

## Fighting Social Change

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*Abstract:* The following essay analyses Chapter 10, The Background of Plato's Attack, in the first volume, The Spell of Plato. The focus is on Popper's interpretation of Plato's sociological perspective discussing the social change and the role of the Great Generation in it, with the dawn of Athenian democracy. Also, the essay examines Popper's analysis of the reactionary social events during and after the Peloponnesian war (431-404 BC). The highlight is on Popper's view of these twitches of tribal, collectivist forces that want to keep their world's old organic "stable" image at all costs. It is also essential to take a deeper look at the historical context and novelties such as trade and naval communications that Popper believes contributed to the birth of an open society. This new society brings individual responsibility and reason instead of group morale and emotions. Popper presented the tension between these opposites by looking at the first "modern" revolution (as he calls it) in ancient Greece and analysing Plato's views on the changed social condition. Plato believed he found an argument for a return to the old society. Popper assails Plato's project and accents the manipulation of Socrates. The first defeats of democracy by autocratic forces (tyranny of oligarchs) demonstrate the fine line between the two opposing concepts of society, the ease with which these retrograde processes take place and lead towards a backslide from an open (democratic) to a closed society.

*Key words:* Karl Popper, Plato, Closed (organic) society, Open (abstract) society, collectivism, individualism, responsibility, social condition, social change.

It was an effort to close the door which had been opened, and to arrest society by casting upon it the spell of an alluring philosophy, unequalled in depth and richness ... Plato thus, unwittingly became the pioneer of the many propagandists who, often in good faith, developed the technique of appealing to moral, humanitarian sentiments for anti-humanitarian, immoral purposes (188).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020). All parenthetical page citations in refer to this text.

## Keeping One's Place

At the end of World War II, Karl Popper, critic of historicism<sup>2</sup> and an advocate of the critical rationalist approach, published a two-volume book entitled "Open Society and Its Enemies". In this extensive and precisely written political document he indirectly criticized modern totalitarian systems. According to Popper, the first ideas and original principles of modern totalitarian systems are derived from, among others, Plato's philosophy. Although it does not directly address the challenges and problems of his time, such as the consequences of National Socialism or Fascism, or the creation of totalitarian Communism, Popper's analysis of the classics of philosophy and sociology, Plato, Hegel and Marx, is an attempt to find sources or historical events and periods that have set the stage for the negative ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Reading the text, I got particularly interested in Chapter 10, The Background of Plato's Attack in the first volume, The Spell of Plato. Here Popper summarized the key arguments and conclusions of his sharp criticism of Plato's philosophy from previous chapters and described in detail the socio-political context of the historical period marked by the rise of Athenian democracy, Peloponnesian Wars and the trial of Socrates. In this chapter Popper also described the main actors (historians, philosophers, politicians, and military leaders) who contributed to the civilizational breakthrough towards a society that Popper calls an "open society". He sharply detects and criticizes the intellectual forces or power-holders who did everything to prevent the social revolution which Popper considers to be the first revolution that opened the doors for the modern structure and organization of society. In addition to political analysis, the value of Popper's work lies in his sociological perspective on the painful and complex process of transition from tribal to modern community. Philosophically, the author presents this as a transformation from a closed to an abstract (open) society. "According to Popper, a tribal society with

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2 "Under historicism, Popper implies the idea that history takes place lawfully to the extent that it is possible not only to analyze it scientifically, but also to predict where and to what "final state" it leads. Popper also considers religious concepts to be variants of historicism, such as the concept of the "chosen people", the fascist ideologies, especially those related to racist science, as well as the Marxist eschatology which should lead to a classless society". Source: JUKIĆ, 40-41, Sarajevo 2010/2011, p. 157-164 [Original text titled 'Kritik des totalitären Denkens. Karl Poppers "Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde" In: MERKUR. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken 736/737, 64, September/October 2010, p. 829-835]

