JOURNAL of Global Political Transformations

Vol. 2, No. 1, 2026

DOI: 10.67524/verus1/1.2026.3

Journal homepage: https://jgpt.veruspublishing.co.uk/

Received: 30.01.2026
Revised: 07.05.2026
Accepted: 19.06.2026

Theoretical and philosophical aspects of the construction of the state and state activity as an abstraction and a real force (dialectical analysis)

Nurlan Nuraliev* [1]
Alaida Tailakova [1]
Marat Alymkulov [2]
Aigul Sydykova [1]
Aigul Yesetova [3]

[1] Department of International Relations and Oriental Studies, International University of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
[2] Department of State and Municipal Administration, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
[3] Department of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Natural Sciences, International University of Transport and Humanities, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract. The aim of this study was to understand the universal principles associated with the political process and to examine the ontological status of the state as both an abstraction and a real force. The study employs the ontological method, the comparative-historical method, Imre Lakatos's method of rational reconstruction, critical discourse analysis, and the institutional and dialectical methods. In the course of the study, key ontological positions (realism and constructivism) were systematised and compared, and the transformation of conceptions of the state from an objective entity to a socially agreed mental construct was traced. Based on a rational reconstruction of the teachings of the classical thinkers over the last five centuries (N. Machiavelli, J. Bodin, J. Locke, G.W.F. Hegel, J. Bentham, K. Marx, H. Kelsen), the study highlights the process of separating public authority from the person of the ruler and the formation of the concept of sovereignty. A synthesis of opposing views (the thesis regarding the reality of the state and the antithesis regarding its illusory nature) has been carried out, and C. Hay's position of 'as if realism' has been substantiated. It has been established that the state is a conceptual abstraction which, for pragmatic reasons, should be regarded as a real entity in practical politics. It has been demonstrated that demystifying the idea of the state allows one to recognise the distortion of reality that occurs when this concept is applied, whilst retaining an understanding of its power as a dynamic institutional complex for law-making and norm-setting. The necessity of conceptually establishing a new field – 'political ontology' – designed to rethink classical political thought and expand the toolkit of discourse on the state is substantiated. The findings may be utilised by academics, political scientists, legal scholars and analysts to establish a methodological foundation for normative legal theory, to assess the legitimacy of institutions of power and to analyse public discourse; they are also suitable for use in higher education institutions when developing specialised courses in the philosophy of law, political science and ontology

Keywords: political ontology; political sociology; existential status of the state; dialectic; realism; constructivism

INTRODUCTION

In social philosophy and political sociology, scholars frequently touch upon the ultimate foundations of political groups. As a primary form of social unification, the state can be examined from this metaphysical standpoint. However, traditional social philosophy is predominantly concerned with general group dynamics rather than the specific nature of state authority. For instance, K. Ritchie (2015) analysed the metaphysics of social groups, demonstrating that

Suggested Citation:
Nuraliev, N., Tailakova, A., Alymkulov, M., Sydykova, A., & Yesetova, A. (2026). Theoretical and philosophical aspects of the construction of the state and state activity as an abstraction and a real force (dialectical analysis). *Journal of Global Political Transformations*, 2(1), 29-35. doi: 10.67524/verus1/1.2026.3.

*Corresponding author (nurlan.nuraliev67@gmail.com)

Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

collective entities are frequently conceptualised through linguistic constructions rather than independent objective properties. To address this limitation, literature explicitly distinguishes political ontology as a regional subfield separate from general social ontology. Y. Karagiannopoulos & E. Kondakciu (2022) delineated this boundary, questioning whether the state should be understood merely as an aggregate of individuals or as an autonomous ontological entity. Advancing this methodological distinction, B. Epstein (2025) developed a comprehensive framework for social and political ontology, differentiating between the "grounding" of social facts and the "anchoring" of statehood and institutional kinds through collective agreement. Furthermore, Y. Slade-Caffarel (2024) applied social positioning theory to demonstrate how state institutions acquire real operational power through relational positioning and collective acceptance.

