

Franz-Xaver Kaufmann,
European Foundations of the Welfare State,
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The retreat of social protection policies and the restriction of government regulation in the economy and society are the starting point for the contemporary debate on the welfare state. The state remains the principal arena from which decisions on the character and content of social policy emanate and in which the limits of redistribution are set. Public policy in the field of social protection marks the significance of the state in regulating social and economic relations. Furthermore, it is the imprint of solidarity in redistribution. European states, in particular those that made up the core of the European Union, share this tradition in state operation.

In spite of the great breadth of his work, Emeritus Professor Kaufmann has only had parts of his work translated into English. English-language audience has thus not been fortunate enough to have access to his very broad and comprehensive view on the “welfare state” as it emerged in the geography of continental Europe. In the book at hand the author has compiled a number of his older works, with the aim of interpreting the foundations of social policy in contemporary states and more specifically, of interpreting the core of the sociological approach to the welfare state. This book may serve as a good introduction to readers who seek to approach the various dimensions of social policies; it is also a useful methodological guide for analyzing contemporary social policy and its prospects.

Social policy is examined as a product of social change and of the consequences of that change for the culture and structures of social formations. As a concept it is confined neither to the organization and operation of social services, nor to the delivery of social goals and the protection of social rights. It is approached as a process that has the potential and the tools necessary to influence the conditions of the functioning of social formations and of contributing, to a greater or lesser extent, to the outcome of social change from as early on as the transition from feudalism to modernity. The conditions for securing social unity (as an imaginary or real, rigid whole) are influenced by social policy, despite the existence of dominant forms of social stratification and the tensions that they bring about.

The book is structured in four sections, throughout which we follow the gradual formation of the foundation and the development of the welfare state as well as its prospects for the near future. The first section refers to the initial ideas surrounding the role of the state in confronting the consequences of economic operations and the practices of social reproduction. The second section then presents the theoretical foundation with relation to general goals and policies and the third focuses on the analysis of the state as a guarantor of social cohesion in the modern world. The fourth and final section of the book examines the questions central to the contemporary debate on social policy and the role of the state in it, and finally in the ultimate form of social stratification in the present and in the future.

The author calls upon three basic analyses of the state in order to interpret the origins of interventions aiming at the protection of vulnerable social groups. Such groups, he notes, contribute to the production of wealth but enjoy neither wealth nor goods, being exposed rather to a number of dangers. With the common starting point of market freedom and the state as a point of reference both for the functioning of the economy and for the protection of the weakest, the author draws on Sismonti’s work for his references to the state as a regulator and

guarantor of protection against extreme inequality. He then makes reference to Friedrich List to demonstrate the unity of the nation as a determining factor for development and prosperity, and consequently for the orientation of state regulation in the direction of economic growth and prosperity. Finally, extensive reference is made to the work of John Stuart Mill, who prioritizes state intervention to protect weak members of society and to create the necessary conditions so that all may have the opportunity of social and economic advancement (Mill emphasizes that not all enjoy the same starting point and that workers in particular face extra difficulties in economic success and advancement).

In the second chapter the author attempts to delineate social policy by pointing to basic social problems, to the way they are interpreted and the manner that they are confronted. His perspective makes reference to the German approach of Sozialpolitik which, he claims, encompasses the practices of a) social protection and welfare and b) of public policies for confronting the social impact emanating from the free market and the inequalities it entails. The author emphasizes that this chapter is an approach that concerns the original formation of social policy from the perspectives of sociology, political science, philosophy but also economics. It is an excellent systematization of the foundations in social policy as a means for social change and toward the systematic effort of confronting the "social question".

The third chapter refers to the role of Christianity in shaping state policies and the protection of employment in particular. Once more the perspective is "German centric" since the chapter makes special reference to the German leadership with regard to the assimilation into state policy of values and principles that emanate from the Lutheran tradition. More specifically, the author highlights the value of the unity of community, the value of solidarity, and the obligation of the whole to work toward the protection of the weakest in society, so that the latter are not marginalized as a result of inadequate material means.

The next chapter completes the theoretical foundations of social policy with regards to values whose frame of reference is not the state: Such values are rather supported by and draw strength and legitimacy from basic social rights. In particular, he mentions that analyses based on the partial implementation of social policy de facto concern national cases with an emphasis on similarities and differences, yet in this manner play down the importance of the foundations and origins of social rights from which social policy itself emerges.

The second section of the book outlines the perspective and content of social policy and the central goals which define it in the broader context of public policy. Chapter 5 highlights the importance of social security, primarily in protecting all citizens against personal and individual fears and its significance as a component of social and economic development. Social security is elevated to a human value, necessary for the survival and progress of human societies. Its content does not remain unaltered within its own frame of reference. This value is vulnerable to external factors that cast doubt over its importance and its contribution to the social and economic process. That is why it is suffering a setback today.

The next chapter examines social policy as a social and political relationship in which social relations, as these are shaped by the social stratification in place today, are enshrined and established. Ideally, there is a defense in favor of the conditions of equal participation in community life for all of its members. Participation in the community is assessed on the basis of access to rights, benefits, infrastructure and personal services. Social policy, it would seem, makes reference to the intentions of public policy and its final results.