its authority of the factual and the traditional, as a property of a closed society, corresponds in a sociological sense to the philosophical opposition between a closed and an open society, while in an open society man is freed from the rule of authority and prejudice because there is the possibility of rational criticism of the existing institutions and of taking responsibility.” Popper warns of the risk of returning to the old state of a closed tribal society. I argue that it is crucial to understand Popper’s description of the forces that call for a return to the old, because I claim that the permanent tension lies in the eternal risk of regression that we experience in today’s modern society. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to provide an overview and review of Popper’s view of the historical and socio-political context. First and foremost, it is the antagonism and war between Sparta and Athens. Then, the importance and role of the representatives of the Great Generation who contributed to the civilisation’s step into an open society, as well as the enemies who used any means to stop the social change. In the introduction to Chapter 10, Popper recalls the previously presented arguments for the claim that Plato’s vision of the state is totalitarian in essence and that it shares many similarities with modern totalitarian systems. Later in the text of Chapter 10, referring to the policies of Sparta, he stresses that modern totalitarian systems differ from the totalitarian systems of ancient Greece only in their imperial ambitions. Plato’s view of the rule of justice that produces true happiness is ultimately achieved “by keeping one’s place” (161).<sup>3</sup> According to Popper, this is one of the main theses in the book *The Republic* and a key element of his totalitarian idea of the political system. “For Plato, justice is not achieved if all citizens of the state are treated equally, but, according to Popper’s interpretation, Plato advocates for a totalitarian concept of justice, i.e. that justice is achieved when the ruler rules, the workers work and the slaves toil. Plato considers this prevailing inequality in tribal society to be a normative model. Doesn’t this remind of the saying “to each his own”, which was, as is well known, placed at the entrance to a National Socialist concentration camp.

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In addition to this, Popper reveals in Plato not only class society, but also the racist and militaristic features of Plato's "ideal" state."<sup>4</sup>

Among the characteristics of the totalitarian regime, Popper includes Plato's insistence on class division of society "by nature". The totalitarian character of Plato's philosophical ideas is confirmed by his position that neither the happiness of individuals nor that of any particular class matters, "but only the happiness of the whole" (161). According to Popper, one of the reasons for Plato's totalitarianism lies in confusing individualism with egoism, which Plato contrasts with collectivism as a model and thus overlooks that collectivism and egoism are not mutually exclusive in reality; rather, the opposite to egoism is altruism, which contains an individualistic component. Popper believes that Plato comes to such an understanding because he hates the individual and freedom and thus opposes the ideals of the Greek Golden Age which are also the ideals of the Enlightenment, namely: justice, equality, humanity, peace and freedom".<sup>5</sup>

In Popper's eyes, Plato is a "totalitarian party politician, successful in his propaganda for the arrest and overthrow of a civilization which he hated" (162). Popper believes that Plato manipulated the arguments of freedom, stability, and prosperity by switching theses, where the ancient philosopher claimed that a totalitarian system represents the pursuit of true freedom as it stands against tyranny.

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5 Ibidem

## **Step out of Tribalism**

In the text that precedes the analysis of the process of transition from a tribal organization of society to the modern community, Karl Popper explains that although tribes are different from each other they always share certain common features. According to Popper, this is especially true of magical and irrational interpretations of social life, which are the source of strictly defined customs. Popper further writes that this direct connection between magic and social customs in tribal communities resulted in “the lack of distinction between the customary or conventional regularities of social life and the regularities found in ‘nature’” (164).

The tribes found community laws by interpreting the action of supernatural forces. Popper continues in a sharper manner, arguing that it is likely that some aspects of tribal communities were even more primitive and that belief in the supernatural can be seen as “a kind of rationalization of the fear of changing a routine” (164). This need to rationalize supernatural forces and laws, however, did not contribute to rational changes or improvements in the lives of community members or of social conditions in general. In tribal communities, the individual has neither the need nor the means to independently determine how to act or how to treat other members of the group. All their actions are pre-determined by taboos and limited by magic-based rules of tribal “institutions”. Determination is something that is granted by nature and is a concept that an individual should not think about or scrutinise. Popper believes that this is the crucial difference between this type of community and a modern community or open society. The modern society provides space for agency and lets the individual decide “between the laws of the state on the one hand and the taboos we habitually observe on the other, an ever-widening field of personal decisions, with its problems and responsibilities” (164). Open society has liberated the individual, provided people with the possibility of awareness, rational thinking, and even critical questioning of their own decisions, relationships, but also laws and institutions.