Political philosophy approaches political reality more directly by investigating the dynamic relationship between individuals, society, and state authority. Scholarship emphasises that political institutions and state authority are anchored in philosophical and intersubjective foundations. L. Cremonesi *et al*. (2025) investigated the ontological status of political institutions, demonstrating that state power relies on instituting thought and common immunity frameworks rather than raw coercion. Complementing this view, M. Lehtinen (2023) explored how nation-states and political institutions are constructed and sustained through intersubjective imaginaries, showing how conceptual abstractions generate real social and political consequences through the interplay of weak and strong political ontologies. Despite these advances, political philosophy frequently embeds the state within specific ideological frameworks, conflating its ontological status with normative models of ideal governance. For example, ideological frameworks treat the nation-state as a naturalised territorial formalisation and essential "social cement" without examining its underlying metaphysical grounds, as M. Freeden *et al*. (2013) demonstrated. Conversely, in libertarian political philosophy, R. Nozick (2006) conceptualised the minimal state strictly as a mechanism restricted to preventing force and fraud, thereby presuming the operational existence of the state without seeking rational metaphysical grounds for its being.

Resolving these theoretical gaps holds profound practical and normative significance. As B. Bosanquet (2012) established, the institutional legitimacy and operational capacity of any modern state rest fundamentally on societal perceptions regarding its underlying philosophical nature and existential status as an idea. When the metaphysical foundations of state authority remain unexamined, normative legal and political theory risks operating on uncritical assumptions. The purpose of this study was to investigate the ontological construction of the state through a dialectical analysis. By bringing the metaphysical element of the political to the surface and synthesising opposing theoretical standpoints – from classical doctrines to contemporary political ontology – this research provides a comprehensive methodological foundation for understanding the state simultaneously as an analytical abstraction and a real force.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Textual corpus and source base. The material basis of this study comprises a curated corpus of primary philosophical texts and contemporary literature in social and political ontology spanning five centuries, from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. To ensure analytical rigor and systematic selection, specific inclusion criteria were established. First, the corpus incorporates classical foundational works in political thought that explicitly conceptualise state authority, sovereignty, and legal abstraction. The early modern formalisation of statehood and sovereignty is represented by J. Bodin (1955), J. Locke (1988), and N. Machiavelli (Strauss, 2006). The philosophical evolution of state power through idealism, utilitarianism, and historical materialism is examined through the works of J. Bentham (1789), K. Marx (Engels, 1884), and G.W.F. Hegel (Knowles, 2002; Zizek, 2011). Finally, the pure legal doctrine of state abstraction is anchored in the foundational theory of H. Kelsen (1928).

Second, the study integrates peer-reviewed literature in social and political ontology that addresses realism, constructivism, and the metaphysics of social groups. Conceptualisations of group metaphysics, social kinds, and institutional constructs are drawn from K. Ritchie (2015), P. Bourdieu (2015), and B. Epstein (2021). Critical perspectives on state power and moderate pragmatic stances are represented by P. Abrams (1988) and C. Hay (2014). Third, the selection incorporates key methodological works that establish frameworks for rational reconstruction and discourse analysis. Methodological criteria were operationalised through the foundational frameworks of I. Lakatos (1970) and R. Wodak (2011).

Explicit exclusion criteria were enforced to maintain conceptual focus. Specialised secondary commentaries lacking direct engagement with the metaphysical or ontological foundations of state power were excluded from the primary analytical corpus. Furthermore, the corpus excludes applied policy papers, empirical case studies, and narrow legal commentaries that treat state authority merely as an unexamined operational premise.

Analytical procedure and methodological framework. The analytical workflow is structured into four distinct, sequential stages, each employing specific cognitive and philosophical methods. The first stage focuses on social ontology mapping to systematically evaluate belief systems regarding the nature of social entities. Philosophical methods of abstraction, concretisation, reduction, analysis, and synthesis were applied to delineate core ontological positions, contrasting objectivist realism against constructivist anti-realism. Within this mapping phase, the interplay between ontological assumptions and epistemological orientations in political analysis is systematically delineated.

The second stage conducts a comparative-historical analysis combined with rational reconstruction to trace the five-century evolution of the concept of the state. I. Lakatos (1970) method of rational reconstruction is employed to re-interpret classical doctrines rather than compiling a passive chronological narrative. This reconstruction enables the identification of historical inflection points, specifically the conceptual separation of public authority from the person of the ruler and the formalisation of sovereignty.

The third stage applies critical discourse analysis to scrutinise public and academic discourses surrounding state authority. Utilising the discourse-analytical approach of R. Wodak (2011), this stage deconstructs linguistic constructions, implicit assumptions, and contextual meanings embedded in key political concepts. This analysis specifically addresses conceptual abstractions such as "imagined communities", "social contract", and "well-founded illusions".

