

Public Abstract

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What the state is remains far from clear in political philosophy. However, the state is also a key concept at work in many discussions in political philosophy. For example, there is a debate about anarchism, the question of whether or not the state is legitimate in some way. However, if we are unclear about what the state is, then we cannot be clear about what the position of anarchism amounts to.

To this end, I have attempted to find some features that we can say are necessary for statehood, that is, without these features, the organization in question is not a state. I have done this by considering two debates in political philosophy that concern the state. The first is the already mentioned issue of anarchism. The second is the issue of state sovereignty in international relations. The worry in this second debate is about the interference by some states with the affairs of other states. The guiding question for the dissertation has been: What features are required for the debates in question to make sense? If a debate requires a feature, then that feature is necessary for statehood.

This methodology ensures that any results are grounded in the actual issues where the state plays a prominent role.

In the course of my research, a central feature for statehood emerged. Basically, a state is an organization that controls the lives of its citizens in some way. Usually, this minimally means that a state says when citizens can and cannot use force. Any other features that we may be able to point to as necessary will be necessary only to ensure that states do control the lives of their citizens in some way.

The results of my research will bring further clarity to debates about the state. Through the course of the dissertation I also clarified what the debates are really about. Moreover, I identified further areas of research that need to be carried out. For example, while I identified some necessary features of statehood, it is unclear whether these features are all that is required, or if something more is needed. This means that there is a clear path for future research in this area.