Chapter One

I

If we look beneath the surface of our public affairs, we can discern one fundamental fact, namely: a great redistribution of power between society and the State. This is the fact that interests the student of civilization. He has only a secondary or derived interest in matters like price-fixing, wage-fixing, inflation, political banking, "agricultural adjustment," and similar items of State policy that fill the pages of newspapers and the mouths of publicists and politicians. All these can be run up under one head. They have an immediate and temporary importance, and for this reason they monopolize public attention, but they all come to the same thing; which is, an increase of State power and a corresponding decrease of social power.

It is unfortunately none too well understood that, just as the State has no money of its own, so it has no power of its own. All the power it has is what society gives it, plus what it confiscates from time to time on one pretext or another; there is no other source from which State power can be drawn. Therefore every assumption of State power, whether by gift or seizure, leaves society with so much less power; there is never, nor can be, any strengthening of State power without a corresponding and roughly equivalent depletion of social power.

Moreover, it follows that with any exercise of State power, not only the exercise of social power in the same direction, but the disposition to exercise it in that direction, tends to dwindle. Mayor Gaynor astonished the whole of New York when he pointed out to a correspondent who had been complaining about the inefficiency of the police, that any citizen has the right to arrest a malefactor and bring him before a magistrate. "The law of England and of this country," he wrote, "has been very careful to confer no more right in that respect upon policemen aid constables than it confers on every citizen." State exercise of that right through a police force had gone on so steadily that not only were citizens indisposed to exercise it, but probably not one in tell thousand knew lie had it.

Heretofore, in this country, sudden crises of misfortune have been met by a mobilization of social power. In fact (except for certain institutional enterprises like the home for the aged, the lunatic asylum, city hospital and county poor house) destitution, unemployment, "depression" and similar ills, have been no concern of the State, but have been relieved by the application of social power. Under Mr. Roosevelt, however, the State assumed this function, publicly announcing the doctrine, brand-new in our history, that the State owes its citizens a living. Students of politics, of course, saw in this merely an astute proposal for a prodigious enhancement of State power; merely what, as long ago as 1794, James Madison called "the old trick of turning every contingency into a resource for accumulating force in the government"; and the passage of time has proved that they were right. The effect of this upon the balance between State power and social power is clear, and also its effect of a general indoctrination with the idea that an exercise of social power upon such matters is no longer called for.

It is largely in this way that the progressive conversion of social power into State power becomes acceptable and gets itself accepted.[1] When the Johnstown flood

occurred, social power was immediately mobilized and applied with intelligence and vigour. Its abundance, measured by money alone, was so great that when everything was finally put in order, something like a million dollars remained. If such a catastrophe happened now, not only is social power perhaps too depleted for the like exercise, but the general instinct would be to let the State see to it. Not only has social power atrophied to that extent, but the disposition to exercise it in that particular direction has atrophied with it. If the State has made such matters its business, and has confiscated the social power necessary to deal with them, why, let it deal with them. We can get some kind of rough measure of this general atrophy by our own disposition when approached by a beggar. Two years ago we might have been moved to give him something; today we are moved to refer him to the State's relief agency. The State has said to society, You are either not exercising enough power to meet the emergency, or are exercising it in what I think is an incompetent way, so I shall confiscate your power, and exercise it to suit myself. Hence when a beggar asks us for a quarter, our instinct is to say that the State has already confiscated our quarter for his benefit, and he should go to the State about it.

Every positive intervention that the State makes upon industry and commerce has a similar effect. When the State intervenes to fix wages or prices, or to prescribe the conditions of competition, it virtually tells the enterpriser that he is not exercising social power in the right way, and therefore it proposes to confiscate his power and exercise it according to the State's own judgment of what is best. Hence the enterpriser's instinct is to let the State look after the consequences. As a simple illustration of this, a manufacturer of a highly specialized type of textiles was saying to me the other day that he had kept his mill going at a loss for five years because he did not want to turn his workpeople on the street in such hard times, but now that the State had stepped in to tell him how lie must run his business, the State might jolly well take the responsibility.