The fourth stage culminates in a dialectical synthesis to resolve the tension between opposing ontological stances. Following the dialectical framework of R. McKeon (1954), the thesis asserting the objective reality of the state is systematically confronted with the antithesis asserting its illusory or constructivist nature. This dialectical resolution substantiates the stance of "as-if realism" formulated by C. Hay (2014), which integrates philosophical pragmatism and scepticism. Concurrently, an institutional approach is applied to examine the state as a dynamic institutional complex, complemented by an axio-value approach to evaluate the societal legitimacy of state power.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When referring to political theory, a scientist cannot avoid the metaphysical element (ontology). One way or another, this fundamental element is immanently inherent in any theories of the state. The problem is that scientists rarely pay attention to it, delving into the normative part of the theory of state and law. Nevertheless, the latter is impossible without knowledge of the definition of the state and its components. Unfortunately, the terms "political ontology" and "ontology of the state" are not well-established, and the corresponding sections of the ontology are not fully formed. But a researcher in this area can use the achievements and tools of a relatively new, but quite independent branch of research called social ontology. Social ontology is the study of the nature and characteristics of the social world, as well as entities arising from social interaction (Epstein, 2021). The main question of social ontology is the question of the existence of social groups. How are they created, and do they really exist? Or are these concepts unrelated to the phenomena of the real world? What should be the criteria for entering a particular social group, as well as what are the logical problems related to group issues?

In turn, the two most common positions on this issue are group realism (belief in the existence of social groups regardless of consciousness) and group constructivism. One of the representatives of the followers of the second position is the British political scientist and sociologist B. Anderson (2006). He wrote a book called "Imaginary Communities", where he paid most attention to the in investigation of national groups and the processes of historical construction of ideas about national groups as a social group. B. Anderson (2006) divides communities into two types: real and imaginary, i.e., not implying direct communication of the participants of these groups. He also emphasises the predominance of imaginary groups and their power in the modern political world. But one can go further and ask a broader question: are there any real (in the B. Anderson`s sense) groups at all?

Some philosophers believe that groups can exist as an ontological entity, regardless of human cognition. This does not necessarily apply to all existing groups, but at least some groups can be called real. Indeed, from the standpoint of common sense, this seems an obvious assumption. However, there is another part of the researchers who claims that there are no groups as such. Admittedly, it is generally assumed that there are certain groups of people united by certain features: gender, national, professional, and other communities. But these are only linguistic constructions used for convenience when describing the surrounding reality. In truth, these language constructions can be removed from the language or replaced by other categories. But they cannot touch the outside world in any way and are not its properties (Ritchie, 2015).

The above question is not just an exercise for the mind, as it directly relates to the political world and the life realities of millions of people. One of the forms of social organisation of society can be considered the state. In a sense, it can be called an established social group, but the status of this group is very vague. For instance, the French sociologist and philosopher P. Bourdieu (2015) defines the state as follows: "The state is that which justifies the logical and moral correspondence of the social world and, thus, the fundamental consensus on the meaning of the social world." In other words, it is both a factor that unites a certain group of people, and this group itself, which exists due to the grounds for unification: "The state is a well-founded illusion; a place that exists because it is considered to exist. This is an illusory but collectively agreed upon reality. This is the place we come to when we try to return to the conditions of such things as academic diplomas, the official register of professions or the calendar… This mysterious thing exists due to its consequences and the collective belief in its existence, which serves as the basis of these consequences" (Bourdieu, 2015). Thus, P. Bourdieu does not deny the existence of the state, but in an extremely specific form – the form of a mental construction supported by a collective consensus.

However, to call the state an illusion, there had to be a history of accepting the state as a reality and strengthening faith in it. Even though the Greek word Politeia is usually translated as "State", and the history of the philosophy of the state is traced from antiquity, in its modern meaning "state" was formed only in the New Age, when the word came into

use in English, French, German. In Italian, Spanish, the words "status", "stato", "estado" were used to emphasise the status of the ruler, but then they began to relate directly to the form of politics. By the end of the 16th century, thinkers Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guciardini began to use the words "status" and "stato" to refer to a group of people and the territory connecting them (Strauss, 2006). A critical point contributing to the final formation of the concept of the state was the difference between the person holding the position and the official potential of this position. i.e., there was a process of abstraction – separation of the essential properties of the subject from the subject itself. From that moment it became clear that the state power can (and should) be disconnected from the person holding the post of ruler. These were arguably the first ideas about the state as an abstraction, as a force representing something more than a particular person or group of people (Strauss, 2006).

