Prefatory remarks

The context for the open society and its enemies in East Asia

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1 Introduction

The two volumes of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* were published in 1945. Although my central argument in these prefatory remarks is that Popper's book is of relevance to modern East Asian societies, I must first grant the fact, squarely and honestly, that it was a product of a specific time and place, if not a veritable Carlylesean tract for that specific time and place, which in many ways bears little resemblance to modern East Asia. Specifically, *The Open Society* must be interpreted as a systematic and rhetorically charged assault on the dominant political-cum-philosophical notions that occupied the middling intellectuals of *Mitteleuropa* in the middle decades of the twentieth century, namely the totalitarian isms: Nazism, Leninism, Italian Fascismo, Austro-fascism, Stalinism and their many attendant, often equally vicious, forms. Popper admits as much in various prefaces and reflections, but the contention that this intellectual product was an issue of 'time and place' and a book of rhetoric for his wavering contemporaries is best driven home by considering the gestation period of the publication. Popper had, in fact, been brooding on the ideas contained in *The Open Society* for most of the 1920s and 1930s, even though his main occupation was, then and later, to

crystallize his non-justificatory philosophy of science, a philosophy for which he has subsequently gained just and lasting fame. Indeed, it would have been strange if he had not so brooded on politics, as he was born in 1902 into a prosperous Viennese family of nominal Lutheran faith, but Jewish descent, that held the dominant liberal-humanist values of his cosmopolitan class in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and thereby he had witnessed the unreason and bloodshed that accompanied the implosion of this world order and the rise of the hideous and brutish totalitarian edifices that replaced it. He was, in short, shaped by the better aspects of the late Hapsburg civilization (and let us also remember its worst), its death throes and the virus of violence that ensued, and hence he wished to use his considerable intellectual powers to understand this unfolding tragedy and, ultimately, to check its course.

My task in what follows, then, is to provide the context for the chapters that constitute *The Open Society and its Enemies in East Asia* by demonstrating that the ideas contained in Popper's *The Open Society* are both a product of a European time and place and relevant to anyone seeking to understand the recent history of the East Asian economies. As a historian of ideas who has previously been a consumer rather than a producer of all things Popperian (with at most cannibalizing his views on historicism for my research in the 1990s into Victorian methodological debates) and as someone who has formerly undertaken little research in East Asian economic, social and intellectual history for want of interest in these domains (a preference that, after the reading I have embarked upon for this project, I now realize was a prejudice), the exercise of providing the context for these chapters was, to say the least, challenging. The collision of two seemingly unrelated areas of research nonetheless warrants the fresh eye of the reasonably read journeyman, as the specialist in either area invariably presumes too much of the reader, with, in this case, the danger being the Popperian expert failing to grasp what is foreign to the East Asian specialist and the East Asian expert not comprehending what is unfamiliar to the Popperian philosopher. Thus, to this end, the narrative of this preface has three

main sections. In the second section I provide an account of how Popper came to write *The Open Society* to show that this book was designed to resolve problems of a specific time and place. In the third section, the largest section, I delineate each of the themes of *The Open Society* that I believe has universal relevance and demonstrate how each is, in particular, germane to research in East Asian studies. In the fourth section I describe each of the chapters that constitute the current book and relate their narratives to the universal themes described in the previous section. The final section contains some concluding comments and draws the reader's attention to some of the limitations of the study.

2 *The Open Society and Its Enemies* as a book of time and place or 'problem situation'

The way in which the Hapsburg frame, its fracture and replacement shaped Popper's message in *The Open Society* is most strikingly, but sparingly, reported in his intellectual autobiography, *Unended Quest* (1974). More recent scholarly output has enriched, expanded and sometimes contradicted Popper's own sparse account, with some of the more eye-catching of these publications being William Warren Bartley III's incomplete biography, *Rehearsing a Revolution. Karl Popper: A Life* (1989), elements of which were reported at a meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society prior to Bartley's death; the opening chapters of Jeremy Shearmur's *The Political Thought of Karl Popper* (1996), even if these pages were designed to provide no more than context for his gentle critique of Popper's political thought; and, most importantly due to his meticulous research into the particulars of the environment that shaped Popper's early life, Malachi Haim Hacohen's *Karl Popper – The Formative Years, 1902–1945* (2000). These biographies, particularly the last, show the way in which the world view of the

Viennese *fin-de-siècle* progressives, radical liberals and old liberals shaped Popper's vision of a tolerant and liberal empire – towards which some at one point mistakenly thought that the Hapsburg Empire was evolving – in which nationalist, racial and religious prejudices are suppressed in favour of a society of Kantian individuals, each of whom was presumed to have the same intrinsic worth and dignity (but also the same unfailing fallibility), and many of whom could be emancipated from their binding material constraints via piecemeal social reforms that were to be engineered by some sort of representative body in a voluntary and non-violent manner. The nature of the historical situation that induced Popper to choose this vision is itself re-created in a number of overlapping and heavily contested discourses that are all too often (as in, now) reduced to historiographical signposts through one-off references to *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and the *Mitteleuropa* project (both inspired by Carl K. Schorske's 1980 book *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*), Wittgenstein's Vienna (prompted by Allan Janick and Stephen Toulmin's 1973 book with this title) and the Late Viennese Enlightenment (pressed by Austrian authors I have not even read). My own prefatory remarks obviously cannot do justice to the associated voluminous literature, but I believe that, following Hacohen's lead, it is easy enough to understand why someone from Popper's intellectual milieu – in the face of rising nationalism and anti-Semitism and living in social settings in which progressive issues were discussed on a daily basis – would adopt this vision.[1] It was not, however, a trouble-free choice for Popper.

It is, in fact, important to represent Popper's eventual *choice* of vision as *understandable* rather than inevitable, especially as many of his contemporaries with similar social, intellectual and ethnic backgrounds chose entirely different world views and, moreover, chose world views (such as Marxism) that *The Open Society* was specifically designed to combat. My emphasized words are chosen carefully here. Popper himself was hostile to sociologies of knowledge and historicist historiographies in which the individual is an over-determined product of his or her paradigm, or superstructure sitting on a means of production, or any other

variation of this theme one may wish to ponder. He believed that such historically deterministic frameworks were too often designed to belittle decision makers by portraying them as lackeys in the service of base interests or unthinking automatons, and, as single-exit games, missed the fact that the historical context of an episode is equivalent to a complex 'problem situation' that an historical actor has to resolve, which has more than one solution, and (invoking R.G. Collingwood) which the historian has to reconstruct in a rational manner to make the final decisions of the actors understandable – but not necessarily right (Popper 1994, 145–7)![2] Popper's own historical 'problem situation' became particularly complex with the unravelling of the Hapsburg Empire and his singular reading of the western canon over this period (from Kant to Kierkegaard), and hence his eventual resolution of the problem confronting him was meandering and time consuming. His liberal-humanist sensibilities were first shaken by his youthful ponderings on the loss of life on the multiple fronts on which the old Empire was fighting during the 1914–18 war, the elimination of the family's wealth in the inflation that followed, and the realization that the poverty of the Austrian rump that remained was the result of the Hapsburgs being the aggressors rather than the aggressees in that war. In revolt against the values of his upbringing, he quit the gymnasium he was attending and, as an effective drop-out, lived an austere and bohemian life, wearing a used-army uniform, in a disused military hospital. As an impetuous sixteen-year-old in search of a better view, he accidentally spilled on to the elevated portico on which the assembled ministers announced the 1918 revolution (and there is a photo of his likeness waving to the crowd), and then ducked behind a pillar when shots rang out. He subsequently worked as an apprentice cabinet maker, a road worker, a carer for underprivileged children and a school teacher, all the while studying and collecting degrees (including a doctorate in 1928) without the prospect of great material return and more for its own sake. He drifted in and out of the intellectual circles, such as Arnold Schonberg's Society for Private Musical Performance, and was actively restricted to the margins of others, such as the Vienna Circle. He revolted against any authority and was known as a difficult young man.

He was a socialist throughout this period and even flirted with communism in 1918–19. Acting as an office boy for the Austrian Communist Party, he interacted with the likes of Paul Lazarsfeld (who later revolutionized sociology in the US) and the Eisler siblings – namely Ruth Fisher (who later became leader of the German Communist Party in the 1920s, an anti-Stalinist and eventually an American agent who betrayed her unattractive brothers), Hanns Eisler (who later composed Hollywood films and the East German national anthem) and Gerhart Eisler (who was a sufficiently efficient Stalinist enforcer that he was deemed worthy to adorn an East German postage stamp). If we are to follow Popper's own account in *Unended Quest*, it was the callous remarks in 1919 by such communist leaders following one of the aborted communist putsches against the new Austrian republic (known as the *Hörlgasse* street battle), to the effect that the deaths of protesters were necessary for their ends, that induced him to reflect upon, and finally reject, communism. He realized that he could not brook the violent consequences of the end–means logic trafficked by the Austro-Marxists, nor the dogmatism of Party policy, nor the Marxist historicist laws of inevitability, and hence, against the tide of the prevailing sentiment of many of his contemporaries, he slowly and hesitantly turned (or possibly returned?) to a vision, described above, of rational and fallible Kantian individuals making choices with consequences and pursuing piecemeal reforms in a non-violent fashion within a liberal democracy. This, however, took time, and Popper, obviously unmoored, continued to drift in what became known as Red Vienna, in which the Social Democrats ran a socialist municipality in the face of an economically bankrupt and hostile wider Austria. He remained a (liberal-) socialist committed to social reform, but increasingly in a way that made him a Dantesque party of one when he debated politics with his radical friends. He read deeply in psychology for his teaching qualifications and, more importantly for this narrative, in philosophy in a singular way, and as shown in detail by Bartley (1989) and Hacohen (2000), in a way

that shaped *The Open Society*.

