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SOCIAL ORDER AND SOCIAL ENGINEERING: BETWEEN CHAOS AND TOTALITARIANISM

I am going to approach the question of social order by viewing the possibility of social engineering and looking at the question about the nature of the laws of social order. In other words, what is the nature of the laws of social order?¹

We know of two types of laws: natural and normative. The first are laws of nature that are described by natural sciences: physics, chemistry, biology, and so on. The second are the rules and norms of human behavior. Natural laws are nothing other than objective regularities of nature, which function independently of human will. Normative laws, on the contrary, the products of the human mind, have a subjective character and depend upon human will. For example we have the law of gravity and if we jump through a window with the aim to fly we must necessarily fall onto the street (the only exception exists in "The Matrix's" reality). On the contrary such normative law as "don't kill" is not natural. Despite this law, everybody can be killed by everybody.

So we come back to our initial question: what is the nature of the laws of social order? I mean, for example, economic laws. If we took the point of view that economic laws were natural we would be able to explain why the collapse of socialist economies was unavoidable. But we would not be able to explain how this phenomenon of socialist economies could exist, for example, in the Soviet Union for 70 years, because this phenomenon would be impossible from this point of view. If we took the opposite point of view that economic laws were only normative laws we would be able to explain the creation of socialist economies but we would not be able to explain why these economies collapsed.

Obviously those laws which govern the function of social order have a dualistic nature. They have both natural and normative characteristics. We can demonstrate how these two characteristics are combined in the function of social laws by the example of a game.

We know that the rules of a game have a clear normative characteristic because all games have been created by a human mind (by the way the notions *thought* [ой-лау] and *game* [ой-нау] have the common root in the Kazakh language). When we began to play a game, we recognized the rules of this game. It means that we have an obligation to perform according to these rules.

Let us compare this situation of entering into a game with the real situation of a moral choice, when we have recognized the rules of the game (social game) and reduced ourselves to the status of a structural element of the game space. When we reduced ourselves to this status (as a player), we began to submit ourselves to the regu-

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larities of the game (its tactics and strategy). And as a result, the function of the game combines the characteristics of natural and normative laws.

One important moment, which we have to pay attention to here, is that the regularities of games, which we as players submit to, cannot define the situation of the moral choice when we decide to “get in” or “get out” of the game. The situation of moral choice is a situation of the absolute freedom of human individuality, existing outside the reality of the game. We have to understand “game” in a wide meaning as a model of social institutions.²

Factually, regularities that we can see in the function of social order give us the principal possibility to value the order. On the other hand, normative conditions of these regularities give us the possibility to change this order. This is a main characteristic of social engineering.

Social engineering finds itself between two limitations that we can define as two logical paradoxes. The first one is the paradox of freedom: absolute freedom, realizing itself as achievement of any aim by any way, eliminates any possibility of freedom. And the second one is the paradox of sets: there is no such set of all sets, which includes itself.

The meaning of the first paradox is described as a situation of war of everybody against everybody by Thomas Hobbes. The social meaning of the second paradox is that the theory that can explain everything in the world including itself does not exist. So, on the one hand, social engineering is unavoidable because we must limit our freedom. On the other hand, social engineering as a process is infinite because it is impossible to find the final variant of limiting freedom. Obviously, social engineering has a clear conceptual aim: the permanent search for a compromise between freedom and its limitation. It means that all people can have any aim but they must use only legal (limited) ways for its realization. Clearly, there are some aims that have never been realized in this legal framework.³

The developing social order, which we compare with the game system, has two claims (principles): fullness (completeness) and non-contradiction. The fullness principle is the universal principle of all developing systems. Its social meaning can be demonstrated on the example of Friedrich Hayek’s conception of “the order of human cooperation”⁴. The process of extending or, in other words, developing social order is the process, which includes not only new participants in the social order, but, more importantly, new ways and methods of life. These influence the existing legal rules of the social game, thereby making changing them unavoidable. These new ways and methods of life are initiated by individual wills, whose aspiration for the fullness of life is immanent. So from the point of view of the fullness principle, the social order has to be dynamic and always ready to change. I think that the fullness principle corresponds to the ideology of an open society.

The second principle, of non-contradiction, means that the rules of the game, on which the social order is based, have to be internally non-contradictory. Indeed we would not be able to play the game if the rules of this game were contradictory to themselves. Obviously, in this situation the social order, which tries to include more new ways of life, will have the harder problem of saving the non-contradictory system of rules. And so from the point of view of the non-contradiction principle, the social order has to be

more static than dynamic and therefore closed to new ways of life.

It is not difficult to see that the principle of fullness as a social engineering strategy corresponds to a liberal political system; and the principle of non-contradiction corresponds to a conservative political system. The ideologies of liberalism and conservatism have obviously their own advantages and disadvantages.

