from traditional empiricists and inductivists who regarded science as progressive but non-revolutionary and continuous. He also differs from other philosophers of science like Kuhn and Feyerabend who seem to regard science as being revolutionary and non-progressive but radically discontinuous.

He contends that science advances by great conjectural leaps forward and with rigorous efforts to determine not if these conjectures are true, but whether they are false. However, these great leaps take place within a continuity tradition¹¹ where the emphasis falls upon the publicity and criticism of the results of scientific investigations.

In this regard, he takes science as being a perpetually open system; which is constantly changed and enlarged, and which grows everyday to embrace more of nature. He does not see science as an ideal system that might embrace nature as probabilistic [positivistic] philosophers like Carnap do. His vision differs radically from other philosophers of science whose eyes are always fixed on a finished scientific system, with their analysis always being clouded by the ideal relation between the parts that will be found on the day when the system will be finished, like a puzzle. Science, he says, should be viewed "simply as a going concern, a growing concern and very much the concern of every body."¹²

Since it is a concern of everybody, he stresses the part played by argument and criticism in science. His picture of the scientist is no longer of a young man with a audacious theory devising an experiment that challenges nature to prove him wrong. Rather he is pictured now as a sceptical but benign person discussing a problem with his colleagues and unravelling it strand by strand until they are rationally persuaded to prefer his explanation

to another. In this critical approach, experiments are relied upon in rejecting one explanation over another. This scientific method does not, therefore, relieve us of the need to attend to the positive evidence of a theory as some philosophers think; instead it binds us to discussing this evidence if we are to be practical.

Here, it may be helpful to note briefly that Popper at this point puts forth an institutional theory of progress, which identifies social institutions that enhance conditions of scientific progress. Among the institutions he mentions in outlining this theory, are laboratories, scientific periodicals and books, libraries, universities and schools and ultimately language. To him, language and writing are social institutions without which scientific progress is unthinkable, since without them there can be neither science nor a growing and progressive tradition. He takes science and specifically scientific progress as:

the results not of isolated efforts but of free competition between hypotheses and ever more rigorous tests. For science needs ever more competition between hypotheses and ever more rigorous tests. And the competing hypotheses need personal representation, as it were: they need advocates, they need a jury, and even a public. This personal representation must be institutionally organised if we wish to ensure that it works. And this institutions have to be paid for, and protected by law.¹³

When he comes to matters of governance and generally to those of social organization, he demands for an 'open society' equivalent to the "open scientific system" detailed above. He regards the two main tenets of the open society as: first, that free debate and especially debate about the wisdom or otherwise of government decisions, should be possible within a society and should exert an influence on politics; and secondly; that institutions should exist for the protection of the poor and the weak; that is, the State must protect its citizens from physical violence by means of legal and social institutions, and must also shield them from abuse by economic forces.

According to Popper, this 'open society' is something we find our way into by getting out of the 'closed' society. So its characteristics are to be defined in opposition to those of the closed society - "which lives in a charmed circle of unchanging taboos, of laws and

customs which are felt to be as inevitable as the rising of the sun, or the cycle of the season, or similar obvious regularities of nature.”¹⁴ The closed society is characterised by ‘a magical attitude’ as opposed to a scientific one. Its members think that the rules current in their society which ‘forbid or demand certain mode of conduct’ are as fixed and inviolable as natural laws. So they never think of altering them, since the magical attitude decries as taboo any questioning of anything that gives cohesion and identity to society. Usually such questioning is met with severe punishment.

This situation is exemplified by the traditional, animistic and tribal societies where the individual early man came into the world dominated by abstractions, kingship relations, forms of social organisations and government law, customs, traditions, alliances and enmities, rituals, religions, myth, superstitions, languages etc., all of which were man-made but none of them made by him, and most of them not amenable to alteration by him either or even open to questioning by him.¹⁵

The ‘truth’ was to be kept inviolate and handed on unsullied from generation to generation. Accordingly, this led to the development of social institutions like mysteries and priesthood. At present it has resulted into the emergence of schools of thought. “A school of thought of this type never admits a new idea. New ideas are heresies and lead to schisms; should a member of the school try to change the doctrine, then he is expelled as a heretic.”¹⁶ Popper says that, a society founded on such line is like a kingdom of the unreasonable since all the norms of conduct are laid down and strictly enforced, so that individuals are not allowed to exercise their personal judgement as to what is right. In such a society personal responsibility is replaced by tribalistic taboos and totalitarian irresponsibility of the individual. It leads to the privileging of dogmas, taboos and irrational ‘truths’.

He cautions that, this attitude of the closed society is continued today, especially in societies in which the State undertakes to regulate more or less the whole of the citizens’ lives. Presently though, this whole process has taken a religious appearance, as in the

Islamic fundamentalist societies like Iran, where no one can impugn or contradict the 'sacred truth', or a secular appearance, as in the totalitarian societies like the former soviet union (U.S.S.R), before it disintegrated and especially before *perestroika*, where free examination of the official truth was forbidden in the name of communism. To both these systems, one can include Nazism and Fascism. These societies are closed because they involve forced, sometimes voluntary, abdication of the right to criticise, the right to be free. According to Popper, without the right to criticise, rationality deteriorates and society is impoverished.

For a society to escape from such a situation, he demands an inauguration of a new era of rationality and critical spirit, of scientific attitude in governance, moral and social issues. And this means that it is not the first or second but the third world that would go on to have a determining influence on the development of this society. As indicated earlier the, first world comprises of the material objects, the second the subjective and private precincts of the mind and the third, the products of the spirit. The difference between the second and the third world reside in the second being composed of the entire private subjectivity of each individual, the non transferable ideas, images, sensations and feelings of each person, whereas the products of the third world, although born in the individual subjectivity, have become public; e.g. scientific theories, governmental or judicial institutions, ethical principles etc. Popper differentiates between three periods that each world can or did predominate.

3.3 The 'Three World' Influences on Society.

During the primitive stage of the history of human civilisation, it was the first world that regulated existence. Society organised itself as a response to brute force or the rigors of nature like drought, threat from world beasts etc. In the tribal animistic and magical society, society organised itself around the second world, although the boundaries between the second and the third worlds was very tenuous and was continuously

evaporating, for the living or the religious authority imposed a subjectivity before which the subjects relinquished theirs.

Popper, places the present 'closed' totalitarian or authoritarian regimes in this category; where the third world remains almost stationary as the society's life goes on within a strict routine through rules and beliefs that protect the permanency and the repetition of what is already established.

In his 'open society,' the critical spirit 'cracks' the walls of the closed society thereby exposing humanity to individual responsibility. It is here that the third world becomes significant as one's condition is no longer of the submissive subject, who adheres unquestioningly to the complex system of prohibitions and orders that govern social life, but of the citizen who makes personal judgements and analysis and eventually rebels against what seems absurd, false or abusive. This critical attitude and rationality, in general, gives birth to freedom which in turn places a heavy load on human shoulders: the obligation to decide what is beneficial and what is harmful, of how to confront life's challenges, of whether society is functioning as it should or whether it should be changed.

From the foregoing, one can easily see why Popper emphasises the importance of the third world in his philosophy. First, man's third world creations have a central place in the environment to which he has to adopt himself and which therefore shape him. This "objective reality stand against each man shaping him from birth, making him human, determine almost everything about his life yet remaining quasi-autonomous."¹⁷ Secondly, their objective existence in relation to him, mean that he can examine them, evaluate them and indeed make wholly unexpected discoveries within them.¹⁸ This leads to a prosperous growth of the scientific attitude and hence non-violent rational criticism gains privilege.

Drawing from this, Popper argues in his book *Objective Knowledge* that, in the long run, it is possible to replace killing [world 1] and intimidation [world 2] by impersonal arguments [world 3].¹⁹ All this is made possible because of the objective or public

character of man's third world creations. They are open and can be presented for debate, unlike the objects of the second world of traditional epistemology which defy discussion as they are contained in us, forcing the carrier to establish their truth by all means including intimidation and terrorism.

The latter is what Popper terms pseudo-rationalism and he traces it from Plato's intuitionism. For him, this is "the immodest belief in ones superior intellectual gifts the claim to initiated, to know with certainty and with authority."²⁰ This belief has, in part, resulted in the emergence of dictators and authoritarian regimes, especially in Africa where these rulers are held in high esteem like the feudal kings, the know-it all individuals, keen to be associated with divine authority at the total disregard of the electorate, and wielding excessive power with or without the backing of the constitution which in most cases, has been manipulated repeatedly to suit their hold onto power. Mostly these rulers have been placed above the law as if they are infallible. One consequence of this action has been the decreeing of the rulers as omniscient with the resultant suppression of all criticism of the official creed and official [although in most cases it is personal] decision of this ruling elite.

On his part Popper is vehemently opposed to this attitude of suppressing the very activity (i.e. critical debate), that is essential for knowledge to grow or improvement in social life. For him, criticism, which he equates to the existence of freedom, is the foundation of progress. He contends that, without criticism, without the possibility of 'falsifying' our theories and social policies, there can never be any possibility of advancement in science or improvement in society. He therefore advocates an attitude of readiness to listen to critical arguments and to learn from experience. This attitude or reasonableness is the same employed in science where there is the belief that in search for truth we need co-operation and with the help of argument we can attain something like objectivity and progress. This attitude considers the argument rather than the person arguing.

In politics like in science, Popper contends that reason grows by way of mutual criticism. The only possible way of 'planning' its growth is to develop those institutions that can

safeguard the freedom of this criticism, that is, the freedom of thought. This can only be achieved if leaders and the general citizenry become aware of one's limitations. He observes that, we must be intellectually modest to realise how often we can err and how much we depend on others even for this knowledge. To put it differently he seems to be saying that, it is by narrowing the range of our ignorance that we increase the breadth of our knowledge. This, therefore, suggest the idea that nobody should be his own judge, and that we should be 'scientifically' objective and impartial in our actions. On the other hand this assertion is bound up with the idea that our critics have a right to be heard and to defend their arguments. It thus implies the recognition of the claim to tolerance.

The idea of impartiality begets that of responsibility; since we are not only to listen to arguments, but we have a duty, an obligation to respond, to answer where our actions affect others. Ultimately in this way, Popper links rationalism with the recognition of the necessity of social institutions to protect freedom of criticism, freedom of thought and thus freedom of all men.²¹

In summation, we would like to highlight that, according to Popper, the methodology of science is institutionalised and made public. And, to him, it is this institutional and public aspect of science that help to protect the scientific method and to contribute to the continuing progress of science. Just like in science, he takes virtually all continuous progress within a society as dependant upon institutional and methodological factors. He believes that in society as in science, our best hope for continuing progress, lie not in ingenious and charismatic individuals but in institutional protections of freedom and an institutional means of correcting social and political policies that have failed to meet the test of experience.