It must be emphasized, however, that this period of intensive study and reflection was predominantly in the field of the philosophy of science rather than political philosophy, even though the latter was never far from his mind. This study led to Popper's revolutionary non-justificatory philosophy of science that turned on a new demarcation criterion between science and non-science – namely by which fallible individuals use the principle of falsification rather than verification to reject rather than prove conjectures – and which made his reputation when he presented it in *Logik der Forschung* (1934; republished in English as *Logic of Scientific Discovery* in 1959). This book was not only the product of the same environment that produced *The Open Society* (since it was, in part, inspired by Popper's reflections upon the unfalsifiability of Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist historicism), but also fed into the later political tract (not least because its 'fallibilist' theme was at odds with totalitarian ideologies scrutinized in *The Open Society*). Popper eventually bound his philosophy of science with his political philosophy into a complex whole – and hence his philosophy of science figures in the next section – but the constraints of time meant that Popper naturally prioritized each in its turn. It was not, indeed, until the shelling of the *Karl-Marx-Hof*, the destruction of Red Vienna and the ascendancy of fascism in the mid-1930s that Popper was prompted to shift his focus from the philosophy of science to political rhetoric proper. The celebration of irrationalism and the cult of violence within fascist historicism was even more distasteful to Popper than Marxist historicism, which for Popper was invariably the naïve historicism of the Austro-Marxists, and hence, for all its wrongheadedness and totalitarian implications, was at least initially expounded by people with rational and humane goals. Indeed, like many of his generation, Popper initially baulked at criticizing Red Vienna's Social Democrats, one wing of which was Marxist to the roots, on the grounds that to do so would aid the groundswell of support for the Austro-fascists. He also presumably turned explicitly to political rhetoric once he realized that his position as an assimilated Jew and liberal who respected rational

thought was more tenuous under the latter compared to the former regime. In the introduction to his *Myth of the Framework*, he stated that the seed of *The Open Society* may have been planted not long before 1933 when a Carinthian National Socialist declared to him: "What, you want to argue? I don't argue: I shoot" (1994, xiii). This story is strangely not presented in his autobiography, but there, as elsewhere, Popper emphasized the way in which such events shaped his political philosophy. He consequently fled Austria, via London, to the New Zealand University of Canterbury in 1937, and began writing what became *The Open Society* (and its companion *The Poverty of Historicism*) on the very day he received news of the *Anschluss* in 1938. It was largely completed by 1943, but due to wartime delays and rejections from publishers, was not issued into the public domain until two years later. It was his war effort, both as a rejection of the fascism that the allies were then fighting and as a warning against the communist-style planning that he feared would be embraced in the post-war reconstruction. In his words:

> *The Poverty* and *The Open Society* were my war effort. I thought that freedom might become a central problem again, especially under the renewed influence of Marxism and the idea of large-scale planning (or 'dirigism'); and so these books were meant as a defence of freedom against totalitarian and authoritarian ideas, and as a warning against the dangers of historicist superstitions. Both books, and especially *The Open Society* (no doubt the more important one), may be described as books on the philosophy of politics.
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> ([1974] 1976, 115)

The writing of *The Open Society* did not end with its publication in 1945. After taking up a position at the LSE on the conclusion of the war, where his reputation grew slowly but surely, Popper repeatedly revised his narrative and responded to his critics in addendums and footnotes in multiple editions through to the 1960s. Although solitary in nature ("willing neither to be a leader nor to be led", as Paul Lazarsfeld remarked), known as the illiberal liberal of the LSE for being a ferocious interlocutor with students and colleagues (who jested that *The Open Society* was written by one of its enemies), and

largely unbefriended and unbefriending (yet inspiring some loyal students), Popper still clearly responded to what was going on around him, and hence any examination of the 'problem situation' associated with the production of *The Open Society* would have to be edition-dependent. Embracing this tactic would, however, press my prefatory remarks beyond the conventional constraints imposed upon such things and hence the narrative that follows is based on the final 1966 edition largely as if nothing transpired in Popper's life between 1945 and 1966. The reader may have also noted that, in almost an artful dodge, I make reference to the voluminous literature that has sought to re-create Popper's 'problem situation' (now 'problem situations'), but largely confine myself to the particulars presented in Popper's own account in *Unended Quest*. This decision is problematic not only because Hacohen *et al.* provide relevant particulars by the 100-page load, but also because these historians on occasion question Popper's own recollections. And, admittedly, some of the pivotal events in Popper's account of his intellectual evolution may be either exaggerated or apocryphal. One wonders, for example, about the real weight played by the deaths in the *Hörlgasse* riot of 1919, the precise role the cod-sciences of Freudianism and (naïve) Marxism played in the formation of the demarcation principle in the 1920s, the actual date on which he gave up on induction as a demarcation criterion between science and non-science, the significance of the Carinthian thug demanding consent with menace shortly before 1933, and so on. Memories are naturally faulty and the importance of events is always twisted in retrospect – and there is, after all, the contested matter of Popper's famous verbal account of the Wittgenstein–Popper poker incident of 1946 in which Popper's memory may or may not have failed him (but probably did not!). I believe, however, that the secondary literature enriches rather than supersedes *Unended Quest* and hopefully this brief narrative simply inspires the reader to consult these and other tracts Popperian when considering East Asian themes.

3 *The Open Society and Its Enemies* as a book of universal relevance

It may therefore be accepted without too much controversy that *The Open Society* was a plea for rational thought, liberty, humanism, reform and democracy at a time when totalitarianism ideologies were in the ascendant; that it was a European product designed primarily to serve the pressing European needs of the day; and that East Asia was certainly not on Popper's mind at the time of its construction. The universality of certain aspects of Popper's message is, for all this, also patent to the naked eye, and, to drive home this point, as well as to create context for the chapters of this edited book, it is appropriate now for me to disentangle some of the key themes of *The Open Society* and to show how they are relevant to East Asia. For want of space I have restricted myself to considering, each under a numbered heading, what I believe are the six main themes. Other themes (especially essentialism and holism, which I wished to consider but felt obliged to drop) may be found in more formal accounts in the various scholarly tomes on this subject (see, e.g. Simkin 1993; Shearmur 1996; Hacohen 2000; Popper 2008). It is also essential that the reader consult Shearmur's more authoritative representation of the characteristics of a Popperian open society – which has a slightly different emphasis and was developed independently to the writing of this preface – in Chapter 1 of this book. In any event, it is appropriate to begin by considering the concept that drives the title of the book and the force of much of its narrative rhythm.

1 The closed society versus the open society

Popper argued that the stress individuals experience when the

society to which they belong evolves from a 'closed society' to an 'open society' may induce them to support movements that ostensibly seek to re-create a strong notion of community, but often, instead, bring about totalitarianism. Specifically, a closed society is characterized by a hierarchical structure in which social interaction takes place within an unchanging daily routine that is governed by taboos, laws and customs, and in which events are regarded as inevitable as the sun rising (1966, i, 1, 57–9, 172ff.). Individuals in such societies lead a life governed by the familial or organic social relationships of the fixed tribal world and do not experience the stress of using their critical reasoning powers to make decisions that can alter the unfolding historical situation in which they find themselves. An open society, by contrast, is one from which what Popper calls critical dualism or critical conventionalism has emerged; that is, it is a society in which individuals realize that the taboos, laws and customs are relative to different tribes and hence that they are institutions which can be changed and improved (1966, i, 1, 60, 172ff.). Individuals in such societies are suddenly confronted with the strain of a life increasingly governed by impersonal (or what Popper calls "abstract") interactions within a world forever in flux and the terrible stress of using their critical reasoning powers to make decisions that can alter their unfolding historical situations, particularly in those dislocating times of war, famine, financial upheaval and commercial-cum-industrial surges. The associated trauma of this development (or what Popper calls the "strain of civilization") leads to the emergence of strong men who seek to strip the decision-making powers from the populace by reinstating the tribal system in the guise of a totalitarian regime, of philosophers who provide philosophical systems to justify the strong men taking command in this way, and of individuals abrogating their responsibility to make personal decisions by placing their fate in the hands of the strong men. Popper focuses his attention *in particular* on the role of philosophers in providing the philosophical justification for totalitarianism (usually via the use of some sort of historicism) and he makes this argument over two volumes, with the first volume devoted to the system presented by Plato (in order to throw light on Hitler) and the second devoted to the systems presented by Hegel and Marx (with passing reference to Aristotle). It is, however, in the first volume that Popper develops this argument most effectively by showing how Plato – believing that Athenian democracy had become a 'sick society' due to the strain imposed by its movement from a closed to an open society – sought to reinstate the authoritarian tribalism of the early Greek societies.[3]

Popper's central claim – that modern totalitarianism is predominantly the product of a 'civilization' never really overcoming the shock of its birth, namely the trauma of moving from a closed to an open society – is effectively a thesis that should be settled on an empirical level (although it should be stressed that Popper was explicit that his own falsification method should not be used, especially naively, in historical research). In other words, it is a thesis that should be critically appraised by considering the protocol statements presented by historians, anthropologists, sociologists and, due to the prominent role played by past philosophers in providing justifications for the reversion to the tribal past, intellectual historians. It should also be compared with competing explanations which appeared at the time, such as the hypotheses advanced in Friedrich A. Hayek's (1944) *The Road to Serfdom* (in which incremental steps towards a welfare state lead to a fully-fledged totalitarian state and from which Popper must partly dissent due to his support for the type of piecemeal engineering considered in point 5 below) and Hannah Arendt's (1951) *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* (which at the time seemed to usurp Popper's narrative in the educated reader's imagination, but, at least from my reading and in spite of the title, does not offer an explicit theory of the rise of totalitarianism). I personally believe that Popper's narrative holds up well in the face of this competition, particularly the way in which past philosophers from Plato to Hegel to Marx are presented as the midwives of totalitarianism, but, and I have to admit this, there is perhaps slightly more to the rise of totalitarianism than simply the way intellectual and political leaders feed off the citizen's stress from everyday decision making. Popper himself seems to imply this in asides, and, as discussed further

below in this narrative, I believe he too would accept a more complex position if cornered. Still, it is a thesis with sufficient empirical content that the relevance of Popper's thesis for East Asia is almost self-evident. After all, the shock that the Asian societies experienced when moving away from their custom-bound closed societies was far more dramatic than in the West, partly because of the suddenness with which change was introduced with the arrival of European colonialism and partly because of the extreme dislocation caused by the advent of post-colonial arrangements, a process that was often accompanied by violent wars of liberation. The strong men of Asia, furthermore, had the luxury of bolstering their position by drawing upon both the philosophical systems of the Western world (and here the naked use of bastardized Marxist-Leninism in Mao Zedong's China and the often surreptitious mimicking of Plato's *Republic* in modern Singapore come to mind) and the intellectual ponderings of the East itself (from misconstruing the writings of Confucius to distorting the words of Mohammad, all finessed by some sort of reference to throwing off the Western 'intellectual' yoke and returning to Asian traditions). The existing academic literature devoted to Asia is replete with such appraisals of the political arrangements of this region, only not in the Popperian frame and without his vocabulary.

