

Politics of Reason.

No. 1.

The JUST STATE.

By

GERHARD KUMLEBEN.

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Foreword.

This pamphlet will give the rudiments of some of the principal ideas underlying the politics of reason. It is kept quite elementary, it deals in full detail with only the important problems, some others could only be touched. For further study, reference must be made to the works of Leonard Nelson, which are the basis of this pamphlet, and to other publications of "Public Life". A selection of those works, translated by Mr W. Lansdell, will soon be published by Allen & Unwin.

Though I am quite conscious of the imperfections of this short essay, I hope that it may lead some readers to take an interest in the problems concerned, or that it may be used as the basis for discussion among young people of the working classes. The best criticism that could be given about it, is that it is too elementary.

This is the second thousand of the pamphlet. I have altered the title to clarify the purpose for which the pamphlet is written.

Sheffield, October, 1927

Gerhard Kumbien

The Just State.

“ All political affairs shall be decided according to the principle of justice ”

This demand follows from the principle itself, and the principle of justice is a demand not to violate the rights of others. As there are conditions under which individuals are not able to defend their rights themselves, the community should form a State, that is an institution with the task and power to protect the rights of individuals when such conditions are present

There are three such cases —

- (1) The individual may differ from others in such a way that he cannot himself defend such rights as others can. Children, the bodily or mentally infirm and animals are such individuals
- (2) Those who intend to violate the rights of others may have such means and such an organisation that the individual is not able to protect himself against such encroachments. A Fascist or militaristic body inside or outside the country, an exploiting capitalist trust and the Clerical Church are instances of such organisations which endanger liberty
- (3) The rights of individuals may be of such a kind that it is easier and more successful if they are safeguarded by an institution of the whole community than by individuals themselves. This is always the case when a scheme for the welfare of society requires means which exceed the possibilities of an individual or a private group of individuals. This, for instance, may be said of protection against epidemics, the supply of water, gas, electricity and coal. To grow woods on the now deserted hills of Derbyshire in order to make them useful for the community under a better land-system could not be left to private enterprise, but to grow wheat and potatoes on the plains of Southern England, now kept out of proper use, could be left to private work if a better land-system guaranteed equal access to the land

So much may be said of the three conditions under which the State, governed according to the principle of justice, and therefore called the just State, has to safeguard the rights of the individuals

But at the same time State-interference should be limited to the above cases. The right of self-determination and self-development is inherent in the human personality, limited only by the same right of others. For completely developed personalities differ not only in degree, but in kind from each other, and therefore each knows for himself alone what will lead him nearer to perfection. From this reason there is no right of the State to interfere in those cases where there is equal opportunity for everybody to develop his personality, but there is every obligation for it to interfere if there is not equal opportunity for all.

If, for instance, the existing land-system creates unemployment and poverty, so that the proletarian class is physically exploited and cannot give any education to its children nor enjoy the high values of science and arts, it is time to abolish the present system and to establish the just State for the aim of preventing such exploitation. But the just State being established and secured, there is no right for it to go further than to secure equal opportunity for all, to acquire wealth and to enjoy the higher cultural values. There is then no right for the State to confiscate all private property, to suppress private enterprise in industry, for by this means it establishes bureaucracy and exploitation by officials. Nor is it its right to force religion, science, literature and the arts in a certain direction.

Reason, the inherent power of human mind, being the source of all general truth, is thus also the source of the principle of justice. The politics that take the principle of justice as the fundamental guide of their decisions, are therefore called politics of reason. This general truth lies unconsciously in our mind at the beginning, and only by reflecting we are able to make it conscious. Thus we discover that the principle of justice is the necessary, but autonomous (self-legislative) demand of a person upon his own actions. Being a principle, that is to say, a GENERAL truth it involves no preference or distinction of individuals. As a PRACTICAL principle it demands that all persons should have equal rights. It is this

well-known demand. Do not act in such a way that you would not agree with the action if the interests of the one affected by that action were also yours. The details of the philosophical problem connected with this principle cannot be dealt with here. It is sufficient to say that the NECESSITY of its demand excludes all 'relativity' of right and justice, but that on the other hand the AUTONOMY excludes all outward demands or superior inspiration. The truth of this principle is of the same kind as that of any axiom in mathematics or fundamental theorem of natural science. Relativism and mysticism have no room in scientific politics.

Applying the principle of justice, we have now carefully to examine what form of government fulfils the conditions of politics of reason. Is it a secular or clerical autocracy, democracy or any other form?