To him, all scientific and social political theories are in the nature of conjectures that can be criticised. Scientific theories are subject to criticism based on correspondence with observable facts. In social, political or moral issues, no comparable method is available

although we can employ the scientific attitude if we want to improve our society. He therefore asks for intellectual courage, honesty and tolerance in uncovering contradictions. This is essential to the search for both better explanations and better plans of actions.

On the whole, Popper is hostile to all forms of authoritarianism. He embraces the values of critical rationalism as detailed above. He is sensitive to the limits of reason thus argues that it can operate primarily negatively by criticism and refutation. And just as reason can offer no certainty in science, he argues that, it offers none in morality, justice or politics. He rejects the notion that reason can identify basic incontestable principles- principles of nature or morality from which valid scientific or social or moral conclusions may be safely be derived.

Just like there is no point of rest in science, Popper notes that society in general no equilibrium state of adaptation can be reached by any one application of the method of trial and elimination of error. First, because no perfect trial solutions to the problems of society are likely to be offered; secondly, because the emergence of new structures involves a change in the organisational and environmental situation. New problems of organisation may become manifest; and in consequent, new pressures, new challenges, more problems may arise as a result of structural and organisational changes which have arisen from within society.

He thus points out the major significance of public debate. Critical debate permits our policies to die for us, whereas the uncritical method of the fanatic demands that we testify as martyrs to our policies; if they are faulty, we perish with them. He postulates that, vigorous criticism, revision and re-examination of our policies should replace the violence of the struggle for power. To him a revolutionary change in our ideas, can deputise for the violent revolution in politics which have claimed so many human lives.

Therefore, Popper demands a society to be tolerant to criticism and open to change. His idea of the open society is founded on a basic decision in favour of rationality. This faith

in reason implies the idea of impartiality and tolerance, and includes the rejections of all claims to authority.

3.4 Critical Remarks.

One glaring feature of Popper's social philosophy is his vague, spurious and at times inadequate conception of rationality. The study intends to expose this by drawing from his philosophy. As one easily deduces, he sees human action in society as problem solving and exemplifying the same generic schema $[P_1 \rightarrow TS \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2]$ ²² that epitomises the growth of knowledge. An unsuccessful action [TS] in the schema, subjected to criticism [EE] confronts the agent with a problem [P₂]. He argues that, actions are rational only as attempt at solving problems or removing difficulties. This is an echo of his thesis that "a theory is comprehensive and reasonable only in relation to a given situation and can be rationally discussed only by discussing this relation."²³

He, accordingly, states that people act adequately or appropriately to the situations in which they find themselves.²⁴ In *Conjectures and Refutations*, for example he presents the scientist's problem situation in terms of the alleged aim of science: the rationality of the situation requiring choice of a theory with properties of improved empirical content, independent testability, simplicity and unity, and whose novel predictions survive testing.²⁵ But, the study would like to argue that this conception of rationality is very vague. For one, in and out of science there are many situations which have no rationally obvious line of conduct, a fact that Popper neglects.

We would like to argue with Richard Foley that rationality is essentially goal oriented and that corresponding claim about the rationality, or irrationality, or pseudo-rationality, according to Popper, of an individual's actions or beliefs are at bottom claim about how effectively an individual is pursuing his goals. And since claims about how effective an individual is pursuing his goals can be made from a variety of perspectives,²⁶ then no single perspective is the privileged perspective from which assessment of rationality are to

be made. The point that is important here is that the force of one's 'reasons' can be understood only by someone who is familiar with the particular perspective within which the reasons are offered.

The problem with Popper's conception of rationality is that, he takes the narrow usage of it in science [i.e. scientific rationality] and parades it as rationality in general. This, of course, is in accordance with his persistent attempt to equate rational thoughts with his account of the hypothetical deductive method in science. He thereby disregards what Foley calls 'epistemic rationality.'²⁷ What this suggest is that there is a dimension to our social life which Popper's formal schema of hypothesis and falsification fails to illuminate. Paul Bernays²⁸ concurs with this assessment. He feels that Popper's view of rationality is too restricted. He takes exception to an identification of rationality with the critical spirit only. To him rationality goes beyond such a mere selective function.

This Popperian misconception can be traced back to his interpretation of David Hume's rejection of induction. Hume had insisted, correctly, that we cannot infer the validity of a law from observed cases. He then concluded from this that there can be no rationality in the assumption of a natural law. It seems to us that Popper takes this assertion literally while what Hume really showed was that we cannot have rational certainty of a natural law. But rationality need not be interpreted as certainty, it can be characteristic of our way of trying to reach understanding. In point of facts the idea of natural law itself is a rational conception.

Another bias in Popper's philosophy is his insistence on objectivity. Through out his works, an objectivist anti-psychologist stand is adopted as for example in his analysis of knowledge in statements rather than beliefs: and in what he calls the principle of transference - 'what is true in logic is true in psychology,'²⁹ which makes the logic of cognition more premodial than its psychology. In *Objective Knowledge* problems and problem situations exist objectively and often without subjective counterparts.

Although this objectivism has its own attractions, the question that comes to one's mind is - can we dispense with subjectivism as Popper seem to announce? Before we give an answer, it is prudent to outline some of the attraction of objectivism.³⁰ First, the third world is easily explicable in terms of situations, and situations can be more deeply explanatory than the psychological states of the second world. Secondly, there is no way of subjecting to direct empirical test hypothesis with subjective private reference whereas objective hypotheses are in terms of publicly accessible reference. This gives objectivism a methodological advantage.

But even after all this, it may still be argued that a scientist conduct of his experiment has to refer in some way to his subjective perceptions and beliefs about that situation, to his subjectively entertained aims and such like. The objectivist character of knowledge becomes, in this way a slight of hand because Popper suppress this psychological elements while having to include them, otherwise scientific themes and explanation would be bodily movements and not actions.

This fact has been recognised by Michael Polanyi in his book *Personal Knowledge*, where he argues that "complete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact sciences is a delusion and in fact a false ideal."³¹ He therefore proposes that we revise our view of science "by acknowledging our personal knowing, our indwelling as an integral part of all knowledge."³² In his works, Polanyi endeavours to demonstrate that "into every act of knowing there enters a tacit and passionate contribution of the person knowing what is known." He says that, "this personal coefficient is no mere imperfection but a necessary component of all knowledge."³³ As K. Mbugua³⁴ has aptly elucidated, Polanyi shows that all stages, starting from the selection of a scientific problem until arrival at a breakthrough and its eventual verification [or falsification], involve personal judgement of the scientist.

Joseph Flanagan³⁵ also acknowledges the personal element in knowledge. He argues that there are three stages in the knowing process - experiencing, understanding and judging.

He takes the last stage in knowing as the most personal as it calls for a high sense of responsibility. To him:

judging is different. In this activity the grasp of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the evidence is somehow even more up to you and your integrity as an inquirer; and so you feel more responsible for your reflective understanding than you do for your experiencing or your direct insights. As these three phases in knowing succeed and interrelate with one another, you, the knower, has accumulative sense of responsibility. This aspect of knowing: leads us to the fourth quality of knowing: it is personal.³⁶

This shows that rules of science cannot by themselves tell us when to accept or reject a scientific theory, as Popper thinks, rather, this decision entirely rests upon the person making the inquiry. However, in his pursuits, a scientist may be controlled by impersonal requirements which transcend subjectivity e.g. submission to universal standards.

In politics, the demand for objectivity is even more problematic than Popper realises. His demand for the creation of impersonal institutions coupled with his call for a sense of detachment in political matters is the height of callowness, in politics. We think that he adopts this attitude because of his great faith in institutions. This blinds him from seeing how persons can influence institutional performance. This criticism will be developed further after we have examined his democratic institutions. //

When we move to his three-world conception of reality, we also find problems. He does not specify clearly the relation between the third and second worlds. He argues that the third world entities are autonomous and so also are the second world entities - as these three worlds exists independently of each other, although related to each other. To him, the third world is entirely a human creation, autonomous but a product of the mind. Interestingly, the activity of the human mind belongs to the second world, while the products of this activity become the third world entities. Now, how is it possible that mental activity may result in products which are part of the third world if there is no similarities whatsoever between entities of these two worlds? Popper does not tell us how

a mental [non material] activity relates to a physical [material] one! The three world concept is therefore not very illuminating.

To our understanding, it seems that he emphasises the three world idea because he wants to tackle practical problems which a society encounters. He wants to say that a concern with practical problems is needed if our understanding of social institutions is to be advanced. In fact it is these problems that help in our advancement in the theoretical understanding of social institutions. He asserts that, the institutions of a society can only be improved by learning from our mistakes, by tackling pressing problems in our problem situation.

From this analysis we can conclude that, rationality and a scientific approach to politics all point to a society which is 'open' and pluralistic. Popper's ideal society, therefore, is one which allows for freedom of all men, which is susceptible to change through different problem situations and one which grows, progresses or improves every time. He does not envision an ideal society to be a perfect, changeless, stagnant, utopian and abstract entity, as some philosophers do. The study hopes that, from the foregoing analysis, it is now time to reveal and examine what Popper has been advocating. This is now going to be the content of the next chapter.

Notes

- ¹ Cf., K. Popper, *In Search of a Better World*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp 44-51.
- ² Ibid., p.46.
- ³ Ibid., p.47.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid., p.48.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ B. Magee, *Popper*, London: Fontana, 1973, p.82.
- ⁸ Popper, *In Search of a Better World*, Op. Cit., p.46.
- ⁹ Cf., K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1966, p.4.
- ¹⁰ K. Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London: Hutchinson, 1957, p.278.
- ¹¹ This tradition is what he calls the revolutionary principle of continuity. Cf., *Conjectures and Refutations*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1965, pp.240-248.
- ¹² J. Brohoski, "Humanism and Growth of Knowledge" in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* P.A. Schlipp (ed.), LA SALLE, Illinois: Open Court, 1974, Vol. 1, pp.609.
- ¹³ K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Kegan 1960, pp.154- 155.
- ¹⁴ Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, pp.57 -200.
- ¹⁵ Cf., Magee, Op. Cit., p.59.
- ¹⁶ Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.149 .
- ¹⁷ Magee, Op. Cit., p.59.
- ¹⁸ Cf., Ibid., pp.60-61.
- ¹⁹ Cf., K. Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1972, p.84.
- ²⁰ Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p.227.
- ²¹ Cf., Ibid., p.238.