2 Historicism

Popper stated that his "attitude to historicism is frank hostility" (1966, i, 17). He believed that historicism was the most important means by which philosophers undermine an open society, and hence his critique of this philosophical framework is, not surprisingly, the main thread that holds the narrative of *The Open Society* together. Historicism entails harvesting historical events to construct either singular trajectories or universal laws of "inevitable" historical development, usually of a stadial form, that place restrictions on the capacity of individuals to make rational and moral decisions that can alter the course of their unfolding historical situation. The quest

to construct such inevitable trajectories usually manifests itself in times of unsettling change, especially in those periods in which a closed society of repetition and unchanging customs gives way to an open society of rapid and ceaseless change. This is because historicism is a means by which individuals cope with the daily strain of facing the threatening Heraclitean flux and, further, it allows them to abrogate their responsibility to make stressful decisions within this flux, especially decisions that relate to combating social evils (1966, i, 4). These historical trajectories may also be so structured that they depict a society evolving to some perfect end (such as in the writings of Hegel and Marx) or moving away from some perfect form (such as in the writings of Plato), and in both cases they provide opportunities for strong men to come to the fore and to close any emerging open society. In the case of historicist trajectories evolving to a perfect end, strong men can present themselves as leaders who will oversee and hasten the evolution of society to its inevitable end (whether it be a Thousand-Year Reich or a working man's paradise), while in the case of historicist trajectories moving away from some perfect form, strong men can present themselves as gifted leaders, with inside knowledge, who can arrest the regression from the perfect form (as in Plato's quest to check the rise of Athenian democracy by harking back to the rigid caste system and authoritarian societies of the likes of Sparta). Popper (1966, i, 8) further argued that historicist trajectories can be theistic in form, in the sense that it is the will of God that events will unfold in an inevitable sequence (usually in a way that is to the advantage of a chosen people); or natural in form, in the sense that they are effectively laws of nature (such as Comte's stadial laws of thought); or spiritual in form, in the sense that there is some evolution of an essence (usually involving the manifestation of the spirit of a national group); or economic in form, in the sense that society is driven by laws of economic development (such as Marx's stadial theory of the means of production). But whatever the precise form, the key Popperian message is that historicism is a threat to an open society, while a secondary message seems to be that there is something *cowardly* and morally wrong when

individuals baulk at engaging with a historical situation, say, by failing to pursue 'activist' lines of social reform on the grounds that they are constrained by the historicist trajectories and must resign themselves to this fate.[4]

The tension, if not the contradiction, between the acceptance of trajectories or laws of historical *inevitability* and great men presuming that they can *meddle* with these developments, at least by hastening or retarding the change within the fixed boundaries of the presumed trajectory, is, in the scheme of things, no more than a minor problem within the historicist's frame of mind. The myriad contradictions, paradoxes and flaws in the historicist framework are actually delineated by Popper with ruthless and sparse prose in the slim volume, *The Poverty of Historicism*, which was published in three parts in *Economica*, via Hayek's intervention after it was rejected from *Mind* in the 1940s, before appearing in a book much later in 1957. Indeed, *The Poverty of Historicism* was carved out of *The Open Society* project when Popper realized that he was trying to do too much with the latter, and hence the two books should be considered as companion volumes and read together. There is, however, a slight danger of reading *The Poverty* first, since the reader has a tendency to presume that *The Open Society* is no more than an anti-historicist tract and thereby, in the process of cannibalizing the passages that relate to this, letting the other themes fall into the background. The reference to the assistance provided by Hayek to Popper in his publishing endeavours also points to the wider reaction to historicism by European scholars at this time, as seen in Hayek's *The Counter-Revolution in Science* (1952) and Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History* (1953), with the latter studiously not citing Popper. The 'time and place' of European historicism should nonetheless not blind us to the possibility of elites throughout the world also embracing historicism when confronted with the shift from a closed to an open society. East Asia is no exception. Not only did the strong men of Asia import European historicism to justify their illiberal actions in the post-colonial era – such as the earlier mentioned (mis-?) use of Marxist laws of history in Mao's China – it is also clear that most Asian countries are still in the process of emerging from closed societies of fixed status and repetition, and thereby all sorts of historicist logics are being deployed by strong men to justify controlling these unwieldy forces. The most common of these deployments is to make reference to a unique historical evolution of an Asian nation state or region that makes liberal democracy unsuitable. This veritable 'Asian way' argument is reflected in everything from the 1993 Bangkok Declaration to the utterances of Mahathir Mohammad and Lee Kuan Yew. Indeed, one could argue that, paradoxically, Robert Young (most dramatically in *White Mythologies*) and other members of the post-colonial movement who have dominated much of Asian Studies over the past twenty years have indirectly lent support to Popper's thesis by showing how Western philosophies of history – in the form of either unreformed Marxian historicism or W.W. Rostow's Vietnam-era pro-democracy development trajectories – were represented as having universal applicability and thereby strait-jacketed the policies available to the intellectual elites in Asia. It is all laudable stuff, but one must raise the questions of why they do not draw upon Popper in the process and why sometimes they seem to surreptitiously reintroduce historicism by dwelling upon singular Asian trajectories. In any event, I contend that historicism, either imported or adjusted for local conditions, is often as imperialistic as a chinless youth made tall by a Sam-Browne belt and swagger stick.[5]

3 The engine of success: critical rationalism in liberal democracies

Popper presents his thesis of the rise of totalitarianism almost with the presumption that an open society is superior to a closed society, and, further, one has to read his two-volume narrative carefully and in conjunction with his other publications to determine the rather multi-layered justification for this presumption. It is sufficient to state here that, over and above the 'critical dualism' characteristic described earlier in this narrative, the Popperian open society is a

liberal one in which all individuals are open to criticism; there is scope for non-violent change through some sort of democratic process; and individuals are 'protected' from exploitation within a pluralistic society that is subject to the rule of law. Popper, in other words, very nearly equates the fully evolved open society with Western liberal democracy, and this, admittedly, may make some Asian specialists – drunk on the admittedly nutritious brew of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) – suspicious that this is yet another example of Western self-affirmation by establishing an oriental 'other'. I do not believe that this is the case, partly because the 'other' to *European* liberal democracy is *European* totalitarianism (and, indeed, Asia is barely mentioned in *The Open Society*) and partly because of the soundness of Popper's arguments in favour of an open society. As Shearmur emphasizes in Chapter 1, these arguments largely turn on humanitarian issues, such as the minimization of pain and an ability to embark upon peaceful social reform. But before turning to these important issues further below, it is convenient at this point to focus on an argument in favour of an open society that is less explicit in Popper's narrative and may only be properly grasped by considering *The Open Society* alongside his other writings, namely that an open society is required to create an engine of progress in which new ideas are systematically generated, criticized and expelled. This argument is important to consider first, even though it is not always at the very forefront in *The Open Society* itself, since it is dangerous to consider any publication in isolation from its author's other writings and, perhaps more importantly, because progress is of some importance to the economists who are contributing to this volume. In any event, Popper's logic is impeccable: a liberal society will outperform an authoritarian regime because the generation and critical appraisal of ideas are the key source of a society's scientific and social progress. This claim evolved out of Popper's path-breaking work in the philosophy of science alluded to earlier in this preface. Specifically, in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959), Popper exposed the poverty of using the verification principle (as deployed by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle) to justify scientific theories. The

problem with this approach had been identified before (most famously with Hume's problem), but it was Popper's stress upon the asymmetric nature of verification and falsification that revolutionized the thinking on this issue; that is, he showed that no number of white swans demonstrates that all swans are white, but one black swan demonstrates that not all swans are white, and thereby he showed that a scientific theory may be rejected but never proven. This gave rise to his science/non-science demarcation criterion, by which a science is defined not by one's ability to prove theories but by one's ability to falsify conjectures. More importantly, it gave rise to a different vision of the scientific process in which fallible individuals with imagination do not collect observations in a mind-numbing Baconian induction process, but instead propose conjectures that might be tightened into falsifiable hypotheses and subjected to attempted refutation (including the Kantian ideas that accompany them) by considering evidence that is open to inter-subjective assessment in the public domain. Popper (1966, ii, ch. 24) had, in short, used *The Open Society* to transfer a *variation* of this idea, which became known as critical rationalism, to the political arena by showing that liberal societies flourish because they allow fallible citizens to learn from their mistakes while totalitarian regimes become sluggish because they suppress criticism. Popper – without ever condoning naive falsificationism in the non-sciences – celebrated speculation and criticism whenever they could be brought to bear.[6]