In this sense, Popper writes: “And in our own time, many of us make rational decisions concerning the desirability or otherwise of new legislation, and of other institutional changes; that is to say, decisions based upon an estimate of possible consequences, and upon a conscious preference for some of them” (165).

Popper still calls closed societies collectivist, while new societies based on individuals and their decisions are called open societies. Closed societies are organic and largely correspond to the biological primordial theory of the state based on “kinship, living together, sharing common efforts, common dangers, common joys and common distress” (165). The difference between a collectivist and an open society lies in the freedoms of the individual. In an open society, individuals have the opportunity and most often want to progress and succeed, which may eventually mean competition. An individual becomes competition to another individual. In this relationship, a certain person can take someone’s place or role in the society, take their job or a position of power. In contrast, there is no competition in organic closed societies. Popper emphasizes that nothing similar exists in the organism. Nothing that would resemble a class struggle in an open society. “Since there is nothing in the organism to correspond to one of the most important characteristics of the open society, competition for status among its members, the so-called organic theory of the state is based on a false analogy” (165). It is therefore not surprising to discover that attempts to apply organic theory to our modern society are covert forms of propaganda to return to tribalism (166), Popper argues.

Popper also calls the open society an ‘abstract society’ and says that most of these features can also be found in modern societies. But the fact is that in the modern world there are groups (collectives) made up of individuals who join them out of the need for social contact, shared interest or the like. The difference lies in the fact that in an abstract society, communication and participation in a group is the result of an individual who is free to enter or leave such groups. This is not the case with closed societies with predetermined affiliations and relationships where the individual has no power to judge or choose. Attempts to carry out one’s own will are uncompromisingly sanctioned by the group. Therefore, Popper writes that abstract/open societies bring potential and that “personal relationships of a new kind can arise where they can be freely entered into instead of being determined by the accidents of birth; and with this, a new individualism arises” (166). Popper also emphasizes the importance of creating new spiritual connections among individuals, which can to a great extent overcome biological or physical connections. In general, the author sees the transition from a closed to an open society as the first and one of the greatest revolutions that have happened to humanity. He gives credit for this to the Greeks, the people who started this transition which he believes persisted until the modern times.

The tensions and insecurities brought about by this transition have incited antagonism between the ruling and other classes. Encounters with other communities and cultures were a novelty and also brought uncertainty. New cultural contacts proved to be a challenge to the stability of tribal communities. In parallel to this, communications and trade developed and the class of sailors and merchants was articulated. According to Popper, the new class posed the greatest (enemy) threat to the survival of a closed society. The historical changes that Popper writes about started around the sixth century B.C. A number of social revolutions occurred, along with reactions of the conservative forces that wanted to keep the status quo at all costs. Transition did not necessarily mean progress, liberation from magic, liberation from raids, getting to know different cultures, creating space for critical discussion. It also triggered violent efforts to maintain the tribal system, as was the case with Sparta. (167).