Criticism of Autocracy.

We understand by autocracy a form of government in which decisions are made according to the arbitrary will of a person or a group of persons. In an autocratic State the actions of government thus are exclusively determined by the mere will of the rulers. To secure their power these arbitrary rulers need an armed body of blind followers, to carry through certain decisions by which they intend to get rid of dangerous enemies or organisations, and to promote a propianda for their rule. This body must differ from similar institutions specially in that way that it consists of BLIND followers and cannot contain reasoning nor criticising elements, as there is no room for any other than the ruler's will in such a body.

If we mention here the Italian Fascist Government as an instance for an autocratic government, we do so, because we see that simply the arbitrary will of Mussolini rules the Italian people. We have not to discuss here what limitations of personal freedom in a country are necessary, especially in the time of the transition of the present system into a better one. But our question is, what RIGHT underlies these limitations of personal freedom? And the

answer of the believers in autocracy is The will of the ruler is the law of the State It is under this aspect that we have to criticise the present conditions in Italy Almost with the same right we could have quoted the present English Government as an autocratic one

To criticise autocracy we have to examine whether it fulfils the conditions of the just State, as explained in the above

First of all there is no possibility of defending logically such a system as autocracy For it is based on the assumption that the will of a certain person is privileged above the wills of others How can this assumption be justified? If it is true that only the will of the ruler is decisive, this assumption itself can only be justified by the ruler's will The only way therefore, to prove the truth of this assumption is to presume just what should be proved by it This means that the assumption itself involves a contradiction

Secondly, the system is morally wrong We have made it clear, that only such restrictions of individual liberty are justified which can be deduced from the principle of justice In an autocratic system even the attempt is not made to deduce any restriction from this principle Therefore all limitations of freedom, whatever they may be, lack in this case the necessary justification Thus we cannot be astonished that experience shows us that in autocratic States there actually exist such limitations even in contradiction to the principle of justice This is exactly the case of the present conditions in Italy Even those who are not prejudiced against a non-democratic system are alarmed by the actions to which Mussolini and his followers are driven by personal ambition and mere love of power

But let us even suppose for a moment that the arbitrary rulers are willing to do the best possible for the progress of their country, regulating all affairs of the nation by the commands based on their will Even the utmost material progress cannot then compensate the people for the loss of spiritual freedom Higher wages, shorter hours, better housing conditions are necessary for progress, but they have no positive value in themselves The higher value of which they form a necessary condition is the development of the

personality, and this is only possible by the free initiative of the individual, limited in the rightly justified way. Therefore the so called "benevolent autocracy" cannot satisfy the demands of human rights more than any other government, that is not based on the principle of justice.

Finally the system is weak in itself. On one side an unjust suppression increases the hostility of a large number of people, on the other side the blindness with which the followers obey, makes it doubtful how far the leader may depend on them. If the power of the "Duce" is determined by the way in which he "fascinates" his fascists, it may easily happen that others use the same sort of influence with more success than he does.

No doubt he who has a well organised armed body at his disposal, and has organised education for his aims, can for some time force his will upon the nation. But he is never sure that a secret opposition may not arise, out of which an organised revolution may grow.

Thus the claims of autocracy must break down if examined in the light of reason. But though our arguments include the disproof of clericalism, it is necessary to consider this special form of autocracy separately.

The Danger of Clericalism.

This is what we call a clerical Church: It is based on the doctrine that the direct inspiration of God is given to the Church's officials and only to them, excluding from that inspiration the common people. The higher the office is, the more intimate communication with God is supposed to exist. Therefore the organised form of such a Church is hierarchic, that is to say, the higher the office, the greater the power to decide of him who holds it.

These would be some of the clerical claims —

The human being is nothing in himself, all wisdom and strength is given to him by the Eternal Grace which he receives at the hands of the Church.

As the lay persons have no communication with God, except through their priests, all their attempts to find moral truth by themselves and to live their lives according to their own decisions, are in vain or lead to their corruption. A man therefore, who keeps himself separated from the Church and tries to go his own way, will never be moral nor happy. A State government, which does not acknowledge the predominance of the Church cannot be just.

But for the sake of God's Kingdom on the Earth the Church strives to make all men moral and happy. Therefore it does not allow its followers to try and stand by themselves and fall into sin by such attempts. Owing to the spirit of their office, the officials of the Church will show Believers the right way of life.

But as it is difficult for those who have come into the habit of sin, to return to the right way, the Church claims the education of the children, that these may be brought up from the beginning in the spirit of love to God and obedience to His commands, as they are explained by His priests.