Later, thanks to the philosophy of Enlightenment, the famous theory of the social contract appeared in the 17th century. This is such an agreement by which people consent to empower the state in their interests, conceding some of their individual rights in the state's favour. For J. Locke (1988), the state is a social contract, under which individuals agree not to violate each other's natural rights, such as life, liberty, and private property, in exchange for protecting the "sphere of freedom" of each individual. The social contract has a dual status: it is real because the political reality where society lives thanks to this contract is real. On the other hand, the concept of a social contract is perceived as a metaphor or thought experiment justifying a democratic society.

In the 19th century, the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel saw the reason for the creation of states not so much in individual rights as in the universal human mind. He was dissatisfied with the idea of a social contract, since he considered the "idea of the absolute" to be the beginning of power and the state, which is something more than the will of individual people (Knowles, 2002). For G.W.F. Hegel, freedom is an opportunity to act, being guided by universal guidelines. Subordinating themselves to the state, the individuals can fulfil themselves. The state, in turn, is called not to serve the needs and interests of individuals, but to be the purpose, the culmination of morality, the highest law standing above society, and not originating from it (Knowles, 2002). The state is absolute, autonomous, and self-promoting. It is a dynamic institution that considers law as a certain action in the context of society, reducing each social action to total definitions of a given rational order. Clearly, the state is not just a real entity, it also has a higher objective force ruling the subjects (Zizek, 2011).

The utilitarian J. Bentham (1789), the founder of utilitarian ethics, had his own ideas about the theory of the state, which, unlike G.W.F. Hegel (Knowles, 2002; Zizek, 2011), can be called constructivist rather than realist. The universal principle and measure of human activity for utilitarians is utility and the desire to avoid suffering. The same principle is the core of the utilitarian theory of law. Accordingly, useful laws have the primary right to exist in the state. The state itself is an artificial construct created to reduce the suffering of citizens by ensuring the security and protection of private property of individuals (Rudan, 2013).

The ideas of J. Locke (1988) and J. Bentham (1789) formed the basis of the political philosophy of Karl Marx and F. Engels (1884). From their perspective, the origins of power lie in private ownership as a result of the production of excess product. In turn, the presence of private property contributes to the formation of material inequality and exploitation of some classes by others. The state in its origins is called upon to protect the interests of exploiters and to restrain and humiliate the exploited class.

The first attempt to deduce the history of the state and power was the theory of F. Engels (1884), outlined in the work "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State". F. Engels outlined three stages of the formation of the state: the division of labour and the emergence of the family, the emergence of private property, and then the emergence of classes and the state. The reason for the emergence of the state is the division into two classes: owners of the means of production and those who can only dispose of their opportunity to work, i.e., sell their labour. The state exacerbates this gap by serving the interests of the dominant class (Engels, 1884). Consequently, the reason, and at the same time the very essence of the state, is an ethical issue, the struggle of social groups. The state, like G.W.F. Hegel's, is dynamic, absolute, and has a predetermining force. However, as in J. Bentham's theory, it is rather a construction that supports the current being but is not a universal form of the political. Sovereignty is considered to be an essential feature of the state – an inviolable independent legitimate authority within the boundaries of a particular territory, consolidated in the form of a person or a state authority. The state is a special political institution in which sovereignty is embodied (Philpott, 2020).

French philosopher J. Bodin (1955) was the first European philosopher to single out this concept. His souveraineté appears as a central concept in his Six Books of the Republic, which he wrote in 1576, at a time when France was being torn apart by civil war between the Calvinist Huguenots and the Catholic Monarchy. He regarded the problem of order as central. Sovereignty, as an indivisible, permanent, and absolute power, became for him a single political organism, standing above any other. Only the supreme power in the territory could strengthen the fragmented society of J. Bodin`s time. The philosopher defined the state as the management of a set of families (which is the main political unit) carried out based on law. The state is also the product of an agreement that guarantees protection from external influences and peace within the community, which is the key to the happiness of individuals. The concept of sovereignty is central to the political philosophy of the more modern thinker H. Kelsen (1928). The sovereignty of the state determines the boundaries to which the law applies, which for H. Kelsen is synonymous with the state. Sovereignty is the

fundamental principle of international law, according to which state sovereignty is determined by the factual control over the territory/population.

