

Interpretation

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In his *Tractatus*, W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz presents a vision of a happy society, the good state, the principles of good governance, the essence of politics, and humanity's high task. His main objective is "to demonstrate the necessity of, and provide a guide for, the redirection of humanity" (19).

Here are some highlights of the vision.

A happy society has seven basic characteristics: (1) there is cooperation among its citizens; (2) everyone is happy, but not at the expense of others; (3) citizens are virtuous, and leaders are wise; (4) there is a system of education in virtue and knowledge to which everyone has equal access; (5) there are good laws; (6) people have reliable political knowledge via an unbiased media; and (7) a continuity of generations exists, fostered by a common identity made possible by ancestral memory, a common language, and common traditions, customs, religions, and values.

"The state is a territorial political organization based on a society" (41). The *good* state's main purpose is "the cooperation, liberty, prosperity, and security of its citizens" (41), but its purposes include contribution to the common good of all humanity. In the good state, one finds division of labor, little bureaucracy, no poverty, and no excessively wealthy individuals. It is characterized by justice and freedom, including freedom of speech, limited only by what society considers vulgar and offensive. Citizens of the good state are patriotic and engage in public affairs. Among them there is *solidarity*,

cooperation aimed at achieving the same goals. When only some people are active while others remain passive, there is no solidarity. The culture of a good state is based on the native culture, the one that founded the state. This culture has a privileged and dominant position, but it is tolerant of other cultures. In a good state's society, there is a variety of social layers or classes. Classes, however, are not rigid, and membership in them is not hereditary. There is equal access to education, employment, public life, and such. People can compete for a better place in society and advance from a lower to a higher social class. At the top of the hierarchy sits an educated moral and intellectual elite. The good state upholds morality. It upholds religion as well, ensuring tolerance among different religions. It honors and maintains tradition, without *excessive* attachment to it, which would stifle creativity and bring cultural stagnation. The oldest and most universal element of tradition is the family. The proper family is composed of a man (the husband and father), a woman (the wife and mother), and their children—the purpose of their marriage—together with those to whom they are bound by kinship. The good state meddles as little as possible in the affairs of the family.

The state necessarily has authorities (the government, police, military, courts) to enable decision making and to use coercion as a means of control essential for cooperation. The three basic functions of the government are to balance the interests of groups within the state, to maintain law and order, and to defend the state against aggression. Government of a state concerns both internal affairs and relations with other states. Internally, the purpose of government is the good of its citizens. Externally, its purpose is to help build a strong international community. Those who govern should have an understanding of their time as well as an ability to predict and anticipate what is coming. One kind of correct political regime is *proper democracy*. Democracy is all about *freedom*, the autonomy of individuals, families, ethnic groups, religious groups, and others to shape their own lives. Proper democracy is not ensured by free elections and a multiplicity of political parties. It is ennobled democracy, “sophocracy,” in which wise and noble people have the top positions in state and society. There is some kind of *law* permitting only individuals who are noble, wise, moral, comprehensively educated, skilled in many things, considerably experienced in life, and appreciative of tradition to occupy political office.

The essence of politics, the art of governing, is the organization of society for cooperation and a good life. It is *not* the struggle to gain and maintain power.

We were not born on earth to seek only wealth and power, nor to consume and fight. “The purpose of the evolution of life is its fullness and perfection. Human evolution is a journey to ever greater freedom and to moral and intellectual perfection” (23). Our destiny is to perfect ourselves and carry on evolution.

