¶ 1.1



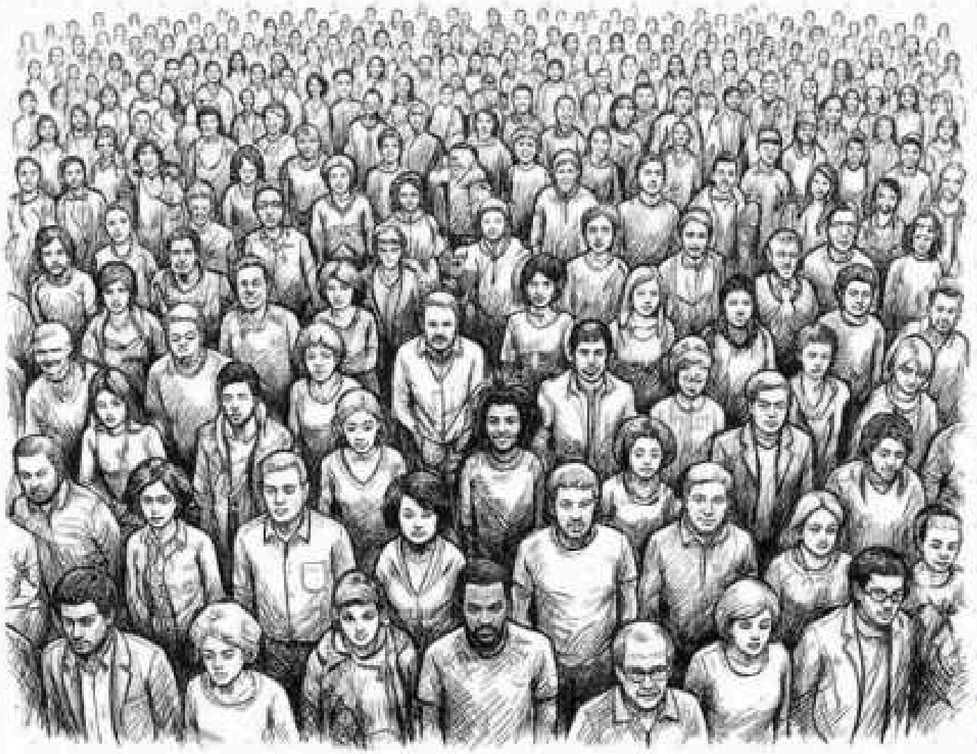
POLS 101 B: Lecture 1

What Politics Is: Power, Authority, and the State

Welcome to Lecture 1.

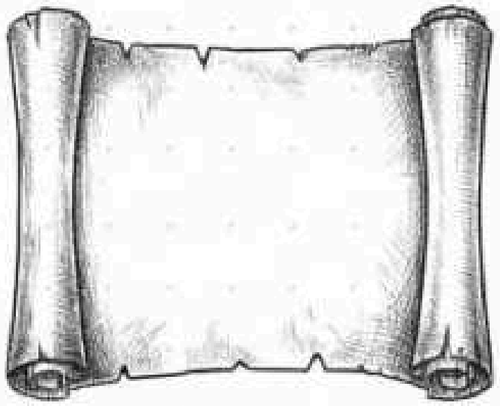
¶ 1.2

1. Politics
2. Power
3. Authority
4. Legitimacy
5. The State



Explain why people usually obey a government, and what happens when they stop.

¶ 1.3



Aristotle (Politics):
Human Being = Political Animal
(Naturally lives in a community)

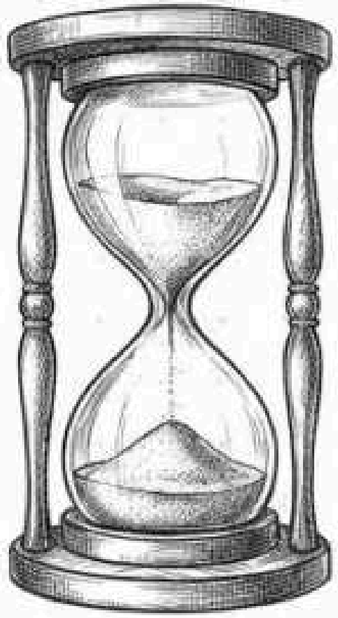


Harold Lasswell (1936):
Politics = Who ← (What + When + How)

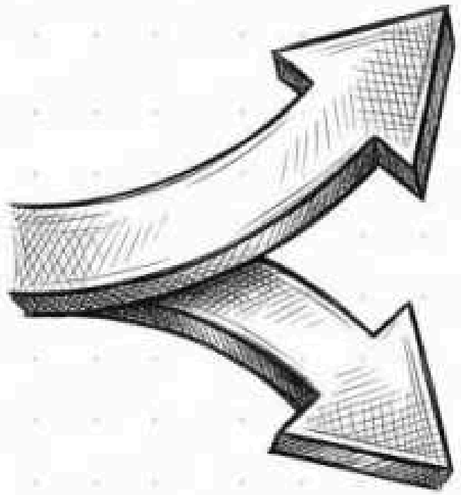


Modern View:
Politics = Conciliation
(The peaceful reconciling of different interests)

¶ 1.4



+



Needs Binding Decisions

→ **POLITICS**

Condition 1: Scarcity

(Never enough money, land, attention, opportunity)

Condition 2: Disagreement

(Clashing interests and values)

The First Face of Power (Robert Dahl, 1957)

