

## Anarchism

Is there justification for the state?

## What if...?

What if while you were at school today, a stranger broke into your house and, instead of robbing you, washed and folded your laundry, cleaned the bathroom, and vacuumed the carpet?

- Despite the fact the stranger performed you a service, would this service justify the stranger's actions?
- Similarly, the government provides numerous benefits to us, but do these benefits morally justify the government in exercising its power and authority over our lives?

## Authority vs. Power

How do these similar actions differ?

- i. During a time of international crisis, your best friend is drafted into the army to fight for the country's interests. He doesn't particularly want to go to war but is forced to do so by the government.
- ii. You are having a dispute with your neighbor concerning the damage that the neighbor's dog did to your garden. At gunpoint, you force your unwilling friend to attack your neighbor for you.

## Authority vs. Power

How do these similar actions differ?

- You fill out your federal income tax form and find that you owe the government \$1,000. You write a check for the total knowing that if you do not pay what the government demands, you will suffer severe penalties.
- While you are walking home from school one night, an armed robber demands all your money. You hand over your money, knowing that the consequences of non-compliance will be severe.

## Questions

- What does it mean to have legitimate authority to control and regulate others behavior?
- Is there are difference between authority and power?
- Is the government different from the robber or your friend?

## Anarchism

- Definition 1: a political theory holding all forms of governmental authority to be unnecessary and undesirable and advocating a society based on voluntary cooperation and free association of individuals and groups
- Definition 2: there is no conceivable justification for government

## Types of Anarchism

- Naive anarchism: in the absence of government control, people would exist in harmony and peace
  - Assumes that human nature is good and government is a necessary evil
- Militant anarchism: since the government is unjustified, it should be overthrown by force
- Theoretical anarchism: agrees that government has no legitimate authority and government's exercise of power is theoretically unjustified, nonetheless it may be practical to tolerate its existence

## Differences....

- When is an entity a state? When is it not?
- What's the difference between state power and state authority? Do they go hand in hand?

## Wolff *In Defense of Anarchism*

## Definitions

- Politics: the exercise of, or the attempt to influence, the power of the state
- State: a group of persons, or an entity controlled by a group of persons, who have supreme authority within a given territory or over a given population
- Authority: the right to command and the right to be obeyed
- Power: the ability to compel compliance, either through the use of threat of force

## More Definitions

- Descriptive: factually grounded or informative; describes or asserts a state of affairs
  - Example: The law says speeding is illegal.
- Normative: authoritative standard; principle of right action binding upon agents; states what one ought to do
  - Example: One ought not speed.

## Under what conditions does one man have authority over another?

Or stated another way, under what conditions can a state exist?

- Does any state have the right to command?
- Does any state have the right to demand compliance to its commands?
- Is one every obligated to submit to the state's authority?
- Obedience: doing what someone tells you to do because that person/authority tells you to do it

Prudence and undesirable consequences for disobedience might justify compliance with a *de facto* authority

## Is there a limit or range to the state's authority?

### Defenders of Supreme Authority:

- Rousseau: thought that once one enters into a contract, the state has complete authority
- Locke: state has limited authority in most matters, however in some matters the state does have supreme authority

## Authoritative command vs. persuasive argument

- When is one obeying a command? When is one acting on one's own authority?
- Who or what has authority? What does Wolff mean? (See page 132)
- Doing one's duty: One could do one's duty without submitting to a command or an authority
  - Choose to comply with a command because it prescribes actions which one thinks one ought to do
  - In these cases, one is not obeying a command, but "acknowledging the force of an argument or the rightness of a prescription" (132)

## Why Acknowledge Claims of Authority?

- Tradition: it's always been done this way
- Right to Command: based on authority's special characteristics, who then assumes a right to command
- Official Positions: we are conditioned to submit to elected officials, trained officers, or public officials

## De facto vs. De jure States and Authority

- *De facto* state: a state believed to have authority over a populace
- *De jure* state: a state that legitimately has authority over a populace
- Are there in fact any *de jure* states?

## The Autonomous Individual

The autonomous individual is responsible for his or her actions

## Responsibility

- How does Wolff define the concept of responsibility?
- What characteristics does one possess and must exist for one to be responsible?
  - Freedom of will
  - Capacity to reason about choices
    - gain knowledge, reflect on motives, predict outcomes, criticize principles
- Possessing both free will and reason places an obligation upon an agent to take responsibility for his/her actions

## Characteristics of the Responsible Person

- Autonomous: gives laws to himself, he is self-legislating
  - because he arrives at moral decisions on his own and lives by those moral imperatives, in short he takes full responsibility for his actions
- Inescapable obligation
  - because one's responsibility for one's action results from the capacity for choice
  - One can decide not to be autonomous by obeying the commands of another

## Taking Responsibility

- "Taking responsibility for one's actions means making the final decisions about what one should do."
- For the autonomous one, there is no such thing as a command and no such thing as obeying a command
- The autonomous one makes the decision whether to act in accordance with the prescription, but never gives up the choice of what kind of act one will take

## Demands upon an Anarchist

- Be responsible
- Be autonomous
- How does one do this?
  - Moral deliberation
  - Gather special, technical information
  - Become educated in order to make informed decisions
  - Become the author of your actions

## Conflict of the state and the individual

- States are authoritarian
- Individuals have an obligation to be autonomous
- Anarchism is the only political doctrine consistent with individual autonomy
  - Is there a resolution to this conflict?

## Argument for Anarchism

1. Adult humans have a moral obligation to be autonomous individuals.
  2. If one is an autonomous individual, then one is ruled only by oneself and one's own moral imperatives.
  3. If one is ruled only by oneself and one's own moral imperatives, then one is not ruled by the state or any other authority.
  4. Thus, if one is an autonomous individual, then one is not ruled by the state or any other authority.
  5. Hence, autonomous individuals are not ruled by the state or any other authority.
  6. One has a duty to obey those who have authority over one.
  7. The state does not have authority over the autonomous individual.
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8. Therefore, the autonomous individual does not have a duty to obey the state.

## Complying with the State

- Anarchist might have to comply with state laws for a limited time or in certain cases
- If there is no chance that the state will disappear, then it appears the anarchist will have to comply for the indefinite future.
- Does that fact that the anarchist will have to "comply" most of the time weaken Wolff's position?
- Is his position strengthened by claiming that "compliance" is acceptable as long as the anarchist doesn't view the commands of the state as legitimate? Has Wolff conceded too much?
- How can it be that all authority is illegitimate but some authority "worthy of support?" (See p. 136)

## What if...?

- Would it be inconsistent for an anarchist to vote in elections? If the anarchist did vote, then wouldn't he be pursuing his self-interest in supporting leaders who would do the best job? If he did vote, is he supporting the very system of governmental authority of which he disapproves?
- History is full of horrible events where people unquestioningly followed the laws and leaders of a corrupt government. Would things have been different if more of the populace had been anarchists?