

# Enigmatically Engineered:

A humanly look at the blueprint of social engineering impacting social fabric and economic resilience

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In this end-of-year issue of Aei4eiA's research snippets, we take a closer look at the world around us and its micro unit- human. Renowned sociologist Blumer notes, "**human society consists of acting units and acting people, and all activity in society springs from such acting units**" (Blumer, 1962).

As we can interpret from the above, businesses and society at the large scale are formed by such micro-units of this ecosystem. Hence, **the characteristics, quality of this individual unit that is 'human', plays a significant role in the overall sustainable development of any society and economy.**

But what if this unit is socially engineered and controlled by a mighty few and everything around is steered for their vested interest. **Social Engineering is not a new concept.** Rulers across civilisations have implemented it either just for their own benefit or for the greater good. Laws and regulations in any society were established around this core concept where at any point in time, the controllers of the society steered the course of direction. What is the state now? Is it too much of noise and void around? In this end-of-the-year issue, we took this opportunity and time to ponder upon this theme to analyse the probable way forward. Let's begin with what we understand by the term Social Engineering.

## Social Engineering- What is it?

Broadly speaking, Social Engineering in the realm of social sciences, is the use of centralised planning in an attempt to manage social change and regulate the future development and behaviour of a society (Marget, 2023). The concept is not new but who is at the helm steering the centralised planning processes determines the outcome.

Today, globalisation and technical innovation like AI made it easier for the phenomenon of social engineering to percolate deep within the society far-and-wide and at a never seen before unbelievably fast pace. Who is controlling centralised planning and benefiting from such a scenario? Are they using this phenomenon for their own benefit or for the greater good? Let's look at what the structure of a civilised and progressive society looks like?

### Structure of a civilised and progressive Society

Today, human civilisation is old and experienced enough to have figured out the structure of an ideal society that is a society based on certain values and principles and for the greater good. And, historically, we have many successful civilisations/empires as references that not only survived but progressed through the ages while creating positive impacts. **They made wonders when their rulers and the subjects adhered to those well-thought principles but perished once they got distracted due to any of the inner evils be it pride, greed, envy and more.**

Here, we take a quick glimpse at two of the progressive empires of the ancient times that reached its pinnacle while engineering their way and positively impacting the society. Both these civilisations made important contributions to philosophy, mathematics, literature, trade and economy, astronomy, medicine, architecture and more, with traces existing even today.

#### a. Ancient Greek empire

Especially, the contributions of **Plato** during the Classical period circa 490–323 BC is noteworthy. Along with his teacher **Socrates**, and his student **Aristotle**, Plato is a central figure in the history of Western philosophy-an innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms. The most comprehensive statement of Plato's mature philosophical insights appears in his seminal work, **The Republic**. It elaborately defined the **fundamental principles for the conduct of human life**, what is the goal of Justice if not "*giving to each what is owed*", society's belief that justice is morally obligatory and more. He further points out that there is a natural tendency of human beings to also act unjustly while preserving the outward appearance of being just (Cornford, 1941). But **a true leader must be genuine, knows how to rule and always act for the sake of the goal, never in their own interest alone**. He explained society to be collection of human units organised into distinct classes based on their roles, skills and capabilities. To guide and control their actions are the guardians of the society the soldiers and rulers. To fulfil their duties, especially **the rulers should have inclination toward philosophical thinking**. To that extent, Philosophers, who excels at investigating serious questions about human life and judge what is true and best for all has a significant role to play. That was the **structure of an ideal society**.

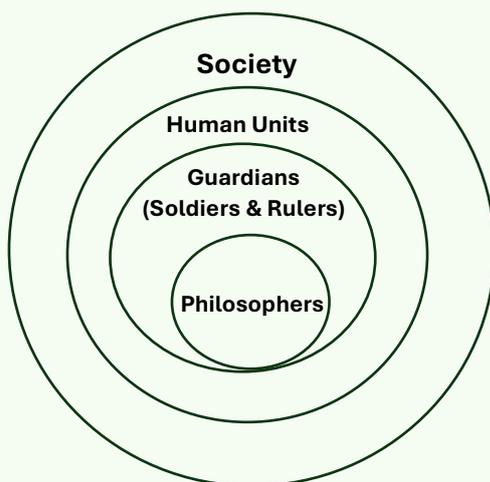


Figure 1: Structure of an ideal society

He further indicated that **fostering personal qualities and developing human units can only be achieved by good education**, which should be fundamental to any progressive society. He even operated his own school in Athens and erstwhile Greek would be rulers (including Alexander the great) were enrolled to learn the art, science and philosophy of ruling. **He believed that for an ideal society, since rulers are responsible for making decisions impacting all the human units involved, they must have wisdom, the capacity to comprehend reality and to make impartial judgements about any issue** (Kemerling, 2011).

Now, let's take a quick look at the Mauryan Empire of India.