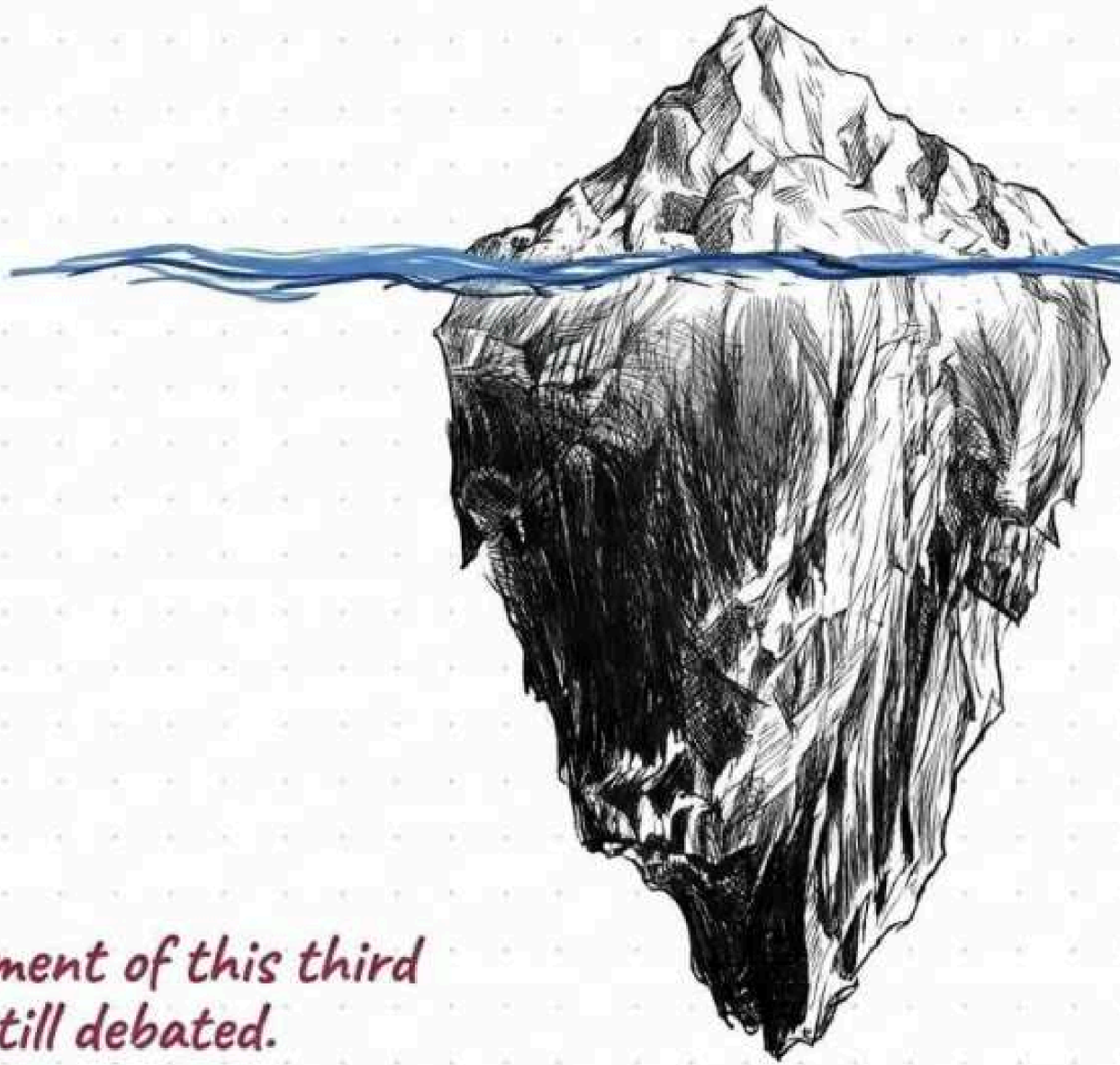
¶ 1.5

Power (A → B) = B does X (where B would not otherwise do X)

Observable Behavior — e.g., who wins when interests clash.



¶ 1.6



Direct Conflict (Dahl).
Observable clashes.

Agenda Control
(Bachrach & Baratz).
Issues never come up for decision.

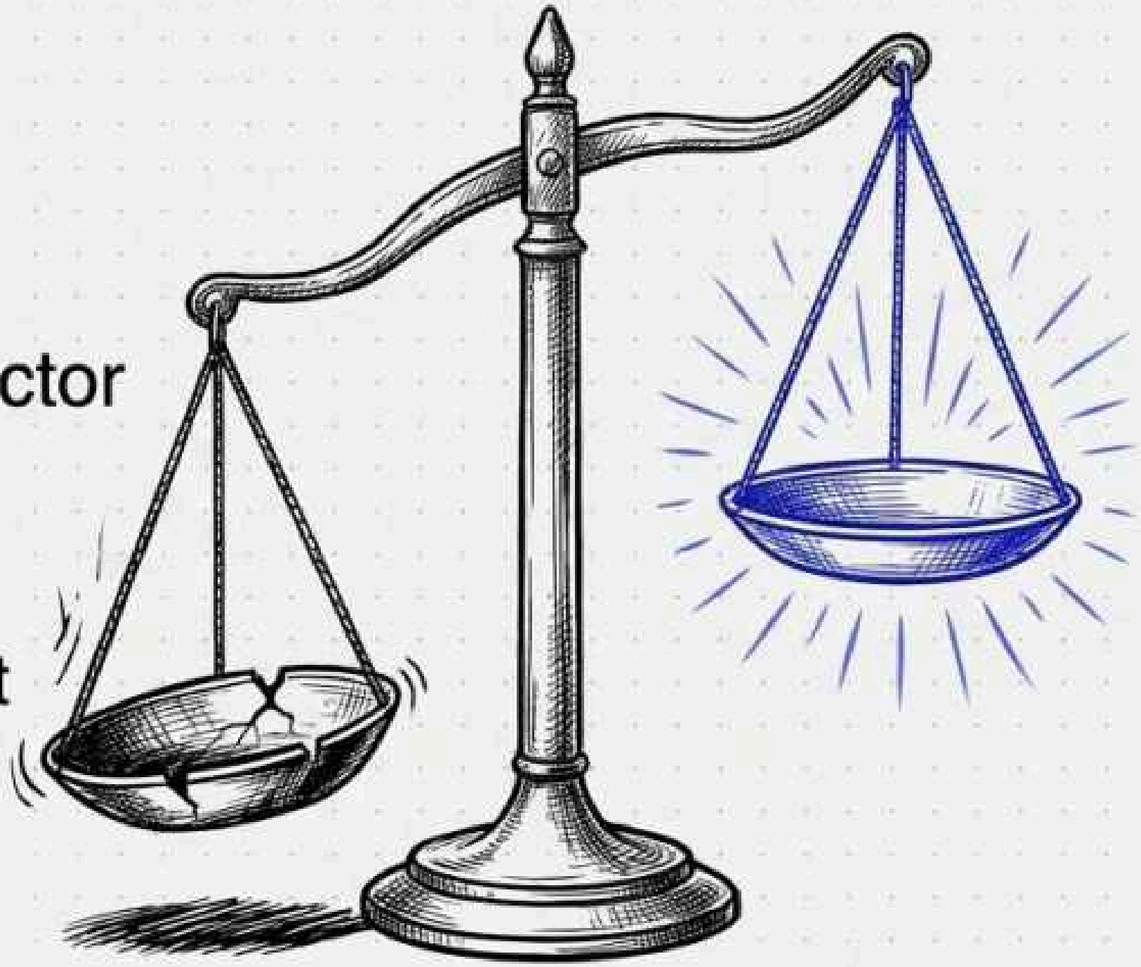
Shaping Desires
(Lukes, 1974).
People don't even notice a conflict exists.

