



Theological proposals to the welfare state theory: The contribution of the Evangelical Church in Germany

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Establishing the aims and objectives of a welfare state is an integral part of the political, economic and cultural debate, in particular, the repercussions of a welfare state on economic systems and social institutions; the sociopsychological consequences of a welfare state; and the scope, conditions and definitions of welfare. Some discussions address a theological and religious approach to the issue, specifically the Churches' teaching on welfare and the Churches' influence on the birth and development of the welfare state. The Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD]) has also joined the global discussion. The EKD advocates the welfare institutions; moreover, it stresses the contribution of the Protestant theology and culture to the emergence of the social state in Germany. This article aims to outline the Protestant approach to welfare axiology. Following a brief sketch of the welfare theory, it examines the previous and current Protestant influences on the welfare state and system. It also presents significant attempts to distinguish crucial values and the most serious challenges of the welfare state. The primary sources of the reflection are the recently published documents of the EKD (Denkschriften), and the source literature.

Contribution: The theological proposals of the Evangelical Church in Germany contribute to the axiological and ethical debate on welfare and the social state. The research addresses the focus and scope of the journal of the promotion of multidisciplinary aspects of studies in the general theological area.

Keywords: Evangelical Church in Germany; welfare state; social state; justice; subsidiarity; self-determination.

Background

The conditions, scope and definition of the welfare state are continuously central to political concern. Already, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the economists held that:

[W]ill be little or no room for increasing the scope of the welfare state and the share of social spend of the gross national product should not be allowed to increase; otherwise, it could conflict with the aim of sustained economic growth. (OECD 1985:7)

Growing public expenses converging with the repeated financial crises, the observations of social idleness and apathy, the global economic and political concurrence, to mention only a few factors, have challenged the welfare idea and become a crucial point of the political divisions. Nevertheless, on the other hand, many unexpected events, like the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, have diluted the criticism and again demonstrated the significance of social politics.

The global break brought about by the virus, and the social upheavals in its aftermath, raise new questions and new approaches to the welfare idea. The welfare reflection considers economic and sociopolitical aspects, focusing on such problems as the scope and type of benefits or wider, sociopolitical schemes. Nevertheless, behind such technical concerns, there is an axiological and ethical debate on systems of values that stipulate a welfare state. Moreover, welfare is an ideological concept, referring to the very foundations of current dominant political discourse, human rights and the principle of social justice. Some discussions also touch on religious and theological approaches to welfare. In many cases, such opinions evoke Weber's and Sombart's tradition of linking economic systems with religious foundations.

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At this point, it is worth paying attention to the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD]). The Church often speaks out about crucial social, economic, cultural and economic questions to shed theological light on discussed issues. Its utterances also refer to the social state and, concomitantly, to the welfare idea. In this regard, there is a twofold link between Church's teaching and the social state: firstly, the Church is regarded as one of the factors of the social state, and secondly, the Church currently advocates for the social state and provides reflection on many aspects of welfare.

This article aims to highlight the EKD's theological approach to the social state. It addresses the following research questions: did the Protestant theology and the Protestant Churches in Germany contribute to the origin of the social state? How does the EKD consider axiological and ethical aspects of the social state? More generally: does the welfare idea converge with Christian values? A specific research problem to be resolved is a semantic relationship between a social state and a welfare state. The article employs the method of literary analysis, in particular of the documents of the EKD.

The outline of the welfare theory

The discussions on the welfare state become more complex, the more the category itself is differently understood. In the opinion of Szarfenberg (2016:32), four questions must be considered when defining the meaning of welfare:

Firstly, what are the limits of the state's involvement in the citizens' lives?

Secondly, what does the term 'welfare' include? In other words, which state functions belong to the area of welfare?

Thirdly, what values underlie the social politics of the given state? What is the understanding of individual freedom?

Fourthly, what are the goals set and measures adopted by the state in its social politics? Do states have the right to impair individual freedom while performing their social tasks?

Moreover, addressing these questions is not the only problem with the notion. Another refers to the overlapping and identification of categories employed in particular countries and particular languages. Thus, the term 'welfare state' is being equated with social politics, although obviously the latter is much broader; as Esping-Andersen noted, there are countries with a social policy, even though they are far from the welfare idea. The welfare state also overlaps with the category of the social state (*Sozialstaat*), deriving from and embedded in the German sociopolitical traditions and in many other European countries. In Germany, the direct equivalent of the term 'welfare state' (during the Weimar Republic) was the *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, yet due to the political conflicts, 'the preferred description in Germany of a positive, yet realistic commitment by government to advance individual welfare is *Sozialstaat*' (Veit-Wilson 2000:10).