Disintegration of the closed society has left consequences that Popper claims were also felt in the modern society at the time of his writing. Tendencies towards closure and conservation re-emerge, especially in periods of social change. A series of revolutions in ancient Greece brought the liberation of the individual and the beginning of their rational existence and action. This period witnessed the liberation from exclusively social needs based primarily on emotions. The individual opened up to assessing and accepting their own responsibility. Popper describes the breakdown of the closed society through the breakdown of the family and the consequences it leaves on children. He argues that “the breakdown of the closed society, raising as it does the problems of class and other problems of social status, must have had the same effect upon the citizens as a serious family quarrel and the breaking up of the family home is liable to have on children” (168). The greatest danger of the coming changes was felt by the ruling classes, but also by the previously subordinated class. In his text, Popper illustrates this with Sparta, which did everything to prevent these changes. He also analyses in detail the case of Athens as the leading example of democracy at the time. The success of the process of transition from a closed society to an open one in Athens was reflected in the development of its maritime communications and trade, which at that time represented “one of the few forms in which individual initiative and independence can assert itself” (168).

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## Who are the Patriots?

The development of maritime communications and trade is a major feature of Athenian imperialism that occurred in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The oligarchs, a privileged class in Athens until then, considered this development a dangerous change of the *status quo*. “It became clear to them that the trade of Athens, its monetary commercialism, its naval policy, and its democratic tendencies were parts of one single movement, and that it was impossible to defeat democracy without going to the roots of the evil and destroying both the naval policy and the empire” (169). Popper emphasized that most of the descriptions and details of this period can be found in Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War, more precisely the two great wars fought in the periods 431-421 and 419-403 B.C. Wars broke out in a couple of cycles between democratic Athens and the oligarchic and tribal-based Sparta.<sup>6</sup> What Popper draws special attention to is the so-called fifth column of oligarchs in Athens who, dissatisfied with the changes and the dominant democratic system, secretly cooperated with Sparta. Popper describes them as “the extreme wing of the Athenian oligarchic clubs who conspired throughout the war with the enemy” (169). His criticism relates to the fact that the history of the Peloponnesian wars and the subsequent fall of Athens is known exclusively through the interpretation and influence of Thucydides. This influential historian of the time presented the fall of Athens as the result and the ultimate proof of the weakness of the democratic system (182). Popper emphasizes that this is a deliberate distortion of the truth and that the facts show a different political and social climate of the time.

The class interests of the oligarchs proved to be more important than their patriotism for their homeland of Athens, and so guided by this particular goal they cooperated with the enemy Sparta in the hope of winning and sending the existing democratic system into the past. This situation, which Popper calls the “class situation” (170), began almost three decades before the start of the Peloponnesian War. Popper believes that the historian Thucydides himself was an enemy of democracy and finds proof of this in his descriptions of the Athenian empire. The paradox lies in the fact that

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<sup>6</sup> Three wars were recorded in the period from 430 to 404 BC. The wars were started by Sparta with the Peloponnesian League against the Athenian Maritime League led by Athens. The motive for the conflict on the part of Sparta and its allies was to prevent the strengthening and spread of the Athenian democracy. All three periods of conflict resulted in the defeat of Athens.



the masses supported the Athenian democracy, while educated people like the historian Thucydides believed that the Athenian empire was tyrannical. (171)

Athens, they believe, was a ruthless democracy, a place ruled by the uneducated, who hated and suppressed the educated, and were hated by them in turn. But this view — the myth of the cultural intolerance of democratic Athens — makes nonsense of the known facts, and above all of the astonishing spiritual productivity of Athens in this particular period. Even Meyer must admit this productivity. ‘What Athens produced in this decade’, he says with characteristic modesty, ‘ranks equal with one of the mightiest decades of German literature.’ Pericles, who was the democratic leader of Athens at this time, was more than justified when he called her ‘The School of Hellas’. (172)

It is interesting that Popper mentions but does not examine the fact that the Athenian democracy was based on slavery. Nor does he examine Athenian imperialism. On the contrary, Popper presents the positive aspects of imperialism, arguing that only a certain form of imperialism could win and overcome exclusivity and self-sufficiency, a closure specific to tribal communities. The Athenians were interested in contact and communication, especially in the field of taxation but also with respect to the initiatives and independence of other members of the empire. (172). On the other hand, Sparta’s policy was to prevent change and “interference” at all costs, and to ensure a return to the safety of tribalism. By that logic, Sparta was anti-imperial. Popper cites a strategy, six ways in which Sparta works:

- (1) Protection of its arrested tribalism: shut out all foreign influences which might endanger the rigidity of tribal taboos.
- (2) Anti-humanitarianism: shut out, more especially, all equalitarian, democratic, and individualistic ideologies.
- (3) Autarky: be independent of trade.
- (4) Anti-universalism or particularism: uphold the differentiation between your tribe and all others; do not mix with inferiors.
- (5) Mastery: dominate and enslave your neighbours.
- (6) But do not become too large. (173)

Introduction of the image of a new enemy (in case the old one is defeated) is present in all closed societies, where domination is justified by its role of saving the state and the people from the real but often-imaginary enemy.

(173). Popper claims that these six characteristics of the closed Greek society coincide with modern totalitarian societies. This is not the case only in the part of imperialist aspirations of modern systems that we do not find in tribal communities. On the other hand, according to Popper, Athenian imperialism tended to create a “commonwealth of Greek cities” or a “universal empire of man”, while the imperialism of modern totalitarian systems has none of the characteristics of tolerant universalism (173).

The political and spiritual revolution that caused the collapse of Greek tribalism reached its peak in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC with the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. A violent class struggle took place in Athens in parallel with the war between the two leading cities, Athens and Sparta. The old Athenian oligarchs who stood up in defence of tradition, old values and old religion were called the patriots. Their slogan was: “Back to the state of our forefathers”, or “Back to the old paternal state”, which is where the term “patriot” originates (174). The goal was to stop social change and fight against the universalist imperialism of Athens, its democracy and symbols of power such as the navy, defensive walls and trade.

Popper believes that the patriotic movement was deeply morally rotten, although it fought for a return to stable forms of life, religion, dignity, law and order. “Its ancient faith was lost, and was largely replaced by a hypocritical and even cynical exploitation of religious sentiments” (175). Opposing these tendencies to return to the old, great influence was exerted by the generation that promoted faith in reason, freedom, brotherhood and equality of all people. Faith, says Popper, in an open society. Thus in this chapter Popper pays special attention to understanding the role of protagonists from the so-called Great Generation. Pericles, the leader of that generation and the leader of Athens at the time was the first to politically formulate the principles of justice, equality before the law and of political individualism. He had the support of intellectuals such as Herodotus, who celebrated these principles in his works. Besides Herodotus, there was also Protagoras, a native of Abdera who became influential in Athens, and Democritus, another member of the Great Generation. “They formulated the doctrine that human institutions of language, custom, and law are not of the magical character of taboos but man-made, not natural but conventional, insisting, at the same time, that we are responsible for them” (175). The writings and speeches of the representatives of the Great Generation contained ideas directed against slavery, rational protectionism, and anti-nationalism, “i.e the creed of the universal empire of men” (175).

Pericles and the representatives of the Great Generation have set the basis for the political program “of a great equalitarian individualist, of a democrat who well understands that democracy cannot be exhausted by the meaningless principle that ‘the people should rule’, but that it must be based on faith in reason, and on humanitarianism” (177). At the same time, they are, according to Popper, examples of true patriotism, pride of the city to which they belong and which they have made an example and a school “not only of Hellas, but, as we know, of mankind, for millennia past and yet to come” (177). Plato did not support the forces of the Great Generation that were against the “paternal state” movement. The significance of this movement was further confirmed by the attention that Plato devoted to the cynical interpretation of Pericles’ oration half a century later. In *The Republic*, Plato attacks democracy in an undisguised parody, a dialogue called “Menexenus or the Funeral Oration” (177).

### **Who is the Enemy?**

There is no return to a harmonious state of nature. If we turn back, then we must go the whole way — we must return to the beasts. We must go on into the unknown, the uncertain and insecure, using what reason we may have to plan as well as we can for both security and freedom (189).