** Measurement of this third face is still debated.*

¶ 1.7

Power Alone:
Mugger / Tax Collector

- Traits: Expensive, fragile, unusual.
- Relies on constant threats.



Authority:
Rightful Power

- Traits: Voluntary compliance.
- Command is accepted as a right.

Authority = Power + Rightfulness

Max Weber's Three Pure Types of Authority

¶1.8



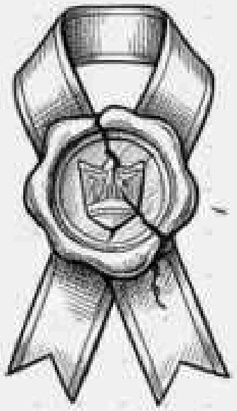
Traditional

Rests on long custom (e.g., hereditary monarch).



Charismatic

Rests on extraordinary personal qualities of a leader.



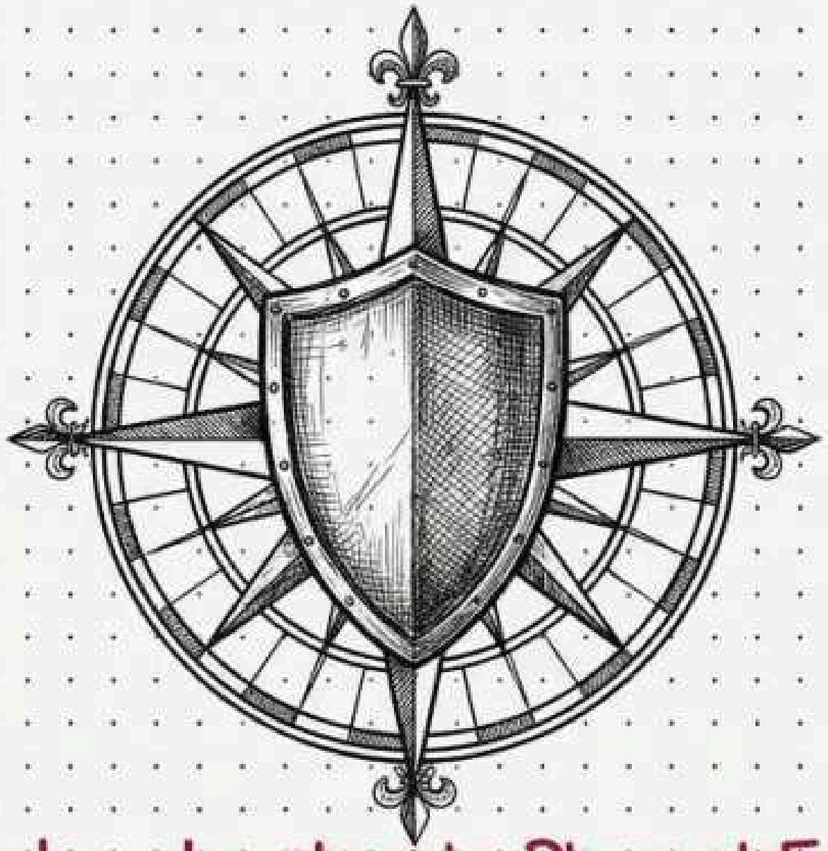
Legal-Rational

Rests on impersonal rules (e.g., agreed proce–dures for an offce).

Real governments usually mix all three.

