

## Political and Social Philosophy

Epiphany Term 22/23

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Most people live in *states*; political institutions that claim authority over their citizens. They claim the authority to tax, to coerce and to influence through policy. In short, they have a huge influence over our lives and claim the legitimacy or authority to do so. But do they have the legitimacy to do this? What if anything gives them the right to rule us in the way that they do? This is one of the big questions in political philosophy. It will be our question this term.

We'll be focusing on:

- *Anarchism*: We look at the strongest argument for thinking that states lack legitimacy. And we consider some responses, including from democrats.
- *Libertarianism*: Perhaps we should have a state, but it should be 'minimal'; there should, for example, be little or welfare system. We look at the strongest argument for this 'libertarian' view.

As we do this, two of the big questions that we'll encounter are:

- *Democratic Legitimacy*: What, if anything, gives democratic states the right to enforce the will of the majority in order to coerce or restrain citizens?
- *Ownership and Property*: A lot of libertarian and anarchists arguments are tacitly reliant on the view that we own what we think we do. Is this right? What, generally, is the correct 'philosophy of ownership'?