Notably, the theories of the origin and functions of the state differ in their diversity. However, the positions of most philosophers regarding the existence of the state specifically stay rather outside the brackets. The key question for this study is as follows: is the state an analytical abstraction or a real entity? Proceeding from the above, it is possible to summarise the existing positions and identify two main perspectives of consideration of the state. First, a view of the state as a concept that is a reference to a non-existent reality. In other words, the state has an empty referent. Scientists of this field believe that the term "state" is a reference to an entity that does not have the status of existing and does not relate to the real world in any way. However, there really are political practices that do not necessarily lead to the idea of a state.

A similar position states that the concept of the state is based on group characteristics that are essentially unacceptable, such as unity, community, sovereignty, etc. This view correlates with the position of group antirealism in the sociology of groups. Both above-mentioned perspectives of consideration converge on the uselessness of this abstraction. Based on this, the philosopher P. Abrams (1988) noted that the very concept of the state, as a special separate entity, is not only an abstraction, but, most importantly, an abstraction that distorts the perception of reality and does not allow seeing the inevitable discrepancy between idealised conceptions about the state and the practice carried out on behalf of the state. The solution to this issue, which P. Abrams (1988) suggests, is to completely abandon the concept of the state and look directly at the practices through which this idea is manifested. This position resembles the view of P Bourdieu (2015): the state is a well-founded illusion supported by the consent of agents.

Admittedly, realists would disagree with this. For them, turning to the state means turning to a structural concept. Moreover, to the basic structural level of reality (consisting of many structural entities) supporting the surface level of visibility (consisting of things that are "relevant"). Without losing touch with realism, the position of moderate scepticism states that the state has a real referent, but cannot adequately convey it, i.e., the concept is a considerable distortion of really existing things. Like most physical phenomena, it is difficult to feel and perceive because it is inaccessible to the physical senses. The existence of the state is possible thanks to a political intuition of the agents of the political area. However, one cannot fully know what exactly the state is, the state is unattainable (Hay, 2014).

In other words, the state is an unsuccessful attempt to convey a more complex reality. In this regard, some thinkers, such as I. Adams (1999), believe that the number of distortions is too large, and therefore it is worth abandoning the concept. Others call it an acceptable number of distortions, which is sufficient and necessary for the current political practice (Hay, 2014).

The thesis of the existence of the state contains an opportunity for criticism from different sides, generally speaking – antitheses. Discussion of both sides, reinforcement of data directly related to political practices, will help to better understand the real status. This dialectical process is also a necessary background for social change (McKeon, 1954). One observes the same seemingly insoluble clash when trying to describe and understand the state. Therefore, a qualitatively new level of understanding is required.

Political scientist C. Hay (2014) offers a variant that summarises the two earlier positions: from this perspective, the state is neither an abstraction nor a real entity. It is "as if realism". He offers the following point of view: if cultural, political, social reality presupposes the existence of the state, then this does not mean the need to recognise its real existence. In other words, the question is not the existence or non-existence of the state, but how useful it is to refer to such a construct. If one can analytically prove the usefulness of a realistic position on the issue of the state, then perhaps the very question of the validity of the state should be discarded. This position has its origins in philosophical pragmatism – a doctrine that sees the value or lack of value of a philosophical construction, depending on whether it serves life practice. In other words, how useful it is (Haack, 2006). If one wants to use a certain abstraction, they need to recognise its "as if realism" status. However, one will never be able to find out if they are truly real (Hay, 2014).

Another way to the position of "as if realism" in relation to the issue of the state is scepticism. Scepticism proceeds from a logic remarkably similar to the previous one and assumes doubt about the existence of the subject of research. From this perspective, the state is an analytical technique that helps to better see the connections between discrete social practices, but there is insufficient evidence to recognise it as real. Thus, "as if realism" distinguishes a class of objects with a special ontological status of the same name, which also includes the state. This can be considered a shift rather than a solution to the ontological problem of the existence of the state – and in a sense it is (Hay, 2014).