- 22 Vide Supra, pp.26-7.
- 23 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.119.
- 24 Cf., K. Popper, "The Rationality Principle" in *A Pocket Popper*, Oxford: Fontana, 1983, pp.357-361.
- 25 Cf., Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., pp. 241-242.
- 26 This perspective range from an individuals perspective to a communities; from the perspective of most scientist to the perspective of most experts
- 27 Cf., R. Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- 28 Cf., P. Bernays, "Concerning Rationality", in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, P. A. Schlipp (ed.), Op. Cit., Vol. 1, pp. 597-605.
- 29 Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p. 6.
- 30 Cf., J. Struan, "Popper, Weber, and The Rationalist Approach to Social Explanation", in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Paul Rock (ed.), Vol. 41, No. 4, Dec. 1990, pp.564-8.
- 31 M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p.18.
- 32 M. Polanyi *Meaning*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, p.44.
- 33 Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, Op. Cit., p.312. 77
- 34 Cf., K. Mbugua, "Micheal Polanyi and the Personal Element in Science," in the *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, September 1997, pp. 152-159
- 35 Cf., Ibid.,
- 36 J. Flanagan, 'The Self Causing Subject: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Knowing,' in *Loneragan workshop*, Vol. 3, Fred Lawrence (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 35.

Chapter Four.

The Open Society - Poppers Ideal Society.

Government is something which is supposed to help secure and deliver the goods for its subjects. Yet not one individual or group is capable of knowing exactly what such goods are. The people themselves must as a collectivity determine what their goods must be. And this can best be done only through a democracy.

H. Odera Oruka.

It is evident from the preceding discourse that Popper regards living as essentially a process of 'problem solving.' He therefore wants societies that are conducive to such a process. Now, since problem solving calls for the propounding of trial solutions which are then subjected to 'criticism and error elimination'; he advocates forms of society which permit of the untrammelled assertion of differing proposals, followed by criticism, followed by genuine possibility of change in the light of criticism. Such a society, he believes, will be more effective at solving its problems and therefore more successful in achieving the aims of its members than if it were organized on any other lines.¹

He thus wants a society that is 'open' and pluralistic, one within which incompatible views are expressed and conflicting aims pursued. In this society everyone should be free to propose solutions to problems, and in the same breath everyone should be allowed to criticize the proposed solutions of others, and especially those of the government, whether in prospect or application. Above all, he wants a society in which the government policies are changed in the light of criticism.

By an open society, Popper refers to the degree of freedom that the members enjoy in making their contribution to the operation of the society. This, in turn, is determined by how receptive the whole social system is to inputs from individuals. The 'openness' of society also refers to the latitude the prospective leaders are allowed to organize

themselves for the purpose of offering their services to the people. When he comes to the question of pluralism, he observes that it is in the interest of competition and therefore good governance that this open society should accommodate as many parties, groups and interests as possible. Hence to him, a pluralist or multiparty political system is a better foundation of an ideal society. This ideal or 'open' society is what he calls a democracy.

4.1 Popper's Democracy

By democracy, Popper does not mean 'the rule of the majority' or 'the rule of the people.' He observes that "although 'the people' may influence the actions of their rulers by the threat of dismissal, they never rule themselves in any concrete practical sense".² He also believes that the election of governments by majority of the governed leads to what he calls the paradox of democracy, which will be discussed later. For him, therefore, democracy does not consist in the rule of anyone in particular but in 'institutional control' of those who hold office by those who do not hold office. Accordingly, his democracy should be understood as a characteristic or form of power-institutions or institutions of management, defined in terms of the institutional control over governors, including their dismissal and replacement, which is exerted by those whom they govern. This is well captured by his contention that;

by a democracy I do not mean something as vague as 'the rule of the people' or the 'rule of the majority', but a set of institutions (among them especially general elections i.e the right of the people to dismiss their government) which permit public control of the rulers and the dismissal by the ruled, and which make it possible for the ruled to obtain reforms without using violence, even against the will of the rulers".³

From this definition, he gives the standard by which one should judge the democratic nature of a political system as the degree of adequacy allowed for the expression of the will of the people; that is, the extent to which the people are involved in decision making processes. Indeed, unlike earlier democratic theorists like Locke, Mill etc. who saw the problem of democracy as being the control of government by the people, Popper sees it as being, how to give institutional expression to the will of the people; that is, how to make

the will of the people explicit in real and concrete terms. He says that this can only be realised if a society creates and preserves social institutions that are 'free' or impersonal and which can enable the ruled effectively to criticize⁴ and control their rulers and even change them if need be.

Drawing from the above description of democracy the question that immediately springs to ones mind is; what institutional framework can guarantee the expression of the peoples' sovereign will? Put differently, it comes to - which institutions can make the open society be realized? This question thus leads us directly to the discussion of the main or necessary institutions of Popper's ideal society.

4.2 Institutions of the Open Society.

First, before we embark on a discussion of these institutions, it is important to take note of the fact that Popper regards the most fundamental requirement of democracy as being that those in power should be removable, at reasonable intervals without violence, and replaceable by others with different policies. He therefore advocates periodic or regular free and fair elections. Now this is necessary because, as everyone is free to investigate and criticize the proposed solutions or policies of the government and, above all, as these governmental policies are to be changed in the light of criticism and since policies are normally advocated and their implementation supervised, by people who in most cases are committed to them, changes of them must involve changes in personnel. So if democracy is to be a reality, those in power should be removable, at reasonable intervals and replaceable by others with different policies. This on the other hand can only be a genuine option, if people with policies different from those of the government can be "free to constitute themselves as an alternative government, ready to take over; that is to say, they must be able to organize, speak, write, publish, broadcast, teach in criticism of the people in power, and must have constitutionally guaranteed access to a means of replacing them especially by regularly held free elections."⁵

The above requirement begets the need for choice from many policy proposals presented to the people, by different political parties. In fact, Popper recognizes that for democracy to thrive, it calls for open competition among interest groups, political parties and freely chosen political leaders. He thus demands for a multi-party political system which guarantees an official opposition that keeps the government on its toes and which allows the general public to be involved in the debate of national issues.

Here we would like to point out that Popper seems to be advocating for what has been called a "government by discussion".⁶ In such a government ruling is based on discussion amongst the citizens and their representatives. It is grounded in verbal conflicts in the social and political forum, and determined by arts of persuasion directed towards the multitude whose vote give power for a period of time to the speaker who has won its suffrage. All in all we would say that the primary aim of pluralism is to engender discussion which set men free to think their own thoughts, to organize themselves into groups and corporations, according to their inclination and tastes.⁷

Popper also demands a constitutionally guaranteed clear and definite separation of powers which should ensure a workable system of checks and balances between the main arms of government - that is the executive arm on the one hand and the legislative and judiciary on the other. He observes that if each governmental organs functions and their area of jurisdiction are spelt out in unequivocal terms, then this will help to smoothen their operations by minimizing conflicts of jurisdiction. This will, in turn, foster institutional autonomy as it will help avoid undue hegemony by one organ over the others with the attendant dangers to the separation of powers principle. He also take cognisance of the fact that under such a system the freedoms of the people are guaranteed and protected. Such basic liberties include among others the freedoms and rights of the individual, the freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement, conscience and most importantly of press - which is supposed to keep the ruled aware or informed of the policies undertaken by the government.

Popper also takes the education system as being another very crucial institution in the democratic process. He reckons that democratic culture - beliefs, attitudes and predisposition, etc. is not inborn or inherited but is learned. He therefore, demands that the practice of democracy be taught if it is to be practised. He puts forth a theory of learning which not only allows for indoctrination but requires it. Unlike some scholars who believe that objectivity or openness of mind required weak indoctrination, Karl Popper by contrast, thinks indoctrination should be thorough, not in the sense of shutting off all criticism but in the sense of being done competently and by someone who is informed and articulate.

It is imperative to recognize at this moment that Popper takes democracy as both an attitude and a value. To him, democracy is an attitude because it is a way of doing things that is dependent upon how we regard ourselves, our abilities, our beliefs about authority and the effectiveness of the government and most importantly our attitude towards other peoples' abilities. As an attitude therefore, democracy can and should be taught and people educated about the limitation of men as opposed to the *tout puissant* attitudes that underlie most undemocratic systems. To this extent and in this regard, Popper advances that, the amount or degree of democracy in any given society is directly proportional to the degree of acculturation of the people in democratic values, attitudes and beliefs. Afrifa Gitonga⁸ terms this the superstructure of democracy. Like Popper, he argues that, "for democracy to exist, survive and prosper, it requires that the people be bathed in and drenched with the democratic ethos!"⁹ Robert Dahl has also recognized this position and observes that, "a country with a political culture strongly favourable to democracy will make its way through crises that would bring about a breakdown of democracy in a country with less supportive political culture".¹⁰

As we cannot possibly discuss all the institutions of Popper's 'open society', we would like to mention in passing some of the main features of this system. They include among others the liberty of the individual to think and make personal judgment and thereby be responsible for his own actions, respect for basic human rights, equality of rights and

before the law, a limited but representative governments based on the principle of the separation of powers. This last feature entails the ideas of diffusion of power whereby none of the government organs would be strong enough to load over the others and thus exact command or influence on the performance of the other(s).

If we give a tabular expression of how important Popper's institutions are to the democratic process, the table will look like this:

The Following Institutions	are necessary to satisfy the following criteria
Elected officials Free and fair elections	Equality in voting
Elected officials Universal suffrage Right to run for office Freedom of expression Alternative information Freedom of association	Effective participation
Freedom of expression Alternative information Freedom of association	Enlightened understanding
Elected officials Free and fair elections Universal suffrage Right to run for office Freedom of expression Alternative information Freedom of association	Control of agenda and government
Universal suffrage Right to run for office Freedom of expression Alternative information Freedom of association	Inclusion

If we may digress a little, we would like to emphasize that Popper insists on the construction of impersonal institutions. This is to say that the institutions of the open society [for instance, the ones just mentioned above] must not reflect or contain sectarian or personal interests, but must be created and manned to accommodate the wishes of all or majority members of the society. In fact, for him, all long-term political problems are

institutional.¹¹ For example, he regards the principle of leadership as not replacing institutional problems by problems of personnel but rather, “it burdens the institutions with the task of selecting future leaders”.¹² He therefore urges us not to confound institutional problems with those of personnel.

Secondly, it is important to note that, Popper regards institutions as being equivalent to fortress. They therefore must be well designed and manned with their aims and goals well spelt out. Such an approach will help in the creation, maintenance and strengthening of these organs [institutions] for effective and democratic governing of society. And this brings us to the question of creation and maintenance of these institutions and therefore on whether utopian social engineering is better than Popper’s piecemeal approach.