The link between critical rationalism in the arena of political philosophy and the domain of the philosophy of science was largely lost on Popper's contemporaries when *The Open Society* appeared in 1945. This was because his *Logic of Scientific Discovery* was not translated into English until 1959 and his demarcation criterion was sufficiently innovative that even some of his German-speaking colleagues in the Vienna Circle mistakenly presumed that it was a mere finesse on the justificatory approach of logical positivism. Critical rationalism was nonetheless just as revolutionary in political philosophy as it was in the philosophy of science. As Bryan Magee (1997, 199) claims, Popper indirectly uses critical rationalism to

advance a profoundly original argument in defence of liberal democracy that turns less on traditional moral considerations (which, as shown below, Popper valued independently) and more on the contribution a liberal democracy makes to achieving another end, namely progress. It is important at this stage to recognize that Popper at no time equated an open society with free-market capitalism and he certainly did not equate progress with mere economic progress, especially if it did not help those in greatest need.[7] But, at the same time, economists like myself do not do too much violence to the Popperian vision if the narrow focus on economic progress via the growth of ideas is accompanied with the rider that the resulting prosperity should be employed, via a discovery process that Popper called piecemeal reform, to provide the merit and public goods that are required for a civil society, and the institutional environment to help those in need. The Popperian engine of discovery is therefore, in this reworking along economic lines, designed to generate ideas that both contribute to the production process and lead to a better allocation of the surplus to humanitarian ends. Indeed, the end institutional product of this hyper-critical evolution need not even be a free market economy so admired by most economists. It is the laissez faire of ideas, not of goods and services, which is being emphasized (even if my personal view is that they are intertwined). In any event, the argument that a liberal democracy succeeds because it generates (and destroys) the most ideas should resonate with those economists who now believe that new ideas are the key contributors to economic growth (as reflected in Solow's slippery residual and, more recently, endogenous growth theory). In contrast, this pro-'liberal democracy' argument went against the considered opinion of the time in which it was proposed, especially after the democracies fell into disrepute in the 1930s due to the appeasement policies in the face of totalitarian aggression abroad and lame economic policies in the face of economic malaise at home.[8] Even those who had not embraced the noxious 'isms' of this time presumed that a democracy was inefficient compared to a benign dictatorship, and, further, that democracies were wealthy because such societies had accumulated sufficient wealth to afford the moral luxury of democracy, not because the very nature of democracies created this wealth (Magee 1973, 1997). The application of critical rationalism in the political domain, however, turned this conventional causal reasoning on its head: societies were not liberal democracies because they were prosperous, but rather they were prosperous because they were liberal democracies. All this is impressive stuff, but it is a proposal that should be critically appraised by considering the evidence and, due to the complex causal processes at play, this is a difficult task. The relevance of this hypothesis for Asia is in dispute for this reason, and hence, not surprisingly, the chapters that follow and the wider literature (indirectly and unknowingly) are preoccupied with this aspect of Popper's grand structure. The economic success of illiberal China is set against the failure of illiberal Burma, while the Asian Way argument (sometimes referred to as the Lee hypothesis after one of its chief advocates, Lee Kuan Yew) is buttressed by citing the growth of Singapore under less than liberal arrangements. The selective use of statistics and simple-minded null hypotheses to support the Lee hypothesis has, in turn, incensed economists such as Amartya Sen (1997, 2). The fact of the matter is that the cult of econometrics, when applied by journeyman hands to multiple causal relationships between non-operational concepts (such as freedom and liberty), is both questionable and only taken seriously in seminars within economics departments (and then really only as a means by which young researchers demonstrate that they have mastered a tool that they can pass down to others). Still, it is evidence that has to be thrown into the mix, particularly when an econometrician above the common ruck sometimes manages to isolate one of the many causal relationships between freedom and progress. Popper, however, never passes their lips and the debate itself is nothing more than a dog's breakfast.[9]

4 A liberal, non-violent and humanitarian democracy

It is important to emphasize that although Popper was a militant democrat, his advocacy was always for a democracy of a specific type. An unthinking, illiberal and uncritical democracy was obviously off the agenda, as this would not generate the engine of discovery described in the previous numbered point. His ideal open society is a *liberal* democracy defined by individualism, equalitarianism, faith in reason and love of freedom, not democracy per se (1966, ii, 199). Popper's historical template for such a democracy is the Athenian democracy in the time of what he called the "Great Generation", which existed in the fifth century BC just prior to and during the Peloponnesian wars (1966, ii, 185). Popper focused on this era of Athenian history because, as mentioned previously, Plato justified a return to a closed society on the basis of the supposed failings of this democracy and hence it was a means by which Popper could fight modern battles by historical proxy. Popper does not, however, present a broad historical review of all democracies across time and space (and the protocol statements that they would yield); nor does he really provide a logical-deductive explanation for why a democracy would necessarily yield the liberalism and critical rationalism that drives progress. His main rhetorical tactic seems to be that of delineating the illiberal nature of totalitarian societies and then implying that democracies will be liberal and critical in orientation because they are not totalitarian. This is not always convincing. There is, after all, the possibility of democracies giving rise to an intolerant collective (as in Ibsen's *The Enemy of the People*); the dysfunction and internecine bloodshed of the splintered collective associated with Balkanized groups (from the American to the Iraq civil wars); a public choice dynamic in which communities close in on themselves (via, say, sclerosis of the Olsen sort or, as Buchanan argued, poor policies arising from the ill-dispersion of the associated costs and benefits); and, most importantly since it is Popper's own argument, people voluntarily choosing to return to a tribal society due to the stress of decision making in an open society (such as post-1933 Germany). Popper is, of course, intelligent enough to consider many of these illiberal

possibilities and to make explicit that his democracy would not operate along illiberal lines (1966, ii, 160ff.). Still, beyond contending that there must be some sort of Hayekian "planning for freedom" that entails imposing appropriate institutions to prevent the rise of a totalitarian democracy, he does not present a specific logic for why a democracy should become a liberal democracy in which ideas may be trafficked freely and in safety.[10] If anything, the most logically developed defence of democracy presented by Popper seems to be based less on the way a democracy yields a liberal and open environment and more on Popper's acute humanitarian sentiments. Specifically, while a liberal democracy makes a contribution to humanitarian ends via that part of the engine of discovery that produces civilizing reforms, it also makes a contribution to these ends by reducing the scope for violence. Popper effectively makes the moral injunction that to kill someone is usually bad and to kill people *en masse* is very often bad (and his personal distaste for inhumane acts is littered through his recollections, from his pacifism as a child to his aversion to the Viennese street shootings). The political system must therefore be arranged such that it minimizes mass killings, and since mass killings in particular take place in a quest for regime change, the political system must contain a non-violent mechanism for such change. True democracies have such a mechanism while totalitarian regimes do not, so the former system is preferred, *quod erat demonstrandum* (1966, ii, 151, 161). That Popper would advance this logic is perhaps not surprising, as he was an assimilated Jew living in an age in which to be old was, as the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska would say, the "privilege of rocks and trees".

Popper, then, does not really provide a fully developed explanation for why a 'liberal' version of the many possible versions of democracy emerges, but the saving grace of his position is that he is always clear that he is in favour of a liberal democracy rather than just any 'garden variety' democracy. Popper's two justifications of liberal democracy – as a means to promote critical rationalism and to provide non-violent regime change – are also presumably connected. Specifically, if citizens recognize that critical rationalism

is the best way to achieve progress towards a more civilized society (a big if), and if such progress is actually what they want (a bigger if), and if a regime with increasing totalitarian sentiment starts to curtail critical rationalism (not much of an if), then the citizens of such a society need a non-violent means (i.e. a democratic mechanism) by which to change the regime. Popper also dismisses the entirely plausible possibility of a benign dictator (or oligarchy) promoting critical rationalism to a greater extent than a liberal democracy with the equally plausible argument that there is no effective succession plan within totalitarian regimes, so that there is every possibility that a benign dictator will eventually be replaced with a short-sighted tyrant and, hence again, the regime change required to return to a liberal world would entail violence (1966, i, fn. 25, 269; 160). It is, I believe, these sorts of arguments that make Popper's analysis relevant to East Asia. The contention that unalloyed totalitarian regimes in Asia without peaceful mechanisms for regime change (whether they be the dystopias of Kim Il-Sung's North Korea and Ne Win's Burma or less oppressive regimes) do not reach their full potential owing to the eventual and violent curtailment of critical rationalism has much empirical content if one examines Asian history. This line of argument, of course, could always be made more nuanced by drawing on the frighteningly complex debates generated by Joseph Needham's multi-volume series on *Science and Civilization in China* (of which seven were written by Needham himself and none have been read by me) and the associated Needham Question of why the West took over from China in science and technology despite China being the first mover in these affairs.[11] It is nonetheless true enough in this cut-down form and, more importantly, it is not at odds with the fact that the dichotomy between brutish totalitarian states and tolerant liberal democracies is becoming less relevant in Asia in recent times, as the elites of the totalitarian societies seek increasingly to imitate the templates for liberal success by acting as benign dictators or oligarchies. For, according to Popperian logic, this Asian 'critical-rationalist spring' will last only as long as the benign dictators and oligarchies permit it to last, and if they ever retreat from this

position, there will be no means by which to remove the regimes in a non-violent way. The citizens will have to yield to the new oppression or take actions that will lead to mass killings.

