

The Enemy is the State

Dallas Freed

dallasfreed.com

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Introduction

[To be written — the frame: this isn't a book about which party, which policy, which leader. It's a book about the one institution that gets a moral free pass for doing what no person is allowed to do. Aimed at the reader who has never thought of themselves as political, and isn't going to start now — but who already holds the moral intuitions the argument rests on.]

The Rule We All Already Agree On

[To be written — the book's one axiom, stated in ordinary language: don't initiate force against people who haven't harmed you. Tested against everyday cases the reader will instantly confirm. Neighbor won't give you a ride to the airport; you don't get to take his car. Coworker disagrees with you about dinner; you don't get to hit him. This chapter does nothing but make the rule explicit. It's the floor.]

The One Exception Nobody Examines

[To be written — the same acts, reframed as government: taxation is taking his car; war is hitting him over dinner. Most readers will flinch. The chapter's only job is to let the flinch happen, and then ask: what changed between the first chapter and this one? Same act, same effect on the person receiving it. Opposite moral verdict. Why?]

How the Poison Spreads

[To be written — the mechanism. Once “they” are allowed to do what “we” aren’t, the permission doesn’t stay contained. It corrupts the participants (you voted for it, you paid for it, you accepted it), the institutions that touch it, and the vocabulary used to describe it. The rest of the book is case studies of that spread.]

Ethics

[To be written — what voting for, paying, working for, or receiving from government does to the moral life of the participant. The ordinary person who would never personally rob his neighbor will vote for a politician who taxes him. The ordinary person who would never personally cage someone for smoking a plant will support a prison system that does. The poisoning isn't of the institution — it's of the citizen who endorses it. This is the most important chapter.]

Truth — Science

[To be written — Lysenko as the cleanest case (an entire field of Soviet biology conformed to the state's preferred answer, and a generation of geneticists was liquidated). Then closer to home: COVID-era lab-leak suppression, the replication crisis, the shape of what gets NIH-funded vs. what doesn't. Government doesn't need to forbid inquiry; it just needs to control who gets paid to do it.]

Truth — Economics

[To be written — Hayek’s “Pretence of Knowledge” Nobel speech: the most senior economist of his generation stood at the podium and said his field was pretending to be a science it isn’t. Nobody listened, because nobody funding the field wanted them to. 2008 as the canonical complex-systems failure — every major risk model assumed defaults were independent; the actual system had hidden coupling. GDP as Goodhart’s Law. Taleb’s “fragilistas” applying linear tools to evolved systems. The field got poisoned not by being wrong, but by being wrong in ways that were useful to power.]

Art

[To be written — three stories. Solzhenitsyn writing Gulag Archipelago on scraps and burying pages because the government owned every typewriter, publisher, and postal route he could have used legitimately. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony — the artist forced to encode rather than say, with the regime applauding and the audience weeping at the same notes. The CIA secretly funding abstract expressionism during the Cold War, making the point that "free art" paid for by a government is still a government project. One conclusion: when government pays or forbids, art becomes propaganda or goes underground — and the art that survives the regime is almost always the art that defied it.]

Children

[To be written — compulsory government schooling as the most efficient poisoning, because it gets there first. Would you let a stranger raise your child for twelve years on a curriculum you didn't choose, around other children you didn't pick, on a schedule built for an industrial economy that no longer exists? Most readers will say no. Most readers already do. The chapter makes that contradiction visible without preaching.]

Charity and Mercy

[To be written — the voluntary acts of giving and forgiving, displaced by the bureaucratic transfer and the mandatory sentence. Mutual aid societies and fraternal organizations before the welfare state; what replaced them and what it cost. Forgiveness — second chances, restorative justice, the pardon from the person who was actually wronged — made harder than it needs to be once the government takes over the role of the injured party. The moral poisoning here is the subtlest: a society that outsources mercy forgets how to offer it.]

You Can't Reform the Chair

[To be written — the move from “we need better people in government” to “the office itself is the problem.” Every reformer who has ever sat down at that desk ended up using the same tools. Why. And why the instinct to clean it up is the instinct that keeps the chair intact.]

A Life of Withdrawn Consent

[To be written — concrete, not utopian. What does it look like to stop endorsing the thing, without running off to the woods? Small acts: not voting, or voting only against. Keeping more of your life outside the systems that require permission. Raising children who know the rule in Chapter 2. Building the voluntary alternatives the book's other chapters showed existed before. Closing image: the point isn't to tear anything down. The point is to stop feeding it.]

Conclusion

The problem isn't that the wrong people keep winning elections. It's the chair.