The process of converting social power into State power may perhaps be seen at its simplest in cases where the State's intervention is directly competitive. The accumulation of State power in various countries has been so accelerated and diversified within the last twenty years that we now see the State functioning as telegraphist, telephonist, matchpedlar, radio operator, cannon founder, railway builder and owner, railway operator, wholesale and retail tobacconist, shipbuilder and owner, chief chemist, harbour-maker and dockbuilder, housebuilder, chief educator, newspaper-proprietor, food-purveyor, dealer in insurance, and so on through a long list.[2]

It is obvious that private forms of these enterprises must tend to dwindle in proportion as the energy of the State's encroachments on them increases, for the competition of social power with State power is always disadvantaged, since the State can arrange the terms of competition to suit itself, even to the point of outlawing any exercise of social power whatever in the premises; in other words, giving itself a monopoly. Instances of this expedient are common; the one we are probably best acquainted with is the State's monopoly of letter-carrying. Social power is estopped by sheer fiat from application to this form of enterprise, notwithstanding it could carry it on far cheaper, and, in this country at least, far better. The advantages of this monopoly in promoting the State's interests are peculiar. No other, probably, could secure so large and well-distributed a volume of patronage,

under the guise of a public service in constant use by so large a number of people; it plants a lieutenant of the State at every country crossroad. It is by no means a pure coincidence that an administration's chief almoner and whip-at-large is so regularly appointed Postmaster-general.

Thus the State "turns every contingency into a resource" for accumulating power in itself, always at the expense of social power; and with this it develops a habit of acquiescence in the people. New generations appear, each temperamentally adjusted - or as I believe our American glossary now has it, "conditioned" - to new increments of State power, and they tend to take the process of continuous accumulation as quite in order. All the State's institutional voices unite in confirming this tendency; they unite in exhibiting the progressive conversion of social power into State power as something not only quite in order, but even as wholesome and necessary for the public good.

[1] The result of a questionnaire published in July, 1935, showed 76.8 per cent of the replies favourable to the idea that it is the State's duty to see that every person who wants a job shall have one; 20.1 per cent were against it, and 3.1 per cent were undecided.

[2] In this country, the State is at present manufacturing furniture, grinding flour, producing fertilizer, building houses; selling farm products, dairy products, textiles, canned goods, and electrical apparatus; operating employment agencies and home-loan offices; financing exports and imports; financing agriculture. It also controls the issuance of securities, communications by wire and radio, discount rates, oil production, power production, commercial competition, the production and sale of alcohol, and the use of inland waterways and railways.

II

In the United States, at the present time, the principal indexes of the increase of State power are three in number: Firstly, the point to which the centralization of State authority has been carried. Practically all the sovereign rights and powers of the smaller political units - all of them that are significant enough to be worth absorbing - have been absorbed by the federal unit; nor is this all. State power has not only been thus concentrated at Washington, but it has been so far concentrated into the hands of the Executive that the existing regime is a regime of personal government. It is nominally republican, but actually monocratic; a curious anomaly, but highly characteristic of a people little gifted with intellectual integrity. Personal government is not exercised here in the same ways as in Italy, Russia or Germany, for there is as yet no State interest to be served by so doing, but rather the contrary; while in those countries there is. But personal government is always personal government; the mode of its exercise is a matter of immediate political expediency, and is determined entirely by circumstances.

This regime was established by a *coup d'Etat* [overthrow] of a new and unusual kind, practicable only in a rich country. It was effected, not by violence, like Louis-Napoleon's, or by terrorism, like Mussolini's, but by purchase. It therefore presents what might be called an American variant of the *coup d'Etat* [non-violent revolution].[3] Our national legislature was not suppressed by force of arms, like the French Assembly in 1851, but was bought out of its functions with public money; and as appeared most conspicuously in the elections of November, 1934, the consolidation of the *coup d'Etat* was effected by the same means; the corresponding

functions in the smaller units were reduced under the personal control of the Executive.[4] This is a most remarkable phenomenon; possibly nothing quite like it ever took place; and its character and implications deserve the most careful attention.

