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This recent publication of W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz’s *Traktat polityczno-filozoficzny* (2015) from the Polish is one of the most recent titles in the Routledge Focus Collection on Politics Series which aims at a quick turn around – they advertise three months – from submission to publication. Other recent titles in this series are concerned with the rise of the far right in America, and the increasing trend of populism in South East Asia, among other timely topics. Indeed, this series’s quick turn around on publication allows for literature to be available on current events and topical themes while they are still a part of emerging public conversations. However, while this permits the circulation of work relevant to contemporary issues, it leaves submitted manuscripts vulnerable to oversights.

*Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus* aims to promote a view of the good society, through a survey of values, governance, and evolution, with a stated end goal of progress towards individual ethical perfection. Beyond the individual’s moral evolution, this volume discusses the individual’s relationship to national culture by articulating ethics as a necessary part of social and political thought, and attempts to create a theory of international cooperation across national boundaries.

The book’s structure has been modeled on Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), in that both are composed of numbered presuppositions and claims with little or no explanation or argument to support those claims. Outside of the book’s form and the similar titles, there is no connection to Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Korab-Karpowicz’s unqualified claim that Wittgenstein was a positivist – a position the author works to reject – suggests that he has not engaged with much of Wittgenstein’s other work, since Wittgenstein’s first publication, *Tractatus*, is perhaps his only major text which could be categorized as logical positivism.

Though the majority of the book appears in this layout, the introduction presents a more familiar prose form, which allows for a more nuanced discussion of themes than the number supposition form of the body. It is here that the philosophical foundations of Korab-Karpowicz’s thought suggest a need for revision or, at least, clarification. For example, a primary concern in this volume emerges as a desire to dismiss postmodernism so that he can make claims of objectivity about values. This is explained: if multiple people have a subjective experience in relationship to values, and those experiences align, then this proves its objective truth.
The problem with this claim is that it equates inter-subjectivity with objectivity; even in the case of a universally subjective truth, we should not claim that this is tantamount to objectivity without much more sensitive attention to the problems with this argument.

He then strangely uses this position to argue that since no human has had contact with alien intelligent life, and that no human is likely to, that therefore not only does intelligent alien life not exist, but no alien life exists – an *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. While it is unclear why this train of thought regarding alien life is relevant to his argument, the position of a possible set of universal values that can be objectively known becomes important when he wants to argue that all humankind shares the common heritage of classical values, which Korab-Karpowicz relates to Christian values. He does not support this claim with any argument or evidence.

Once in the body of the volume, the lack of flexibility of form means that many assertions lack ample context and argument. In some instances, this leads to a lack of clarity and nuance that leaves some of his claims confusing. For example, in the chapter “Freedom,” Korab-Karpowicz argues against infringements on freedom of speech, except in cases where that speech is “vulgar” or “offensive.” There is no conversation about who might be curtailing these freedoms (government, media, corporations with broad platforms?), and there are no examples of what constitutes “offensive” speech. In the very next supposition, he inserts a note against “political correctness,” describing it as an ideology which asserts that some opinions are correct and some opinions are incorrect. Political correctness is propagated by various interest and pressure groups, constituting a denial of freedom. Again, it is unclear why “political correctness” is included at this point. Is he using this as an example of a kind of claim against offensive speech, but a claim that should be ignored? Or is he using “political correctness” as an example of infringement on freedom of speech? Since even some of the most unsympathetic and most common accounts of “political correctness” describe it in terms of being offended at someone’s expressed opinion, he could have included it as part of the former. However, the odd and unexplained allusion to pressure groups might put it in the latter. The reader is left uncertain.

This patchwork of unargued proclamations is a series of claims supporting nationalism, social exclusion, homophobia, and Islamophobia. The reader gleans more later on about what he means by pressure groups, and the example given is that of LGBTQ organizing, which he calls the “lobby of perverted sex.” He repeatedly asserts that people should not be treated as means, and yet also claims that human sexuality should be used to preserve existing institutions, which by his own later definition, would actually equal enslavement. He also claims that multiculturalism has failed, and that societies which embrace a diversity of values, communities, and perspectives are doomed to collapse.
He argues for a *nativeculturalism* which dominates over other cultures, and which is based on classical Greek culture, which – according to him – was the Golden Age of democracy. While one might respond that citizenship, voting rights, land ownership, etc. were denied to most humans living in these famous city-states, it’s clear that Korab-Karpowicz isn’t concerned with these people. Seeing Athenian “democracy” from the perspective of slaves, foot soldiers, women, or immigrants does not interest him, and perhaps he would see this critical intervention as mere Marxist postmodernism. He claims LGBTQ people threaten civil values, though he never once submits any evidence or argument to support this claim, and when he does outline these civic virtues they include things like courage, honesty, and respect for the law, but the most important civil virtue according to him is “love of the homeland.”

What emerges from these pages is a tired, and simultaneously bizarre, traditionalist and nationalist manifesto, full of unsubstantiated homophobic and xenophobic claims and full of self-citation. Curious about the vague yet positive reviews on the back of this book (Did they even read the same book I did?), I decided to look up some of the so-called reviewers and see what kind of work they themselves produced. One Professor William Auden, listed as from Western Connecticut State University, claims that the “thoughtful book is a guide for anyone inquiring about positive world change.” There was no mention of any Professor Auden on the university’s website, and a few informal inquiries to various faculty there confirmed that there is no one by that name at the university, nor has there ever been. This is a mystery, to be sure, and one that is almost as baffling as why this book was published in the first place.