Chapter 7 refers to first order and second order policies. The chapter focuses on the institutionalization of social policy, a process that allows the state to organize those mechanisms necessary for satisfying basic social needs and the demands of its citizens. The state and its social policy—an element of modernity—constitute an arena in which power relations among all social and political parameters are manifested. The product of these complex relations also determines the content of social policy. In a modern environment, policies seeking to “rationalize” social protection entail cuts and limitations, essentially affecting the weakest. Second order policies signal the shift in the focus of social policy from the preoccupation with central needs and how to confront them, to the conservation of the gains of previous years, as well as the protection against the limitations and changes that cause a decline in levels of social protection.

The third section of the book may be viewed as an addition to the second since it elaborates on the theoretical problematization regarding social protection policies. Yet it also shares a place with the fourth section, in which the author develops his idea on the theory of the welfare state. Chapter 8 in particular refers to the processes by which, through state policies, the promotion of prosperity is sought at an individual and collective level. This chapter highlights what the author considers to be the central role of the state as a guarantor of social protection, which is in turn a prerequisite toward the final goal of social prosperity.

The starting point of chapter 9 is the concept of national policy as a basis and shared tradition of European states. Here the author addresses the “European Social Model” as an outcome of the shared, though varied tradition of European states in social policy. Reference to the European Union is *sine qua non*, as is reference to its role in supporting this shared tradition and the consequences that this policy brings about among the different approaches to social protection, as these have developed in practice. In his attempt to develop this problematization the author maintains that social policy remains national and that social protection remains a matter concerning states, whose differences are little affected with the passage of time, especially where one’s problematization is broadened to include the enlargement states. Thus they serve the “European social model” in a different manner. In an equally different manner, originating in national experiences and practices, they react to the common pressures they face. He concludes that the European Union may do little to contribute to the organization of common policies given that prosperity remains in the domain of national policy. He notes, however, that the greatest pressure can be traced to the increasing regulatory power of the Union, in particular that of the European Court of Justice.

In Chapter 10 the author aptly defends his preoccupation with the dual nature of social policy, which is constituted on the one hand by the collective notion of prosperity, the environment in which it develops and the elements that preserve it, and on the other hand by institutions and mechanisms as legitimized parameters and necessary elements of collective prosperity. The notion of community, within which firm bonds of solidarity develop at the basis of a shared imaginary, constitutes the basic unit for delimiting and understanding social policy. The survival and reproduction of community are an important element for the orientation of social protection, always in keeping with social rights as these arise from the status of the citizen. In this chapter the reader is also given the opportunity to understand the axes defining the character of the social state in the European geography. (//)

The dimensions of production, of distribution and of reproduction are common starting points for European social states and for welfare capitalism in Europe. Moreover, the author offers a detailed presentation of a relationship that he presents from the start of the book, one

that is between modernity and the social state. He also refers here (and at greater length in the section that follows) to the consequences of globalization for the social state.

The next four chapters make up the last section of the book, the title of which makes for the greatest question mark in the field of social protection and beyond. The first chapter outlines basic arguments in favor of the welfare state, its successes and the need for its continued intervention in the economy, in politics, in the shaping of values and the organization of the relationship between the public and private sphere for every member of society. It is of course acknowledged that changes in the economy, in production and in the shape and character of social formations all demand corresponding changes in social policy. In light of the modern world, social policy must change in order for its achievements to endure.

Chapter 12 refers to the central question of human capital, highlighting its importance in the debate on the renewal of the goals and means of social protection. The current context makes it necessary to focus the efforts of social policy. What's more, the central political goal with respect to the protection and prospects of the welfare state is to account for the cost of social capital development as part of National Income Accounts (NIAs).

Chapter 13 raises the issue of what constitutes the notions of solidarity and redistribution in the modern environment of international competition, with relation of course to the remit of the state which maintains its power while altering its central role. Despite dramatic changes in the role and functions of the state, despite the differentiation between the levels of solidarity that emerge, successful solutions and practices are not out of reach, though the author does not elaborate on these in detail.

In the final chapter of the book, the author explains once more the relation between state policies and power relations as these are enshrined in the economy and society, before discussing at length the role of the modern state. The intervention of the state is based on four different axes: a) its new responsibilities with regard to the protection of natural resources, b) the increased attention paid to issues of protection from the dangers that the modern man faces, by preventing them, c) new forms of state intervention, which according to the author are related to and prove the conservation of its power and finally d) the openness of state policies given the closer relationship between states but also among their citizens, of mobility and shared activities in an increasingly globalized environment.

Overall, the book is a collection of works written in different periods, yet it stands out for its elaborate and solid arguments in favor of the welfare state. It may be of use as an introductory guide to questions of social protection but also as a point of reference to the search for the modern welfare state, not for the original ideas that it introduces but because we find at its core an analysis of the process of social reformism as a mission and a central function of the state, from the time in which it emerged, to the foreseeable future.

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