A second index is supplied by the prodigious extension of the bureaucratic principle that is now observable. This is attested *prima facie* [evident without proof - at first sight] by the number of new boards, bureaus, and commissions set up at Washington in the last two years. They are reported as representing something like 90,000 new employees appointed outside the civil service, and the total of the federal payroll in Washington is reported as something over three million dollars per month.[5] This, however, is relatively a small matter. The pressure of centralization has tended powerfully to convert every official and every political aspirant in the smaller units into a venal[6] and accommodating agent of the federal bureaucracy. This presents an interesting parallel with the state of things prevailing in the Roman Empire in the last days of the Flavian dynasty, and afterwards. The rights and practices of local self-government, which were formerly very considerable in the provinces and much more so in the municipalities, were lost by surrender rather than by suppression. The imperial bureaucracy, which up to the second century was comparatively a modest affair, grew rapidly to great size, and local politicians were quick to see the advantage of being on terms with it. They came to Rome with their hats in their hands, as governors, Congressional aspirants and such-like now go to Washington. Their eyes and thoughts were constantly fixed on Rome, because recognition and preferment lay that way; and in their incorrigible sycophancy they became, as Plutarch says, like hypochondriacs who dare not eat or take a bath without consulting their physician.

A third index is seen in the erection of poverty and mendicancy into a permanent political asset. Two years ago, many of our people were in hard straits; to some extent, no doubt, through no fault of their own, although it is now clear that in the popular view of their case, as well as in the political view, the line between the deserving poor and the undeserving poor was not distinctly drawn. Popular feeling ran high at the time, and the prevailing wretchedness was regarded with undiscriminating emotion, as evidence of some general wrong done upon its victims by society at large, rather than as the natural penalty of greed, folly, or actual misdoings; which in a large part it was. The State, always instinctively "turning every contingency into a resource" for accelerating the conversion of social power into State power, was quick to take advantage of this state of mind. All that was needed to organize these unfortunates into an invaluable political property was to declare the doctrine that the State owes all its citizens a living; and this was accordingly done. It immediately precipitated an enormous mass of subsidized voting power, an enormous resource for strengthening the State at the expense of society.[7]

[3] There is a sort of precedent for it in Roman history, if the story be true in all its details that the army sold the emperorship to Didius Julianus for something like five million dollars. Money has often been used to grease the wheels of *a coup d'Etat*, but straight over-the-counter purchase is unknown, I think, except in these two instances.

[4] On the day I write this, the newspapers say that the President is about to order a stoppage on the flow of federal relief funds into Louisiana for the purpose of bringing Senator Long to terms. I have seen no comment, however, on the propriety of this kind of procedure.

[5] A friend in the theatrical business tells me that from the box office point of view, Washington is now the best theatre town, concert town and general amusement town in the United States, far better than New York.

[6] Venal -- corruptible, bribable, unscrupulous, dishonorable.

[7] The feature of the approaching campaign of 1936 which will most interest the student of civilization will be the use of the four billion dollar relief fund that has been placed at the President's disposal - the extent, that is, to which it will be distributed on a patronage basis.

III

There is an impression that the enhancement of State power which has taken place since 1932 is provisional and temporary; that the corresponding depletion of social power is by way of a kind of emergency loan, and therefore is not to be scrutinized too closely. There is every probability that this belief is devoid of foundation. No doubt our present regime will be modified in one way and another; indeed, it must be, for the process of consolidation itself requires it. But any essential change would be quite unhistorical, quite without precedent, and is therefore most unlikely; and by an essential change, I mean one that will tend to redistribute actual power between the State and society.[8] In the nature of things, there is no reason why such a change should take place, and every reason why it should not. We shall see various apparent recessions, apparent compromises, but the one thing we may be quite sure of is that none of these will tend to diminish actual State power.

For example, we shall no doubt shortly see the great pressure group of politically organized poverty and mendicancy[9] subsidized indirectly instead of directly, because State interest can not long keep pace with the hand-over-head disposition of the masses to loot their own Treasury. The method of direct subsidy, or sheer cash-purchase, will therefore in all probability soon give way to the indirect method of what is called "social legislation"; that is, a multiplex system of State managed pensions, insurances and indemnities of various kinds. This is an apparent recession, and when it occurs it will no doubt be proclaimed as an actual recession, no doubt accepted as such; but is it? Does it actually tend to diminish State power and increase social power? Obviously not, but quite the opposite. It tends to consolidate firmly this particular fraction of State power, and opens the way to getting an indefinite increment upon it by the mere continuous invention of new courses and developments of State-administered social legislation, which is an extremely simple business. One may add the observation for whatever its evidential value may be worth, that if the effect of progressive social legislation upon the sum-total of State power were unfavourable or even nil, we should hardly have found Prince de Bismarck and the British Liberal politicians of forty years ago going in for anything remotely resembling it.