4.3 Piecemeal Versus Utopian Social Engineering¹³

Popper calls the construction of social institutions according to some definite plan as social engineering. A social engineer in this case is anyone who is directly involved in the creation and running of social institutions. It may be an administrator, a political leader etc.

By piecemeal social engineering, Popper refers to the practical application of or the utilization of the available technological knowledge in the construction and running of institutions. A piecemeal approach is premised on the belief that a scientific basis of politics should consist of the factual information necessary for the construction or alteration of social institutions in accordance with the aims and wishes of the people. According to Popper, there is an analogy between piecemeal social engineering and physical engineering in as much as both regard the ends beyond the province of technology. Therefore “just as the main taste of physical engineering is to design machines and to remodel and service them, the task of the piecemeal social engineering is to design social institutions, and to reconstruct and run those already in existence”.¹⁴

This is made possible because the piecemeal engineer recognizes that very few social institutions are consciously designed while on the other hand the vast majority have just 'grown' as the undersigned or unintended results of human action. With this in mind, he looks upon these institutions from a 'functional'¹⁵ point of view. His problem therefore becomes, if such and such are our aims, is this institution well designed and organized to serve them? He will therefore endeavour to convert all institutions to the service of certain identified or expected ends, just like machines.

The technologist, another term that he uses for his piecemeal engineer, does not believe in the method of re-designing society as a whole. After identifying his goals, he tries to achieve them by small adjustments and re-adjustments and which according to Popper can continually be improved upon.¹⁶ Like Socrates,¹⁷ he is aware of how little he knows. He recognizes that we can learn from our mistakes. Accordingly, he makes his way, step by step, carefully comparing the results expected and the result achieved. At the same time, he will be always on the look out for the unavoidable unwanted consequences of any reform. Mostly, a piecemeal engineer avoids embarking on reforms which are wide in scope and complex in nature and which makes it impossible for him to 'disentangle' causes from effects and to know what he is really doing.

37

Opposed to this meticulous and cautious approach to institutional development is the utopian or holistic social engineering. This approach aims at remodeling the whole society in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint. Popper describes it as "aiming at seizing the key positions and at extending the power of the state... until the state becomes nearly identical with society".¹⁸ Furthermore, it aims at controlling from these key positions the "historical forces"¹⁹ that mould the future of the society; either by arresting this development or by foreseeing its course and adjusting society to it. In essence, the holists create a utopia of society and try to achieve it by remodeling the society as a whole thereby embarking on an elaborate and complex social reconstruction. They find a piecemeal approach to social problems to be too modest and a mere window dressing

gimmick. They therefore demand a somewhat elaborate social reconstruction package and not isolated incidences as Popper would advise.

On his part Popper points out that this holists' demand does not augur well with practice. For in practice "the [holists] always fall back on a somewhat haphazard and clumsy although ambitious and ruthless application of what is essentially a piecemeal method without its cautious and self-critical character".²⁰ This is because in practice the utopian approach turns out to be impossible; the larger the scale of changes attempted, the greater are their unintended and largely unexpected repercussions forcing upon the holistic engineer the expedient of piecemeal improvisation. Consequently, the utopian engineer is forced to do things he did not intend to do, that is to say, it leads to what Popper calls "the notorious phenomenon of unplanned planning".²¹

In contrast to the holistic engineer who has decided in advance that a complete reconstruction of society as necessary, and therefore approaches social problems with a closed mind, the piecemeal engineer attacks his problem with an open mind especially as regards to the scope of the reform. He knows, unlike the utopianist who rejects a priori, the limits to institutional control of society due to the personal element or the human factor. He therefore tries to build a society that accommodates the fallibility of man. Popper observes that contrary to this, problems connected with the personal element;

force the utopianist, whether he likes it or not to try to control the human factor by institutional means and to extend his programme so as to embrace not only the transformation of society, according to plan, but also the transformation of man. This whole process substitutes the demand that we build a new society fit for men and women to live in with the demand that we 'mould' these men and women to fit into the utopianist new society. This clearly removes any possibility of testing the success of the new society. For those who do not like living in it only admit thereby they are not yet fit to live it; that their human impulses need further 'organization'.²²

Popper then rejects the utopian attempt to realize an ideal State, using a blue print of society. He asserts that such an approach removes any chance of testing the performance of the system and in the same breath any claim to a scientific method being employed

evaporates. At the same time, he finds this approach to be irrational especially in its assumption that a complete reconstruction of our social world would lead to a perfectly workable system.

First, the reconstruction of society as a whole is inconvenient and impossible as we do not have experience of this calibre. Secondly, such an approach means that, if there are mistakes, they will be on a large scale. Such mistakes can then only be eliminated by a long and laborious process of small adjustments, i.e. by the rational method of piecemeal engineering.

He observes that a holistic attempt demands a strong centralized rule of a few who will seize the key positions and control the development of society from these central positions. Popper argues that, this action extends the power of the State to every sphere of society and most often leads to an authoritarian or totalitarian rule and its attendant dangers. He gives communist countries as case examples of such societies, which he is vehemently opposed to.

Lastly Popper contends that, there are no 'historic forces' that mould or guide the development of any society, as the holists proclaim. He argues that society develops according to the concerted wishes and efforts of its members. He therefore advocates the piecemeal method which approaches institutional development rationally and which views institutions as means that serve certain ends and therefore judges them, wholly according to their appropriateness, efficiency and simplicity.

Moving from the construction of institutions to their working, Popper demands that a piecemeal engineer adopts the method of searching for and fighting against the greatest and most urgent evils of society, rather than searching for and fighting for its greatest good.²³ He puts forward two maxims that would guide a technologist in his actions.

4.4 Popper's Political Maxims

The first general guiding principle for public policy, that Popper puts forward, is 'minimize avoidable suffering'. He prefers this maxim because in most cases, it draws attention to problems. An education authority instead, for example, of spending money on building of model schools, may set itself the aim of minimizing disadvantages, that is, direct its attention to the under-provided schools, those with the worst staffing problems, the most over-crowded, worst equipment, etc. and makes doing something about them the first priority. This Popperian maxim therefore discourages leaders and administrators from thinking about creating utopia and instead implores them to seek out and try to remove the social evils under which human beings are suffering. It is for this reason that Magee finds this principle to be 'above all a practical approach and yet devoted to change' as "it starts with a permanent active willingness to remould institutions."²⁴

Popper proceeds to argue that there is a logical asymmetry between minimize unhappiness and the formulation of the utilitarian maxim; 'maximize happiness.' This results, according to him, from the recognition that we do not know how to make people happy, but we do know ways of reducing their unhappiness. He writes that:

I believe that there is, from the ethical point of view, no symmetry between suffering and happiness, or between pain and pleasure... Human suffering makes a direct moral appeal namely, the appeal for help, while there is no similar call to increase the happiness of a man who is doing well anyway (A further criticism of the utilitarian formulation 'maximize pleasure' is that it assumes, in principle a continuous pleasure - pain scale which allows us to treat degrees of pain as negative degrees of pleasure. But from the moral point of view, pain cannot be outweighed by pleasure and especially not one man's pain by another man's pleasure. Instead of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, one should demand, more modestly, the least amount of avoidable suffering for all; and further that unavoidable suffering - such as hunger in times of unavoidable shortage of food - should be distributed as equally as possible.²⁵

This kind of approach, Popper rightly observes, results to a perpetual stream of demand for immediate action to rectify wrongs that are manifest. In most cases such an approach

will endear widespread agreement as people are aware of what should be done for the society which leads to its general improvement.

Popper's second formulation 'maximize the freedom of individuals to live as they wish', arose from the shortcoming of the one above. Many people had raised doubt as to whether 'minimize avoidable suffering' went far enough to be a guiding political maxim, even when accompanied with all its heuristic value. This concern emerged from the fact that minimizing unhappiness confined itself to only remedying ills, abuses and anomalies in an existing social pattern. It did not say anything about provision of leisurely or luxurious facilities like sports grounds, parks and many other recreational facilities, which an affluent society can provide. Hence with the second maxim, he demands extensive public provision in all aspects of life be it education, housing, etc. It also allows for the individual to live as they wish.

These popperian political maxims echo what John Rawls advances in his book *A Theory of Justice*. Like Rawls, Popper seems to demand that the basic social institutions of the open society satisfy the fundamental principles of social justice. The two principles of justice that Rawls²⁶ advances are as follows: the first one touches on liberty whereby each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic liberty compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. These basic liberties that Rawls talks of, are roughly speaking, political liberties (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office), together with freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience and freedom of thought, freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law.

The second principle touches on distribution where social economic inequities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage and should be attached to positions and offices open to all. This second principle applies, in simple terms, to the distribution of income and wealth and to the design of organizations that make use of differences in authority and responsibility or chains of command.

With these principles both Rawls and Popper demand that all social values, that is liberty and opportunity, income and wealth and the bases of self respect are to be distributed equally. Both realize that in a capitalist set up, social, political and economic inequalities are bound to ensue. They therefore demand that these inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged. All in all, the ultimate end for both is that all social goods are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution can be shown to be to the advantage of everyone including the least favoured by nature or any subsequent working of the system.

From the foregoing, one notices that Popper seems to be making the theoretical foundation of his open society to be a fusion of values of both western liberal democracy, which champions individual rights and liberties, with the best of social democracy - which is mainly concerned with social welfare. This comes out of the fact that he expects the individuals in the open society to be extended with as much freedom, as can be conceivable as long as such freedom is not incompatible with the freedom for all. In addition to this, he prefers State intervention in social welfare such that it maintains equality, order progress and all other attendant advantages attached to such an arrangement. If this is the case then Karl Popper is crusading what has been called "polyarchy"²⁷ by some scholars like Robert Dahl.

4.5 Polyarchy

In his book *Democracy and its Critics*, Dahl defines polyarchy in several ways. Accordingly, it can be understood as a historical outcome of efforts to democratize and liberalise the political institutions of the nation-states; or as a distinctive type of political order; or regime different in important ways not only from non democratic systems of all kinds but also from earlier small scale democracies; or as a system of political control in which the highest officials in the government of the State are induced to modify their conduct so as to win elections in political competition with other candidates, parties and

groups; lastly it can be understood as a system of political rights or a set of institutions necessary to the democratic process on a large scale²⁸.

