

On Fraudsters, two Types of Honest Persons, and the Role of the State in the Light of Kant's "Essay on the Maladies of the Head"

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Once a state based on principles of fairness and equality (in line with Kant's republican constitution) is established, it faces the challenge of self-preservation. Addressing this issue Kant argued against relying on citizens' moral capacity as the main safeguarding force. Like many others he was convinced that men in a society become selfish and greedy. But he also believed that this disposition, if adopted by many, will eventually undermine itself. He proposed the existence of a mechanism that works against the conscious intentions of selfish individuals, a secret plan of nature that leads very slowly and "over many generations" to the overall reduction of greediness in a society. In the short and middle term however, such a state is structurally unstable.

In my essay I elaborate on this structural instability from three interrelated perspectives: 1) from the point of view of Kant's secret plan of nature; 2) from the point of view of the link between the quality of the state and the quality of the citizen and 3) from the point of view of the secret exemption as the principal mechanism structurally undermining the rule of law. It turns out that the fate of two types of honest people - I distinguish between Kant's and Hume's type - depends on the quality of the state. When things go wrong and the Kant's honest citizen cannot exit the state, only a high quality state can secure his survival. A high quality state also guarantees the second type of honest person - Hume's type - the reciprocity that he or she needs in order to remain honest. In a low quality or "failed" state Hume's type will sooner or later start cheating on others and violating the law himself in order to survive, while the Kant's type of honest person will perish.

Key words: fraudsters, honest people, Kant's honest person, Hume's honest person, quality of the state, quality of the citizen, moral stance, rational selfishness, game theory

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