

Talismans and Tiger Repellent, the Religion of the State



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As adult humans, we hold a lot of beliefs that we bring to bear on our day-to-day actions. Many of these beliefs, assumptions and expectations come from our cumulative knowledge of the operations of the physical world in which we live. We have extracted them as larger principles from an observation of these principles operating in the world around us (induction). In other cases, we have arrived at truths or eliminated falsehoods by their contradictions of one another, or contradictions of observed reality (deduction). These type of "beliefs" or determinations are the rational ones. That is not to say, necessarily, that an idea arrived at through other processes is inherently wrong, or necessarily contradicts reason, but merely that it was not adopted because of its conformity to reason and evidence.

The other area of human beliefs is one which I would refer to as "faith-based". These beliefs, are those that are handed down to us by our surrounding society as presumptions or divine bestowals. Presumptions which we have not formed on the basis of evidence or logic, but which are given to us on the basis of the *fear* of what will happen if we do not accept them. Perhaps a systematic examination of religion in general, and the typical tactics by which religious determinations are transmitted in early childhood would be merited in a later article. For the moment, however, I wish merely to describe the nature of religious determinations in general, in order to properly categorize faith in the institution of the state as being religious and not rational in its basis for adoption.

Anyone who has advocated for the absence of the state has noticed that when a person is confronted with that idea, the "disaster scenario" immediately comes forward. When you get the response "what about the roads" or "what about the murderers" you are not getting a logical argument. What you are getting is a glimpse into the inner psychological turmoil of the person to whom you are speaking, and a glimpse into the basis for their belief in the state. They have accepted this belief in the state on the basis of faith and societal indoctrination, and on the basis of fear of the disaster presented to them.

Philosopher / novelist Ayn Rand referred to this practice as “social metaphysics”. Metaphysics, in philosophical terminology, simply means the study of the material world around us and its nature. In short, “social metaphysics” is the practice of reaching determinations about the nature of reality through social means, instead of on the basis of our individual observations and reasoning. So when a belief reached through these means is threatened, naturally the fear scenario which motivated the acceptance of the belief will come to the forefront.

It is in this way, **the state has been religiously accepted as an ex-post-facto cause for the peace, prosperity and social cooperation which preceded and enabled it.** The *real* cause of whatever orderly and prosperous civilization we have now, is the widespread acceptance of basic interpersonal morality known as the non-aggression principle. If you still believe that the existence of laws is what causes our relative peace and stability, and not this larger moral principle, ask yourself *why* you are not stealing or murdering someone right now. Is it really merely because you know it is illegal?

The state came later as an innovation designed to feed on the newly emerging economic surplus.

In one of the greatest “Simpsons” episodes ever made, and one of the greatest examples of political satire in general, Lisa Simpson points out the fallacy behind Homer’s assumption that his government “Bear Patrol” program is effective.

Homer: *Not a bear in sight. The Bear Patrol must be working like a charm!*

Lisa: *That’s specious reasoning, Dad.*

Homer: *Thank you, dear.*

Lisa: *By your logic I could claim that this rock keeps tigers away.*

Homer: *Oh, how does it work?*

Lisa: *It doesn’t work.*

Homer: *Uh-huh.*

Lisa: *It’s just a stupid rock.*

Homer: *Uh-huh.*

Lisa: *But I don’t see any tigers around, do you?*

Homer: *Lisa, I want to buy your rock.*

The best way to understand people’s belief in the necessity, morality, and effectuality of government is to think of it as a belief in a magical talisman. They have always had it in

their pocket, and the disasters which they assume would result in its absence, have never happened. The correlation they see becomes, because of societal conditioning, the cause of the absence of the disaster they fear.