These many ways of interpreting polyarchy are not contradictory according to Dahl. Rather they complement each other as they simply emphasize different aspects or consequences of the institutions that serve to distinguish polyarchical from non polyarchical political orders. Basically, in a polyarchy citizenship is extended to a relatively high proportion of adults with the rights and citizenship including the opportunity to oppose and vote out the highest officials in the government.

From the above definitions or interpretations one would say that polyarchy is the epitome or the highest end (at present) of the democratic process. It is the most complete historical achievement of the democratic process as it is the reality that practice has offered in our movement to the democratic ideal. It is the highest end of our democratic movement because it is a regime or political order with a set of unique political and social institutions that are necessary to the democratic process but which exist above a certain threshold. These institutions include among others:

1. Control over governmental decisions about policy is constitutionally vested, in the citizens through their representatives - the elected officials.
2. Elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed in relatively frequent, free and fair elections in which coercion is quite limited.
3. Practically all adults have the right to vote in these elections.
4. Practically all the citizens have the right to run for the public offices for which candidates run in these elections.
5. Citizens have an effectively enforced right to freedom of expression, including criticism of the officials, the conduct of government.
6. They also have access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolized by the government or any other single group.

7. Finally, they have an effectively enforced right to form and join autonomous associations including political associations such as political parties and interest groups that attempt to influence the government by competing in elections and by other peaceful means²⁹.

These requirements, according to Dahl, must characterize actual and not merely nominal rights, institutions and processes for a society to be polyarchical. In fact, for him, countries of the world may be assigned approximate rankings according to the extent to which each of the institutions is present in a realistic sense. And as one would notice, the above requirements are the same that Popper demands for his ideal society. This is the reason why the study calls the open society or Popper's democracy - polyarchy. Just like Dahl, Popper provides a broad array of human rights and liberties that no actual existing real world alternative to it can match. Integral to polyarchy is a generous zone of freedom and control that cannot be deeply or persistently invaded without destroying polyarchy itself. Secondly, the institutions of a polyarchy make it unlikely in the extreme that a government will long pursue policies that deeply offend a majority citizens. What is more, those institutions even make it rather uncommon for a government to enforce policies to which a substantial number of citizens object and try to overturn by vigorously using the rights and opportunities available to them. For instance, the citizen have the capacity to exercise a veto over the re-election and policies of elected officials,; this is a powerful ace that they can frequently use to prevent officials from imposing policies objectional to many.

From what has transpired up to this point, one should have noticed that Popper's theory of democracy does not proceed, as it were, from a doctrine of the intrinsic goodness or righteousness of majority rule but rather from the baseness of tyranny. For him therefore there are two main types of governments - Democracies and Tyrannies or dictatorships. The first consist of governments which we can get rid of without bloodshed, for example, by way of general elections. Here the social institutions provide means by which rulers may be dismissed by the ruled and the social traditions ensure that these institutions will

not easily be destroyed by those who are in power. The second type, consist of government which the ruled can not get rid of except by way of a successful revolution.³⁰

Seen in this light Popper holds that 'the principle of democratic policy' is therefore the proposal to create, develop and protect political institutions for the avoidance of tyranny. With such a principle he does not imply that we can ever develop institutions which are faultless or full proof or which ensure that policies adopted by a democratic government will be right or good or even necessarily better or wiser than the policies adopted by a benevolent tyranny. What may be said, however, is that implied in the adoption of the democratic principle is the "conviction that the acceptance of even a bad policy in a democracy [as long as we can work for a peaceful change] is preferable to the submission to a tyranny however wise and benevolent." ³¹

There are two reasons why Popper adopted this approach. First, one has to remember that Europe at this time was faced with a dark age. Marxism, Nazism and Fascism had taken root and were spreading like borne fire, threatening everything in their way. What he was trying to do then was to undermine these ideologies. Secondly he wanted to avoid many paradoxes that befell earlier social-political philosophers, particularly democratic theorists. To understand this latter point the study would like to briefly discuss some of these paradoxes in order to underscore the above contention.

4.6 Political Paradoxes

Before we proceed one has to be reminded that Popper's theory of democratic control is not based upon the principle that any one should rule. As such an approach results into the paradox of sovereignty discussed earlier and which he tries to avoid. He thus takes the various equalitarian methods of a democratic control like general elections and a representative government as his basis for governance especially in the light of a wide spread traditional distrust of tyranny. He at the same time takes this equalitarian methods as not fool proof but "reasonably effective institutional safeguards against misrule and

therefore capable of always being open to improvement and even providing methods for their own improvement.”³²

This popperian approach, therefore, avoids the paradox of democracy which supervened proponents of majority rule. These theorists had argued that the demos or majority should rule but were faced with an insurmountable problem; supposing the majority decided to vote for a party which did not believe in free institutions and therefore would destroy them when it gets to power. This is attested to by the Nazis in Germany, the Facist in Italy and recently the Muslim fundamentalists in Iran and Algeria. As Magee³³ correctly points out any person committed to choice of government by majority votes is here-in in an insoluble dilemma; an attempt to stop the Facist, the Nazist, communists or any such party from taking over means acting contrary to his principles, yet if they do take over they will put an end to, democracy.

Popper’s open society eskews such a paradox. For, if anyone is committed to the preservation of free institutions, he can without self-contradiction defend them against attack from any direction be it from the minorities or majorities. At the same time, he can defend these same institutions from any attempt to overthrow them by armed violence. In fact, Popper takes force to be morally justified against an existing regime which sustains itself by force, especially if one’s aim is to establish free institutions, since his objective is to replace the rule of violence by a rule of reason and tolerance.

This popperian approach also tries to avoid the paradox of tolerance. Popper is of the opinion that if society extends unlimited tolerance it is likely to be destroyed and tolerance with it. This is well captured by his contention that “if we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed and tolerance with it.”³⁴ By this formulation, he does not insinuate that leaders should always suppress the utterance of intolerant philosophies as many commentators think - for this will definitely result in the prosecution of rivals which he calls witch-hunting. What he

implies rather, is that we should counter intolerance by rational argument and if possible keep it in check by public opinion. In some circumstances, however, he recommends that such a tolerant society must be prepared to suppress the enemies of tolerance, particularly if they constitute a genuine danger.

Lastly, Popper tries to avoid the well known paradox of freedom. He writes that, "a free man may exercise his freedom first by defying the law and ultimately by defying freedom itself and clamoring for a tyrant."³⁵ From this, he infers that unqualified freedom is not only self destructive but bound to produce its opposite - for if all restraint were removed there could be nothing whatever to stop the strong enslaving the meek. Hence complete freedom could bring about end of freedom. Accordingly he concludes that, "freedom defeats itself if it is unlimited,"³⁶ and goes a head to demand that the State should limit freedom to a certain extent so that everyone's freedom is protected by the law. Thus if people are to enjoy freedom, what they do must be limited by restrictions and rules.

In view of this, what Popper calls the promotion of human freedom does not consist in establishing 'unlimited freedom' for everyone to do anything, but consist in establishing 'qualifications' to individual freedoms. That is to say, "establishing specific freedoms of specific people to do or not to do specific things and simultaneously in preventing anyone from hindering them."³⁷ The promotion of individual freedom therefore demands that the State should allow and assist in the fullest development of institutions for freedom. And in this connection, Popper asks: 'what do we demand from the State?' which he answers by asserting that the function of the State power should be the servicing of freedom and humanity.

We would like to point out that, Popper is especially concerned with economic freedom, which he contends that, if unrestrained could lead to the exploitation of the poor. Accordingly, this should be corrected by the State for the protection of the economically weak. In this regard he observes that "the principle of non intervention, of unrestrained economic system has to be given up. If we wish freedom to be safeguarded, then we must

demand that the policy of unlimited economic freedom be replaced by the plan economic intervention of the state. We must demand that unrestrained Capitalism give way to an economic interventionism.”³⁸

Passing in the discussion of democracy from the promotion of freedom to the definition of the same, Popper reminds us that if freedoms have to be effectively provided, they must be protected. He therefore demands that if the State is to protect freedom, democratic institutions are necessary. This is because those who want to ensure that their freedom is protected must see to themselves and not rely on protectors over whom they themselves have no control. It is for this reason he concludes that, “if the masses of humanity are to live free from exploitation and free from want, they must see to it that those in charge of management and administration, manage and administer accordingly and that requires equalitarian methods of democratic control.”³⁹

On the whole, we would like to emphasize that Popper demands for just an optimum freedom and tolerance. For him, a society should extend the maximum possible freedom to its members. This maximum freedom is a qualified one and can be created and sustained at optimum level only by institutions designed for that purpose and which are backed by State power. This, therefore, involve State intervention in political, economic and social life of a society to some degree. The view expressed here is what he calls protectionism.

In a word therefore, we conclude from the brief discussion of political paradoxes above, that Popper demands a government that rules according to the principle of equalitarianism and protectionism, one that tolerates all who are prepared to reciprocate and which is controlled by and accountable to the public. In addition to this it must be based on some form of majority votes together with institutions for keeping the public well informed of governmental policies, as this is the best though not infallible means of controlling such a government.

If we go back to the reasons as to why Popper chose this approach, one can now understand the intention for his propagation of the open society. The aim was to spread as wide as possible the liberal democratic ideals. But even though this is the most important relevant aspect of his philosophy it was not his chief reason for writing his 'war books,' where he espouses these ideas. One has to remember that, at this time, the Nazis under Hitler were meeting success after success conquering almost the whole of Europe. The communist, on the other hand, had earlier on entrenched themselves in Russia after a successful revolution and their ideas were spreading like fire across Europe.

These two events had a very serious implication on western civilization, which was now threatened with the threat of a new dark age. In this circumstances, what Popper was trying to do was to understand and explain the appeal of these new found enemies of western civilization. He was also trying everything in his powers to undermine them. This he realized could only be effective if he promulgated the value and importance of philosophy of liberty and freedom in the widest sense. These totalitarian and authoritarian philosophies is what he calls the enemies of the open society.

4.7 The Enemies of the Open Society

Popper takes the most serpentine and efficacious enemy of the culture of freedom to be 'historicism.' "I mean by Historicism," he writes "an approach to be social sciences which assume historical prediction is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the rhythms or the patterns, the laws, or the trends that underlie the evolution of history." ⁴⁰ He castigates historical predictions because these actions, especially when engaged in by historicist 'are entirely unlike the more modesty predictions made by the sciences.' For "ordinary predictions in science are conditional. They assert that certain changes [say of the temperature of water in a kettle] will be accompanied by other changes [say the boiling of water]. Historicist predictions, on other hand, are unconditional historical prophecies." ⁴¹

Historicism considers it “the task of the social sciences to furnish us with long-term historical prophecies.”⁴² It is thus not a science but has become “a wider philosophical scheme... the view that the story of mankind has a plot and that if we can succeed in unravelling this plot we shall hold the key to the future.”⁴³ It therefore goes out to find this “path in which mankind is destined to walk.”⁴⁴

To unravel the ‘plot’ and discover the destined ‘path’, historicism employs the historical method, which assumes the best way of obtaining knowledge of society and its institutions is by studying its history and that if one wants knowledge of social entities, one can only acquire it by studying social changes.⁴⁵ This means that if one wants to know what is destined to happen in a society one must study the origins and development of society and to discover the rhythms, patterns, laws and trends which are at work and which will infallibly determine the future.

