

Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
By David Miller

This book introduces readers to the concepts of political philosophy. It starts by explaining why the subject is important and how it tackles basic ethical questions such as 'how should we live together in society?' It looks at political authority, the reasons why we need politics at all, the limitations of politics, and whether there are areas of life that shouldn't be governed by politics. Accessibly written and assuming no previous knowledge of the subject, it encourages the reader to think clearly and critically about the leading political questions of our time.

Questions for thought and discussion

- Is it really true that what governments do profoundly affects the quality of our lives?
- Have there been any recent news stories that support the claim that we no longer have any real political choices to make?
- Do states need to be able to coerce their subjects if they are to have political authority?
- If we are obliged to obey the law for reasons of fairness, then the obligation is owed to our fellow citizens, not the state. So why do we need the state?
- What role should ordinary citizens play in a democracy?
- Are there any good reasons for thinking that the issue of fox-hunting should not be resolved democratically?
- 'One way of tackling the problem of minorities who are always outvoted is to allow them to form their own governments on their own territories.' Is this a good solution?
- 'I am free to purchase a Ferrari even though I don't have enough money to do so.' Could this be true?
- Is a drug addict free not to get the next fix?
- Is it as easy as Mill thought to distinguish between harming people and offending them? Should we care about offence?
- Could it ever be permissible for a government to violate a human right in pursuit of some other goal? If so, what goal?
- If justice is about equal opportunity, then why not flip a coin to decide who gets what?
- Are there any human needs that are truly universal?
- Can someone ever deserve to have £10bn?
- Do you agree with Hayek that we can't talk meaningfully about social justice?
- Does feminism make sense only if we believe that men and women are fundamentally different by nature?
- Can policies of positive discrimination aimed at helping cultural minorities be justified?
- Was Dean Inge right when he said 'a nation is a society united by a delusion about its ancestry and by a common hatred of its neighbours'?
- Are injustices between states less important than injustices within a state?
- What does it mean to be 'a citizen of the world'?

Other books by David Miller

David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)

David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000)

David Miller (ed.), *The Liberty Reader* (Boulder, Co.: Paradigm Publishers/Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006)

David Miller, *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)