Furthermore, from the sociopsychological angle, the welfare idea appears as something taken for granted by an average person, despite raised voices of economists and sociologists who often warn about an oncoming bankruptcy of the welfare state. Veit-Wilson (2000) was right when stating that:

A major problem hindering rigorous analysis in social policy is the diverse and imprecise meanings attached to the term 'welfare state'. In widespread usage the term has become emptied of all explanatory meanings and is used as a synonym for modern industrial states, all of which provide welfare for some of their inhabitants. (p. 10)

Most researchers admit there is no single and accepted definition of the welfare state.

Apart from this conceptual confusion, there is also a discussion about the genesis of welfare. Some researchers hold that the welfare idea derives from the Christian institutions of mercy, while many credit the socialist and emancipation movements. Yet others discern that the welfare state reflects capitalism's continual self-transformation.

Even though in the West, there is a prevalent conviction that welfare is an obvious task of the state's policy and that social security is a human right, one observes significant discrepancies in how states conduct social policy. The differences mainly refer to approved axiology in defining dependencies between state, social institutions and individuals (citizens) and consequently, adopted conceptions of state, social institution, social relation, community, society and the individual person. Various typologies are used in the theory of social politics. Perhaps the most often cited are the schemas of Richard Morris Titmuss and Gøsta Esping-Andersen. Titmuss, the pioneer of the welfare theory, distinguished three key welfare models: the residual, the industrial achievement-performance and the institutional redistributive. The first model stems from the conviction that there are two crucial channels to meet human needs: the market and the family. The social aid programmes play a remedial role only in case of failure of the previous ones. Moreover, the state must consider assumed negative consequences of overwhelming social policy, such as morality erosion or learned idleness. This type of welfare system is therefore marginal and selective.

The achievement-performance model considers the state's social policy as a complement to the economy and assumes merit and productivity as the key criteria for meeting social and human needs.

The last type stresses the role of social policy institutions in social integration and in the growth of social equality. The institutional redistributive model is therefore the most universal. The system of benefits addresses the criterion of needs, and there should be no limits set on the social commitment of the state. The social policy relies on the redistribution of incomes and guaranteed access to benefits, regardless of one's individual contribution. This welfare is therefore an entitlement of the citizens.

When considering the above models, one can discern that each relies on a different hierarchy of values. Whereas the first case refers to individual freedom, the second is more concerned with justice and the third prefers to emphasise social equality. Moreover, the British social researcher, Titmuss, pays attention to the welfare idea's more universal and historical role, namely the 'transformation of the social consciousness' (Titmuss 1987:113). According to Titmuss, the welfare idea creates a new society where social relationships loosen dependence on the economy. Social welfare is therefore a factor of social transformation, yet on the other hand, it is determined by the growing complexity of modern society and the increasing division of labour. There is another historical perspective of welfare discerned by Titmuss which is that as 'societies become more complex and specialised, so do systems of social welfare. Functionally, they reflect, and respond to, the larger social structure and its division of labour' (Titmuss 1987:114).

The typology proposed by the Danish sociologist Esping-Andersen stems from the term decommodification, which pays even more attention to the ideological base of the adopted social policy. This notion has made a strong impression on the social sciences, and it is a frequent hermeneutic tool of social reflection. It is obviously a counterpoint to the term 'commodification' and therefore might be regarded in contrast to the latter (Cohen 1988:380). When applied to the social policy, decommodification generally refers to the scope of universal entitlement to benefits, regardless of one's position in the division of labour. Esping-Andersen precisely defines it as occurring 'when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market' (Esping-Andersen 1991:22).

The Danish sociologist distinguishes three regimes (types) of the state in regard to the decommodification of their social policy.

The first is a liberal state of welfare. This type has a low level of decommodification. It deems that the market is the best device to regulate economic activities and social roles, and it assigns to the state the function of distribution of limited benefits.