5 Piecemeal change to minimize suffering versus utopian dreams to maximize happiness

It is now appropriate to consider what Popper believed to be the most important purpose of an open society in a little more detail, namely the way in which it allows individuals to exploit that part of the aforementioned engine of discovery, via what he called piecemeal reform, to improve on free-market outcomes. Specifically, Popper rejected what he called "utopian engineering", which he associated with totalitarian regimes, in favour of "piecemeal engineering", which he associated with open societies. Utopian engineering effectively sits alongside historicism as a system of thought that philosophers intentionally or unintentionally use to usher in a closed society. Utopian engineering may seem a strange policy for philosophers to advocate if they are also inclined to believe in historicism, but, as mentioned before, there is no shortage of paradoxes within the historicist approach to modelling the social world and, further, Popper recognizes that there are two strands of historicism: one in which an actor cannot alter the inexorable laws of history, and another in which he or she can alter the historical trajectory at the margins (1966, i, 157). It is also the case that utopian engineering is *embraced* by some philosophers who *reject* historicism for a world in which actors can make meaningful change and, as in the case of Marx's legendary contempt for utopian socialism, *rejected* by those who *embrace* a pure form of historicism in which potential policy makers are locked in by the rhythms of history. This, however, simply implies that, within the Popperian frame, philosophers who facilitate the rise of totalitarianism are not confined to historicists. In any event, utopian engineering is defined as the pursuit of an ideal state that is mapped out by a social engineer in a complex blueprint and in which some grand utilitarian

goal is to be achieved, whereas piecemeal engineering is defined as the implementation of 'trial-and-error' policies that are designed not to maximize human happiness at some distant 'ideal' end, but to minimize pain and suffering by solving more immediate and pressing problems (1966, i, 158). The former approach sets society along a path to tyranny by a series of logical mechanisms that is reminiscent of, but nonetheless different to, Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*. Specifically, utopian engineering requires a "strong centralized few" to implement a complex blueprint; the centralized few, even if setting out as a benign oligarchy, need to crush dissent and curtail critical discussion to implement a blueprint to which not all citizens subscribe; such dissent (and the violence needed to suppress it) will be magnified in utopian engineering settings, since people find it difficult to comprehend a complex utopian blueprint that leads to a distant end, while they can readily see the sense of relieving immediate suffering by achieving a limited end via piecemeal change; and complex blueprints take more than one generation to implement and, without a successor plan, the centralized few may be succeeded by tyrants (1966, i, 158–61). Popper also believed that piecemeal engineering was more likely to achieve its prescribed goals than utopian engineering. Specifically, the absence of criticism that ensues from the aforementioned suppression of dissent makes it difficult to determine the efficacy of the utopian policy; well before utopian engineers achieve their ideal end, new ends will be deemed desirable; powerful interests become attached to the grand ends set out in the blueprint and thereby dogmatically pursue them despite evidence that the plan is failing; and, unlike utopian engineering, faltering piecemeal engineering may be reversed without much suffering (1966, i, 158–63). Underlying all of these arguments in favour of piecemeal engineering is Popper's humanitarian mission – which is always present in his narrative and punctuated in the anecdotes relating to his life – to minimize pain rather than to maximize utility, an approach he termed negative utilitarianism.[12]

This analysis indicates that, like Hayek, Popper did not believe that free-market capitalism necessarily yielded results that were in any way good, fair or just, but unlike Hayek (who famously argued that the state could rarely improve on these free-market outcomes for want of every individual's local knowledge), Popper believed that, through the trial-and-error process of piecemeal engineering, the state could improve on free-market outcomes. Popper was therefore never an Austrian economic libertarian in the Hayekian sense. His road to totalitarianism is built by those who embrace utopian engineering and/or historicist philosophies rather than, in the case of Hayek's road to serfdom, incremental steps towards state planning. Popper was appreciative of Hayek as a like-minded interlocutor and correspondent, and readily acknowledged the similarities between his and Hayek's criticisms of grand state interventions (1966, i, 159; fn. 4, 285–6), as well as his and Hayek's views on historicism and simple-minded "scientism" (see Hayek 1952).[13] The fact of the matter is, however, that Popper followed Marx closely in condemning the inequities of the unrestrained capitalism of the Victorian age. Invoking the paradox of economic freedom (namely that unlimited economic freedom defeats itself by allowing the strong to enslave the weak), and by drawing upon the Marxist distinction between formal and material freedom, he believed that the state should create freedom by elevating the economically weak (1966, ii, 123–5; Magee 1973, 78). To this end, Popper supported piecemeal engineering both to minimize pain (as dictated by his negative utilitarianism) and to provide the type of economic interventionism required to resolve the paradox of economic freedom. The state should be small, its policies should be implemented within the rule of law rather than through bureaucratic edict (1966, ii, 130–2), and its sole purpose should be to protect both the economic and political freedoms of the individual, but it has interventionist and civilizing roles nonetheless.[14] This may perhaps disenthrall some libertarians (including the generous sponsors of the conference from which this book springs) – and disabuse others who dismiss Popper as an extreme neo-liberal member of an undifferentiated Mount Pelerin Society – but once one interprets Popper from his own critical rationalist stance it is a perfectly sensible proposal: one needs to see

if state intervention improves on the market outcomes through trial and error rather than to reject it outright from the start. Popper himself would have also presumably been in a position to cast judgement on the success of the piecemeal engineering with which he sympathized, as he lived through to the age of Thatcher in which many of the incremental changes associated with the rise of the welfare state were reversed (on the grounds that they had failed) in the fashion that he proposed; that is, with the Brixton riots, a decade of depressing British cinema and the tragedy of high unemployment, rather than gulags, Leni Riefenstahl documentaries and mass killings. And, of course, the relevance of all of this to East Asia is sadly all too clear, with Popper's model of utopian policy formation confirmed with the failures of the blueprints associated with Saloth Sar's (aka Pol Pot's) year zero of 1975; Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism" of 1962 (in which the call for "self-improvement by way of self-criticism" was not what Popper meant by forming policy via trial and error); and Mao's Great Leap Forward of 1956 to 1961 (where everything failed, from backyard pig-iron production to Lysenko-style food experiments).[15] The success of more recent "piecemeal" experimentation with "market socialism" (*sic*) under Deng Xiaoping and his successors contrasts neatly with these fiascos. Indeed, a consensus has now formed to the effect that the Chinese leadership stumbled towards market reform, in a piecemeal fashion, rather than adhering to a grand blueprint (see Perkins (1994) for an early statement of this).

6 Intellectual history

It cannot be emphasized enough that *The Open Society* is, above all else, an intellectual history. As stated in the previous numbered points, Popper is interested less in the cut and thrust of the rise of the totalitarian regimes and more in showing how philosophers have acted as midwives for these regimes. He therefore not surprisingly spends the lion's share of the book analysing the writings of Plato, Hegel and Marx to show how they deployed historicism and attendant philosophies to justify, in Popper's eyes, the unjustifiable (and remember that, in the original parable, the lion's share is the entire share). Popper, in particular, sets the philosophers in the dislocating times in which they wrote their works, and, to this extent, adheres to his own historiographical approach of *situational logic* that was touched upon in the second section of this chapter; that is, eschewing cheap psychologizing and sociologies of knowledge in which social causes impact on an agent as if he is an automaton, and, instead, explaining an agent's behaviour as a rational response to an 'objective' problem situation, which is captured by reconstructing the context in which the problem is set. The more specific problem situation that dominates *The Open Society* is, of course, a society's inability to cope with the strain of civilization as it moves from a closed to an open society. Popper therefore seeks to present Plato's call for a return to a society ruled by aristocratic oligarchs as a rational (but definitely not the right) reaction to this strain and dysfunction in the Athenian democracy; Hegel's position as an apologist for the Prussian absolutism as a reaction to the devastation of the German states in the Napoleonic era; and Marx's sponsorship of collectivist rule by the proletariat as a reaction to the tumult of the Industrial Revolution. This historiographical approach, which closely resembles Collingwood's "question-and-answer" logic, is more complex than one imagines at first reading, and justice has certainly not been done to it here.[16] It was, however, the less than perfect execution of this method, rather than the method itself, that drew the ire of his contemporaries. This was mainly because, in contravention of the scholarly etiquette of the day and unlike the modern contextualists of the Sussex and Cambridge schools, Popper allowed his "presentist" objectives (his war aims!) to dominate in such a way that he did not always provide sympathetic or temperate readings of the texts. Thus, by quoting others or through his own words, Popper labels Hegel a "charlatan", Fichte a "windbag", oracular philosophers "clowns" and so on, in a veritable bayonet charge in which no prisoners are taken. The important qualification to this is his free admission that although the Marxist historicism leads to tyranny, Marx himself should be

celebrated as a rational humanist who provided many powerful insights – which is true enough and makes the narrative devoted to Marx in the second volume the most measured (but therefore in some ways more cold and ruthless) of his critiques.[17] The violence of this language was distasteful enough to scholars who had devoted a lifetime to studying Plato and Hegel line by line and as 'greats' – not to mention for the Marxists who, in the shadow of Stalingrad and the fall of Berlin, still had confidence in this philosophical frame – but it was Popper's occasional slipshod readings of the original texts (and misrepresentations of his fellow exegetes) that spurred them to counter Popper's position with effect. Giants in the field such as Isaiah Berlin and Gilbert Ryle may very well have declared that Platonic and Marxist exegesis would never be the same after Popper, but other critics used his occasional exegetical failings to marginalize his larger message.[18] Popper himself excused the lapses on the grounds that he was isolated and without access to key texts while writing *The Open Society* in New Zealand (where the university library was not much bigger than his father's), and he used footnotes and addendums in later editions to defend his textual interpretations. The general verdict now seems to be that Popper's textual assessments are more right than wrong, even if they originally rest on some poor readings (Klosko 1996). The first critiques of Popper's exegeses nonetheless provided a reasonable excuse, especially for the children of 1968, to dismiss Popper's narrative.

Popper's use of intellectual history as a means to convey his philosophical arguments – a tactic that pervades most of his writings – also irritated some of his greatest (but never uncritical) admirers. A young Bryan Magee (1997, 188ff.), then unknown to Popper, rather presumptuously and with some fury wrote Popper a letter stating that he only confuses the issue when he makes a contribution to the solution of a philosophical problem by examining it within an intellectual history of past philosophers, since this allows modern philosophers to ignore the former and focus on Popper's errors as a historian of ideas. Magee is, of course, right, but also wrong, since Popper's use of intellectual history has

the indirect and useful effect (even if Popper was perhaps unaware of this fact) of inducing many to read his work who would otherwise not have done so, and, more importantly in my eyes, allowing him to tease out novel ideas over which he did not yet have complete control. The latter strategy is perhaps the most underestimated use of intellectual history and it is certainly relevant to Popper's *The Open Society*, where all of the side considerations, detours from the main message and qualifications appear to be the product of someone who knows the general direction, but not the precise route and final destination, when setting out on a journey. The concise and analytical *The Poverty*, which recall was carved out of *The Open Society* project, also shows how he could boil down his findings after completing the hard yards of studying the intellectual history, while the notoriously long gestation periods of most of Popper's works would presumably have been longer if he had not used this strategy. All of this, of course, points to the way in which this theme is relevant to anyone working within Asian studies. Not only does it signal the way intellectual historians can show how the strong men of Asia exploit ancient and not-so-ancient texts to justify their actions in the face of the strain of civilization, as in Popper's original thesis, but, presumably through a more sympathetic reading of the original texts than that adopted by Popper (and in the eavesdropping tradition of the Sussex School in particular), they can show how these strong men usually distort these texts for their ends. This was precisely Sen's (1997) tactic in the Morgenthau Memorial Lecture devoted to the exceptionalism underlying the Lee hypothesis; namely that in the same way that there are non-freedom traditions in the European tradition (Plato, for example), Asia is far more diverse than many think and, within this diversity, there are freedom traditions in what perhaps may be called the Asian canon. There is, for example, a respect for diversity and tolerance within Buddhism (even though Buddhists paradoxically seem to have a rapacious appetite to kill each other) while Confucianism is more complex, humanist and not solely authoritarian (a point emphasized in recent years by Simon Leys).

