



The State

Franz Oppenheimer

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Over the years, many writers have claimed that the State has some kind of noble mission. Few have seen things with such clarity as the German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer. The State, Oppenheimer persuasively argues, is always born in the conquest of one group by another. The conquerors then set themselves up as the government and extract tribute in the form of taxes from the conquered. Furthermore, he argues, the State can have originated in no other way than through conquest and subjugation, and to advance his argument, he draws on vast historical knowledge with dramatic examples of the beginnings of the State from prehistoric to primitive, from hunters to herders, from the Vikings to modern day.

The State affects the most mundane as well as the most important aspects of our lives. As a powerful, sprawling institution, it shapes the other major institutions of society and reaches into our most personal everyday affairs. Yet, little of importance has been written on the State in terms of its nature and development. In this significant but long-neglected classic, Franz Oppenheimer develops his libertarian ideas on the origin and future of the State.

Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943) was a German sociologist, political economist, and chair for sociology and theoretical political economy at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main. From 1934 to 1935, Oppenheimer taught in Palestine, immigrating in 1936 to Los Angeles, where he was active in the American Sociological Association and became a founding member of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*.

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