When, therefore, the inquiring student of civilization has occasion to observe this or any other apparent recession upon any point of our present regime,[10] he may content himself with asking the one question, *What effect has this upon the sum-total o f State power?* The answer he gives himself will show conclusively whether the recession is actual or apparent, and this is all he is concerned to know.

There is also an impression that if actual recessions do not come about of themselves, they may be brought about by the expedient of voting one political party out and another one in. This idea rests upon certain assumptions that experience has shown to be unsound; the first one being that the power of the ballot is what republican political theory makes it out to be, and that therefore the electorate has an effective choice in the matter. It is a matter of open and notorious fact that nothing like this is true. Our nominally republican system is actually built on an imperial model, with our professional politicians standing in the place of the praetorian guards; they meet from time to time, decide what can be "got away with," and how, and who is to do it; and the electorate votes according to their prescriptions. Under these conditions it is easy to provide the appearance of any desired concession of State power, without the reality; our history shows innumerable instances of very easy dealing with problems in practical politics much more difficult than that. One may remark in this connection also the notoriously baseless assumption that party designations connote principles, and that party pledges imply performance. Moreover, underlying these assumptions and all others that faith in "political action" contemplates, is the assumption that the interests of the State and the interests of society are, at least theoretically, identical; whereas in theory they are directly opposed, and this opposition invariably declares itself in practice to the precise extent that circumstances permit.

However, without pursuing these matters further at the moment, it is probably enough to observe here that in the nature of things the exercise of personal government, the control of a huge and growing bureaucracy, and the management of an enormous mass of subsidized voting power, are as agreeable to one stripe of politician as they are to another. Presumably they interest a Republican or a Progressive as much as they do a Democrat, Communist, Farmer-Labourite, Socialist, or whatever a politician may, for electioneering purposes, see fit to call himself. This was demonstrated in the local campaigns of 1934 by the practical attitude of politicians who represented nominal opposition parties. It is now being further demonstrated by the contemptuous haste that the leaders of the official opposition are making towards what they call "reorganization" of their party. One may well be inattentive to their words; their actions, however, mean simply that the recent expansions of State power are here to stay, and that they are aware of it; and that, such being the case, they are preparing to dispose themselves most advantageously in a contest for their control and management. This is all that "reorganization" of the Republican party means, and all it is meant to mean; and this is in itself quite enough to show that any expectation of an essential change of regime through a change of party administration is illusory. On the contrary, it is clear that whatever party competition we shall see hereafter will be on the same terms as heretofore. It will be a competition for control and management, and it would naturally issue in still closer centralization, still further extension of the bureaucratic principle, and still larger concessions to subsidized voting-power. This course would be strictly historical, and is furthermore to be expected as lying in the nature of things, as it so obviously does.

Indeed, it is by this means that the aim of the collectivists seems likeliest to be attained in this country; this aim being the complete extinction of social power through absorption by the State. Their fundamental doctrine was formulated and invested with a quasi-religious sanction by the idealist philosophers of the last

century; and among peoples who have accepted it in terms as well as in fact, it is expressed in formulas almost identical with theirs. Thus, for example, when Hitler says that "the State dominates the nation because it alone represents it," he is only putting into loose popular language the formula of Hegel,[11] that "the State is the general substance, whereof individuals are but accidents." Or, again, when Mussolini says, "Everything for the State; nothing outside the State; nothing against the State," he is merely vulgarizing the doctrine of Fichte,[12] that "the State is the superior power, ultimate and beyond appeal, absolutely independent."

It may be in place to remark here the essential identity of the various extant forms of collectivism. The superficial distinctions of Fascism, Bolshevism, and Hitlerism are the concern of journalists and publicists; the serious student sees in them only the one root idea of a complete conversion of social power into State power. When Hitler and Mussolini invoke a kind of debased and hoodwinking mysticism to aid their acceleration of this process, the student at once recognizes his old friend, the formula of Hegel, that "the State incarnates the Divine Idea upon earth," and he is not hoodwinked. The journalist and the impressionable traveler may make what they will of "the new religion of Bolshevism"; the student contents himself with remarking clearly the exact nature of the process which this inculcation is designed to sanction.

