

Freedom from Fear

Fear

Many things shall be said for long time about the death squad attack on two symbols of American power, but among the most certain of their effects is fear that they reportedly struck into hearts of many citizens around the world, above all in the United States itself. A month after the attack, fighter jets in that country scrambled daily over key cities on “homeland defence” missions. Security was tight at sporting events, and in and around all government buildings. The airport of that country’s capital city had scarcely reopened. The researches coined the formula about “The New Normality” as response to the question about the meaning of normality in the climate of “floating fear” (Bauman). For the fourth time within a century, fear is casting a long shadow over the whole world. Globalization of fear and terror deeply changed political map of modern political societies producing, as Ronald Dworkin strongly stressed in his marvelous critics of the “Patriotic Act” deep liberal and democratic deficit. “Freedom from fear” which even in the mids of war Franklin Roosevelt ranked only fourth of his famous fourth freedoms, has with the contemporary “war on terror” come to be touted as “chief among them”.

For some observers, these developments confirm the rule that human beings are creature of fear – that people are ultimately timorous beings. Other observers cast doubts upon sweeping ontological claims of this kind. They point especially to historicity of fear, with good reason and much evidence on their side. These critics of ontological accounts of fear emphasizes as well, the basic point that fear comes in many different guises and forms, as eschatological fears that swept Europe from the fifteen century onwards show (1).

The odd things is that political thinking has been thought naked by this new phase of globalization of fear, essentially because in recent decades, question about fear have rarely featured in discussions within the fields of political theory. Franz Neumann’s masterful Berlin lecture on the subject a half-century ago, was among last sustained treatment of the theme that has since fallen into abeyance. The work of Judith Shklar and Guglielmo Ferrero belong to that important exception. The aim of this paper is to explore and reflect political ideas of these writers and present three different solutions how to reach “freedom of fear”.

F. Neumann. Fear as Energetic Principle of Political Order

It is common assumption that Neumann relied on the phenomenon of fear in politics in the last stage of his life. Besides his study on the same title (“Anxiety and Politics”) which he originally delivered as lecture before the Free University of Berlin, few other studies are of great importance: “Approaches to the Study of Political power”(1950), “The Concept of Political Liberty” (1953) and “Notes on the Theory of Dictatorship” (1957). The first study he focused on the relationship between political power and psychology was “Approach to the Study of Political Power” aiming to add “new idea to the discussion of political power”. Neumann argued against psychological approach in political science situating Machiavelli’s theory of politics and power as paradigmatic example of that approach. “ The historical basis of this approach to politics and political science is usually psychological, as Machiavelli has already developed it. Men are the same during history. They have certain stable traits and all, are equipped with “power drive”, an uncontrollable and irrational impulse for power (...) This is not imply that psychology of power has no place in political science. Its significance is great, but not decisive. Its contribution is twofold . First, it leads to realization that optimistic theory of human nature is one – sided and thus false. Man, although endowed with reason, frequently know not – or is permitted to know – what is interest are. Secondly, psychological techniques permit us to describe in concrete and convincing terms the personality structures most capable of exerting or of suffering power. But psychology cannot supply a theory of political power” (2). Accordingly, the rejection of the psychological approach involves in its positive side the view that politics (and history) is not simply a struggle for power, but the attempt to mold the world according to image. Political and historical process has meaning. Although, Neumann reapprached Machiavelli he has never freed himself from the influence of natural philosophy. In the important study of that time “The Concept of Political Liberty” , Neumann strongly relied on natural philosophy tradition which start in the philosophy of Epicurus and has continued to the modern times the philosophy of Hobbes, Spinoza, French enlightenment, and English utilitarianism. Some kind of Epicuerism remains stable element of Neumann’s political theory. Neumann starts with the view Epicurus thought that external nature is governed by necessity, that is, by immutable natural laws. Understanding of this necessity makes man free, liberates him from fear. A man cannot display his fear if he does know what the nature of external world is. The tradition of enlightenment did another decisive step in that tradition promising to override irrational inclination of passions by enabling man to live according to dictate of reason. “To be able to live according to reason man must classify his passions, understand them, and thereby subdue them. Only slavish nature is ruled by passions”(3). Starting from that legacy Neumann demonstrates the significance of the cognitive element of political freedom. In this sense, it is not

surprise that Neumann starts his theory of political alienation, which could be denote as yhe most important innovation in his politics of fear, with Sigmund Freud who very much stands in the tradition of natural philosophy. In his probably most important treaty from that period, Franz Neumann introduces the notion of “political alienation” as fundamental principle of political society. In the same term he denotes the core of political philosophies and theories as an attempt to solve the problem of man’s political alienation. “It is fairly widespread academic doctrine that political theory is concerned with determining the limits of the citizen’s obedience of state power. In this formula coercion appears legitimate, and the sole function of political theory is to erect a fence around such political power relationship (...) Political theory is conceived as rationalization of existing power relationship (...) Political power embodied in the state , will always be alien to man.: he cannot and should not fully identify himself with it” (4). The whole history of political societies could be described as struggle against alienation of political power.