When moved to the field of politics, historicism assume that it can put politics on a solid basis and give practical advice by telling which political actions are likely to succeed or fail. It thus help reveal the political future therefore becoming the foremost instrument in far-sighted practical politics.

Popper takes Marx’s view that history develops according to scientific laws as a classic example of historicism. Other historicists beliefs include Hegelianism in its belief in the development of the spirit [reason] as the force that drives human history, Platonism in its belief in the ideal or ordered society, Nazism in the establishment of the a thousand year Reich etc. Since we can not discuss all historicist theses here, we have chosen to briefly examine Marxism as it was and still is the most influential of all historicists doctrines. In fact Popper dedicated the second volume of *The Open Society and its Enemies* to a responding critique of Marx as the supreme philosopher whose theory projects a perfect future.

The central aspect of Marxism, which Popper vehemently attacks, is its claim to be scientific. Marx saw himself as the Newton or Darwin of the social sciences. He was a great intellectual admirer of Darwin whom he regarded "as having by his theory of evolution and natural selection done for the morphology of the natural sciences what he himself was striving to do for human history."⁴⁶ He believed that, the development of human societies was governed by scientific laws of which he was the discoverer. Like many other scholars of his time, Marx thought that Newton had discovered natural laws which govern the motions of matter in space, so that given the relevant data about any physical system-like sunrise, sunset, eclipses, movements of tides etc., one could foretell its course. However, although natural laws enable us to foretell the future of our solar system they do not enable us to control it. With this recognition in mind, Marx saw his own discoveries as faithfully paralleling this. In *Das Kapital*, he describes himself as having discovered the natural laws of capitalists production and warns that:

even when the society has got upon the right track for the natural law of its movement and it is the ultimate aim of this work to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society- it can neither clear by bold leaps nor remove by legal enactment's the obstacles offered by the successive phases of it's normal developments..... It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results. The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of it's own future.⁴⁷

He came to this belief after analyzing the history of society from its primitive stages through the feudal phase to the capitalist stage, which was to develop to the higher socialist order. For him, societal evolution was inevitable as it was driven by 'inexorable laws', and the only thing man could possibly do was to 'shorten and lessen' its birth pangs. This is what he calls historical materialism where he talks of economic forces coming into play due to the changing patterns in the ownership of factors of production. This divides society into classes and conflict ensues due to exploitation of some classes by others.

While admitting Marx's ingenuity in his discoveries, Popper attacks and demolishes Marxist claim to scientific status. He points out that Marxism was based on fault pre-

Einsteinian and pro-Freudian conception of science and individual behavior respectively and which have been rendered obsolete by recent developments. He also argues that its Ricardian economic foundations have been washed away by post-Keynesian economics and its Hegelian logical foundations by post-Frege logic.

Even when taken as a scientific theory, Popper shows that Marxism has been falsified. He points out refutations to Marx's predictions. For instance, Marx believed that it is only fully developed capitalist countries that could go communist and therefore all societies would have to complete the capitalist stage of development first. But experience has shown otherwise, as virtually all countries that turned communist were pre-industrial i.e. none was fully developed capitalist society. Marx talked of the impending revolution as having to be based on the industrial proletariat; but Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi-Minh and Fidel Castro based their successful revolution on the peasantry.

Popper also points out other Marxist predictions which has been falsified as being about the proletariat getting poorer more numerous, more class- conscience and more revolution. In most industrial countries on the contrary this group has become richer, less class-conscious and less revolutionary. In fact ownership of the means of production which Marx predicted was bound to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands has become so widely dispersed with the advent of joint stock companies that control has passed into the hands of a new class of professional managers. Popper argues that the emergence of this class is in itself a refutation of the Marxist prediction that, all other classes would inevitably disappear and be polarized into two; an ever shrinking capitalist class which owned and controlled but did not work, and an ever expanding proletariat which worked but did not own or control.

All in all, Popper finds all historicist doctrines untenable especially as pertains to their explanation and prediction of the course of history. He denies the historicist claim that there are laws of history and dialectical process peculiar to the social world and hence to the social sciences. He upholds the naturalists view that the natural and the social world

are all of a piece and are amenable to the same specific method. The method of 'Conjectures and Refutations.' In *the Poverty of Historicism*, he summarizes his refutation of historicism into five theses; i.e.

1. The course of human history is strongly influenced by the growth of human knowledge
2. We can not predict, by rational or scientific methods, the future growth of scientific knowledge
3. We can not therefore, predict the future course of human history.
4. This means that we must reject the possibility of theoretical history; that is to say, of a historical social science that would correspond to theoretical physics. There can be no scientific theory of historical development serving as a basis for historical prediction.
5. The fundamental aim of historicist method is therefore misconceived, and historicism collapses.⁴⁸

Besides the logical refutations provided above, Popper also attacks historicism on the ethical and social planes. With the stress on historical prediction based on the false methodological discovery, historicists hold that history can predict the future. This means that the future is predetermined, and this future is present in the past, telescoped in it. In view of this he assumes that if there were to be a social science and for that matter historical prophesy, the main course of history must be predetermined and neither goodwill nor reason had the power to alter it. All that is left for us in the way of reasonable interference is to make sure of the impending course of development and to remove the worst obstacles in its path.

This leads them to believe that the future is on their side, that history will justify their conduct and besides nobody could alter the cause or direction of history. The implication of this on society and particularly governance is serious. First, it means that the leaders should identify the course or path of a society's movement and propel it in that direction by removing any obstacles in the way. As the leaders 'know' the way forward, criticism of their policies is outlawed and society degenerates into authoritarianism, totalitarianism or

dictatorship. Secondly for all its concern with being on the right side of history, historicism teaches people to refrain from attempting social political and economical changes. In this regard, Popper finds historicism as an abdication of moral responsibility and as a species of moral futurism since it passes the moral buck to the future. Remember they assume that their cause is certain to prevail. This belief undesirably result in the individual feeling released from moral responsibility for his decisions and actions as he is taken only as a pawn and a somewhat insignificant instrument in the general development of mankind.⁴⁹

Lastly, popper finds historicism as a warped and an idealist concept. For him, those who think they can say what the future can be because they think they know 'the plot' and 'the path' are frauds who pretend to powers of prophecy not given to other men. They imagine to be in rapport with the eternal which he finds ludicrous. He mentions Hegel, despite his rationalism and empirical method, as one of this kind.

The reasons for Popper's rejection of historicism should be clear from everything that has gone before in this work. He is an indeterminist who believes that change is the result of our attempts to solve our problems. And that in these attempts, we choose our plans of actions, although sometimes unintended repercussions (consequences) may occur. Thus in so far as any process of direction is at work, it is we in our interaction with each other and with our physical environment [which he calls world 1 and which we as a species have not created] and with world 3 [which we as a species have created and which each individual inherits but can do only a little change] who move history forward. Any meaning it has is meaning we give it.⁵⁰

After having shown the fallacies of historicism, Popper proceeds to bring three more charges of theoretical misdemeanor, which he expounds as companion errors that go with historicist dogma. These are 'essentialism,' 'holism,' and 'utopianism.' He uses the term methodological essentialism to characterize the view that it is the task of pure knowledge or science to discover and to describe the true nature of things i.e. their hidden reality or

essence.⁵¹ According to essentialism, the best, the truly scientific theories, describe the 'essences' or the 'essential natures' of things - the realities which lie behind the appearances.⁵² Essentialism, explains Popper, is connected to historicism in the sense that the essence reveals itself in a certain pattern of development. For "in order to become real or actual, the essence must unfold itself in change."⁵³ Therefore, "applying this principle to sociology we are led to the conclusion that the essence and the real character of a social group can reveal itself, and be known only through its history."⁵⁴

This summation leads to the inevitable historicist conclusion that by studying the historical pattern of the development of society, one penetrates to the essence of society. And having grasped the essence, one can understand the necessity of that particular pattern of development and can infallibly predict its continuation. This is because "change, by revealing what is hidden in the undeveloped essence, can only make apparent the essence, the potentialities, the seeds, which from the beginning have inhered in the changing object."⁵⁵ This doctrine thus leads to the historicist idea of a historical fate or of an inescapable essential destiny.

Popper proceeds to argue that once historicism is combined with essentialism, it inevitably degenerate into 'holism' and 'utopianism'. According to him, "the strongest element in the alliance between historicism and utopianism is undoubtedly the holistic approach which is common to both"⁵⁶ as historicism is interested in the development, not of aspect of social life but of society as a whole. Historicists demand that we study society as a whole and only study aspects of social life in so far as their development is determined by that of the whole. This therefore calls for holistic approach to social problems which tend to lead to utopianism. For "holist not only plan to study whole society by impossible method, they also plan to control and reconstruct our society as a whole."⁵⁷

If this approach is taken, then as shown earlier in section 4.3, it leads to utopianism, as it is based on 'an impossible method.' It is impossible because "if we wish to study a thing we are bound to select certain aspects of it. It is not possible for us to observe or to

describe a whole piece of the world, or a whole piece of nature, in fact not even the smallest whole piece may be so described, since all descriptions is necessarily selective.”⁵⁸ This is what he calls the piecemeal approach. It takes the development of particular aspects and their complex interaction, which determines the development of the whole and not the development of the whole determining particular aspects.

Popper calls these ideas the enemies of democracy because of their dogmatic nature. He presumes reasonably enough that, dogma produces dogma - so that with an absurdly dogmatic philosophy there goes an absurdly dogmatic theory of man and society. Therefore, since these ideologies are dogmatic, the corresponding societies are bound to be authoritarian and thus suppress creativity, criticism and freedom. He gives communist Russia, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as the corresponding societies that embraced the totalitarian ideas discussed above and hence they become closed as individual freedoms were suppressed in the name of State protection and welfare.