[8] It must always be kept in mind that there is a tidal-motion as well as a wave-motion in these matters, and that the wave-motion is of little importance, relatively. For instance, the Supreme Court's invalidation of the National Recovery Act counts for nothing in determining the actual status of personal government. The real question is not how much less the sum of personal government is now than it was before that decision, but how much greater it is normally now than it was in 1932, and in years preceding.

[9] Mendicancy -- indigence, destitution, pauperism, distress.

[10] As, for example, the spectacular voiding of the National Recovery Act. Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in March 1933 and immediately proposed his “New Deal” legislation to launch the United States on “the road to recovery.” First came the National Recovery Act, later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court after bitter opposition from big business. Later came the Walsh-Healey Act, then the Wage-Hour Law.

[11] George Wilhem Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). At the time of Hegel's death, he was the most prominent philosopher in Germany. Hegel followed the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides and considered membership in the State as one of the individual's highest duties. His followers divided into right-wing and left-wing Hegelians. The left-wing Hegelians moved to an atheistic position where, in politics, many of them became revolutionaries. This historically important left-wing group included Karl Marx.

[12] Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) was one of the major figures in German philosophy. Fichte developed his own system of transcendental idealism, the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

IV

This process - the conversion of social power into State power - has not been carried as far here as it has elsewhere; as it has in Russia, Italy or Germany, for example. Two things, however, are to be observed. First, that it has gone a long way, at a rate of progress which has of late been greatly accelerated. What has chiefly differentiated its progress here from its progress in other countries is its unspectacular character.

Mr. Jefferson wrote in 1823 that there was no danger he dreaded so much as "the consolidation [*i.e.*, centralization] of our government by the noiseless and therefore unalarming instrumentality of the Supreme Court." These words characterize every advance that we have made in State aggrandizement. Each one has been noiseless and therefore unalarming, especially to a people notoriously preoccupied, inattentive and incurious. Even the American *coup d'Etat* of 1932 was noiseless and unalarming. But in Russia, Italy, and Germany, the *coup d'Etat* was violent and spectacular; it had to be; but here in America it was neither. Under cover of a nationwide State managed mobilization of inane buffoonery and aimless commotion, it took place in so unspectacular a way that its true nature escaped notice, and even now is not generally understood. The method of consolidating the ensuing regime, moreover, was also noiseless and unalarming; it was merely the prosaic and unspectacular "higgling[13] of the market," to which a long and uniform political experience had accustomed us. A visitor from a poorer and thriftier country might have regarded Mr. Farley's activities in the local campaigns of 1934 as striking or even spectacular, but they made no such impression on us. They seemed so familiar, so much the regular thing, that one heard little comment on them. Moreover, political habit led us to attribute whatever unfavourable comment we did hear, to interest; either partisan or monetary interest, or both. We put it down as the jaundiced judgment of persons with axes to grind; arid naturally the regime did all it could to encourage this view.

The second thing to be observed is that certain formulas, certain arrangements of words, stand as an obstacle in the way of our perceiving how far the conversion of social power into State power has actually gone. The force of phrase and name distorts the identification of our own actual acceptances and acquiescences. We are accustomed to the rehearsal of certain poetic litanies, and provided their cadence be kept entire, we are indifferent to their correspondence with truth and fact. When Hegel's doctrine of the State, for example, is restated in terms by Hitler and Mussolini, it is distinctly offensive to us, and we congratulate ourselves on our freedom from the "yoke of a dictator's tyranny." No American politician would dream of breaking in on our routine of litanies with anything of the kind. We may imagine, for example, the shock to popular sentiment that would ensue upon Mr. Roosevelt's declaring publicly that "the State embraces everything, and nothing has value outside the State. The State creates right." Yet an American politician, as long as he does not formulate that doctrine in set terms, may go further with it in a practical way than Mussolini has gone, and without trouble or question. Suppose Mr. Roosevelt should defend his regime by publicly reasserting Hegel's dictum that "the State alone possesses rights, because it is the strongest." One can hardly imagine that our public would get that down without a great deal of retching. Yet how far, really, is that doctrine alien to our public's actual acquiescences? Surely not far.