Another important element of Neumann’s political theory belongs to his concept “regimes of fear”. He very much relied upon political theory of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Montesquieu, arguing that fear of (enemy) is the integrating principle of dictatorship, the term which he uses as general notion for “regimes of fear”, regime of fear is kind of political formation which institutionalizes destructive role of fear using methods of terror, propaganda and crime. It is core of all totalitarian systems. “It must, however, not be overlooked – that every political system is based on anxiety. But there is more than quantitative difference between the anxiety which is institutionalized in totally repressive system and that which is based of halfway liberal one. These are qualitatively different state of affairs. One may perhaps say that totally repressive system institutionalizes depressive and persecutory anxiety, the halfway liberal system true anxiety (5). As an illustration Neumann takes the Spartan State and Thucydides analysis arguing that “fear of Helot” is integrating principle of Spartanian ruling class, their anxiety being activated into aggressiveness and destruction. The totally repressive character of Sparta rest precisely on fear as “energetic principle”.

Following Neumann’s analysis we could say that his theory remains unfinished and limiting to the theory of “negative politics”. It is for the sure the core of the politics of fear. What remains unresolved, even in crude manner, is question, what be done to prevent and override the fear, which as Neumann rightly pointed out, cannot be eliminated. He ask, can the state accomplished this problem, and replies that it is impossible, since state has caused the evil. In this sense two basic motivations which leads Neumann remains unfinished, namely Schmittian notion of “friend and enemy” as core of politics, and the formula of “order and disorder” (“cause of order”) which since Machiavelli dominated in social and political theory..

J. Shklar. Constitution of Liberal Polity and Fear

The work of Judith Shklar also counts as an important exception in contemporary political theory. Her ideas are of particular significance for two reasons. First, she spoke from and to the tradition of liberal political thought which dominates in contemporary political discourse about something which is very important to the tradition and which has lost sight. Shklar articulates the historical roots of liberalism as a politics of fear. This sets her apart, as only liberal voice to explore the deep connections between the conditions of individual and societal fear and the constitution of liberal polity. Secondly, despite its depth and insight, Shklar's analysis remains, like so many classical analysis of that topic, rooted in an ontological and wholly negative conception of fear in political life. Liberals, as I pointed out, have something special to thank to Judith Shklar for. In the last years before her death, she wrote a short work "Liberalism of Fear", in which she dragged modern liberals back to the politics of fear that had contextualized and dramatically informed classical liberal analysis. In her last few essays, Shklar reminded liberals that key concern of Hobbes and Locke, and, later, of Montesquieu were response to conditions of fearful uncertainty. In the recent time of relative wealth and security, liberal theory has been focused on issues of the rightful distribution of excess wealth and /or rightful allocation of resources, and liberty of the individual in the world full of actual and potential belongings, a world assumed to be more or less free from destructive uncertainties. In discussing these, people can forget that liberalism was borne out of the fires of war and the social and economic uncertainty attending the collapse of political societies. They can forget that key concern of Hobbes, Locke, and Milton were a set of response to the violent and fearfully conditions in which they lived. Shklar points out that "It is out of tradition begun, by conviction of the earliest defenders of toleration, borne in horror, that cruelty is an evil (... (that political liberalism of fear arose and continue aimed the terror of our times to have relevance" (6). Hobbes, of course, was not liberal in the true sense. He sought to control the condition of fear by converting into competition that was rule-bound and protected by paternalistic state and backed on "obedience-protective" formula. John Locke perceived the dangers in creating an unarmed society of citizens who are dependent on the good will of fully armed state. For this reason, he initiated the idea of controlling the fear through constitutional devices that would supplement the fear-reducing dynamic principles of civil society – tolerance and trade. Montesquieu took this idea much further, presenting a deep and wide account of community-building dimensions of commerce, and outlining the social functionality of a pluralist culture and institutions of separation of powers. It is Montesquieu who mostly informed Shklar. Hobbes, she rightly pointed out, was not concerned with individual liberty, Locke was more concerned with establishing a "liberalism of natural rights", but Montesquieu posited fear at the destructive heart of despotism – the corrupt and corrupting anti-polity, which lies as negative potential in every society. Furthermore, Montesquieu's vision was shaped by conservative

understanding that contingencies of time and place and the prejudices of human-kind ensured that perfect, certain and fearless world is unobtainable. Shklar, summarizing her years of considered reflection of the tradition of political theory and upon the events of twentieth century, concluded that “our best hope is not perfect and equal world but for a less brutal and irrational world(7). Starting from such normative assumption Shklar posits the end of politics, not as the pursuit of perfection, but rather as avoidance of the worst possible outcome, “*summum malum*”: cruelty and the fear it inspires and very fear of fear itself”(8). Contra Hobbes, she argues that the goal of politics should not be to eliminate fear, an outcome neither practicable nor desirable, but rather “damage control” taming fear wherever possible and, in doing so open the widest possible degree a space in which citizens can “make effective decision without fear”. This is the purpose for which liberalism was designed.

