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A Summary of the Article “The Concept and the Problem of the State”

The author reveals the problematic nature of both the concept of the state and its subject matter. Although the state is one of the fundamental concepts in social sciences and the humanities, like other basic concepts of social sciences, law or political sciences it is still not entirely clear and fully understood. The concept of the state suggests the unity and totality of a multipart and multifaceted structure that forms a state order. However, are the implied unity and totality objective or are they just hypostatization? What is the ontological nature of the state which is a product of deliberate and consistent human activity. Is it rooted in reality, and if so, what kind of reality is it? The concept of the state is not simply a general, natural and rational term. It represents a component of socio-political language, slightly different in every cultural environment and even in every country. Therefore, a state theorist does not deal with a conceptual, abstract and intellectual archetype of what exists as a real state order in the outside historical and social world. Although it is difficult to build a theory of the state, the achievements of European thought in this area are rich.

As indicated by the author of this article, the scope of applicability of the concept of the state is also disputed. Two approaches clash here: the first one recognizes the state as a general term that refers equally to all periods of history, and the second one limits the adequacy of this concept to the time since the end of the Renaissance, and thus to the modern and contemporary age in continental Europe. The article juxtaposes two general images of a political order: the Middle Ages and modernity. This comparison is intended to show the fundamental differences that exist between them and at the same time to demonstrate the historicity of the concept of the state.

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