The point is, that in respect of the relation between the theory and the actual practice of public affairs, the American is the most unphilosophical of beings. The rationalization of conduct in general is most repugnant to him; he prefers to emotionalize it. He is indifferent to the theory of things, so long as he may rehearse his formulas; and so long as he can listen to the patter of his litanies, no practical inconsistency disturbs him - indeed, he gives no evidence of even recognizing it as an inconsistency.

The ablest and most acute observer, among the many who came from Europe to look us over in the early part of the last century, was the one who is for some reason the most neglected, notwithstanding that in our present circumstances, especially, he is worth more to us than all the de Tocquevilles, Bryces, Trollopes and Chateaubriands put together. This was the noted political economist, Michel Chevalier.[14] Professor Chinard, in his admirable biographical study of John Adams, has called attention to Chevalier's observation that the American people have "the morale of an army on the march." The more one thinks of this, the more clearly one sees how little there is in what our publicists are fond of calling "the American psychology" that it does not exactly account for; and it exactly accounts for the trait that we are considering.

An army on the march has no philosophy; it views itself as a creature of the moment. It does not rationalize conduct except in terms of an immediate end. As Tennyson observed, there is a pretty strict official understanding against its doing so; "theirs not to reason why." Emotionalizing conduct is another matter, and the more of it the better; it is encouraged by a whole elaborate paraphernalia of showy etiquette, flags, music uniforms, decorations, and the careful cultivation of a very special sort of comradery. In every relation to "the reason of the thing," however - in the ability and eagerness, as Plato puts it, "to see things as they are" - the mentality of all army on the march is merely so much delayed adolescence; it remains persistently, incorrigibly, and notoriously infantile.

Past generations of Americans, as Martin Chuzzlewit[15] left record, erected this infantilism into a distinguishing virtue, and they took great pride in it as the mark of a chosen people, destined to live forever amidst the glory of their own unparalleled achievements *wie Gott in Frankreich* [like God in France]. Mr. Jefferson Brick, General Choke and the Honourable Elijah Pogram made a first-class job of indoctrinating their countrymen with the idea that a philosophy is wholly unnecessary, and that a concern with the theory of things is effeminate and unbecoming. An envious and presumably dissolute Frenchman may say what he likes about the morale of an army on the march, but the fact remains that it has brought us where we are, and has got us what we have. Look at a continent subdued, see the spread of our industry and commerce, our railways, newspapers, finance companies, schools, colleges, what you will! Well, if all this has been done without a philosophy, if we have grown to this unrivalled greatness without any attention to the theory of things, does it not show that philosophy and the theory of things are all moonshine, and not worth a practical people's consideration? The morale of an army on the march is good enough for us, and we are proud of it.

The present generation does not speak in quite this tone of robust certitude. It seems, if anything, rather less openly contemptuous of philosophy; one even sees sonic signs of a suspicion that in our present circumstances the theory of things might be worth looking into, and it is especially towards the theory of sovereignty and rulership that this new attitude of hospitality appears to be developing. The condition of public affairs in all countries, notably in our own, has done more than bring under review the mere current practice of politics, the character and quality of representative politicians and the relative merits of this-or-that form or mode of government. It has served to suggest attention to the one institution whereof all these forms or modes are but the several, and, from the theoretical point of view,

indifferent, manifestations. It suggests that finality does not lie with consideration of species, but of genus; it does not lie with consideration of the characteristic marks that differentiate the republican State, monocratic State, constitutional, collectivist, totalitarian, Hitlerian, Bolshevist, what you will. It lies with consideration of the State itself.

[13] Higgle -- Latin *cocio*. To chaffer, bargain, haggle, hesitate, and cavil; a false kind of reasoning that bears some resemblance to truth and is advanced solely for the sake of victory. Condensed from *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*.

[14] Michel Chevalier (1806–1879). French economist. An ardent Saint-Simonian as a youth, he later favored a form of welfare capitalism. He advocated industrial development as the key to social progress. Also a proponent of free trade, he negotiated with Richard Cobden the Anglo-French trade treaty of 1860. His *Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord* (1836) extols the United States.