Weber's Definition of the State

¶ 1.9

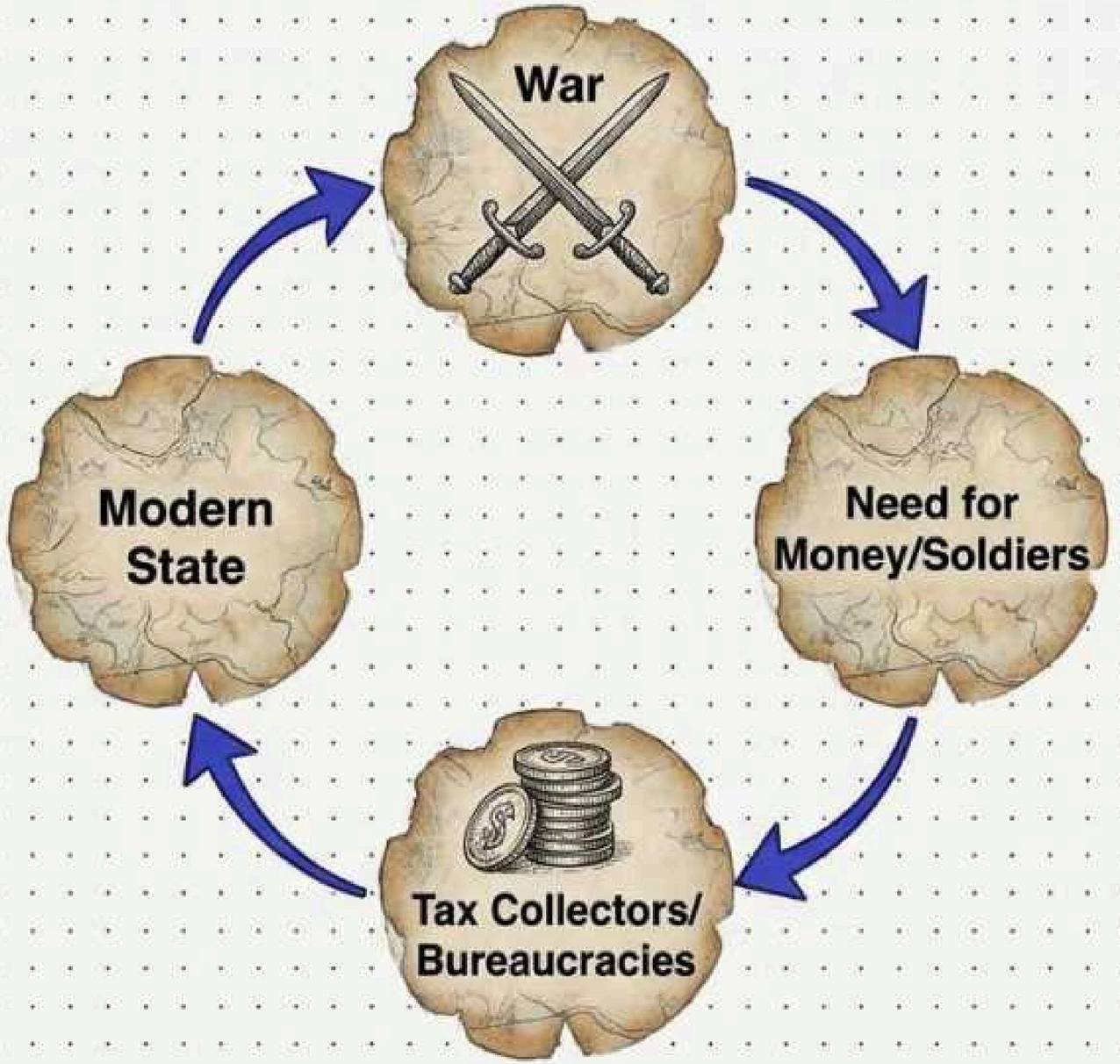


The State = { Monopoly x Legitimate Physical Force } ⊂ Given Territory

- Monopoly: Rival armed groups are NOT tolerated.
- Legitimate Physical Force: The force must be accepted as rightful.
- Given Territory: Operates within specific geographic bounds.

Where did states come from? (Charles Tilly)

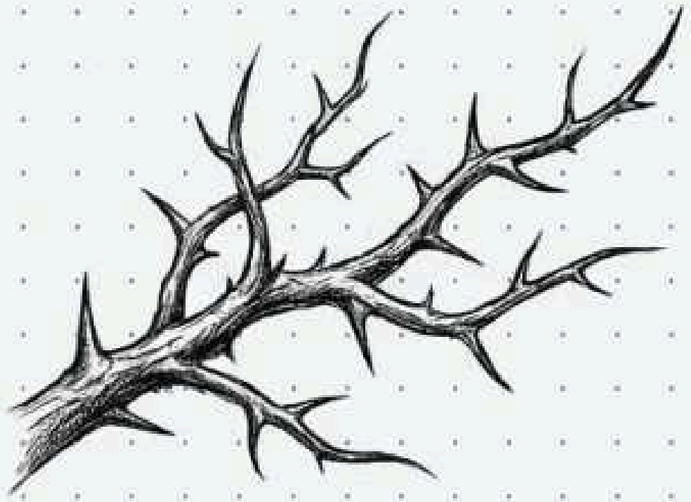
¶ 1.10



1648 Peace of Westphalia — Often named the start of the sovereign state system (though historians note this is a simplification).

¶ 1.11

Why should we have a state?



Thomas Hobbes (Leviathan, 1651)

Without government, life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Solution: Obey a sovereign to escape.



John Locke

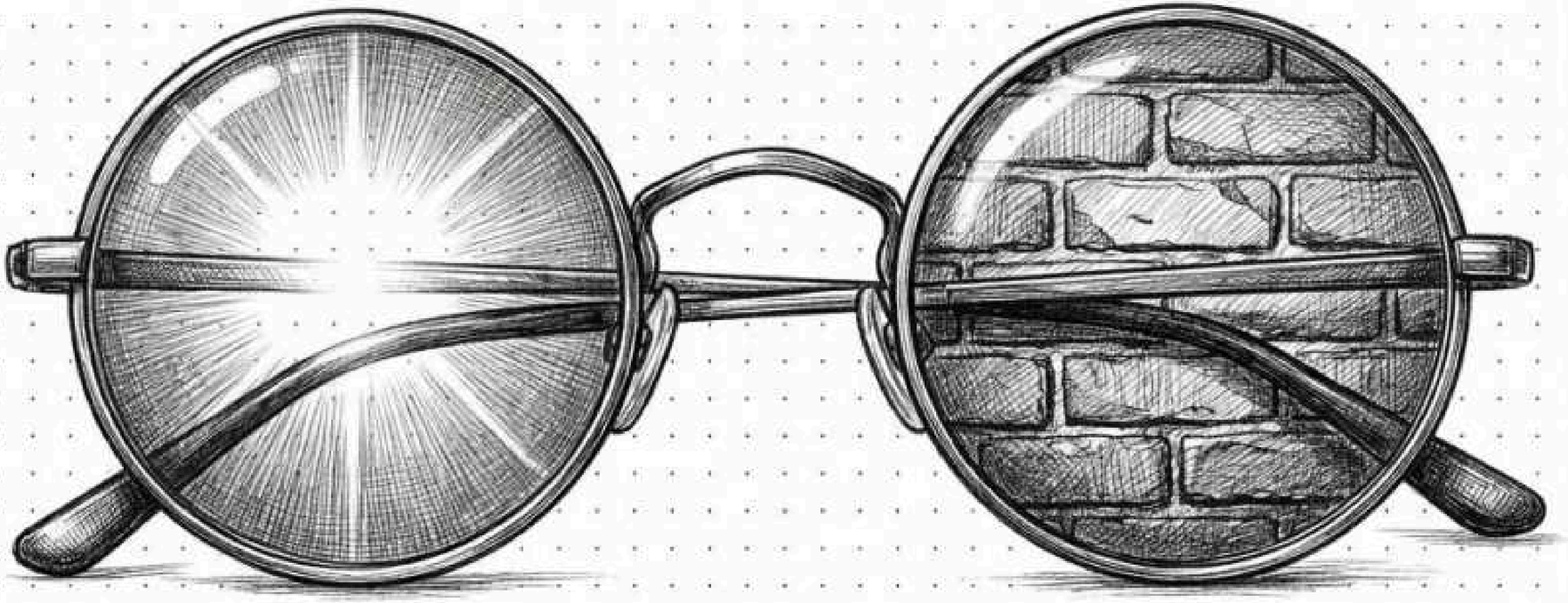
The state exists to protect life, liberty, and property. Requires the consent of the governed.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The state must follow the "general will" of the community.