Furthermore as the Church knows that the laity will ever remain weak, it strives to prevent and suppress in private and public life everything that could be a temptation for man to fall back into an immoral life. It is necessary for that aim that each believer, whatever his political convictions may be, should use all possible influence in political affairs to secure by laws and secular authority the predominance of the Church's doctrines.

It is evident that these statements include the denial of spiritual freedom. That is why we speak of the DANGER of clericalism, and it is not necessary to show in further detail that such a danger exists. The task which remains to us, is to defend spiritual freedom against this challenge of the clerical Church.

First of all we have to remember what we said in the first part on the principle of justice as an AUTONOMOUS demand on our will. Indeed, no action can be moral that is not based on our own judgement and the free decision of the acting individual. To assume that the blind submission to the commands of the priest is

a moral action, involves a contradiction, as it just destroys the autonomy of reason on which this action is supposed to be based

Further, as the clerical Church itself acknowledges the principle of justice in the form of the golden rule, given by Jesus, it is inconsistent in giving any preference to the class of priests, thus basing the distinction of certain individuals from others on claims that are not within reach of our judgement and understanding. By acknowledging the golden rule the Church itself exposes the immorality of blindly obeying the commands of the Church or of anybody else. It follows even from the just mentioned Christian doctrine of the clerical Church that it is blasphemy to suppose that God speak to men through a privileged class of priests, to which all other human beings are subject. For by assuming this distinction, the Church supposes that God contradicts himself—the golden rule says that all human beings have equal rights—and makes God as imperfect a being as the Pope or any capitalist exploiter. This again is in contradiction to the idea of God as the perfect being.

On the other hand, as imperfect as the human being may be, he acknowledges the principle of justice as the rule for his life. By that he believes in his capacity to follow it. Having discovered the difficulties in keeping to that principle, he strives to increase the strength of his will and to improve his ability of impartial reasoning. He may make mistakes in judging, he may be overcome by his weaknesses, as long as he strives to improve his character, there is no reason to take from him his spiritual freedom. He may be unhappy, he may have to give up all comforts of life, he may be thrown into the fierce struggle between duty and desire. he will never give it up, if he has once become conscious of the inner demand of duty.

As morality consists in the acknowledgment of this inner demand, it is not possible for the Church to take from us the moral responsibility of our actions. But as far as its kind wishes are concerned to see us happy, it need not take that burden upon it, we shall be able to care for that ourselves. Occasionally we shall allow ourselves to throw happiness to the winds, when the time comes to fight for economic and spiritual freedom.

Of course, people never learn to stand by themselves, if from the beginning they are hindered from learning it. To become conscious in our minds of our duties, and to be able to follow them, is a matter of long and hard training of mind and body, and he who is brought up without that sort of training, will have greater difficulty to live his own life. If education still further suppresses the feeling for freedom, there will be forced upon the pupil's mind the opinion that he cannot live in freedom, that freedom is dangerous and must be avoided by obedience to the tutor's demands. This is the effect of the education given by the clerical Church.

In this way the Church interferes with the rights of those who cannot defend their rights themselves. Only those are able to defend their right to be free who are conscious of this right. But those who are conscious of this right do not give it away, else they would not be conscious of it. Therefore the clerical Church has not the right to accept anybody as its member nor to educate anybody in its spirit. The rights of each person who submits himself to the Church are violated, whether this submission is voluntary, as in the case of grown-up people, or enforced as in the case of children.

Therefore, it cannot be left to the effort of the individual to fight the aspirations of such a Church, and it is therefore not enough simply to withdraw from its influence. It is necessary that all those who stand for spiritual freedom, unite to struggle for the rights of those who are kept in spiritual exploitation. It is necessary to challenge the Church in those things, by which it gains influence on our public life. It must be prevented that clerical influences grow up in the working-class organisations, thus destroying these from inside. Clericalism must be prevented from capturing our educational system and imposing its laws of censorship.

We have thus exposed the great danger of the clerical hierarchy, and have now to examine whether democracy, fulfilling the conditions of the just State, can show us the way to fight this danger. By doing this we continue to solve our proposed task of exposing the politics of reason.

The Fallacies of Democracy.

We challenge the democratic method, that is the method of electing officials and making decisions by the vote of the majority, as having failed for three reasons

(1) Those who are elected by the people or by the members of their organisation have very often not fulfilled their supporters' expectations or the demands of their office

At the outbreak of the General Strike, 1926, in England, for instance, the T U C had made almost no preparations for the struggle. Their courage was the blind courage of the uninformed and the unready. This same T U C called the strike off without securing any guarantees against victimisation.