The advantage of liberalism is that it tries not to have any external contradictions. Any individuality, any new way of life should unavoidably receive its legal status in the framework of a social order. The disadvantage of liberalism is that this way of openness to new ways of life has led the social order to an increasing number of internal contradictions within the social order. I mean the situation when the rules, which describe the various ways of life, will contain more contradictions among themselves. For example the right of parents to a divorce contradicts the right of their children to 'a normal childhood' or the right to abortion contradicts the right to life.

Conservatism does not have the same internal contradictions as liberalism has because the conservative social order is closed to new ways of life and this is its advantage. But at the same time this is its disadvantage because a conservative society has strong external contradictions with the changing external environment, which also includes the human desire to reach the fullness of life. Take the same examples. Can children have a normal childhood if their parents do not love each other but must live together? Or does anybody wish children 'realize their own life' in conditions when they are unwanted by their parents?

The problem of social engineering in this situation is that it is impossible to find a middle way. This impossibility is described by Kurt Godel's mathematical theorem about fullness and non-contradiction. The social significance of this theorem is that there is no such system of any and all subsystems that can simultaneously be full and non-contradictory. If the system is full it will unavoidably be contradictory. If the system is non-contradictory, it cannot be full. The attempt of Karl Popper to describe this middle way as a strategy of "piecemeal engineering" is not the principle solution to this problem. There is no real compromise between conservatism (piecemeal) and liberalism (engineering) because the imagination of piecemeal engineering as an infinite process will lead us to the reality of a piecemeal accumulation of internal contradictions within the social order.⁵

Obviously any developing social order has to be open to new ways of life. The freedom of individuals is a necessary condition for the existence of effective economic order. This idea has been explained by Hayek's theory of "the dispersal of information". Here I am trying to describe this theory in short form.

At first, information is dispersed in the social space: let us compare a city and village and see where it is easier to find a job. Secondly, information is dispersed in time: today your supply has demand, tomorrow it does not. And thirdly, information is dispersed according to a person's ability to receive and use information.

Many people receive the same information in the same place at the same time but this information becomes a signal for action only for few of them.

On the other hand, every person has a unique way of receiving and using information and the ideal social order has to protect all these ways, giving everyone the possibility to find their own place in the social order. This strategy is necessary because it improves society's chances to adapt to new unknown conditions in the future. Society can only give everyone this possibility to find their own social place through individual freedom. But we know that attempts to include freedom into the framework of rules cause contradictions between them. If we know that the non-contradictory description of freedom through formalized rules is impossible, we have to recognize that the liberal social order has a permanent risk of falling into chaos, because some combinations of free choices in a free people can destroy the social order.

Let me give a simple example. Students, sitting in class, have the freedom to leave the classroom. And everyone can use this right according to their own desire. But the situation when everyone desires to use this right to leave the classroom at the same time is possible. And this hypothetical situation will destroy "the social order" of the class.

There are two basic ways to resolve this hypothetical situation. One way is that we can empower a teacher to give the students the right "to leave" classroom or not. It will be a typical totalitarian resolution of the problem, which is based on the belief that someone – for example, a teacher – can have all the knowledge about the background of the students' desires. And as a result the teacher makes a just decision in regulating students' behavior. The second way is that we can expect lawmakers to invent such a system of rules (recommendations) which can regulate the process of "entering" and "leaving" without any detriment to the class. It is a contemporary situation of a liberal society. But we know this way is limited by Godel's theorem of fullness and non-contradiction.

Another example. Customers of a bank have the right to deposit and remove their own money. If a bank does not give customers the wide rights to remove their money it could lose business to other competing banks. But, on the other hand, this bank in turn must use (invest in the economy) about 95% of the deposited money for its own effective function. This means that in the situation when many customers at the same time (or during the short term) want to remove their money in an amount over than 5% of all bank capital, the bank will have serious financial problems.

The possibility of chaos, and the collapse of the social order, is seen to be more risky in a situation like the function of stock markets. The dynamic motion of large financial capital in search of short-term profits characterizes stock markets. For example the financial crisis in the Pacific Rim countries (1998) – when international financial capital chose to leave the economies of these countries – provoked these governments to prohibit the further removal of capital. They did so, even they might have understood that the attempt to prohibit the removal of capital did not give them much hope for the return of this capital to the country. It is a real example of a totalitarian reaction to chaos and the collapse of social order, which occurred as a result of freedom. So the problem of avoiding the negative consequences of freedom remains important.

Obviously, freedom needs to be limited (the paradox of freedom), but this limitation is impossible as a comprehensive compromise under the framework of formalized rules (Godel's theorem). We could not also accept the viewpoint of Hayek and Popper that an individual expression of freedom is effectively limited by the 'natural selection' of free market. The problem is that the criteria of this selection, which is based on social institutions of property and money, does not work for a long-term perspective. Factually, market is a dictation of present rather than of future. Of course, in social conditions a strictness of the natural selection does not lead to death of 'carriers' of individual ways of life. And Popper notes it as a considerable achievement of human evolution.⁶ But this strictness of the natural selection ignores human individuality in favor of a best solution strategy from the viewpoint of effectiveness of market. The strategy of best solution in turn has a dangerous trend to become a mass model of behavior. When individuals give up their expectations to be accepted by social order as a unique entity with a unique way of life it will unavoidably limit the adaptive basis, "a biological diversity", of social order to unknown conditions of future.