4.8 Critical Remarks.

The main issue that will subsume our analysis here is the practicability or viability of Popper's ideal society. From the foregoing, you can interpret the whole mood of Popper's social philosophy as revolving around democracy - which to him means spreading of rationality into social and political affairs. More importantly it involves the extension of political influence to larger section of the populations. The picture that emerges from the proceeding discourse is of a society which, while operating in an evolving world, is fundamentally concerned with restructuring itself so much as to ameliorate the problems spawned by its imperfections, and to manage the rapid changes it encounters. Although this society is very appealing, it has some limitations which the study believes must be problematized and examined for it to be even better and also more practical.

Take Popper's insistence on institutionalism for example. He believes that objectivity or rationality can only be achieved through the creation of impersonal institutions. He also

thinks that men's iniquities can be cured by institutions, which would then guide the conduct and actions of a society's leaders. He does not believe in charismatic and benevolent individuals who, as most people think, can propel society to greater heights. But this popperian view, persuasive as it is, can easily lead to a neglect of the way in which all institutions whatever their origins and power base, develop a life and an ethos of their own. Popper forgets that most of the political institutions become associated with particular interest which their occupants, the public officials, seek to promote and defend. His call for near pure institutionalism therefore becomes problematic especially when coupled with the relegation of the persons who run them to mere pawns.

This situation is aggravated by his contention that these democratic structures or institutions provide the necessary conditions for popular control. We would like to argue that although this is true, democratic institutions are not in themselves sufficient. Their aim is only manifest when widespread participation actually ensues. But, for most people, however, political concerns are far from predominant and rank behind economic pursuits, kinship obligations and even leisure activities. From Popper's perspective, fuller democratic control would require a level of public involvement that our present type of society does not ordinarily produce.

The American society, which he says exemplifies his idea of the open society, is a good example. Political scientists have shown that citizens of the U.S do not know much about their governmental institutions. They neither care very much about political leaders, current issues and public policies. For most, the day-to-day concerns of family and work - place demand far more attention than that of politics. In fact, were questions of governmental policy put directly before the people instead of before their representatives, the modal response would be 'no opinion.'⁵⁹

While these findings may be common across many of Popper's open societies, his picture of an average citizen does not comport with it. For him, the average citizen is a hard working individual of modest means and independent mind, attentive to public affairs,

protective of his own interest but fair in balancing those interest against the interest of others and of the polity in general. This image of a mythical rational citizen traceable to the writings of people like Locke and Bentham highlights the virtues of individualism.

Popper then embraces this individualism and even goes ahead to exaggerate the citizens' abilities. We think he did this because he was trying to serve the purpose at hand at that time i.e. destroy the enemies of democracy. But these exaggerations have become muddled with representation of reality. In fact, most people fail to live to the high standard that he sets for democratic citizenship. However, Popper - influenced by his popular image of democracy - has none the less taken for granted the general capability and rationality of individual citizen. On the other hand, reality of the actual capacities and behaviors suggest that these presumptions are wrong.

Things are made worse when one moves to Popper's representative democracy. He realised the problem of modern mass society where people can not possibly meet and resolve issues. His solution was to institute representative democracy in lieu of direct democracy. Here the peoples' selected representatives meet face to face instead of the people themselves. Through periodic elections and rotation of office the common people maintain ultimate control over public business. However, difficulties arise when evidence begin to indicate that individual citizens appear to lack the basic knowledge of the political institutions, public questions and public policies deemed necessary to provide the general guidance for their representatives. When economic characteristics, party membership measure, or subjective partisan self-identification are better predictors of the vote than sentiments on political issues; indeed when most peoples sentiment about serious policy issues is 'no opinion' or 'dont know' - how are the people to rule?⁶⁰

This question reminds me of another problem which Popper overlooks in his political philosophy. This is the issue of ethnicity, nationalism and democracy. He forgets that most world nation states are artificial and characterized by ethnic multiplicity and diversity. The implication of such diversity for democratic theory has been serious - for it has led to the

dilemma of how to combine majority rule with minority rights in pluralist societies. Mostly, there are potential tendencies towards domination among majority groups in such a society. Ethnic minorities tend to be permanent minorities and the ruling group tend to be permanent majorities. This is why in many political struggles, the cross cutting of cleavages of ethnicity and social class frequently complicate the terms of social conflict and make institutional responses very difficult. This situation is well captured by Ivo Duchacek's observation that:

In inter ethnic relations...the convenient democratic game of majoritarian decision making in the frame-work of a broad consensus does not work since the unalterable symmetry between permanent majority and permanent minorities impedes the formation of a consensual community.⁶¹

Although Popper does not address this problem directly, his solution seems to be the demand for us to draw up constitutions which recognize individuals not communities and which aim at the establishment of 'a civic nation.' The unifying role here is played by the notion of the rights and duties of citizens. This popperian approach is premised on the assumption that the normal safeguards of democracy are sufficient protection for minorities. Such redress has in reality not solved the minority problem. The minorities have remained excluded from the government and therefore drawn [or is it thrown] into politics of protest. The Tamils, the Sikhs, the Muslim fundamentalists are such people⁶² we are alluding to. In such cases Popper's approach aggravate rather than mitigate ethnic consciousness.

Popper's call for open competition among interest groups, political parties and freely chosen political leaders also emphasize the ethnic problem. Unlike what he believes, the entire political sphere do not occupy neutral grounds in which success is obtained purely on the basis of cogent argument and numerical appeal. Instead for most politicians and political parties, the whole terrain of formal politics is enemy territory. Liberal democracy therefore "is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about privileges that go with inclusions and penalties that accompany exclusion."⁶² It entrenches adversarial politics with actors in the political process perceiving politics as an all out war. It therefore

means the exclusion of the loosing ethnic groups in perpetuity, from power and hence the heightening of ethnic tensions.

When you move from the ethnicity problem you also find that Popper's notion of the relationship of democracy to governance is misleading. For this relationship, he adopts the general consensus that democracy means good governance. This is such a uniquely dogmatic belief, which Popper apparently takes to be so obviously true that he never tries to problematize and examine it. This is why in his political discourse there is a great deal of concern with governance performance in authoritarian regimes and developing countries and never in 'established democracies.' The study would like to argue that nothing expresses the devaluing of democracy in contemporary world better than this conflation of democracy and good governance. Contemporary democracy is not a form of government but a way of choosing government. Of course, apart from elections there are other political arrangements that express democracy.

But, the study believes that this can be largely overridden by a determined government. This is not to say that the democratic way of choosing government has no effect on governance. It does, at least in the sense that it sets expectations and behavioral orientations by the threat of a non-renewable mandate. However, if we leave matters at that and neglect to problematize governance in democracies, we opt for a minimalist governance performance and a very shallow democratic practice.

It is not difficult to imagine gross undemocratic actions and human rights abuses which can occur where rulers are regularly selected by multiparty electoral competition. For one thing, Popper's democracy can degenerate into arithmetic majoritarianism with no sensitivity to special needs to certain groups such as minorities. A freely elected legislature can democratically legislate religious intolerance, political persecution, racial discrimination and cultural genocide and still win the next elections. Popper's democracy therefore does not tell us enough about governance. It is our contention that he continues as though democracy settles the issue of governance because he is increasingly

internalizing the devalorization of democracy. This process is helped by the fact that in established democracies, democracy has achieved the considerable feat of rendering the State benign, though at times not deeply democratic

Above all these Popper's assumption of the autonomy of his democratic society is a myth. We need to remember that the autonomy and sovereignty of the Nation-state has always been less fact than fiction. International conflicts, rivalries, alliances and wars have eternally demonstrated how much the autonomy of all States, democratic or otherwise has been radically incomplete. Not just conflict but also trade, commerce and finance have always spilled over a States boundary. A country's economic life, physical environment, national security and survival are highly and at present increasingly dependent on actors and actions that are outside the country's boundaries and not subject to its government. Democratic States, therefore have never been able to act autonomously in disregard of the actions of outside forces over which they have little or no control. These have a negative impact on Popper's society as citizens[through institutions] can not exercise control over external actors whose decisions bear critically on their lives. Unless things are reversed the demos in Popper's open society suffer a considerable reduction in its capacity to control business on matters of importance to it.

To illustrate this situation, we would like to examine some global processes that undermine democracy by reducing the significance of the nation state and the vigor of the public. Firstly, the transnationalization of more and more things including economic activities has meant that more decisions, which are important for our lives, are made in distant places, often anonymously by agents and forces we hardly know or control. And in so far as more important decisions are beyond us, democratic choice becomes vacuous.

Secondly, advances in telecommunications technology and information revolution appear to be reconstructing consciousness as information. But while it feels consciousness, this information hardly has any social meaning. And since it is devoid of social meaning it does not integrate socially. Even though it connects us in an electronic coherency, this

technology isolates us socially as it is delivered through the privacy of modems, storage devices and screens. Once delivered it is just an environment dissociated from social praxis. It thus conspires against sociability. The technology delivers the information in relative isolation; the information also isolates us as it is essentially technology rather than social experience.

Both technology and information constitute a new public space which is not conducive to democratic politics - for it is decidedly non dialogical. Our visibility to each other in this new public space is abstract as is the space itself. It has hardly any boundaries, it is too fluid and too amorphous to elicit a sense of sharing in a social entity or to nature political projects and democratic activism. This point about our changed political and national space is important because it underscores the transformation of the public in ways that render it unable to support democracy. For instance the porosity of the national space caused by the transnational phenomenon makes political struggles extremely difficult. How can people organize themselves against oppressive power which is always flowing into space beyond our grasp and immune to the institutional checks on power in our locality?⁶³

Lastly, Popper's treatment of the enemies of the open society is very suspect. It seems to us that he is caught up in the fallacy of the straw-man. This fallacy consist of a person reconstructing a weak case of somebody's ideas and then in mercilessly demolishing them. If we take historicism as an example, one would notice that Popper conjures up this name, prescribes what it is and then lumps other peoples ideas here. He tells us that Marx was the greatest and the most ingenious historicist. He then decides to search for evidence of historicism in Marx's works and disregards his positive and strong critique of liberal democracy, where Marx points out the contradictions of democracy.

Marx takes up the issue of the creation of a political community in the face of unequal division of property. His specific concern is to demonstrate that political emancipation in the form of the institutions of a liberal democratic system fall short of human

emancipation. What Marx is concerned to establish is the partial nature of the community established by a political democracy alone. In essence it creates a divided persona. At one time man is a member of a political community where he is taken as equal with his other fellow citizens, sharing equal rights and duties. Here he has a life in a political community where he is valued as a communal being. But simultaneously the same person is a member of a capitalist society based on private property acquisition and competition, where his activities are far from cooperative and moral.