The second regime refers to the conservative and 'corporative countries', in which the state is the main agent of the social policy (as Germany, Austria, Italy and France). The state realises the social policy while preserving differences of social status and rights. 'This corporatism was subsumed under a state edifice perfectly ready to displace the market as a provider of welfare' (Esping-Andersen 1991:27).

To the third type belong the countries that promote 'an equality of highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs'. Therefore, these are the countries with the highest level of decommodification, mainly resulting from the inclusion of a middle class in the universalism of social

rights. It is the smallest cluster of states, encompassing the Scandinavian countries.

To summarise, social policy reflects political ideologies and ideas driving the state, or the political blocs, as in the EU. Thus, for instance, the former Eastern European communist countries regarded the welfare state as an endemic Western idea of solving such social problems as unemployment and poverty that basically would not have occurred in the communist world (Szarfenberg 2016:30). The above-described typologies of the welfare systems clearly show that welfare is also an ethical question and requires continuous ethical inquiry and reflection. An interesting approach to the welfare state is proposed by the Evangelical Church in Germany.

The welfare idea and the Protestant theology

The Evangelical Church in Germany often talks about the welfare state. Firstly, however, one should emphasise that the English term 'welfare state' in widespread use is being referred to the German term *Sozialstaat*, although they are not the same. As Franz-Xaver Kaufmann argues, the latter is far more normative (Kaufmann 2015:63).

The dependence between the social teaching of the Evangelical Church and the *Sozialstaat* is inherent. The question of welfare is not merely the next heated issue on the sociotheological agenda. Instead, the theologians and church leaders from the EKD declare the welfare state as genetically connected with the Protestant Churches and Protestant theology. Obviously, it is not only about the political tradition of Bismarck, who laid the foundations for the social security system. In a broader perspective, it is also about the profound change in Western culture caused by the Protestant Reformation and leading to, in the words of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, 'an affirmation of everyday life'. In the opinion of the Canadian philosopher, the affirmation of ordinary life gave impulse to the modern notions of nature and, consequently, to the modern identity:

The notion that life of production and reproduction, of work and the family, is the main locus of the good life flies in the face of what was originally the dominant distinction of our civilization [...] This was true of the Reformation theologies, which are the main source of the drive to this affirmation in modern times. (Taylor 2006:23)

Of course, Taylor's discovery is a hermeneutical device to read out the signs of modern society and the modern state, such as the idea of welfare and its distortion, consumptionism. It also pays attention to the social facets of the Protestant teaching that, in the widespread sociological imaginary, were driving modern Western civilisation: the doctrine of the universal priesthood, vocation, the theology of marriage and family and on substantial democratisation (in Calvin's thought) (Van Ruler 1989:154), to mention only some of them. All of them shed more light on the emergence of the welfare

state (*Sozialstaat*). Moreover, all of them help consider the cultural facet of the welfare idea. Such an observation is significant since a large part of welfare research focuses on political and economic aspects, neglecting the influence of culture and religion.

The last remark offers a hermeneutical key to establishing a context of research discovering Protestant driving forces of the welfare idea. Therefore, it is about Christian universals that have been an integral part of Western culture through the ages. Kaufman rightly observes that two components of the Christian tradition underlaid the welfare systems; in other words, two ways were moving the development of the welfare concept: the Christian tradition of dealing with the poor and Christian universalism.

The first is about the specific value of Christian mercy. It obviously has its roots in Jewish tradition and practice; indeed:

[T]he Old Testament is full of rules given by God for the management of the household, the economy, of the people of Israel [...] These covenantal obligations aimed at safeguarding the creation and protecting the most vulnerable people in society. (Van Drimmelen 1998:xiii)

However, Christianity distinguishes itself from the latter in two essential points. Firstly, in the New Testament's message, the poor are regarded not merely as recipients of aid but as those who are endowed with a special value. Secondly, as the gospel's message of mercy is universal, applying to all people, Christianity's inherent belief affirms that a right to welfare is universal as well (Kaufmann 2015:66).