The significance of Popper’s analysis lies in a very clear representation of the challenge of stepping out or moving into what the author calls “modern civilization.” An important element of his political and sociological analysis is the detection and elaboration of the idea of the “enemy”. According to Popper, it was those philosophers, politicians, military leaders who did everything to stop the changes and restore the stability and harmony of the tribal system. Popper celebrates the achievements of the Greek civilization, the culmination of which was manifested in the Athenian democracy and the works of the philosophers who founded critical rationalism. “Individualistic civilization” emerged with the collapse of tribal society (179). Despite a group of philosophers advocating for a return to the old social state, Popper emphasizes that philosophy contributed to and was a response to the breakdown of the closed society. Social change laid the foundations for the tradition of critical challenge (178), discussion and the art of rational thinking in general.

Plato was not the only philosopher or “one of the educated” who fought for the return to the past and opted for rebellion against freedom. For example, Heraclitus was the first known enemy of the open society. He criticized Athens and its democratic institutions. Here Popper stresses that there is an essential difference between democratic criticism and totalitarian criticism of the democratic political system (179): “Socrates’ criticism was a democratic one, and indeed of the kind that is the very life of democracy” (179). Popper refers to aspects of Socrates’ teaching in several instances in the text: his intellectualism, his egalitarian theory of human reason as a universal medium of communication. Socrates’ doctrines are intellectual honesty and self-criticism. According to Popper, Socrates founded the egalitarian theory of justice by emphasizing that it is better to be a victim of injustice than to perpetrate it against others. An important aspect is the new focus on the individual. The initiative of the individual, his self-affirmation, becomes a necessity in the beginnings of the open society. Interest was created for the individual as an “ordinary” individual and not necessarily a tribal leader, war hero or saviour of the homeland. Socrates then raised the question of the soul and morality, which is directly related to the theories of individuality and rationalism. Socrates’ critical philosophy did not spare even the leaders of democratic Athens, as he noticed the lack of implementation of proclaimed principles and values in everyday life. He also blames the democratic leaders of Athens for their obsession with power and politics.

However, Socrates did not show as much interest in political reforms and institutions as in influencing changes and individuals in society (180). “This activity made him, on the one hand, attractive to at least some of the enemies of democracy; on the other hand, it brought him into contact with ambitious aristocrats of that very type” (181). Critias’ efforts to destroy democracy and the political program of the Old Oligarchs failed. The tyranny of the thirty extreme oligarchs “had been beaten in the realm of power politics largely because they had offended the citizens’ sense of justice” (184). With respect to previous losses in the wars, the rulers of Athens accused Socrates of betraying democracy and cooperating with the enemy. Immediately after the defeated democracy was recovered and re-established, a case was filed against Socrates. He was accused of educating and influencing the most dangerous enemies of Athens such as Alcibiades, Critias and Charmides. The indictment read as follows: “...that Socrates was corrupting the youth...” (183) While Socrates decisively protected

his personal integrity throughout his defence, Plato, according to Popper, “with all his uncompromising canvas-cleaning, was led along a path on which he compromised his integrity with every step he took” (188).

Popper examined Plato’s attitude towards Socrates. “Plato tried to implicate Socrates in his grandiose attempt to construct the theory of the arrested society; and he had no difficulty in succeeding, for Socrates was dead” (184). Further in the text, he stated that Socrates taught faith in human reason, that he was aware of dogmatism, that he pointed out the dangers of misology, i.e. distrust of the theory and skill of critical reasoning (176). Socrates fought for the freedom of critical thinking and self-esteem that had nothing to do with “the self” and sentimentality. According to Popper, Socrates had only one noteworthy heir and that was his friend Antisthenes, the last representative of the Great Generation. Popper is aware that his criticism of Plato might seem too harsh even to Plato’s critics. At the same time, it is paradoxical that free thought, criticism of political institutions, teaching young people new ideas, were considered serious crimes in the Athenian democracy. In Plato’s state, Popper believes, Socrates would not even get a chance to defend himself publicly. Popper insists, “I cannot doubt the fact of Plato’s betrayal, nor that his use of Socrates as the main speaker of the Republic was the most successful attempt to implicate him. But it is another question whether this attempt was conscious” (184). He further argues that by reading Plato he is witnessing an internal conflict and a true titanic struggle in Plato’s mind. (185) Plato, with his longing for unity and harmony, visualized the structure of the human soul as identical to the structure of a class-divided society, and this shows how deeply he had to suffer.