In the capitalist society where he is active as a private individual, he treats other men as means. This divided state leads to alienation and to the betrayal of the ideals of the community and thus of human emancipation. In essence what Marx is trying to say is that even with the best of intentions, the norms and political arrangements of democracy engender contradictions which undermine it. For example, competition which is much valued, tendentially generates inequalities on an increasing scale. This subordinates some to others. This Marx critique echoes that of Rousseau in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.⁶⁴ Popper disregards of all these issues raised by Marx and goes ahead to attack only some aspects of Marxist theses. This is an inadequate and warped analysis of Marx and historicism in general.

From our analysis of the weaknesses in the basic assumptions of Popper's democracy, we have demonstrated how the open society falls short of an absolute ideal. Although the people act as a guide to the government, we have shown that, they have different abilities and capacities to judge what is best for them and their nation; and even when they are asked to choose representatives, their choice is often governed more by emotional and sectarian interest than by reason. The result of this, of course, is that democratically chosen government do not always represent quality and democratically taken decisions do not always represent good judgment. It follows, therefore, that the only justification for Popper's democracy is not qualitative but quantitative. That is, whatever consequences may come from the decision or action taken, the sufferers or gainers are responsible for the action and the consequences.

We have also proved that the system of Popper's democracy is manipulatable in the interests of powerful groups and it carries with it in-built injustices to minority. It is difficult to include safeguards for minorities in the above democratic system because it involves the weakening of the governing institutions. All these compels us to agree with Rousseau that "if there were a people of gods they would rule themselves democratically"⁶⁵ and also that a perfect society is not suited for men.

However, this does not imply a total rejection of Popper's open society; rather it behooves us to re-examine this ideal society so as to provide solutions to some of the problems it generates by its imperfections. Popper himself agrees with this position. He even acknowledges that opportunities for political participation could be immeasurably greater than the institutions of his democracy provide for. He is certain that democracy hasn't reached its maximum limit and thus urges us to search for a new form of democracy that will expand opportunities for participation and democratic control.

The foregoing reflections suggest that "the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy."⁶⁶ And the study believes that more democracy can only be achieved if people realize that political and social institutions take their rise from, and are moulded by a political philosophy. This is to say that underlying institutions and political practice in general is a political theory, a political philosophy. It is our contention that if such a philosophy is fully articulated or worked out and the citizens educated, in fact bathed in it, then more democracy will be realized as the whole process will engender a political culture that will automatically be supportive to democratic practice.

Notes

- ¹ Cf., B. Magee, *Popper*, London: Fontana Press, 1982, p. 74.
- ² K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1., London: Routledge, 1966, p. 125.
- ³ Ibid., (Vol. 2), p. 151.
- ⁴ It is important to remember that Popper takes criticism as the hallmark of rationality. Vide Supra, pp.16-39.
- ⁵ Magee, Op Cit., p. 105.
- ⁶ A.C. Hill, *Democratic Realism*, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1945, p. 20.
- ⁷ Cf., Ibid.
- ⁸ A. Gitonga and W. Oyugi, *Democratic Theory and Practice in Africa*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 10.
- ¹⁰ R. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1991, p. 263.
- ¹¹ Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p.126.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ For a comprehensive discussion of this two approaches to the creation and maintenance of social institutions - refer to K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge, 1960.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 65
- ¹⁵ Cf., B. Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and other Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. This book gives a detailed discussion of the functional approach.
- ¹⁶ This same ideas have been expressed with a deeper passion by Walter Lippmann in his book *The Good Society*, London: Allen & Unwin ,1937.
- ¹⁷ Cf., Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, Warmington E.H. (ed.), New York: The New American Library Inc., 1956.

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- 18 Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, Op Cit., p. 67.
- 19 Popper refers to scholars who believe that there are some forces that drive society towards a certain direction as historicists. For example Hegel took reason or the spirit as the driving force behind everything while Marx thought it was the class conflict (dialectical materialism) that would drive society or a communist social order. Vide Supra., pp.88-97.
- 20 Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit., p. 67.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 67-8.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 68-9.
- 23 Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op Cit., Vol. 1, p. 158.
- 24 Magee, Op cit., p. 85.
- 25 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op Cit., Vol. 1, p. 284-5.
- 26 Cf., J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- 27 The origin of the term 'polyarchy' is briefly discussed in Dahl R. "Polyarchy, Pluralism and Scale", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, No. 4. 1984 pp. 225-40.
- 28 Cf., Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, Op. Cit., pp.218-219.
- 29 Ibid., p.233
- 30 Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p.124.
- 31 Ibid., p.125.
- 32 Ibid., p.258.
- 33 Cf., Magee, Op Cit., p.93.
- 34 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p.262.
- 35 Ibid., p.123.
- 36 Ibid. Vol. 2, p.124.

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- 37 M. Conforth, *The Open Society and The Open Society*, New York: International Publishers, 1968, p.296.
- 38 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p.125.
- 39 Conforth, Op. Cit., p.341.
- 40 Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit., p.3.
- 41 K. Popper, *Conjectures and refutations*, London: Routledge,1965, p.339.
- 42 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol.1, p.3.
- 43 Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.338.
- 44 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p.269.
- 45 Cf., *Ibid.*, p.37.
- 46 I. Berlin, *Karl Marx*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, p.232.
- 47 Cf., E. Burns (ed.), *A Hand Book of Marxism*, Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1935, p.374.
- 48 Cf., Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit., preface.
- 49 Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p.7.
- 50 Cf., Magee, Op. Cit., p.99.
- 51 Cf., Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p.31.
- 52 Cf., Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, Op. Cit., p.104.
- 53 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p.8.
- 54 Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit., p.74.
- 55 Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p.7.
- 56 Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit., p.74.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p.79.

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- 58 Ibid., p.77.
- 59 Cf., Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, New York: John Wiley, 1960, Chapter 8.
- 60 Cf., P. F. Lazarfield et al., *The Peoples Choice*, New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1944, Chapter 3.
- 61 Ivo Duchacek, "Antagonistic Co-operation: Territorial and Ethnic Communities" in *Publius(Denton, TX)*, 7, 4, Fall 1977, p.23.
- 62 D. L. Horowitz, "The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict: Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 4, No.4, Oct. 1993.
- 63 Cf., Claude Ake, "Re-Thinking Democracy," in *Political and Economic Monthly*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1996, p. 43.
- 64 Cf., L. Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin*, London: Routledge, 1972.
- 65 J. J. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, vol. 3 p 4
- 66 As Quoted from *A Dictionary of Quotations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
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Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations.

We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawakened, notwithstanding the renaissance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted.

Walt Whitman.

The study has revealed Popper's vision of the ideal society to be a democracy. It has seen that this vision is informed by his theory of scientific knowledge. This theory takes knowledge to be conjectural, hypothetical, and objective. This is in contrast to the earlier epistemological standpoint, which regarded knowledge to be certain, true and in the main subjective.

The study noticed that Popper is a fallibilist in his philosophy. His fallibilism emphasises the possibility of error in all our quests for knowledge. It recognised his caution that the discovery of error does not provide support for relativism or scepticism - for the important thing about error is not that a mistake has been made, but that we can learn from our mistakes.

Basing on this, the study then examined the influence of Popper's approach to knowledge on his social political philosophy. This resulted into the explication of his 'scientific' political philosophy. In this process, the study found out that, just as in the search for knowledge, Popper's political philosophy demands a measure of detachment which he believes can engender objectivity and rationalism. Such detachment, the study saw, can only be achieved if a society develops social institutions which are to be used in governing.

In accordance with this philosophy, the study noted that he takes the most ideal society to be a democracy or the 'open' society which is founded on the creation of impersonal institutions which help in the choice and control of leaders. This popperian [ideal] society was then examined, and it was discovered that it falls short of an absolute ideal. The study saw that, despite Popper's belief in the consistent reasonableness of human beings, men are rarely rational especially in their political choices. They are driven more by irrational considerations [i.e economic, sectarian etc.,] than by reason. His faith in institutions was seen to be blinding him from appreciating the possibility of these structures being perverted by officials whom they are meant to guide and control. These and other limitations led to the inevitable conclusion that the open society was not perfect.

This position was seen to be in agreement with his indeterminist and fallibilist approach which takes science and society as never in a state of rest but always being in a problem situation which calls for the propounding of trial solutions and therefore always needing attention. The study observed that Popper does not take his democracy to be a perfect entity, rather he sees it to be an imperfect but open society which needs to be improved upon and even allowing for this to be undertaken.

Following from this, the study would like to recommend several measures that will go a long way in reducing the imperfections of this system. We believe that in order to maintain the vitality of the democratic process, democratic institutions would need to be improved and made stronger. Such an action would then allow democratic institutions to provide whatever control that may be possible over the authority delegated to decision makers. This will lead to a healthy democratic political life. At the same time the individual citizen should be allowed to possess political and economic resources they would require to participate in political life as equals. These include, among others, the government focusing on the reduction of the causes of gross political and economic inequalities, ensuring that information about political agenda, [appropriate in level and form, and accurately reflecting the best knowledge available] is easily and universally accessible to all citizens. The government should also allow and participate in political discussions.

Another adoptive strategy, which the study believes can reduce the limitation in Popper's democracy, is the movement from democracy in the nation state to democracy in the transnational State. Although such a move may be problematic it is the best shot at reducing external influences on societies. This feat is slowly being achieved by the European Union which has managed to set up transnational political structures and consciousness even though the democratic process is still more attenuated here than in individual States

In conclusion, the study would like to highlight that the cornerstone of Popper's open society is the claim that 'everything is open to criticism.' With this assertion, he seeks to avoid the extremes of absolutism and irrationalism. He cautions us not to expect too much from any source or method. He implores us not to turn our backs upon rational argument and open discussion even though they may fail to provide a final [absolute] justification for any decision, policy or theory.

He believes that critical debate will permit our policies or hypotheses to die for us - whereas the uncritical method of the fanatic demands that we testify as martyrs to our policies, decisions or hypotheses; if they are faulty we perish with them. According to Popper, rigorous criticism, revision and re-examination of our policies can replace the violence of the struggle for power. In this way, he thinks that a revolutionary change in our ideas decisions or hypothesis should deputise for the violent revolutions which have claimed so many human lives.

Lastly, Popper takes the democratic principle of legitimacy to be the principle of consent; a law or obligation is not legitimate nor am I to obey it unless I previously have consented to this law or obligation through myself or my representatives. His democratic regime, therefore, is that regime which, in principle, is willed by each individual. This is because this democracy defines itself as, and seeks to be, that regime which is willed by each individual. With this starting point in mind, how can anyone want anything but Popper's democracy!

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