AN ANALYSIS OF THE STATE

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ABSTRACT

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 necessary features of statehood. 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.

The central feature for statehood which has emerged concerns control. 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 and that this control is ensured through the use of forcible coercion. 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.