The old oligarch and his followers thought in their superficiality that with the help of tyranny like that of the Thirty Tyrants they would be able to bring back the good old days. Plato believed that the program of the Old Oligarch could not be revived without reaffirming the old values of tribalism by opposing them to faith in open society. People must be taught that justice can mean inequality because the tribe, the collective, stands above individuals. But because Socrates’ faith was too strong to be directly challenged, Plato was forced to interpret it as a faith in a closed society. Popper argues that this is how Plato used Socrates’ teachings on the necessity of the rule of ‘educated’, learned philosophers and encouraging students to participate in politics. Popper believes that this is the simplest interpretation of the fact that Plato kept Socrates as his main speaker to propagate that the enlightened, the wise should rule.

Plato turns against humanitarian ideas and the egalitarian theory of justice, especially in *The Republic* which represents “his hesitant preface to his defence of lying, to his introduction of racialism, and to his definition of justice...” (186). In it Plato believes he has found the root of all evil, the ‘Fall of Man’, the breakdown of a closed society. This discovery convinced him that it was necessary to return to the nature and that the Old Oligarch and his followers were basically right in favouring Sparta against Athens. Popper writes that Plato went even further, classifying tyrants as the culprits for the collapse of the closed society in that they succumbed to the revolutionary spirit and were forced to make concessions to the people’s desire for equality. This may be the reason why Plato hated tyranny. Popper admits that while reading he was confused by Plato’s hatred of tyranny, but he considers “that his indictment of tyranny was mere propaganda” (162) as evident in Plato’s description of the tyrant. Popper argues that only a true enemy of tyranny believes that tyrants must start wars one after another in order for the people to feel the need for a general, for a saviour in extremely dangerous circumstances. Tyranny, Plato insisted, was not the solution, nor was any of the current oligarchies, although his philosophical imperative was to keep people at their level / place (187). Despite his hatred of tyranny, Plato defended the most tyrannical measures.

This kind of resistance to political change could not work, Popper said. Considering that “once we begin to rely upon our reason, and to use our powers of criticism, once we feel the call of personal responsibilities, and with it, the responsibility of helping to advance knowledge, we cannot return to a state of implicit submission to tribal magic” (189). Plato’s dream of unity and beauty and perfection, aestheticism and holism and collectivism, is a product as well as a symptom of the lost group spirit of tribalism. Plato himself felt the influence of the revolutionary forces and fought them within himself. His response to the Great Generation required a truly great effort. He was forced to fight against free thought and search for the truth. He was made to defend lies, political miracles, taboo superstition, repression of the truth and, ultimately, brutal violence. Popper believes that Plato in his deep sociological insights realized how much his contemporaries suffered due to major changes in society that brought insecurity and tension. Plato was aware of the uncertainty caused by “the social revolution which had begun with the rise of democracy and individualism” (163). By switching theses, Plato blamed social change for the rift and general misery of the society. He saw a cure only in preventing

change and returning to the tribal order in order to regain the happiness which, according to Popper, was “hopelessly wrong” (163). In this regard, Popper argues: “... he erred in his fundamental claim that by leading them back to tribalism he could lessen the strain, and restore their happiness” (163). Despite social and political forces rejecting change, modern Western civilization originated in ancient Greece at a time when a step forward “from tribalism to humanitarianism” was made.

We must, I believe, bear this strain as the price to be paid for every increase in knowledge, in reasonableness, in co-operation and in mutual help, and consequently in our chances of survival, and in the size of the population. It is the price we have to pay for being human. (168)

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