

Call for Book Chapters

***Justifying the State* (Palgrave Macmillan): Edited by Gene Callahan and Leye Komolafe**

Introduction

Political obligation remains one of the most discussed, and contested, topics in political philosophy. Whether there is a peremptory or prima facie duty to obey the state has been the subject of rigorous philosophical debate, with philosophers offering various theories both in support of and against political obligation.

Plato, for instance, grounded political obligation in citizenship. His argument can be interpreted to mean that individuals, by virtue of being citizens, are obligated to obey the state. The discourse on political obligation has, however, evolved over time, as theological, teleological, deontological, voluntarist, and associative theories, among others, have been further developed.

Many theorists argue that if individuals are obligated to obey the state, then the state must possess legitimate authority. Defending such authority requires that the state itself be justified. Thus, a foundational question in the debate on political obligation is whether the state can, in fact, be justified. Philosophical anarchists challenge this premise, arguing that the state cannot be justified, and therefore cannot claim a moral right to demand obedience.

The central question, then, remains: *Can the state be justified?*

This edited volume invites contributions from researchers engaging with contemporary discussions on this question, focusing on developments from the 20th century to the present. The scope of the book is limited to the Western philosophical tradition.

Provisional Chapter Titles

- Bernard Bosanquet's Philosophical Theory of the State
- Giovanni Gentile: The State as an Idea for Overcoming Individualism and Collectivism (Spartaco Pupo, University of Calabria)
- Isaiah Berlin on Negative and Positive Liberty

- Michael Oakeshott on Authority (W. John Coats, Connecticut College)
- Eric Voegelin's Theory of Representation
- Hannah Arendt on the State and a Just and Free Political Order
- John Rawls and the Original Position (Jason Ferrell, Concordia University)
- Robert Nozick: Only the Minimal State Is Justified (Graeme Garrard, Cardiff University)
- Murray Rothbard: No State Is Justified (Billy Christmas, West Virginia University)
- Jürgen Habermas and Communicative Competence
- John Finnis and the Natural Law Theory of Authority
- Ronald Dworkin's Rights Theory and the State
- Jeremy Waldron on the State
- Jon Elster's Methodological Individualism and the State
- Bernard Crick's Theory of the State
- Joseph Raz's Service Conception and the Normal Justification Theories of the State
- H.L.A. Hart's Rule of Recognition Thesis and the State
- Jacques Maritain on the Theory of the State
- Jonathan Wolff's Universal Political Obligations Theory of the State
- Robert Paul Wolff's Autonomy Thesis of Anarchism
- Alasdair MacIntyre's Internal Goods and Goods of Excellence Defense of the State
- David Schmidtz's Public Goods Theory of the State
- Louis Althusser's Marxist Critique of the State
- Jacques Ellul on the Irreconcilability of True Freedom and Social Justice
- Michel Foucault on Power Relations and Governmentalities Theses of the State (Otto Lehto, New York University)
- John Simmons on Justifying the State
- Leslie Green on Authority, Legitimacy, and Political Obligation
- John Horton's Associative Theory of Political Obligation
- George Klosko's Social Contractarian Justification of Political Authority and Obligation
- Charles Taylor's Communitarian Political Theory
- G.A. Cohen on the State

- Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Theory as a Theory of the state
- Murray Bookchin on Libertarian Municipalism and the State
- Frantz Fanon on the Illegitimacy of Oppressive States (Adeshina Afolayan, University of Ibadan)
- Michael Walzer on the state
- Will Kymlicka on the State and Multicultural Citizenship
- Philip Pettit on the Functionality Claim for the State
- Noam Chomsky and the Critique of State Power
- Christopher Heath Wellman on the State
- Catherine MacKinnon's Feminist Theory of the State
- Judith Butler's Discourse on the State
- Kwame Anthony Appiah on Identity, the Nation, and the State
- Yves Simon and the General Theory of Authority
- Gerald Gaus (Kevin Valier, University of Toledo)
- James Buchanan on the Limits of Liberty (Alexander Craig, Saint Mary's College)
- Jonathan Crowe and the Natural Law Tradition Theory of the State

The topics above are provisional! Authors are welcome to propose alternative topics, provided they fall within the thematic scope of the project. Kindly note that the topics with affiliated authors above have been assigned.

Submission Guidelines:

Proposed publication date: December 2026

Deadline for abstract submission (approx. 150-300 words): July 15, 2025

Submission deadline for drafts of accepted papers: November 15, 2025

Submission deadline for final essays of accepted papers: January 15, 2026

Peer Review starts: March 15, 2026

Proposed publication date: December 2026

The estimated word count for each essay is 5000-6000 words with the book being around 100,000 words: 15-20 chapters

Please send a notification of interest and your abstract to the editors at the contact information provided below.

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For further inquiries, please contact the editors directly.

Find supplementary links below:

<https://github.com/gcallah/JustifyingTheState/blob/main/toc.md>

<https://philevents.org/event/show/136537>