¶ 1.12



Normative Theory

- How things ought to be. (Moral grounds).
- Example: Anarchists rejecting the state.

Empirical Political Science

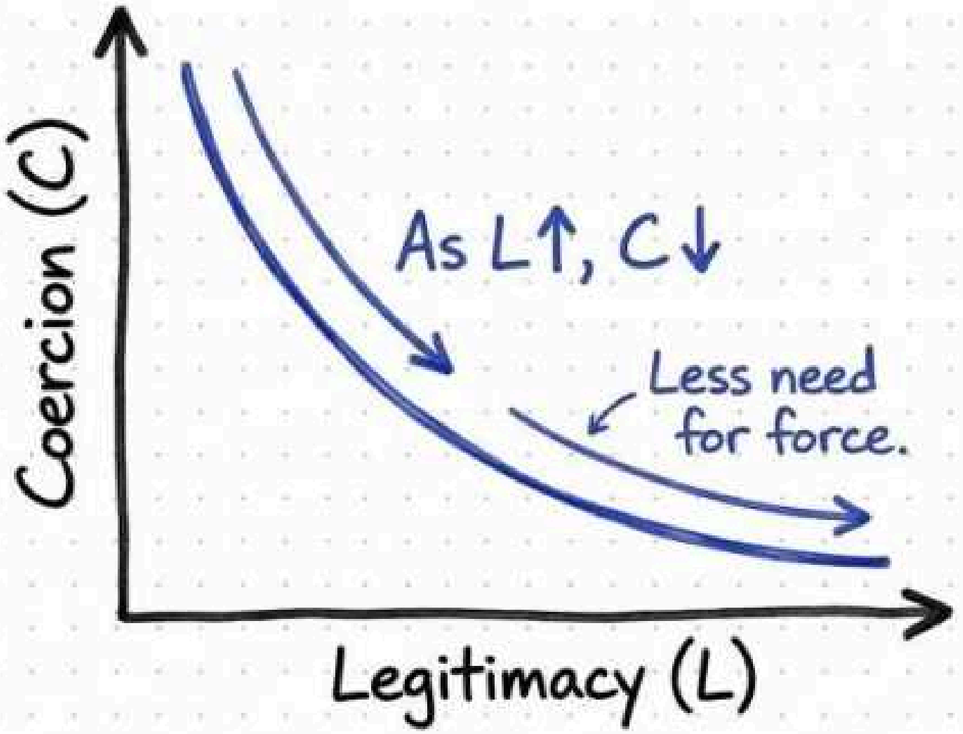
- How things actually are, and why. (Material realities).
- Example: Marxists viewing the state as class instrumentation.

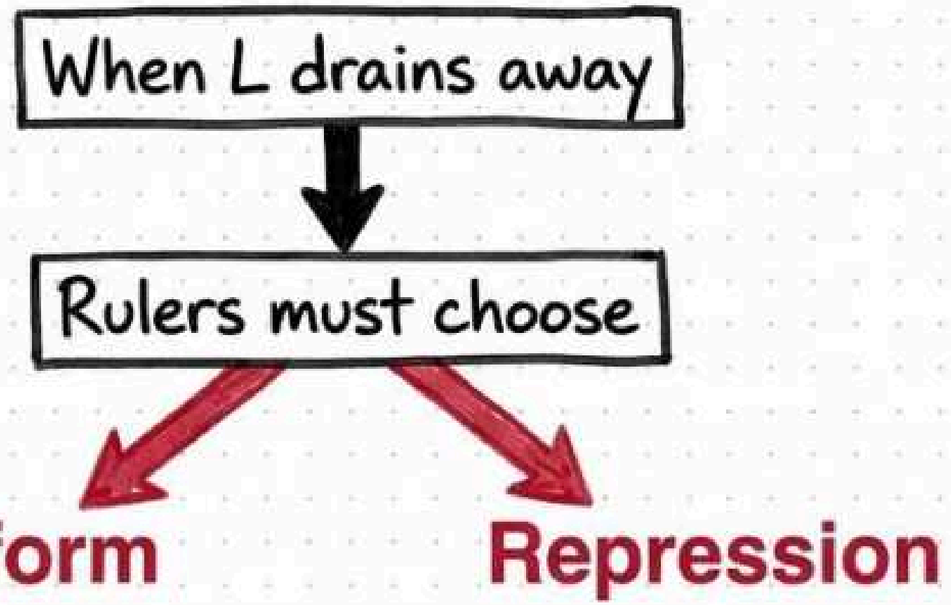
Political science tries to keep these two distinct, even though they interact.

¶ 1.13

Legitimacy = belief that political authority is rightful.

Sources:
Fair procedures (elections),
Good performance (safety/prosperity),
Shared **identity/tradition**.

