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Social Contract, Free Ride: A Study of the Public Goods Problem

Anthony de Jasay

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Anthony de Jasay : Social Contract, Free Ride: A Study of the Public Goods Problem before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Social Contract, Free Ride: A Study of the Public Goods Problem:

This book provides a novel account of the dilemma over how "public goods"--including civil order, defense, social welfare--should be provided and who should provide them. The author shows how present systems, in an attempt at fairness, actually help breed the parasitic "free riding" they were meant to suppress. He argues that, in the absence of taxation, many public goods would be provided by spontaneous group cooperation. However, this would imply some degree of free riding that would eventually lead cooperating groups away from voluntary solutions and closer to compulsory ones, bringing the problem full circle. De Jasay argues that these conflicting incentives are the principle cause of the poor functioning of organized society.