4 The chapters that follow

Popper, then, uses *The Open Society* to present a complex and multi-layered structure of principles of universal relevance and, indeed, a number of other themes could have been presented in addition to the six delineated in the previous pages. Every thematic thread, however, cannot be disentangled in a preface such as this and, in any event, my goal is less to provide a critical analysis of *The Open Society* and more to show how it is relevant to East Asia, and thereby to provide context for the narratives of the chapters that follow, of which there are eight in total. All but the first chapter were delivered in an earlier form at a one-day economics conference in 2011 called *Freedom to Choose*, which (and as stated in the Acknowledgements) is held each year on the Fremantle campus of the University of Notre Dame Australia and sponsored by the Mannkal Economics Economic Foundation. This conference is designed to create a forum in which undergraduate, honours and postgraduate students in economics can interact with senior academic and industry economists to discuss their career prospects. Each year this conference has a different theme, but it is always related to a libertarian topic. The theme for 2011 was to consider the extent to which Popper's concept of an open society is relevant to the East Asian economies. Seven scholars from a range of backgrounds were invited to deliver papers. Some speakers had no formal background in things Popperian while others could be described as authorities on both Popper and his philosophy, but all had an interest in discovering the extent to which the Popperian framework is relevant to the East Asian economies.

The opening chapter by Jeremy Shearmur is introductory in nature and is devoted to describing the key characteristics of Popper's vision of an open society. Shearmur was, for a period of eight years, Popper's personal research assistant and subsequently the author of two books that were drawn upon by me in the preparation for writing my own narrative, namely *The Political Thought of Karl Popper* (1996) and, along with Piers Norris Turner, the edited volume of Popper's unpublished and uncollected writings, *Karl Popper, After the Open Society* (2008). He therefore writes with some authority on what Popper meant by a functioning open society both in the two volumes of *The Open Society* and in Popper's voluminous comments on this matter in the lifetime of writings that followed. According to Shearmur, Popper believed that an open society is one in which individuals, but government officials in particular, are open to criticism via Popperian critical rationalism; there is a mechanism for non-violent change through some sort of democratic process; there is social and political pluralism; the rule of law is present; and there is an understanding that individuals must be 'protected' from economic and political exploitation. Some of these characteristics have been briefly commented upon in the themes I addressed above, but Shearmur's chapter was written quite independently from my own prefatory remarks and his agenda is clearly different to mine, as he is less interested in disentangling the themes of *The Open Society* (and thereby does not consider Popper's anti-historicism and singular historiography) and more interested in describing what Popper's open society would actually look like in a concrete setting. It is an admirable outline and serves well as context for the references to such a society in the subsequent chapters in which this concept is used in relation to specific East Asian countries.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to considering Popper's vision in relation to Thailand. Chapter 2 by Patrick Jory is entitled 'Karl Popper and Thailand's political crisis: the monarchy as the problem for an "open society"'. It considers the way in which many Thai scholars and politicians use historiographical techniques – which in many ways resemble the historicism so detested by Popper – to claim that Thailand's less than transparent 'democracy' is the result of a 'special' historical trajectory and hence is immune from criticism. Jory, who is a noted cultural historian rather than an economist per se, focuses in particular on the way in which these techniques are used to justify Thailand's *lèsemajesté* law that

prevents criticism, a key element in Popper's open society, of the Thai crown. Jory's narrative is, of all the chapters, the most explicit in its use of Popperian categories to explain (and, I would add, successfully explain) an Asian phenomenon. Chapter 3, by contrast, takes a more indirect and critical line with regard to the Popperian framework. Entitled 'Thai populism and the middle-income trap' and written by Peter Warr, who is the head of the Research School in Pacific and Asian Studies at ANU, it shows that an open society of the Popperian sort does not necessarily provide a defence against politicians using inefficient economic policies to manipulate the electorate to ensure that they are re-elected. Warr, in particular, focuses on the various rice floor schemes implemented in Thailand. Popper wrote *The Open Society* prior to the rise of public choice modelling and hence prior to the demonstration of how the liberal democratic process could be manipulated to suit special interests. We therefore cannot be too hard on Popper for not addressing these issues at length, at least in his early writings, even if he did briefly consider (and dismiss) Marxist arguments that similarly turned on the influence of vested interests. In any event, it is a sound criticism of the liberal democratic version of an open society and Warr strikes it home well.

Chapters 4 and 5 are occupied with the problem of Burma. Sean Turnell, who is a long-term Burma watcher and author of *Fiery Dragons*, considers the economic consequences of Burma's closed society in a chapter entitled 'Least free: the economic consequences of fifty years of totalitarian rule in Burma'. Turnell traces the sorry tale of Burma's decline under junta rule from one of Asia's most prosperous nations to one of its most impoverished (and least free). In the context of the themes discussed above, but without at all times explicitly stating this, Turnell is effectively showing how an uncritical, illiberal and unfree Burma has failed dismally to live up to its full social and economic potential (Popperian point 3 above), and that utopian engineering both fails economically and bolsters the power of the centralized few (Popperian point 5 above). Next, Ron Findlay, who is a Professor of Economics at the University of Columbia and of Anglo-Burmese decent, provides a personal

account of recent Burmese history in a chapter entitled 'Development and Freedom in Burma'. He traces the tumultuous history that led up to the colonial age of George Orwell's *Burmese Days* and *Shooting the Elephant*, the great exodus following the Japanese occupation of 1942, the promise of the Democratic Republic in the 1950s, and the entrenchment of the juntas following the 1962 coup d'état. For all of the tragedy that accompanied these episodes, Findlay provides a sympathetic reading of the history of his times prior to achieving academic success in the USA, including touching on the (mixed) advantages of Empire (and I would add that there were some advantages, even if we remember that Eric Blair was at one time a police officer at Insein, now the largest prison in Burma, and that he shot an elephant for the wrong reasons). Findlay also gives the impression that reading *The Open Society* as a precocious Anglo-Burmese youth (while being subject to threatening forces equal to those experienced by Popper as a youth) somehow had more meaning for him than for the Western reader of today.

Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to questioning some of the Popperian conclusions in the broader East Asian arena. Rod Tyers, who is a Professor of Economics at the University of Western Australia, considers the recent economic success of China in a chapter entitled 'The rise and robustness of economic freedom in China'. China is, of course, the elephant in the room for those who adhere to a narrow reading of Popper's *The Open Society*, as it seems to be a totalitarian success story. Tyers provides an admirable survey of the recent economic literature that tracks this economic success, but shows how this both threatens and supports the Popperian frame depending on how one interprets the deeper reasons for this success. If one interprets modern China as an anti-democratic and anti-liberal closed society, then it does indeed pose a challenge to Popper's vision. If, however, one puts to one side Popper's own tendency to use false dichotomies and realizes that China has actually undertaken the 'trial-and-error' policies associated with piecemeal engineering that have allowed elements of an open society (of sorts) to emerge, then it is not necessarily at odds with the Popperian vision. This chapter is followed by another

by Jeremy Shearmur, but this time devoted to Singapore and entitled 'Singapore: Plato's other republic?'. As the title of the chapter suggests, Shearmur considers the extent to which the apparent social and economic success story of the island state of Singapore may be attributed to the authoritarian structures that in some ways resemble those advocated by Plato in *The Republic*. The gains are compared to the considerable losses, mostly in the form of curtailed freedoms not seen to the Western visitor, but the final tally is rather inconclusive. It seems to be a case of wait and see.

In the final chapter, entitled 'Popular despotism: an economist's explanation', William Coleman of the Australian National University provides a more analytical challenge to the Popperian frame by considering sound economic reasons for why individuals would, at times, voluntarily form syndicates with a totalitarian head to achieve certain objectives. Drawing an analogy with pirate syndicates, Coleman suggests that, a priori, totalitarian regimes may not only be formed on rational grounds, but may also achieve certain goals with great success. The extent to which one wishes to treat this approach as a real challenge to the Popperian vision largely turns on whether one supports Popper's own rhetorical inclination of holding to strict dichotomies (such as totalitarianism versus democracy, open societies versus closed societies, and so on) and brooking no half-way houses (such as a liberal dictatorship or a democracy that cannot quite be called liberal), or if one interprets Coleman's syndicates as exceptions to the rule in a sea of possible exceptions to Popper's narrative, which is deemed sound enough, but does not provide the whole story of what makes a successful society. The chapter provides a neat ending to the proceedings.

5 Concluding remarks

The main failing of the book chapters that follow is that they do not collectively constitute a complete survey of the East Asian countries. Two chapters on Thailand, two chapters on Burma, one chapter on Singapore and one chapter on China, and a few contextual chapters do not 'East Asia' make. Japan, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam and Kampuchea are, at most, mentioned as asides for illustrative or comparative purposes. The limited range of countries chosen for review was predominantly due to the fact that this edited book is a product of a one-day conference, and that there is simply a limit to the number of papers that one can fit into one day, and partly a function of the restrictions on the number of chapters that one can fit into a book of standard length. The soundest defence to the charge that the project has insufficient sweep is, however, that the purpose of the exercise is to illustrate the way Popper's world view is relevant to East Asian studies and thereby to induce specialists in this area to consider how Popper's writings may shed light on their areas of research. It is an illustrative, not a definitive, study. A second possible criticism of the studies which follow is that some authors engage directly and at length with how Popper's vision is relevant to their case study, while other authors simply make passing reference to one or two of Popper's insights in the process of considering the social and economic success or failure of a country with totalitarian inclinations. I believe, however, that this too is exactly what is wanted in a project with an objective of illustrating the relevance of a philosopher's frame. The goal, after all, is not to construct an army of parroting Popperian epigones (which rather goes against the whole principle of critical rationalism), but to show how Popper's vocabulary, philosophical ideas and historical conjectures may add value to any narrative devoted to East Asia. It may simply be a matter of drawing upon the concept of negative utilitarianism or the paradox of freedom, or using the Popperian view of historicism to question an officially sanctioned trajectory of a nation's history, or to consider the consequences of utopian engineering, and so on. Indeed, the way practitioners draw upon Popper after reading this volume is of less concern to me than achieving a greater goal of making readers aware that Popper was not just a philosopher of the first rank, but one of the great minds of the twentieth century. He is worth reading.

