

## Acknowledgment

THIS ESSAY is the result of conversations with Albert Jay Nock, author of *Our Enemy the State*, some fifteen years ago. His book was then out of print and the publishers were considering a reissue; for commercial reasons they held that it should be expanded. I had been suggesting to him the need of revision and expansion for quite another reason. The book was based on a series of lectures delivered to a graduate class in history, and on that account it dealt with the State historically; my argument was that it could be handled as an economic phenomenon and that the inclusion of this phase would broaden the scope of the book. Something of a joint venture along this line was under consideration at the time of Nock's death.

I mention this fact to ward off the charge of plagiarism. For, as any reader of *Our Enemy the State* will readily recognize, I have borrowed ideas from it quite liberally in the writing of this essay. I plead the circumstance related above as my justification. Knowing Nock, I am sure that he would be the last to take me to task for appropriating some of his argument, and would be quick to point out that originality is a fiction and a posture.

The fact is, I am under obligation to many writers of economics and political science; traces of a half century of reading have found their way into this book. Why, then, did I not acknowledge my debt to these writers in a formal way, with annotations and a bibliography? Partly because this would have entailed a lot of drudgery, with nothing more to show for it than a few extra pages of print, and partly because this method of drawing upon authorities for support has always struck me as special pleading, spurious and slightly dishonest.

When an author refers the reader to a previous author, in an annotation, he is really saying: "This is not my idea, it is what an established authority has said on the subject and ought therefore to be accepted without question." But, as every exponent of a theory knows, one can draw upon authorities to support either side of a case, just as lawyers do with precedents, and it is natural for a protagonist to cite only those authorities who support his thesis; if he cites a contrary-minded authority, it is only to set him up for demolition. Only a gullible reader, or one who was convinced before he took up the book, will be impressed by this shoring up of argument.

This book lays no claim to being authoritative or original. Its ideas have been borrowed, mostly in an unconscious way, from the goodly number of writers whose thinking appealed to me. This is my blanket acknowledgment to all of them. The best that can be said of my effort is that it is an arrangement of their ideas in a way that will support the conviction I had before I started writing. If the reader finds the book interesting it is mainly because he was attuned to the line of thought to begin with; if the "furniture of his mind" is otherwise arranged, he will probably not finish reading it.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The first, if stimulated, will be prompted to dig into a library to find out how I "got that way"; the other would hardly check up on any bibliography I might have added.

FRANK CHODOROV

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