## b. Mauryan Empire Of India

Before the Mauryan empire, the Indian subcontinent was fragmented into hundreds of kingdoms often ruled by regional chieftains, private armies and even gangs of bandits, each trying to establish its own supremacy. Mauryan empire (c. 321 BCE-181 BCE) in turn, had **disciplined centralised control with massive army to protect the empire, instill stability and peace in the region, which in turn encouraged economic prosperity**. Just like in Greece, Plato's *The Republic*, the Mauryan empire too operated under the principles of *Arthashastra*, an ancient Indian treatise (that is strict and fair) on economic policy, statecraft and military strategy written by *Kautilya* (also known as *Chanakya*- the philosopher-pundit turned kingmaker).

The efficient working of the empire had the distinction of establishing a single currency across India, network of administrators and civil servants to provide justice and security for merchants, farmers and traders. It funded numerous public works projects to enhance productivity. The international network of trade even extended to Greece. Sea-borne foreign trade that began for the first time during the empire added to its prosperity. They believed that the economy is inextricably linked with daily human lives (Akhter, 2020).

The outcome of such efficient use of social engineering can be reflected in the quotes of *Megasthenes*. Megasthenes- the ancient Greek historian, diplomat, ethnographer and explorer was sent by the king Seleucus I on embassies to the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta. Megasthenes was the first person from the Western world to leave a written description of India. He described India in his detailed book "*Indica*", "***The inhabitants, in like manner, having abundant means of subsistence, exceed in consequence the ordinary stature and are distinguished by their proud bearing. They are also found to be well skilled in the arts, as might be expected of men who inhale a pure air and drink the very finest water. And while the soil bears on its surface all kinds of fruits which are known to cultivation, it has also underground numerous veins of all sorts of metals...***"

As can be seen the afore mentioned, **two ancient civilisations mentioned before are examples of social engineering with a difference, with focus was on public good and progress**. Now, **circa 2024**, let's check some of the media report describing instances of a few significant economies of the world to see where we stand and to evaluate for ourselves **whether ours is a genuine progress or just noise and void...**

### Circa 2024- A few news snippets

A recent report notes, when the **LinkedIn's #OpenToWork status feature** was first rolled out during the pandemic in 2020 (*the year characterised by millions of people facing sudden unemployment*), nearly **200 million profiles** chose to display the status. Currently, 40 million people are still using the badge to display their quest for new opportunities (Fortune, 2024). Why such a situation, is it just the pandemic to be blamed or has it something to do with globally controlled vested interest groups spread around the world that have socially engineered such a scenario for their benefit.

Now, coming to the biggest democracy in the world once praised by Megasthenes, and where world's large majority of human units reside today, International Labour Organisation (2024) reported, "*Young Indians more likely to be jobless if they are educated and that the unemployment rate for young people with secondary or higher education was six times higher at 18.4 per cent*".

Similarly, in one the world's most dominant superpower nations- the US, in what appears to be a disturbing and shocking situation is that, there is "*The Rise of the Hyper Educated Poor*". Contrary to the previous belief that the key to financial success is higher education and college and to fulfill the great American dream of the yesteryears, today, there is a growing horde of academics living in poverty points to the fact that Master's and PhD degrees are no savior from a lower income. Many adjuncts make only \$2,500 to \$3,000 for a three-credit course that is disbursed

over an entire 15-week semester and even fall short to make a poverty level wages, well under \$30,000 a year, and have to rely upon public assistance, such as food stamps (Meszaros, 2015).

In Australia too, between 2016 and 2022, overall enrolments in the higher education sector have dropped by 4% as people think that University degree doesn't lead to a better job. To meet the cost-of-living pressures, young people are working more in multiple jobs but less inclined towards formal education (Victoria University, 2018). And, according to a 2024 Productivity Commission report, labor productivity in Australia has stagnated since the COVID-19 pandemic- a fact that needs to be urgently addressed. These are just a very quick glimpse touching just into the aspect of education.

**Where is the society heading? Who is benefitting from such a structural damage to the society and global economy depriving human units the very significant option to get educated and productive, to lead an economically secured life which is fundamental to any progressive society?**

We boast of one world, progressive world, technological advancement and the use of modern technology like AI in our daily lives. **If this is what progress looks like, pardon me but we are in a hallucinated world.** The so-called flag bearers/position holders of the society should refrain from lengthy champagne-soaked speeches at conferences, munching good food, shaking hands, collecting goodies, travelling around the world at the expense of public money, when the rest of the world suffers.

### **The way forward- Philosophically speaking**

As we have noted in the previous paragraphs and philosophically speaking, the lives of human units circles around the **ABCD- All about the journey from Birth-to-Death** while making the **Choices** in between. Perhaps, **more pondering should be done by those holding positions and who have the opportunity of making much needed changes for the greater good.** History approves that even the mightiest or unjust rulers have vanished from the face of earth. For, **history appreciates valour, skills, justice, progress, beauty and treats treachery, tyranny, injustice with disgust.....**

Going back to the afore-mentioned ABCD....?

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