Notes

1 The recent announcement by the New Zealand Nabokovian scholar, Brian Boyd, that his official biography of Popper is once again in preparation, after being put to one side in the 1990s, leaves one with expectation that this flurry of scholarship will be added to soon. The biographies listed in the text above, which perhaps reflects the cult of the book, may be supplemented by very good 'essay' obituaries by David Miller (1997) for the *Biographical Memoirs of the Fellows of the Royal Society* and John Watkins (1997a, 1997b) for the *Proceedings of the British Academy* and *American Scholar*. Hacohen's (1996, 1999, 2009) many journal articles also include valuable insights into Popper's life. Good character portraits of Popper are contained in Magee (1997) and, even though eccentric, Raphael (2000).

2 Popper's hostility to sociologies of knowledge and historicist historiographies on the grounds that they strip people of the capacity to make rational and moral choices that have meaningful consequences (as well as on the grounds that these conceptual frameworks have internal contradictions) occupies much of *The Open Society* and *The Poverty of Historicism* and is described in detail in the next section. Popper himself articulated his own problem-based historiographical position, which he called *situational logic*, in these and other books (see, e.g. 1966, ii, 97, 265), but specifically for the overlap between Popperian and Collingwoodian visions of intellectual history, see a paper he wrote in the late 1960s and later revised as "A Pluralist Approach to the Philosophy of History" (Popper 1994). In this publication he makes clear that, unlike Collingwood, he believes that the historian's sympathetic re-enactment of the inaccessible thought processes of the actor confronted with the problem is unimportant compared to making sense of the agent's decision by analysing the objective knowledge related to the 'problem situation' that can be critically analysed in the public domain. Popper's proposal that the historian needs to build the historical context in order to create a problem situation that an historical actor has to solve nonetheless bears a close resemblance to the stance of the Collingwoodian school (and thereby, to a lesser extent, to the modern Sussex and Cambridge contextual schools). The similarities between, and the failings of, the Popper and Collingwood positions are described in detail in Skagestad (1975) (see Moore (2010) for contextualism more generally). Needless to add, and this cannot be emphasized enough, the historiographical approach I deploy to understand Popper's decisions in the above narrative is driven by the modern contextualist traditions rather than every specific of Popper's situational logic, no matter how much they overlap. I am certain, for example, that Popper's strict reading of his own 'situation logic' approach would make him leery of any reference to his 'Jewish heritage' in an account of his intellectual choices, even if, in the context of my narrative above, the occasional reference to this heritage is to highlight the influence of the broad intellectual milieu of the Austro-Hungarian Jewish elite rather than any outrageous claim that 'we think with our blood' (and I would like to thank a referee for making this point). Finally, Popper himself reported that his approach was inspired by his Viennese mathematics professor, Hans Hahn, who treated the subject historically by considering each advance in infinitesimal calculus as a problem that an actor of the time had to solve (Hacohen 2000, 104).

3 The concept of totalitarianism is problematic, as it has formal properties within political philosophy that are not only contested in that discipline, but also diverge from the properties reflected in Popper's use of the term. I nonetheless follow Popper by using this concept broadly to mean an authoritarian, anti-democratic, anti-liberal, hierarchical and closed society: "what we call nowadays totalitarianism belongs to a tradition which is just as old or just as young as our civilization itself" (1966, i, 1). I do so all the while realizing that it is not quite a satisfactory use of the term.

4 Although modern economists may find this sort of analysis foreign, they should note that the discipline went a long way down the historicist route in the Victorian era following its advocacy by the historical schools of economics in the English, American and German *Methodenstreits* (or battles of method), and it was a near-run thing (partly attributable to

some deft footwork by Alfred Marshall and John Neville Keynes) that the discipline did not take a more radical and permanent historicist turn. Also note that economic historicism is effectively a subset of the natural historicism in Popper's list in the above narrative, as economists presented them as laws of nature or singular trajectories by drawing upon Social Darwinism, Marxism, Comtism, Mill's Book IV of *A System of Logic*, and Scottish and German stadial theories of growth (see Moore 1995, 1999, 2003). I am therefore bemused why Hacohen (2000, 352–8) would follow some of the contemporary reviewers of *The Poverty* in stating that it was an attack on a straw man, especially as he proceeds to examine the historicists targeted by Popper in the pages that follow this claim. There is, I grant, a problem with labelling Plato a historicist (see Klosko 1996). The historicism of Marx (made more problematic by asking which Marx, young or old?) is also clearly a very different matter to the more open and reformed Marxist historicism of the late twentieth century. The popular representation of Marxism in the 1930s was, however, largely as Popper presented it, and, as mentioned in the previous section, it was Popper's personal witnessing of the fatalism of the Austro-Marxists between the wars that drove his contempt for this approach. Finally, stadial theories (including Marxist theories) are still worthy of attention (a view I hold strongly) from a Popperian perspective if they are reinterpreted as trends that are dependent on initial conditions rather than historical laws or inevitable trajectories.

5 A good example of non-Marxist historicism, and mentioned in passing above, is W.W. Rostow's use of *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960) as a means to engineer a "Rostovian" take-off stage during the Indochinese wars so that Vietnam would imitate the European trajectory to liberal democracy. But see Young (1990, 2000, 53), Tucker (1999) and the later writings of Said for post-colonial critiques of historicism in orthodox Marxism, development economics generally, and other discourses engineered in the West and imposed on the East. Tucker (1999, 1) contends that development discourse, which is imperialist and based on myth, "portrays development as a necessary and desirable process, as human destiny itself", and hence is in need of deconstruction. Young (1990, 6–10) argues that the orthodox Marxist historicism prevents people from

acting as agents of change (which was precisely Popper's point, but in relation to his support for piecemeal activism rather than revolutionary change) and, following Althusser and Mao, calls for an opening up of this historicism to allow multiple trajectories (but then what is left of Marxism?). In response to Tucker *et al.*, I would argue that Popper has already "deconstructed" and "opened up" historicism, and, further, the danger of taking this post-colonial line is a tendency to embrace historicism in another form, namely a singular Asian (or African or South American) trajectory. I am bewildered why there is only one reference to Popper (in a footnote in Young (1990) on a subject unrelated to historicism) in the books cited above. I can only presume that this lack of reference is because these advocates incorrectly presume Popper to be a neo-liberal. Such scholars would also no doubt reject the call for the universal applicability of an open society as another imperialist 'discourse' imposed by the 'ethnocentric' leaders in the dominant 'centre' on the 'others' residing in the 'periphery', and hence in need of 'deconstruction'. This post-colonial riposte to the concept of an open society should be taken seriously by Popperians even if one believes that the argument is taken too far and objects to the now dated postmodern jargon in which it was advanced. (And not all of these narratives are driven by what I call, after the indecipherable post-colonialist Homi K. Bhabha, Bhabharisms; Young's work, for example, is for the most part written in clean English). Finally, note that post-colonial criticism of essentialism is also anticipated by Popper.

6 Economists should, in particular, be alerted to the fact that Popper's critical rationalist framework is a complex and imposing edifice, since they, more than most, have tended to misrepresent Popper's contribution as no more than identifying the asymmetry between falsification and verification (even if they do occasionally make reference to the Duhem-Quine hypothesis or add a Lakatosian twist to this interpretation). As I have conveyed in the narrative, it is a neo-Kantian world in which conjectures spun out of our minds are constrained and adjusted via conflict with an independent objective reality that is derived by inter-subjective consent. The science/non-science dichotomy also does not constitute a sense/non-sense dichotomy, since metaphysical and allied speculations are a source of the conjectures. Finally, it is again

important to emphasize that although Popper did not believe that the falsification method, in its purest form, was suitable for non-scientific domains, he did hold that inspiration and conjectures held in check by a critical attitude informed by external objective knowledge were universally beneficial when they could be brought to bear.

7 It needs to be emphasized here that Popper's defence of an open society did not turn on greater economic growth (even though his narrative is heavy with implications for such growth), but on progress towards a humanitarian society. In an effort to demarcate his position from the Hayekian defence of such a society, he even once stated: "I consider it entirely wrong to base the rejection of tyranny on economic arguments.... It is not the inefficiency of communism that we are fighting, but its lack of liberty and of humanity" (Popper 2008, 34).

8 As Arendt (1951) reported, most European democracies voluntarily decided in favour of totalitarianism in the 1930s. The banality of evil was largely ushered in by the electorate.

