

PREFACE

When a professional student of social affairs writes a political book, his first duty is plainly to say so. This is a political book. I do not wish to disguise this by describing it, as I might perhaps have done, by the more elegant and ambitious name of an essay in social philosophy. But, whatever the name, the essential point remains that all I shall have to say is derived from certain ultimate values. I hope I have adequately discharged in the book itself a second and no less important duty: to make it clear beyond doubt what these ultimate values are on which the whole argument depends.

There is, however, one thing I want to add to this. Though this is a political book, I am as certain as anyone can be that the beliefs set out in it are not determined by my personal interests. I can discover no reason why the kind of society which seems to me desirable should offer greater advantages to me than to the great majority of the people of this country. In fact, I am always told by my socialist colleagues that as an economist I should occupy a much more important position in the kind of society to which I am opposed—provided, of course, that I could bring myself to accept their views. I feel equally certain that my opposition to these views is not due to their being different from those with which I have grown up, since they are the very views which I held as a young man and which have led me to make the study of economics my profession. For those who, in the current fashion, seek interested motives in every profession of a political opinion, I may, perhaps, be allowed to add that I have every possible reason for not writing or publishing this book. It is certain to offend many people with whom I wish to live on friendly terms; it has forced me to put aside work for which I feel better qualified and to which I attach greater importance in the long run; and, above all, it is certain to prejudice the reception of the results of the more strictly academic work to which all my inclinations lead me.

If in spite of this I have come to regard the writing of this book as a duty which I must not evade, this was mainly due to a peculiar and serious feature of the discussions of problems of future economic policy at the present time, of which the public is scarcely sufficiently aware. This is the fact that the majority of economists have now for some years been absorbed by the war machine, and silenced by their official positions, and that in consequence public opinion on these problems is to an alarming extent guided by amateurs and cranks, by people who have an axe to grind or a pet panacea to sell. In these circumstances one who still has the leisure for literary work is hardly entitled to keep to himself apprehensions which current tendencies must create in the minds of many who cannot publicly express them—though in different circumstances I should have gladly left the discussion of questions of national policy to those who are both better authorised and better qualified for the task.

The central argument of this book was first sketched in an article entitled "Freedom and the Economic System," which appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for April, 1938, and was later reprinted in an enlarged form as one of the "Public Policy Pamphlets", edited by Professor H. D. Gideonse for the University of Chicago Press (1939). I have to thank the editors and publishers of both these publications for permission to reproduce certain passages from them.

*London School of Economics,
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前言

一个研究社会事务的职业学者来写一本政治著作，首要责任就是明白地指出这点。这是一本政治著作。我不希望用社会哲学文章更优雅大气的名字来掩盖这点，尽管完全可以那么做。但无论什么名字，基本点一样，我要说的都源自某种终极价值。我希望在这本书里充分履行另一个同样重要的责任：阐明本书整个论证所依据的这些终极价值是什么。

然而，我想补充一点。尽管这是一本政治著作，最大限度能怎么肯定我就怎么肯定地说，其中列出的信念并不取决于我的个人利益。在我看来理想的社会，没有理由对我比对英国大多数人更有利。事实上，社会学的同事一直对我说，在我所反对的那种社会制度下，作为一个经济学家，我的地位应该会高很多——当然，前提是我得接受他们的观点。我同样肯定是，之所以反对这些观点并不是因为他们不同于我从小就接触的观点，相反它们正是我年轻时所曾持有的观点，也正是这些观点使我选择了经济学研究作为职业。那些当下时髦，在每一个政治观点背后寻找利益动机的人或许可以容许我补充说，我完全有理由不写、不出版这本书。它肯定会冒犯很多我希望友好相处的人；它迫使我放下手头更擅长、长期来说更重要的工作；最重要的是，它肯定会妨碍别人接受我倾心向往、更严谨的学术工作成果。

尽管如此，如果我认识到写这本书是我无可推脱的责任，主要归因于，广大群众几乎未能充分认识到，现在这个时刻对于未来经济政策问题讨论的特殊性与重要性。实际情况是，现在多数的经济学家为战争服务多年，他们的官职使他们集体失声，导致的后果就是，对这些问题的舆论为外行、怪论、强词夺理、不懂装懂所操纵。在这种情况下，很多人必然心生忧患，不能明言，仍有闲暇写作的我，责无旁贷——倘使环境不同，应该把这些对国家政策问题的探讨留给更有威望、更有才能的人。

本书的中心论点在一篇名为“自由与经济制度”的文章中首次概述过，这篇文章可见于 1938 年 4 月的《当代评论》，后来增订重印为亨利·大卫·吉登斯教授 1939 年为芝加哥大学出版社主编的《公共政策丛刊》之一。感谢编辑、出版商允许我节选重版部分段落。

于伦敦经济学院

剑桥，1943 年 12 月