Our present, postmodern age is one of hatred, turbulence, dissonance, revolutionary changes, severe conflicts, political instability, uncontrolled violence, irrationality, forgetfulness of who we really are, weakening of religion, erosion of morals, unbounded commercial zeal, search for profit everywhere, and threats to true freedom, the main ones being “the abuse of power and monopoly on the media, along with the lobbies of militarism, religious fanaticism, prostitution, perverted sex, and excessive wealth” (64). Current threats to the family are unprecedented. More and more the family is being subjected to state authority. The family is being redefined as a “partnership,” and there is a rise in “multisexuality.” These developments, if unchecked, will eventually lead to the collapse of the very institution of the family and to the self-destruction of our whole society. The West, ignoring or forgetting its tradition and religion, has allowed individuals the unrestricted pursuit of what they desire. Individuals not constrained by tradition and religion have returned to their primitive animality, driven by nothing but desire and impulse. “The current disharmony in the world is a serious threat to the continued existence of all humankind” (99). We need a way out.

The redirection of humanity is possible. Things constantly change, and they can change for the better. “A reversal occurs at deep night, when spirituality is in decline and when love seems to be almost completely overcome by strife (Empedocles)” (131). A new age is beginning, one that replaces modernity and postmodernity. It is the epoch of *evolutionity*, inspired by an organic and holistic worldview and emerging from new developments in science and from the idea of human evolution—the idea that human beings, though they cannot change their *nature*, can change their *character* and the kind of society they live in. What we will be like in the future depends on what we ourselves develop consciously and purposefully. To usher in the age of evolutionity, we must engage in self-reflection about who we are, what our goal is, what we want to pass on to future generations, and what our ultimate destiny is. To change things for the better, we need to start from the existing tradition and then add new elements to it. The redirection of humanity must involve a change in society and politics from competition to cooperation, the encouragement of moral and intellectual virtues, provision of the foundations of

happy societies, and the promotion of peace among states. “We need to go... away from domination, centralism, and uniformity to freedom, autonomy, and diversity” (17). “The repair of states and civilizations can be undertaken through the moral improvement of individuals and societies” (48). The first step is moral improvement based on the natural law of doing no harm to others. Religions play a positive role. They shape character, influence morals, build communities, create solidarity among their members, and focus minds on higher things than we find in the everyday world. Evolutionity does not undermine religions but tries to uncover the *spirituality* in them. In spirituality, the essence of religions, humanity can find a common ground. World peace should begin as peace among religions. Evolutionity brings with it a revitalization of our classical heritage and a return to classical rationality. The core of the classical-Christian civilization is the Classical Tradition. It bears affinities to the teachings of the greatest thinkers in China, India, and the Muslim world. “The Classical Tradition has transcended its classical-Christian origins and is the common heritage of all humanity” (39). We must develop *global* solidarity and fellow feeling, recognizing that all human beings share the same thing, life itself, and all have the same basic needs. Human beings and the whole world will be reborn through love, the essence of excellence.

Readers will have questions and concerns. Here are three of them. First, egalitarian ideals are so deeply ingrained in much of the West that many readers will think the *Tractatus* places too little emphasis on equality. Especially troubling may be the advocacy of a hierarchical society, one with a system of “higher” and “lower” classes, even if it is based on virtue and merit rather than heredity. Second, some readers may have reservations about a return to any type of traditional society. Modern ideals of inclusion—of women, non-Christians, nonwhites, non-Westerners, and, for some, even animals—are precious to many of us. Is there a traditional society that held those ideals? Third, readers may have worries about whether the state envisioned in the *Tractatus* provides a place, one no less privileged than any other, for certain kinds of individuals who ought to have it. Should there not be, not only tolerance, but full equality for, among others, the loner, the atheist, the member of the LGBTQ community, the religious fundamentalist, the vulgar person, the nonpatriot—even the amoralist and the immoralist, as long as they do not use violence and prevent others from the legitimate pursuit of their own ends?

The *Tractatus*, however, is full of many more sound ideas than questionable ones. Few readers will quibble with its emphasis on peace, love, freedom,

justice, nonviolence, moral improvement, religious tolerance, the increase of cooperation among people, and the elimination of exploitation, poverty, discrimination, terror, and enmity. If the book were widely read by people in positions of power, and if they embraced and followed its best teachings, we might find ourselves living in a better world and see an improvement in humanity itself. The problem is that some of our top leaders do not read books.