The second component listed by Kaufmann considers Christianity's revolutionary influence for going beyond the logic of tribal, internal social bonds (Kaufmann 2015:68) and, consequently, internal morality, and it refers to the rudimentary tenets of many classics of sociology like Durkheim and Weber, which are concerned with a shift from traditional to modern society. Of course, Christian universalism has its essential source in the Great Commandment. Therefore, the historical process of Christianisation of morality, culture and social structure meant a gradual transformation of overall values and norms by the love for neighbours, irrespective of any individual and social attributes. At the inception of modernity, this moral universalism led to the emergence of the concept of human rights; it will suffice to mention Bartolomé de las Casas, one of the first teachers of rights inherent to every human being, and John Locke's belief in the God-given inalienable rights of every human person: life, liberty and property. Today's political 'credenda' is unimaginable without such fundamental documents as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the statement that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. When reminded that a great deal of the entitlements included in the Declaration are social rights (see article 25), one may easily discover genetic dependencies between Christianity's moral universalism and the welfare idea.

Moreover, the idea of a convergence of the Protestant tradition and the welfare state is better comprehended when considering the profound social, political, cultural and economic transformation of the Western civilisation at the time of the Reformation. Siegrid Westphal holds that even that the social question, usually linked to the consequences of 19th-century industrialisation and urbanisation, might have stemmed from the changes accompanying the outset of the Reformation. When considering this genetic dependence, Westphal discerns two crucial factors of the emergence of the social question in Protestant theology: demographic and economic. In the first case, it is about the population growth in the years 1450–1560, recorded by numerous historical research, which would have brought about an impoverishment of a larger part of the then Germany, mainly in the countryside, and increased the number of people living in poverty in the cities. The economic cause refers to the structural crisis of the traditional sectors of the economy in Saxony and its neighbouring regions: agriculture and mining (Westphal 2018:55).

In an insightful examination of the Lutheran factors of the welfare state, Käßmann and Wegner started from Christian anthropology, as outlined in the famous Luther's early writing 'Treatise on Christian Liberty' and illustrated by two contrasting statements: 'A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all' (Luther 2016:10). This opposition describes the condition of a Christian who, in faith, answers for the gift of justification. Christians are on the way to freedom from internal worldly bonds, and the love of their neighbours is expressed by service to others, mutual care, mutual help, mercy and compassion. Unlike the antique patterns, Christian love means being responsible for others, and this attitude also has a collective dimension: it is realised, not only in a humble and genuine encounter with the needs of individual neighbours but also for the good of the community. Käßmann and Wegner (2015:285) hold that Luther's theology discerns a 'political love'.

This anthropological starting point leads to Luther's sociopolitical teaching, mainly in the two fields: understanding political authority and the meaning of one's vocation. The first refers to the well-known doctrine of two Regiments, the Church and the state, and a division of duties attributed to them in God's salvation plan. The state must enforce the law and maintain stable social order; however, this duty also includes its members' 'general welfare'. In this context, Käßmann and Wegner (2015:288) cite the famous book by Werner Elert, who, when examining Luther's theology, paid attention to a wide range of responsibilities ascribed to the state, concerning both ideal and material aspects.

Therefore, Luther's tradition may theologially legitimise future Lutheran contribution and support to the development of the social state in Germany and Scandinavian countries. In other words, the Lutheran theology imposes on the state a duty to develop a welfare system. Obviously, historians are unanimous in thinking about the Protestant Reformation as a

driving force of social welfare. Many of them hold that the Middle Ages' practices of care for the poor, grounded in the calling to perform good deeds, were more generous and less repressive than those developed in the Protestant approach. Irrespective of the historical polemics, one may state that the emergence of Protestantism, with its view on the political relationships, paved the way to a more systemic solving of social problems by the state.

Luther's political teaching emphasises the significance of one's vocation for both an individual Christian life and the Christian community (state). The Lutheran ethos of work is undoubtedly one of the crucial ideas of the Protestant heritage which shaped modernity. An organic vision of the Christian society as a network of roles performed by individuals who fulfil their vocation given by God affected later sociological thinking on society as an ordered structure of entities and their functions. It is what Max Weber said in a simple sentence: 'Work in the calling is *a*, or rather, *the*, task set by God' (Weber 2005:45).

Furthermore, in Luther's vision, social roles included in one's vocation are equal before God. This is blatantly illustrated by the Reformer's utterance from his early 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation':

A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another. (Luther 1915)

Luther's vocational teaching laid the foundation for a collective awareness of individuals who affirm their duties within the state (and society) and thereby shoulder responsibility for a common good. Moreover, it helped develop social ethics that regarded everyday work as a manifestation of the love of neighbours. Such a vision must have become a mighty inspiration for the building of a social state, especially considering that societies with a strong Lutheran tradition were shaped by the state.