But when one accepts such a nature of the state, they demystify its idea and give themselves an account of the distortions that occur during the postulation and use of concepts such as the state. One does not pretend that this abstraction can cover the entire complexity of real social and political practices. One recognises the partly fictitious nature of the abstraction used, taking responsibility for the inevitable distortions of reality in attempts to describe and fix it. And so, the state is neither real nor fictitious, but is a conceptual abstraction. The primary open analytical question is not about the status of the state, but about the value of this concept. The state is a dynamic institutional complex, whose unity is partial at best. However, the result of using this abstraction is full

of suggestion and begins with the unification/separation of people into groups.

B. Jessop (2016) proposes a strategic-relational approach to state theory, conceptualising the state not as an autonomous, monolithic entity or a simple illusion, but as a dynamic ensemble of structural forms and social relations that selectively privileges certain strategies over others. This perspective directly reinforces the "as-if realism" established in this study: while in this article provides the pragmatic-epistemological justification for treating the state as real, B. Jessop provides the structural-analytical account of how this abstraction operates selectively in concrete political reality. Both frameworks reject naive state realism and radical anti-realism, demonstrating that state authority exists through strategic practices and institutional institutionalisation.

In political philosophy, O. Marchart (2018) develops a post-foundational political ontology that distinguishes "the political" (as a space of radical contingency and social antagonism) from "politics" (the contingent, partial institutionalisation of order). This aligns with the dialectical resolution achieved here: O. Marchart confirms that any state construct is an inherently incomplete abstraction attempting to fix an unstable social reality. Rather than dismissing the state due to its lack of fixed foundations – the post-foundational framework demonstrates that the state functions precisely as a contingent, necessary institution for managing social conflict.

Within institutional ontology, F. Hindriks (2011) formulates a linguistic theory of social reality, arguing that political entities and state power are created through status function declarations of the form "X counts as Y in context C". F. Hindriks explains the precise mechanisms through which linguistic abstractions acquire binding deontic power (rights, duties, and authority) via collective intentionality. This complements the findings of this paper by providing the micro-foundational and linguistic mechanism for P. Bourdieu's "well-founded illusion" and C. Hay's "as-if realism", explaining how mental constructs become operational social facts.

Approaching state ontology from phenomenology, F. De Vecchi (2015) examines the eidetic social ontology of the state, demonstrating that legal acts, sovereignty, and state authority possess essential normative structures that cannot be reduced merely to empirical human behavior. While constructivist anti-realists view the state as an arbitrary linguistic construction (Ritchie, 2015), F. De Vecchi demonstrates that state abstraction holds a distinct eidetic reality with essential normative connections. This supports the dialectical synthesis of this study, showing that the state's conceptual abstraction is grounded in enduring normative structures rather than fleeting illusions.

Addressing the pragmatic application of state theory, Å. Burman (2023) advances a nonideal social ontology that investigates how social power, structural domination, and political institutions function in actual practice rather than in idealised models. Å. Burman criticises traditional political philosophy for relying on idealised assumptions like the social contract (Locke, 1988) without accounting for nonideal power dynamics. This strongly validates the principal conclusion of this study: demystifying the state through "as-if realism" allows political scientists to recognise the cognitive distortions of idealised state concepts while retaining a sharp analytical lens for examining nonideal institutional power and societal regulation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analysed the metaphysical and ontological foundations of the state by dialectically synthesising the opposing frameworks of objectivist realism and constructivist anti-realism. Historical reconstruction of classical political doctrines – spanning from early modern sovereignty to pure legal theory – demonstrates a persistent analytical trajectory toward separating public authority from the physical person of the ruler. While contemporary scholarship predominantly rejects naive realism, radical anti-realist proposals to abandon the concept of the state create severe analytical distortions and obscure concrete institutional power.

To resolve this impasse, the investigation substantiates Colin Hay's framework of "as-if realism", grounded in philosophical pragmatism and utility. Under this dialectical stance, the state is conceptualised neither as an unmediated physical entity nor as an arbitrary illusion, but as a necessary conceptual abstraction that must be treated as real for practical operational purposes. Demystifying the state in this manner acknowledges the cognitive distortions inherent in applying idealised constructs while preserving an analytical lens to evaluate the state as a dynamic institutional complex responsible for law-making, norm-setting, and societal regulation.