9 As Solow (1994) suggests, the tangles of the causal processes that drive the creation of ideas and thereby growth are sufficiently complex that economic, political and cultural historians are at times better placed to make a contribution to this debate than econometricians and high theorists. The tenuous empirical studies that mount in the development journals are frightening to behold. Just think of the endless competing threads. First, the notions of freedom, democracy and liberty are too ill-defined to be captured in operational variables by statisticians. Second, it is possible to have some sort of freedom or liberty in one domain (such as in an economic transaction or the artistic act of a musical innovation) and not in another (such as in the choice of a political leader via the voting box or the artistic act of making a film), indicating that so-called closed and open societies are not so one-dimensional as they were in the 1930s. Third, economic historians put aside Leonard Read's *I Pencil* at times and grant that 'command-and-control' regimes in which free thought is frowned upon can actually outperform liberal democracies in producing a *limited* number of objects *en masse* (such as Moscow flats and hydro-eclectic projects) and even in an innovative way, especially when a commissar has a revolver at the nape of one's neck. China seems to have taken this one step further by holstering the revolver and out-sourcing this activity to state-owned businesses to produce objects (and innovations) *en masse*, which, because of the size of the population, collectively seem to mimic the myriad private businesses harnessing the array of resources to indirectly serve the myriad ends sought in the Western world. Fourth, the success of China is patently due to the fact that it is operating within the boundaries of the production frontier and harvesting the technology of the West (from secure property rights to the corporate form); that is, they are harvesting the spill-over effects of new technology so admired by the new growth theorists. The real test for such a country is whether or not it can out-compete the Western liberal democracies once it is located on the production frontier. Fifth, Popper failed to foresee the capacity for liberal democracies to descend into a sclerosis for the reasons outlined by the likes of Buchanan, Olsen and Stigler, nor the capacity of governments, such as the Thatcher government, to engineer Schumpeterian-style creative destruction as an antidote. Sixth, the short-term success of the Asian regimes may be attributed to benign dictators, and, as indicated by Popper, if there is no way of peacefully removing them via a democratic process when a short-sighted tyrant or oligarchy takes the helm, then short-term success is followed by long-term failure. And... the list is endless. As stated in the narrative above, the debate is a dog's breakfast. Not surprisingly, those testing for the role played by democracy and liberty find a "mixed and confusing picture" "subject to much discussion" (see de Haan and Sierman (1996) and Sirowy and Inkeles (1990) for typical surveys).

10 Popper accepted that liberal democracies may fail, but in *The Open Society* at least, he was confident that they could succeed and, in response to the Marxists (and therefore the public choice theorists in our day), that the democratic leaders could make decisions without being manipulated by vested interests. See Shearmur (1996) for a lengthy, but gentle, critique of Popper's support for a liberal democracy, in which he contends (among many other arguments) that an open society may naturally implode through an internal dynamic that is Hayekian in nature. Specifically, he argues that the application of Popperian critical rationalism to construct liberal democratic institutions may erode the

very institutions that allow critical rationalism and the open society to exist. In later years, Popper seemed to be even more explicit that democracy could fail. In a 1965 lecture entitled "Freedom: A Balance Sheet", he argued that if we choose freedom, we must be prepared to perish with it, as there is no guarantee that it will flourish (Shearmur 1996, 32).

11 It would be interesting to discover what Needham (a noted chemist, sinologist and fellow traveller) thought of Popper's philosophy of science. An early copy of Popper's manuscript devoted to the logic of discovery was sent to Needham in 1932 (see Hacohen 2000).

12 Slipping in this particular Popperian moral injunction within a broader account of piecemeal engineering may, in the reader's mind, suppress its importance within Popper's complex structure, and hence it should not pass without comment (and, indeed, for many reasons it should be another numbered theme in my list). Popper rejected the utilitarian scheme of a continuous and symmetrical pleasure–pain scale in which units of pleasure and pain are weighted equally. He contended that there is an asymmetry between pleasure and pain, which was metaphorically similar to the asymmetry between verification and falsification within the philosophy of science, and that minimizing pain is more important than maximizing net-pleasure. In other words, he wanted to model the decision making "negatively", just as in the philosophy of science. Popper called this approach "negative utilitarianism" and the term has stuck (and, given that he labels this important idea in no more than a footnote (1966, i, ch. 5, n. 6), it yet again reflects the richness and multi-layered nature of The Open Society). Popper also believed that unavoidable pain, such as in times of famine, should be relieved by assisting those suffering in equal measure (i, fn. 2, 284–5). It is also important to note that piecemeal engineering may be interpreted as the pursuit of 'low target' policies, but this does not quite capture what Popper meant, as he granted that some policies could be bold, only their boldness would be relative to the 'trial-and-error' history that allowed the complexity of the problem to be mastered (i, fn. 3, 285). Finally, negative utilitarianism should be considered alongside yet another Popperian moral injunction, moral egalitarianism, where all individuals are equally valuable, but space does not permit me to consider this.

13 Shearmur (1996, 22, 27) de-emphasizes the role played by Hayek in shaping Popper's views prior to the first edition of The Open Society and reports that Popper was surprised that Hayek had come to similar conclusions (from different premises) in The Road to Serfdom. The Hayekian influence on Popper in subsequent editions was, however, another matter, with Popper taking up Hayek's call for all government action to be implemented under the rule of law rather than through commissar edict. He never, however, really engaged with Hayek's criticisms of calculating values in socialist environments and, unlike Hayek, he believed that the concept of social justice was both useful and had a meaning which most people understood (Shearmur 1996, 12, 35). If anything, in relation to piecemeal engineering, Popper's stance was probably more influenced by his New Zealand colleagues, the New Zealand social welfare system and the social justice sentiments he paraded in his Red Vienna days. Indeed, it is interesting to note, at least for Antipodean economists (the majority of the authors in this volume), that the templates given by Popper for sound piecemeal engineering are C. Simkin's articles in the 1940s in the Economic Record. Simkin was one of Popper's chief interlocutors during his New Zealand years and, by acting as Popper's sounding-board, arguably provided a greater contribution to knowledge than any of his contemporaries in economics.

14 In relation to that historical juncture, it should be emphasized that Popper's extended defence of a liberal democracy (theme 4 above), his critique of historicism (theme 2) and his promotion of piecemeal engineering (this theme) are all interconnected by his objection to Marxism and the dangers it posed in the postwar reconstruction of Europe. Specifically, and as stated at many points in this preface, his support for piecemeal engineering is largely an extended attack on Marx's historicist prophesy that capitalism would sow its own seeds of destruction and be replaced, inevitably, with a dictatorship of the proletariat. Popper objected to this line of thought, in chapters 19 through to 23 in volume two of The Open Society (but see also chapter 9), on the grounds that it encouraged individuals to resign themselves to historical forces rather than to pursue meaningful reform. He, in

contrast, believed that individuals control their own destiny via a liberal democracy and could implement, via democratically determined piecemeal engineering, a more constrained capitalism in which workers were not exploited. Indeed, it is easy to detect Popper's controlled fury at his contemporaries in the Austro-Marxist movement for both baulking at supporting interventionist policies and not standing up to the fascists on the grounds that such actions would just delay the revolution, as dictated by the march of history (1966, ii, 182). He also rejected the associated Marxist proposition that the manipulation of political power by economic power cannot be checked, pointing out that the (piecemeal) welfare reforms which preceded the Great War showed not only that there was an alternative to naked capitalism which did not entail communism, but also that political acts can control the economic base rather than the reverse (1966, ii, 126–9). The link between Popper's 'conjecture and refutation' philosophy of science (theme 3) and his 'trial-and-error' piecemeal engineering should also be clear to the naked eye (1966, i, 163). The intermingling of the different ideas can only be really captured by reading the driving narrative of Popper's *The Open Society* in one sitting.

15 The reference to Pol Pot above points to a key utopian objection (and remember that once, many happily presented themselves as engineers of human souls) to piecemeal engineering; namely that a change of a piecemeal nature does not change the environment in which an actor is situated sufficiently to allow for a change in human nature or world view that is required for a utopian dream to be realized. Pol Pot noted the ease with which liberated Cambodian villages and towns returned to non-socialist ways after his soldiers passed through them in his early campaigns, and hence, in Year Zero, ruthlessly sent all urban individuals into the countryside, subsequently called the killing fields. The horror of Pol Pot's solution is indisputable, but the above-stated utopian objection to piecemeal engineering is sound enough.

16 The complexity of Popper's historiography is judiciously appraised in Peter Skagestad's *Making Sense of History* (see also Simkin 1993). Interestingly enough, Skagestad (1975, 38) also happens to illustrate the 'problem situation' method by focusing on the way in which Popper explained Plato's philosophizing as a rational response to a society's inability to cope with the strain of a society as it moves from a closed to an open society. Skagestad also makes it clear that this approach does not differ markedly from that proposed by Collingwood, in spite of Popper's own claims that Collingwood's calls for empathetic and sympathetic treatments of the historical agent, as well as stepping inside the historical agent's mind, amount to the sort of psychologizing he rejects.

17 Popper's self-confessed use of *The Open Society* to achieve his war aims is, of course, the main reason for this ruthless language. It may have also been simply an extension of Popper's legendary disposition to converse in a dominating, illiberal and ruthless manner. Magee (1997, 191) stated that Popper "pursued relentlessly, beyond the limits of acceptable aggression in conversation", and reported that Ernst Gombrich likened it to arguing a case until the dissenter "put his signature to a confession that he was wrong and Popper was right". As mentioned earlier, Raphael (2000, 376) stated that academics gossiped that "*The Open Society* had been written by one of its enemies". The contradiction between Popper's critique of totalitarianism and his illiberal wish to subjugate others in conversation merely provides the historian with yet another insight into the complexities of human character.

18 Plamenatz (1952) is a good example of the umbrage taken at Popper's exegeses among his first reviewers. It also captures the aversion of the early reviewers to the shrillness of Popper's tone. Even the sympathetic reviews, such as Ryle (1947, 171), took exception to the excessive rhetoric of Popper's narrative: "it is hard tactics in a champion of the freedom of thought to use the blackguarding idioms characteristic of its enemies". Ryle thought the "verdicts" just, but that they would exert a greater influence if they had a more judicial tone. Given that Plamenatz and Ryle were Oxford men and reflected the tone of their institution, it is not surprising that Popper's later request for a position at Oxford was knocked back (Magee 1997, 73). The problem of Popper's shrill tone was compounded by the fact that Popper's liberal message was not in tune with the outlook of the 1940s. As in the case of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Popper found it difficult to find a publisher (Raphael 2000, 376).

Poverty, which was rejected in its article form by *Mind* (issued out of Oxford), was published in *Economica* via Hayek's role as editor of that journal, while *The Open Society* was repeatedly rejected until, once again through the work of Hayek, it was published by Routledge.

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