Thus, Luther's theological heritage, ranging from the theology of everyday life, through the vocational ethics and political vision of two Regiments, to the anthropology of being simultaneously lord and servant, established one of the cornerstones for 'welfare state' thinking. This tradition had been institutionalised in the 19th century by the Bismarck government, although obviously, there were also other examples of employing a Lutheran understanding of social relations. Kässmann and Wegner describe the first cooperative association, founded by Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, which was primarily thought of as an aid institution offering microcredit to the poor, and more generally, it inspired many initiatives within the Church to relieve the growing poverty of the working class. Nevertheless, both a theological heritage and its historical manifestation have played a significant role in the foundation and affirmation of the welfare state. Such

an affirmation illustrates a manifest-like conclusion by Käßmann and Wegner (2015):

A free society, in which as much as possible people should be able to develop according to their abilities, requires a broader social security system from all life's risks. In this regard the modern social state is, so to say, a 'love made visible', a love in structure. (p. 292)

The welfare state in the teaching of the Evangelical Church in Germany

The Evangelical Church in Germany often talks about the welfare state, or more precisely, about the *Sozialstaat*, in the memorandums and documents presenting the official position of the Church towards this or that question. It is, one must state, the interpretation from the viewpoint of Protestant social ethics; therefore, it is a theological-ethical approach to the welfare system. However, the Church does not avoid suggesting specific methods, practices and objectives of social work and social support. Over the last decades, reflection on the significance, nature, scope, social consequences and future of the welfare state has appeared in many Church utterances on the most important challenges of today's society, such as financial crises, transformation of work, changes in the educational system, migration and other issues.

The Church's leaders admit that the Protestant social ethics are part of the roots of the welfare state; however, the latter must not be equated with a Christian social order. Rather, Christian values and vocation offer a foundation for building the welfare (social) state. This conviction has a solid theological explanation in the memorandum '*Einander-Nächste-Sein in Würde und Solidarität. Leitbilder des Sozialstaates am Beispiel Inklusion und Pflege*' issued recently (2021). The document accompanies other Church official utterances from the last 20 years, which touch on the issue of welfare while considering crucial questions of contemporary society, culture and economy, for instance: '*Solidarität und Selbstbestimmung im Wandel der Arbeitswelt*', '*Wie ein Riss in einer hohen Mauer. Wort des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zur globalen Finanzmarkt und Wirtschaftskrisis*' and others.

Therefore, the EKD advocates the welfare state and provides a comprehensive lecture on this issue. It is presented from at least two cognitive perspectives: ethical (also one could add axiological) and sociological. The former ponders on the source of values on which the welfare state relies. The latter considers the significance and challenges of welfare in the rapidly evolving changes within society. In fact, the Church declares its dedication to the further development of the social (welfare) state and take its side when contested or weakened.

The starting point of this careful elucidation is a declaration of the EKD that the Church must address the challenges of the social state and demonstrate its commitment when

making theological reflections, as well as when acting as a diaconal institution. The memorandum *'Einander-Nächste-Sein in Würde und Solidarität'* (2021:25) leaves no doubt that affirmation of the social state and a social imperative find a solid biblical foundation. The document states that social involvement is simply serving God, and the Christian faith, by its very nature, offers a prosocial worldview based on an acknowledgement of human dignity, which is bestowed upon every human being because it derives from God's act of creation. As such, human dignity is realised in offering one's competencies and abilities to a common good (EKD 2021:18). At this point, one can easily find an echo of the Lutheran vocational ethics. Moreover, when laying a theological foundation of the social state from a wider ecumenical angle, the memorandum evokes the option for the poor, excluded and weak. Thus, the idea is well-grounded in the ecumenical agenda.

This rather modest theological basis underpins an ethical perspective that defines the welfare state's conception. Already this elucidation is an interesting example of theoretical support for welfare. However, before listing ethical values, the theologians from the EKD seem to argue that the social state is an inherent and integral element of the post-war international order, since its signs are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and nowadays even more stipulated by the discourse of sustainability. Moreover, they pay attention to the two opposite socio-economic standpoints for building a welfare system: the one in which they refer to the social contract theory (therefore to the market) and the one which is grounded in institutionalism, hence referred to as the state (EKD 2021:23). Consequently, they assert that the social state model stems from the interplay of politics and economy in a given context.

