

Symmetrical Concept of the State

Abstract: The doctoral thesis uses the perspective of Public Choice (political economy) on a descriptive level and the perspective of philosophical anarchism on a normative level to critically assess the concept of modern state (and its crises and legitimacy), as it is used in *Staatswissenschaften* and political philosophy. Common theme of both paradigms is insistence on symmetry of assumptions when analyzing the state; particularities of the state, as compared to other social institutions, do not play the role of *explanans*, but that of *explanandum*. Traditional concepts of political philosophy (sovereignty, will of the people, legitimacy) are consistently put in the context of the general social phenomena, from which they are (or should be) derived.

The symmetrical approach asserts itself primarily against the fictional nature of some political concepts; in this thesis, fictional concepts are approached as assumptions of a “political model” and their unrealistic nature is not seen problematic so far as they stay within the model. However, at the same time, the question about the external (normative and practical) relevance (validity) of such a model arises.

First part of the thesis argues for applicability – and in fact, indispensability – of the economic toolkit (methodological individualism, behavioral symmetry, market failure, spontaneous order, incentives, importance of institutions) in analysis of the state (“political market”). Spotlight is put on the Public Choice tradition represented by James Buchanan and on the intersections between this tradition and the ongoing Czech debate on the crises of the modern state.

Second part specifies the notion of legitimacy as a moral property (justification) of the state which results in state having political authority and its citizens having political obligation (content-independent duty to obey) in moral terms. The thesis deals with normative legitimacy, the moral (external) relevance of which is derived from general moral imperatives. Consequently, the thesis disputes the approach which sees legitimacy as systematically immanent and morally self-standing. Further, some aspects of practical relevance of the normative legitimacy (which serves as a “regulative idea”) are discussed; finally, normative asymmetry privileging universal political participation as a prerequisite of legitimacy is challenged.

In the conclusion, the thesis calls for cautious use of political concepts, bearing in mind their external limitations resulting from the fact that they are models and as such not directly relevant in the real world. In contrast, symmetrical paradigms – political economy and philosophical anarchism – are of growing relevance as alternatives to the traditional *Staatswissenschaften*, but (unlike post-modern alternatives) are not adequately reflected in the Czech political discourse.

Key words: legitimacy, Public Choice, philosophical anarchism