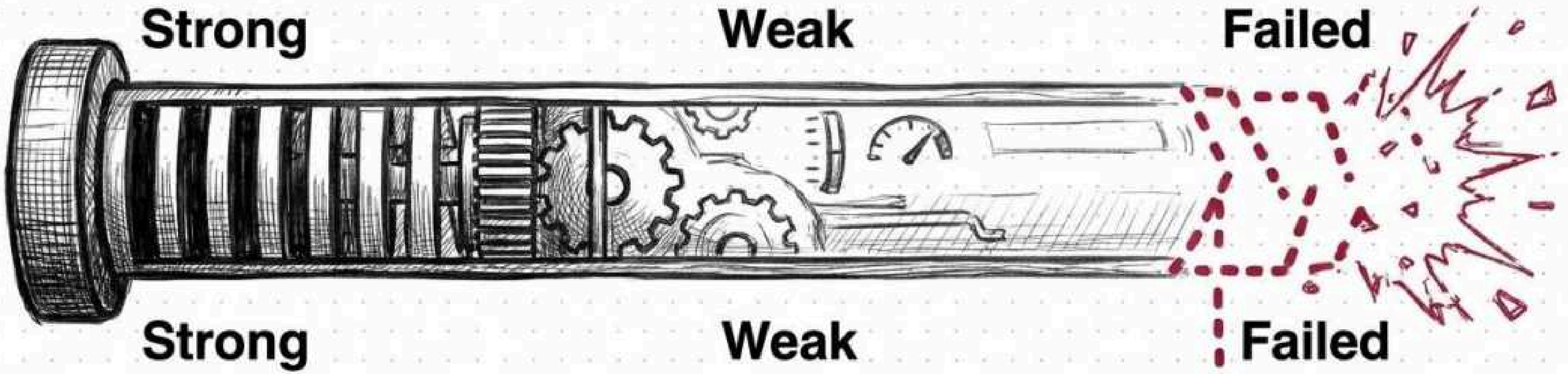




This choice decides the outcome.

¶ 1.14

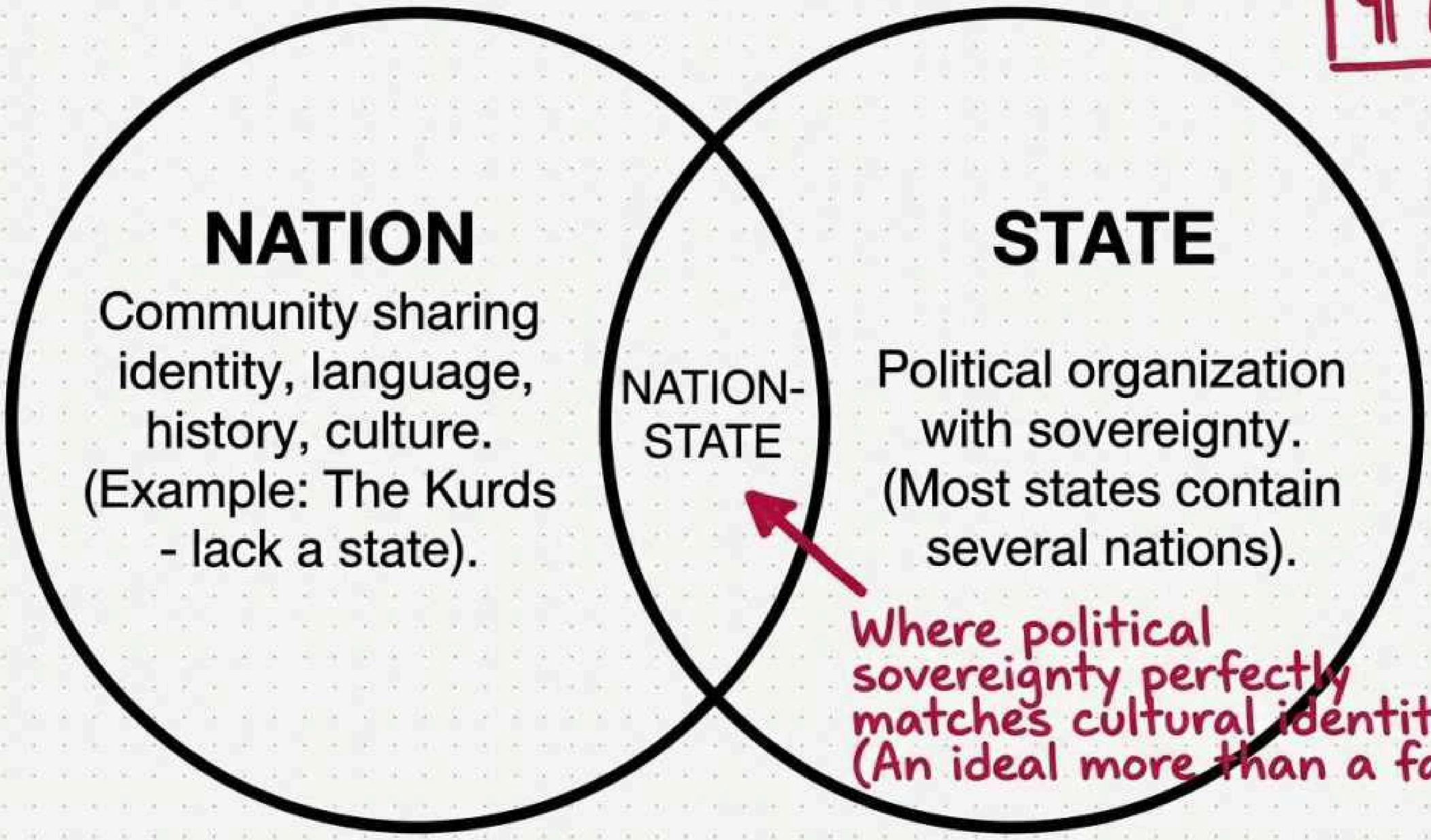
State Capacity (Ability to collect taxes, enforce laws, deliver services, control territory)