Co-operation with an unscrupulous exploiting class is now the accepted policy of many of those who have been elected by the working classes to deliver them from exploitation.

Mr Lloyd George before the war promised us to free the land, but when his opportunity in power came, he failed.

In Russia, the Communist leaders were misled by Karl Marx's Collectivism, and promoted a policy, owing to which there are still more than a million unemployed in Russia.

On the other hand, a man like Mr A J Cook, who advocates the formation of "a party under the control of the rank and file" had the experience of a majority of the members paralysing the leadership of their own secretary in such an organisation "under the control of the rank and file."

It is easy to see why the voting-system failed in the way described.

He whose office depends on a majority of votes, has to try and gain the people's favour. He wants INFLUENCE on the masses, not so much their confidence. He has more chance of getting a majority, if he knows how to make a speech, than if he knows how to reflect. He has more chance of getting a majority if he promises his supporters to fulfil their wishes than if he promises

them to struggle for justice. He who misleads the masses by teaching them that they can decide everything by their votes, easily gets influence over them, by showing them how they should use their votes.

Occasionally, however, the false doctrine of the "rank and file control" recoils on its prophets, and they have to drop their convictions because of their own doctrine. The reason why this happens and why demagogues and incapable men have a good chance to be elected is, that the masses take it for granted that their candidates are honest and capable men. Unfortunately, the masses are only too ready to accept as marks of a higher education—and therefore better leadership—those "opinions" and "points of view" which are substituted for truth and convictions.

(2) The voting machinery has very often been used against the real interest of the people, against freedom, in favour of exploiters' interests and superstition.

During the last war, for instance, the Parliaments of all nations have voted in favour of war-credits.

In France, the capitalist class can readily use the democratic republican State to protect its exploiters' interests.

In Germany, the Roman Catholic Church has secured through the voting-system the passing of education laws that suppress spiritual freedom.

Of course, such things must happen. Not only from the reason that most people have not had an education that enables them to think and stand by themselves, and that each new generation is further off from such an education as long as the voting-system is in operation. There are fundamental reasons for this fallacy of democracy. The above-mentioned substitution of truth by "points of view" gives the same right for every "opinion" to be put into operation, on condition that it gets a majority. As a matter of fact, for the believers in the voting-method, the only criterion for the preference of one opinion over another lies in the

fact that it has got a majority. It is inconsequent on their side to ask for truth, because if truth exists, there is no room for voting.

They are just as inconsistent in regard to their argument about education, saying that the voting-system will give better results, when everybody is better educated. If education leads to a BETTER use of the vote, there must be apart from, and before all voting, SOMETHING to which education leads, and this must be known by those who lead education. The aim of education must be independent from voting if education is to IMPROVE the application of the voting-system. But if such an "independent" aim exists and is known, it is nonsense to VOTE about the affairs of hum in society. This means that the argument itself involves a contradiction.

(3) Worse than anything said so far against democracy is this: Those in power care nothing even for the majority of the people, except when they use the popular will for their own aims.

During the General Strike in 1926, for instance, the British Government, claiming to have been elected by the people, was ready to suppress the GENERAL strike by armed forces.

The Liberal Administration from 1906 to 1914 kept the House of Commons in ignorance of the Cabinet's true commitments to France and Russia.

The British Government trampled upon the rights of the Chinese people by invading their territory.

Therefore, even if the working classes succeed in getting a majority at the ballot-box, they cannot hope that imperialists and capitalists will readily give away the power they have in their hands. If that day arrives—and there is not much hope that it will—the believers in the voting method will find with utter disappointment that they have been misled by demagogues and dreamers.

Three conclusions must be drawn from these statements which include the fallacy of democracy, that is the political method of deciding matters and electing officials by the vote of the majority.

Firstly, it follows that he who strives for justice cannot depend on democratic methods, but must base his political work on a better method than voting and democratic control

Secondly, he cannot even hope that the voting-method will be applied with greater success when the people will have come to a higher state of culture. For just because the present political method is wrong and gives eventually all power into the hands of the unjust, any progress to a higher state of culture is now impossible

Finally, as our arguments expose FUNDAMENTAL faults of the voting-method, democracy does not fulfil the conditions of the just State. Indeed, the wishes and opinions of the majority may in some cases be in accordance with justice, but there is no GUARANTEE that this will invariably and on all occasions take place. On the other hand, if we could be sure that such an accordance exists without exception, it would be on that very account still less necessary to vote, because we should know beforehand what the result of the vote would be

The elimination of all unreasonable factors, dealt with so far in this pamphlet, leads us at last to the true basis of just government, formulated in the beginning of the following section as the principle of leadership

The Principle of Leadership.