The last remark helps us comprehend the significance of adopted values, especially in case of conflicts around the means and goals of social politics and social economy. The theologians discern that lasting debate on the sense and scope of welfare sets a task for ethical discourse to promote the value of social solidarity based on equity and mutual recognition of members of a given society. Thus, social solidarity must be a fundamental value for the entire value system and, when glimpsed from a different angle, a meta-conception for an adopted welfare model. The EKD emphasises that it matters for both current and future challenges of the social state.

Social solidarity and human rights discourse are a starting point for constructing a system of ethical values which are integral to the social state: justice, subsidiarity and self-determination, all of them accomplished by, so to say, instrumental values (employing somehow Rokeach's differentiation) as competence, participation and social security. It is to be said that the way they are defined is specific, taking into account their goals.

Ambiguity

When considering the value of justice in society, theologians pay attention to its ambiguous meaning in regard to the issue of the social state. They portray this ambiguity by two of Jesus' parables: the workers in the vineyard (Mt 25:1–15) and the bags of gold talents (Mt 25:14–30). Thus, it is about the two conceptions of justice: the one linking to an image of an egalitarian society, in which justice leads to addressing the needs, and the other which refers to the value of responsible freedom.

Self-determination

Self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) is the next value that is to be included in the ethical theory of the social state. Theologians denote it through two ethical concepts: firstly, through the Enlightenment idea of the subjectivity of the autonomous individual, which in today's conditions of social state makes one 'capable of self-determination' when emphasising the processual nature of society; secondly, through the idea of personal freedom, experienced and lived in society, and therefore in one's awareness of being in a network of social duties and social bonds, in 'a society of just participation, in which everyone can realise their own abilities, and in which the self-interest is tied into an order that promotes the common good' (EKD 2015b:8).

Thus, the value of self-determination evokes the notion of responsible freedom, the thought developed by Wolfgang Huber and well-grounded in contemporary social theology of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Huber argues that responsible freedom consists in one's unity with himself or herself, in the harmony of more significant life decisions, and in the cohesion and credibility of one's own attitudes, and he claims that 'freedom without responsibility disintegrates' (Huber 2012:112).

Subsidiarity

Huber's ethical approach bridges self-determination and subsidiarity. Obviously, the principle of subsidiarity, since the issuing of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1993), is a hallmark of Catholic social teaching. A very clear definition of subsidiarity was coined by John Paul II (1991) in his encyclical *Centessimus Annus*, written on the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*. Thus, the principle of subsidiarity means that:

[A] community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. (CA 48)

Actually, the Evangelical view is not far from the Catholic one, especially when considering abuses referred to the idea of welfare. Theologians from the EKD explain subsidiarity as an individual's or family's responsibility for themselves, which should be prior to the responsibility of the state or dedicated state's institutions. It also paves the way to make

people able to assume responsibility for the common good; therefore, it counters social idleness and apathy.

Capability

As already alluded to, the above-described terms might be deemed as the principal values, which are to be accomplished by, as the theologians from the EKD denote, 'younger aspects'. In other words, it is about instrumental values. Capability links closely to the principle of subsidiarity and may be regarded as a tool of social policy that enables people to actively participate in the social cooperation process and therefore in economic and political life. At this point, the EKD's theory refers to Amartya Sen's capability approach: the thought that people have a moral right to freedom 'to achieve those things that are constitutive of one's well-being' (Sen 1992:57).

Social security

Social security is the next on the list of 'younger aspects' and, concomitantly, a leading idea of social policy strategies in modern societies. The theologians from the EKD hold that social security must be explained by the interdependence of stipulated needs for benefits and support schemes. Obviously, when considering the scope of needs, social state institutions must reduce private or subjective preferences and refer to objective and ascertainable situations. Thus, social security is not about demands based on individual preferences; instead, it is about objective needs. At this point, the theologians insist that the core of the social protection system must be neither commodified nor subjected to the market and therefore the logic of profit and competition. Instead, it must be integrated into a public sector of a given state (EKD 2009:20).