[15] Referring to the *Life And Adventures Of Martin Chuzzlewit* by Charles Dickens.

V

There appears to be a curious difficulty about exercising reflective thought upon the actual nature of an institution into which one was born and one's ancestors were born. One accepts it as one does the atmosphere; one's practical adjustments to it are made by a kind of reflex. One seldom thinks about the air until one notices some change, favourable or unfavourable, and then one's thought about it is special; one thinks about purer air, lighter air, heavier air, not about air. So it is with certain human institutions. We know that they exist, that they affect us in various ways, but we do not ask how they came to exist, or what their original intention was, or what primary function it is that they are actually fulfilling; and when they affect us so unfavourably that we rebel against them, we contemplate substituting nothing beyond some modification or variant of the same institution. Thus colonial America, oppressed by the monarchical State, brings in the republican State; Germany gives up the republican State for the Hitlerian State; Russia exchanges the monocratic State for the collectivist State; Italy exchanges the constitutionalist State for the "totalitarian" State.

It is interesting to observe that in the year 1935, the average individual's incurious attitude towards the phenomenon of the State is precisely what his attitude was towards the phenomenon of the Church in the year, say, 1500. The State was then a very weak institution; the Church was very strong. The individual was born into the Church, as his ancestors had been for generations, in precisely the formal, documented fashion in which he is now born into the State. He was taxed for the Church's support, as he now is for the State's support. He was supposed to accept the official theory and doctrine of the Church, to conform to its discipline, and in a general way to do as it told him; again, precisely the sanctions that the State now lays upon him. If he were reluctant or recalcitrant, the Church made a satisfactory amount of trouble for him, as the State now does. Notwithstanding all this, it does not appear to have occurred to the Church-citizen of that day, any more than it occurs to the State-citizen of the present, to ask what sort of institution it was that claimed his allegiance. There it was; he accepted its own account of itself, took it as it stood, and at its own valuation. Even when he revolted, fifty years later, he merely

exchanged one form or mode of the Church for another, the Roman for the Calvinist, Lutheran, Zuinglian, or what not; again, quite as the modern State-citizen exchanges one mode of the State for another. He did not examine the institution itself, nor does the State-citizen today.My purpose in writing is to raise the question whether the enormous depletion of social power which we are witnessing everywhere does not suggest the importance of knowing more than we do about the essential nature of the institution that is so rapidly absorbing this volume of power.[16] One of my friends said to me lately that if the public utility corporations did not mend their ways, the State would take over their business and operate it. He spoke with a curiously reverent air of finality. Just so, I thought, might a Church citizen, at the end of the fifteenth century, have spoken of some impending intervention of the Church; and I wondered then whether he had any better informed and closer reasoned theory of the State than his prototype had of the Church. Frankly, I am sure he had not. His pseudo-conception was merely an unreasoned acceptance of the State on its own terms and at its own valuation; and in this acceptance, he showed himself no more intelligent, and no less, than the whole mass of State-citizenry at large.

It appears to me that with the depletion of social power going on at the rate it is, the State-citizen should look very closely into the essential nature of the institution that is bringing it about. He should ask himself whether he has a theory of the State, and if so, whether he can assure himself that history supports it. He will not find this a matter that can be settled off-hand; it needs a good deal of investigation, and a stiff exercise of reflective thought. He should ask, in the first place, how the State originated, and why; it must have come about somehow, and for some purpose. This seems an extremely easy question to answer, but he will not find it so. Then he should ask what it is that history exhibits continuously as the State's primary function. Then, whether he finds that "the State" and "government" are strictly synonymous terms; he uses them as such, but are they? Are there any invariable characteristic marks that differentiate the institution of government from the institution of the State? Then finally he should decide whether, by the testimony of history, the State is to be regarded as, in essence, a social or an anti-social institution?

It is pretty clear now that if the Church-citizen of 1500 had put his mind on questions as fundamental as these, his civilization might have had a much easier and pleasanter course to run; and the State-citizen of today may profit by his experience.

[16] An inadequate and partial idea of what this volume amounts to may be gotten from the fact that the American States income from taxation is now about one-third of the nation's total income! This takes into account all forms of taxation, direct and indirect, local and federal.