“ Leaders in political affairs shall be those who are worthy of the confidence of their followers because of their qualities and way of life ”

What is understood by “ leader ”? A leader is one who leads his followers and does not follow them. Therefore, this term excludes all sorts of democratic control and election by votes

A leader is one who shows his followers the right way, and does not simply fulfil their wishes and desires. By this he differs from the flattering demagogue.

A leader is one who tries to convince his followers of the rightness of his ideas, and asks for their criticism. He refuses, therefore, to accept blind obedience or forced submission. Consequently, by the term "leader" all sorts of autocrats and superior persons are excluded.

A leader is one who decides according to his responsibility, and having regard to this, he controls constantly his thoughts and deeds. By this, any self-righteousness and abuse of power become impossible.

What is understood by "qualities of the leader"? According to the aim for which he struggles and the amount of power in his hand, the leader must have a pure and strong will. He must unalterably keep to his aim, to realise justice in human society, and he must keep his mind and body under such a self-control as allows him to bring his deeds into agreement with his thoughts and words. Therefore, the first demand upon the leader's qualities is that which concerns his character.

It is understood that it is as necessary for him to possess a disposition suitable for reflection and organising capacity, and in addition to that, the best possible training in such reasoning and organising. The best character without high intelligence and organising capacity is useless for political affairs, but the highest intelligence is dangerous without a good character.

The wise leader will make the necessary arrangements for the education and training of leaders, and by that means he will make government independent of the chance that such leaders may be "sent" to us.

What is understood by "confidence in the leader"? Confidence in a leader can only be acquired by the experience of the followers that he is worthy of the functions which he exercises. Therefore, blind obedience and uncritical submission are incompatible with confidence.

To acquire such experience it is necessary for the followers to judge of the leader's qualities by his ideas and actions. Therefore,

the leader, for the sake of his followers' confidence, will do all he can to train them in plain and just judging and criticising

Again, to judge of the leader's capacities it is necessary to know his way of life generally, and the circumstances under which he acts in special cases. This does not exclude that in certain cases the leader makes his decisions without giving full detail, if the circumstances do not allow it, but there will be no room in this for any secret diplomacy nor abuse of the directing power. In order therefore, to gain the confidence of his followers, the leader will lead a life that lies open to all of them, and he will prove his capacity to deal with important things, for instance, by being just and exact in the little things of daily life. He can do so only by putting to himself certain tasks and submitting himself to certain minimum-demands, the fulfilment of which is a criterion for self-control. He who is not punctual, he who does not abstain from alcohol, he who is not just towards animals, he who spends much money and time on pleasure and amusement cannot be recognised as a leader on the way to justice. That is because these faults mean a lack of feeling of responsibility, which is so necessary for him who has the directing power in his hand. The above mentioned demands are only instances that illustrate the way of life of the leader who merits the confidence of his followers.

But confidence means more than acknowledgement, it means active assistance. Those who have confidence in somebody as their leader are ready to give up, if necessary, all things, and struggle for nothing but the aim of justice, in the way that the leader shows them, and that they acknowledge as the right one. The leader, therefore, will do all he can to make them fit for this struggle, and the only way to do this is to put to them tasks, increasing in difficulty with the increasing ability of the followers and with due regard to their individual qualities. In this way, there are very few who would not become, after some time, leaders in one thing or the other.

The principle of leadership demands that those leaders, as described in the preceding paragraphs, shall make the decisions in political affairs.

This demand is fully justified by the principle of justice. For the political aim is to secure in human society the rights of its individuals by a justly organised State. Therefore, the political tasks must not be left to the chance whether some groups will deal with them or not, but to the best aim must be applied the best means. Decisions must be made, and the best means for the end of justice is, that the decisions shall be made by those who are best fitted for it, that is, by the leaders.

It is understood that the leader who does not decide with due regard to the right of the individuals is as unjust as he who does not protect these rights against the encroachments of other individuals or groups, those rights of the individual that have never so far been secured, but have been substituted either by the right to admire the King's splendour or to appreciate the condescension of the Prince of Wales, or the right to die for the capitalists' interests, or the right to vote demagogues into Parliament