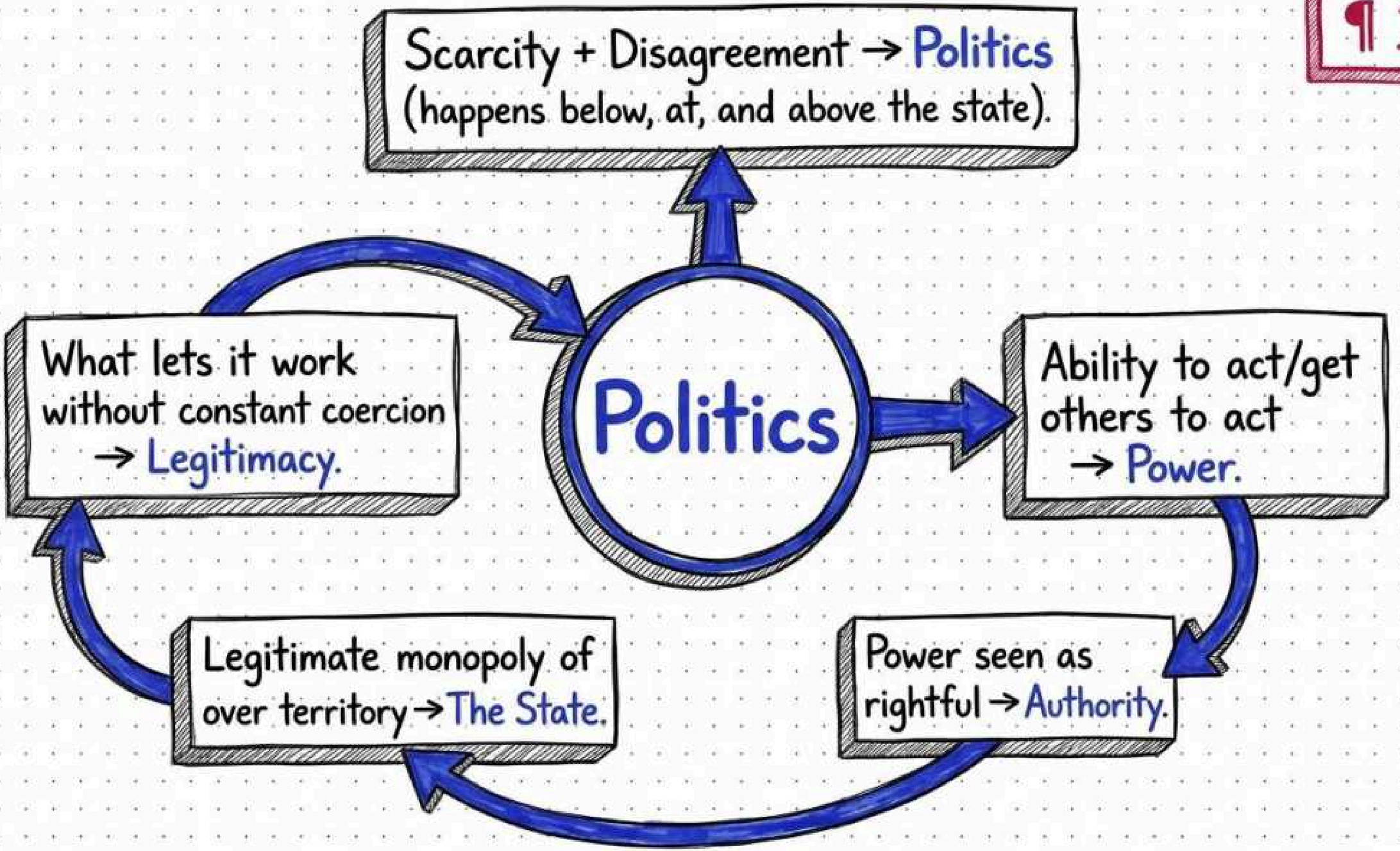
No longer holds the monopoly on force (e.g., Somalia post-1991).

Capacity matters just as much as regime type for what citizens actually experience.