I think that the solution to this problem is in human individuality itself. Freedom will be self-limited if it is used by each one to realize their unique way of thinking and doing. It can sound like an imperative: you can be in the wrong place, at the wrong time but in spite of the negative circumstance you should save your right uniqueness. And, on the contrary, freedom will be unlimited (as "bad infinity") if one tries to be like another "more successful" one. When someone else's experience of successful socialization demonstrates that it is more important for one to be in the right (standard) place, at the right (standard) time than to be right (no standard) for themselves.

In the world, where everything is exchangeable, the thing itself does not have significance. When you buy a car you do not worry about the car itself. You worry *where* it is from (a prestige of space/place: country and company) and *when* it was manufactured (a prestige of time: last "fresh" model) because after three years maximum you as a good customer will exchange this car. The same we can say about people. When you apply to job you should understand that employers do not worry who you are. They worry *when* and from *where* you graduated because after one year minimum they can exchange you on another "fresher" one. I would even go so far as to say that democracy itself is some kind of free market ideology where everything and everyone should be exchangeable. It means that everyone — from partner by marriage to political leader — becomes a commodity. Because we never make good decisions (if we abandon our individuality it should be so) but we can perennially improve them by an infinity of choices.

Is human behavior as standard as profitable socialization demands? All kinds of deviation, including criminal activities, demonstrate that it is not. At the same time there are positive examples of "deviation" like, for example, individuals' feelings of love. Everyday we see ideally beautiful women and men, existing as icons of pop culture. And if they really were our strong standards for the only persons with whom we could fall in love, marriages would become impossible. Of course, we try to find our ideal partner, but our imagination about ideals depends on our individuality and so our choices

are very different. This difference of choice in all spheres of social life keeps the balance of liberal social order.

Freedom will be self-limited when one's choice is a result of one's own understanding and feeling of one's situation, when one does not try to be more than one is. It is like the Tao strategy of behavior: to win without struggle.⁷

Thus social engineering should recognize that freedom and its limitation in principle belong to the sphere of personal responsibility. In other words, the strategy of self-limitation does not have institutional status and cannot be formalized. The present significance of the self-limitation is not evident but its lack will be very strong in the future when a compromise between free agents is always impossible within the framework of non-contradictory rules.

Notes

- ¹ See: Медеуов Ж. К., Ерембесов К. К. "Социальный порядок и хаос". *Евразийское сообщество*. 1998. № 1; Медеуов Ж. К. "Некоторые аспекты социальной инженерии К. Поппера". *Социс*. 1999. № 9.
- ² Here we have to note that this unexplainable and so insufferable freedom of choice provokes its own "retroactive symbolization" in terms of Slavoj Žižek. As a result, the regularities of the chosen game explain the choice that made possible this game and its regularities. See: Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London, New York, Verso, 1999.
- ³ In this context it is interesting to compare the positions of Thomas Hobbes and Benedict Spinoza on the question of freedom and natural human rights. First of all we have to note that for both Hobbes and Spinoza freedom is natural characteristic of human behavior. The distinction between them is that for Hobbes freedom is freedom of action: man pursues any aim by any way. For Spinoza freedom is freedom of thinking which does not try to realize itself in action immediately. The unexpected conservatism of Spinoza's view is based on a simple idea, which comes from Aristotle's explanation of Zeno's paradoxes, that there are two kinds of freedom: *potential* as thought and *actual* as action. For Spinoza potential freedom of thought and actual freedom of action is not the same. It means that the reality of deeds has to be closed for the potential reality of thought. Hobbes does not make distinct potential and actual freedom. For him freedom, if it is freedom, has to be realized in action. And as a result, his model of society can be described as "a bad infinity" of contracts and agreements which will try to describe the potential infinity of thoughts as actual infinity of things and deeds.
- ⁴ See Hayek, Friedrich. *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, London, Routledge, 1991 and Hayek, Friedrich. *The Road to Serfdom*, 1994.
- ⁵ See Popper, Karl. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, London, Routledge, 1993; Popper, Karl. *Unended Quest. An Intellectual Autobiography*, London, Routledge, 1993; Poppers Selections. Edited by David Miller. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985.
- ⁶ "Man has achieved the possibility of being critical of his own tentative trials, of his own theories. These theories are no longer incorporated in his organism or in his genetic system. They may be formulated in books or journals. And they can be critically discussed, and shown to be erroneous, without killing any authors or burning books – without destroying the "carriers". In this way we arrive at a fundamental new possibility: our trials, our tentative hypotheses, may be critically eliminated by rational discussion, without eliminating ourselves" (Popper, Karl. "Reason or Revolution?" *The Myth of the Framework. In defense of science and rationality*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 68–69).
- ⁷ See Merton, Thomas. *The Way of Chuang Tsu*. New Directions. New York, 1969.