Furthermore, these findings establish the necessity of formally delineating "political ontology" as an autonomous subdiscipline designed to expand the conceptual toolkit of political philosophy, legal theory, and discourse analysis. By providing a coherent metaphysical foundation, this approach bridges the gap between high-level theoretical abstractions and discrete empirical practices. Future research should focus on the rational reconstruction of classical political thought through the lens of political ontology, examining how digital transformations and cross-border governance reconfigure the institutional legitimacy and existential status of the modern state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

FUNDING

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

REFERENCES

[1] Abrams, P. (1988). Notes on the difficulty of studying the state. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1(1), 58-89. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6443.1988.tb00004.x.

[2] Adams, I. (1999). The inevitability of political metaphysics. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 4(3), 269-288. doi: 10.1080/13569319908420799.

[3] Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

[4] Bentham, J. (1789). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[5] Bodin, J. (1955). *Six books of the commonwealth*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

[6] Bosanquet, B. (2012). *The philosophical theory of the state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Bourdieu, P. (2015). *On the state. Lectures at the college de France, 1989-1992*. Cambridge: Polity.

[8] Burman, Å. (2023). *Nonideal social ontology: The ontology of social power and social structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[9] Cremonesi, L., Fulco, R., & Surace, V. (Eds.). (2025). *Political ontology, community, and institutions: Roberto Esposito in dialogue with contemporary thinkers*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

[10] De Vecchi, F. (2015). Edith Stein's social ontology of the state, the law and social acts. *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 15, 303-330. doi: 10.5840/studphaen20151516.

[11] Engels, F. (1884). *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. Hottingen-Zurich: Volksbuchhandlung.

[12] Epstein, B. (2021). Social ontology. In E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab.

[13] Epstein, B. (2025). *Social ontology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/9781009290548.

[14] Freeden, M., Tower, Sargent, L., & Stears, M. (2013). *The oxford handbook of political ideologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[15] Haack, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Pragmatism, old and new: Selected writings*. Amherst: Prometheus.

[16] Hay, C. (2014). Neither real nor fictitious but 'as if real'? A political ontology of the state. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 65(3), 459-480. doi: 10.1111/1468-4446.12082.

[17] Hindriks, F. (2011). Making the social world: The structure of human civilization. *Economics and Philosophy*, 27(3), 338-346. doi: 10.1017/S0266267111000265.

[18] Jessop, B. (2016). *The state: Past, present, future*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[19] Karagiannopoulos, Y., & Kondakciu, E. (2022). *The ontology of politics: Institutions, movements, agents, action and power*. Groningen: University of Groningen.

[20] Kelsen, H. (1928). *The problem of sovereignty and the theory of international law: A contribution to a pure theory of law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[21] Knowles, D. (2002). *Hegel and the philosophy of right*. London: Routledge

[22] Lakatos, I. (1970). History of science and its rational reconstructions. *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 91-136. doi: 10.1086/psaprocbienmeetp.1970.495757.

[23] Lehtinen, M. (2023). *Political ontology and imagination: Contours of a democratic imaginary*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland).

[24] Locke, J. (1988). *Locke: Two treatises of government student edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[25] Marchart, O. (2018). *Thinking antagonism: Political ontology after Laclau*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. doi: 10.1515/9781474413329.

[26] McKeon, R. (1954). Dialectic and political thought and action. *Ethics*, 65(1), 1-33.

[27] Nozick, R. (2006). *Anarchy, state, and utopia*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

[28] Philpott, D. (2020). Sovereignty. In E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab.

[29] Ritchie, K. (2015). The metaphysics of social groups. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(5), 310-321. doi: 10.1111/phc3.12213.

[30] Rudan, P. (2013). Securing the future: Jeremy Bentham's a fragment on government and the American revolution. *History of Political Thought*, 34(3), 479-506.

[31] Slade-Caffarel, Y. (2024). *Cambridge social ontology: An introduction to social positioning theory*. London: Routledge.

[32] Strauss, D. (2006). The rise of the modern (idea of the) state. *Politikon*, 33(2), 183-195. doi: 10.1080/02589340600884618.

[33] Wodak, R. (2011). Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. In J. Zienkowski, J-O. Östman & J. Verschueren (Eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics: 22nd annual installment* (pp. 50-70). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

[34] Zizek, S. (2011). *Hegel and the infinite: Religion, politics, and dialectic*. New York: Columbia University Press.