¶ 1.15

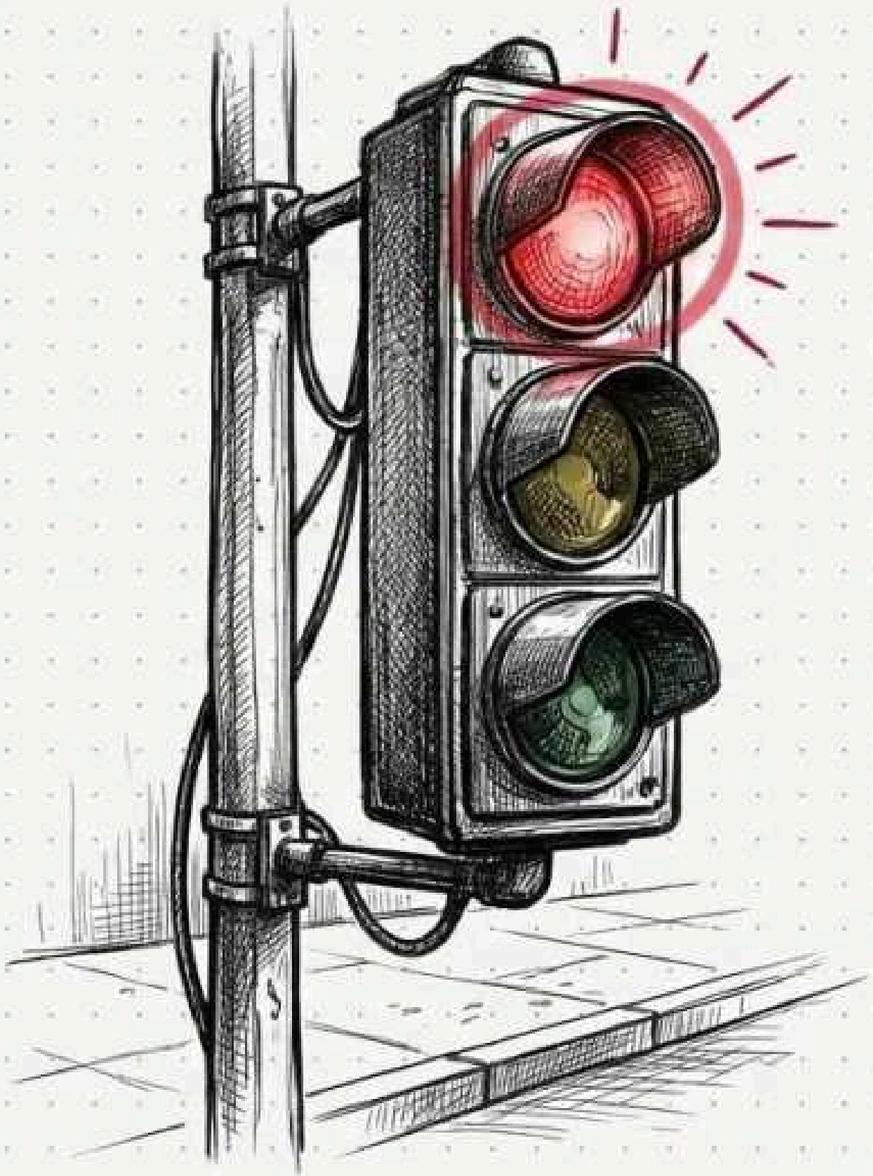

NATION
Community sharing identity, language, history, culture. (Example: The Kurds - lack a state).
NATION-STATE
STATE
Political organization with sovereignty. (Most states contain several nations).
Where political sovereignty perfectly matches cultural identity. (An ideal more than a fact)

¶ 1.16


Scarcity + Disagreement → Politics
(happens below, at, and above the state).
Politics
Ability to act/get others to act → Power.
Power seen as rightful → Authority.
Legitimate monopoly of over territory → The State.
What lets it work without constant coercion → Legitimacy.

Application Question

¶ 1.17

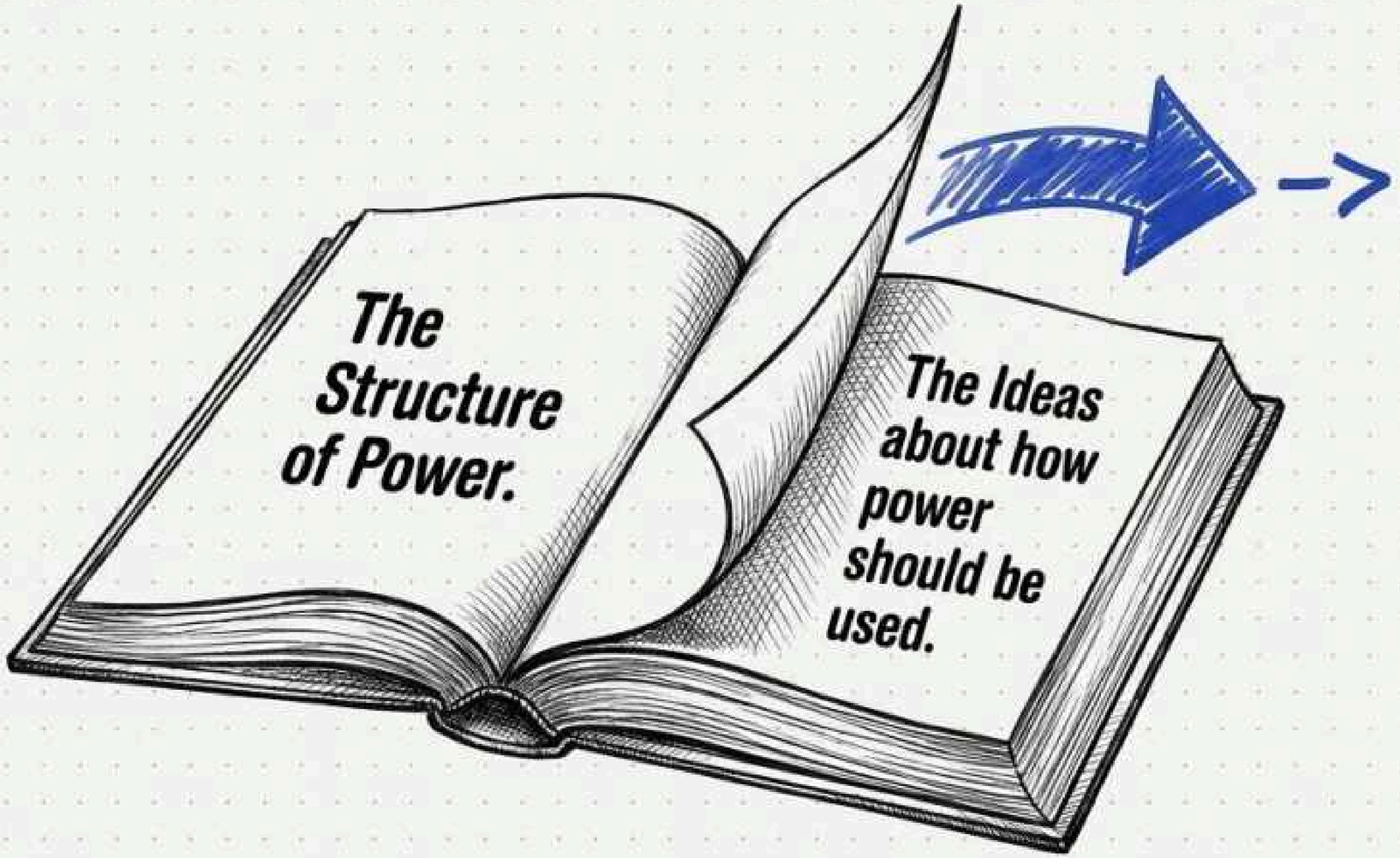


Think of a rule you obey every day without being forced (like stopping at a red light, or paying taxes).

Which of Weber's three kinds of authority explains why you comply?

What would have to change for you to stop?

¶ 1.18



Up Next — Lecture 2: Political Ideologies.