Participation

Participation in the social community is the opposite of various social exclusions. Assuming that society consists of people belonging to different classes, religions and ideologies, of different gender, age, talents and skills, participation is a fundamental principle of social security simply because it enables building an inclusive society despite a number of different social categories. Theologians from the EKD also hold that participation is not only about legal and institutional entitlements to 'participate'. Rather, they call for the 'culture of recognition' which would lead to an internalised pattern of participation. Here again echoes the Lutheran vocational ethics and the idea of a society of different stands and social roles cooperating in God's plan to the world.

The above-described values create an axiological structure of the social (welfare) state that argue its significance, scope and functions. It appears as a valuable contribution of Evangelical theology to the sociopolitical theory. Moreover, the EKD memorandums usually offer a comprehensive outline of contemporary cultural and social trends requiring theological clarification. It also concerns the issue of the welfare state. Thus, the theologians from the EKD present the list of current tendencies that challenge the social policy in the already

quoted document '*Einander-Nächste-Sein in Würde und Solidarität*' (EKD 2021); however, each of them was mentioned and clarified in many previous documents of the Church. Even though the list refers to Germany, it could, at least partially, be applied to many other countries.

The starts from the demographical changes. In fact, this factor has different facets, depending on the country or region. In the case of Germany (and many other European countries), it is about the increasing ageing of the society and a decline of the working-age population. Moreover, the theologians raise the question of poor salaries in social work jobs (EKD 2014a, 2014b:16). The changes in demography lead to growing social care needs, for older people in particular, and seriously influences the social state system. At this point, the theologians employ a current socio-economic discourse on the postindustrial society and refer to the image of a risk society (Anthony Giddens), influencing the scope and future of the welfare state (EKD 2021:18).

Globalisation is another crucial factor affecting today's welfare state. Of course, there is a vast library on the theory of globalisation, and it provokes many controversies concerning its consequences; however, theologians focus on the aspects that influence social policy. Thus, on the one hand, globalisation brings new opportunities and new hopes for spreading an idea of a global civil society, yet on the other, it converges with a growing economic gap between and within the countries, with the pauperisation of societies and bringing about the risk of global pandemics (EKD 2015a:6). These are only examples of the globalisation consequences on the welfare state.

In globalisation theory, the development of regional political and economic organisations and unions of countries, such as the European Union, is a symptom of political globalisation. Concomitantly, it is the next factor of welfare state changes, mainly due to the free movement of labour and coordination of social security schemes. Both obviously enforce a rethinking and restructuration of the social state (EKD 2021:19). It converges with a growing social system lag: national welfare systems do not keep pace with technological progress and increasing social complexity. At this point, theologians suggest specific solutions, such as a transformation of the education model and support of social start-ups.

The idea of sustainability sets a framework for future and long-term thinking about welfare. Theologians hold that the social state requires an axiological change when considering the profound transformations of today's societies. Sustainability is an answer to addressing this need. However, it is contextualised – it encompasses more attractive financial solutions for the social care sector, more efficient protection of the environment and a more just distribution of income (EKD 2015a:24).

The social sphere and its orientation is the next important factor of the welfare system. Assuming that it is understood as Habermas' space of free political discourse and an exchange

of outlooks, the social sphere inevitably affects solutions implemented to the social state and sets its future directions.

The last listed factor of change is digitalisation, considered more broadly as the general process of including digital technologies in everyday life or, more specifically, their implementation in the welfare system.

Both the distinguished values and challenges offer a comprehensive and also a complementary theory of the social state (or welfare state). They shed light on the idea of welfare from the theological position; however, theologians from the EKD do not hesitate to employ sociological, sociopolitical and economic concepts and means. Hence, the Evangelical Church in Germany confirms her commitment to the social state and provides her own view on the scope of the welfare system, welfare's contribution to developing a better society and the threats brought about by welfare reduced to sheer egoistic comfort.

All in all, an affirmation of the social state idea by the EKD has solid foundations in Protestant theological anthropology and Protestant social teaching. The Church refers to early Protestant teaching on the universal priesthood of believers, vocational ethics and the teaching on two Regiments. It also links her approach to her current teaching on social ethics and develops a comprehensive and well-integrated system of values grounded in Protestant theology. The EKD's utterances on the social state may contribute to advancing the welfare theory and demonstrate the Church's advocacy for the welfare idea.

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Author's contributions

P.K. is the sole author of this article.

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