The events after her Shklar’s death have confirmed the importance of liberal reflection of politics of fear. However, Shklar’s discussion remains rooted in an ontological and whole negative conception of fear in political life. Such tendency is most overt in her discussion of “fear of fear”. This is special fear that is always negative and destructive. It is fear that inebriates a person, stopping them, “from enjoying the present in anticipation of the future”. The fear from fear is derived from a primal root fear – a fear of cruelty. Cruelty is defined as “deliberative infliction of physical and secondary emotional pain upon weaker person or group by stronger one” (9). It is the destructive force necessarily involved in the practical reduction by stronger person of the weaker person, from self-directing subject to a controlled and manipulated use-object. The weaker person feels the impact of this force, passively as the breaking up of their functioning identity. Such cruelty, she implies, exist as fact or potential in all power relations, and is thus a permanent concern of political affairs, For this reason, add Shklar, “protection against fear of cruelty is both “beginning and end of political institutions”.

Shklar’s analysis of fear is clearly important. It addresses the complacencies of the liberal tradition, of which she is part and which dominates political discourse. She introduces among liberals reconsideration of the involvement of fear in power relations, especially of the importance of emotional and psychological dimension in the structure of power relations., a factor of great significance, consistently underestimated by rationalist liberal analysis. Despite, its importance, however, Shklar’s definition of fear remains too imprecise confusing acute, immediate fear to all the fibres of the body, typically produced by threat of cruelty, with slow burning, chronic “state of foreboding, typical of the fear of fear”. Shklar, we would add, like Montesquieu and Tocqueville, before her use the language of fear to justify, the rule of law, separation of power, tolerance and social pluralism, arguing that liberal constitutions are primarily devices to tame fear and produce safe and civil condition for living, but she underestimate democracy and democratic processes as factor of liberating from fear. Shklar argued that democracy is necessary element of modern liberal polity stressing that “without the institutions of representative democracy (...) and multiplicity of active group

liberalism is in jeopardy”(10). This claim is standard truism of liberal theory and typically values democracy as a functional servant of liberalism, rather than as end of itself. “Liberalism , she wrote, is monogamously, faithfully and permanently married to democracy, but it is marriage of convenience” (11). Here Shklar undervalues the importance of democracy to a political engagement with fear. Democracy, we would add, is not only a necessary agency of liberalism, but also a vital end in itself.

G. Ferrero. Legitimacy and Fear

Classical political theory since Hobbes to Shklar correctly grasped that the **condition sine qua non** public peace was existence of sovereign power able to guarantee respect for law, and, capable of assuaging constant fear of uncivil actions. But what political theory did not realize was that power based solely on coercion could never free individuals from fear: it would be rather, force them to live in permanent terror, limited freedom and fear. This is key point in the instructive interpretation of fear and political power by early twentieth century political writer and historian Guglielmo Ferrero.

Ferrero acknowledges that the function of power – institutionalization of the command-obedience relationship within a given society – is to free men and woman from the fear they have of each other, but he insists that this relationship contains a paradox fraught with terrible consequences. In order to eliminate the fear that individuals have of their fellows, political power creates another type of fear, fear of power itself.

Ferrero begins from the idea that individual’s innermost essence of their personality is to be found in the tactics and strategy that they use in their fight against death. “The highest living creature are man, who is also the most fearful and most feared creatures. He fears and is feared more than any other because he is only one that has been pouring ever since the great dark guilt of death into which the torrent of life has been pouring ever since the beginning of time; and because he is the only one that has ability to invent and manufacture instrument to destroy life. Knowing that he may to day , he sees the danger of death everywhere” (12). The civilization, institutions, and symbolic universe that human beings create in order to have conditions of relative stability and security all stems from their fear of nature of others, and of future. According to this interpretation, religion, politics, war, laws, morals, and so on, are all attempts to eliminate fear by removing , or at least reducing to minimum, instability and uncertainty in human conditions. This bring Ferrero to define civilization as “school of courage”. “Is there is primordial evil, which we may easily recognize, and to which we may trace all those changes that we classify under the names of “civilization” and” progress”. This primordial evil seems to be fear. Fear is soul of the living universe. The universe cannot enter into the sphere of life without becoming afraid. Man is then , the most timid of all creatures. He is borne of fear and he lives a prey to terror(..) Civilization is school of courage and is measured by the result of effort man makes to vanish

his chimerical fear and to understand the real dangers that threaten him. Progress is everything that is of help to man in vanquishing his imaginary fear and discovering and eliminating the real dangers. Civilization is the result of progress so understood" (13). He adds that government and political order belongs to artificial means that men build up in order to produce minimal level of security and reduction of omnipotent fear of disorder.. "Power is supreme expression of that man has of himself, in spite of his effort to rid himself of it. This is perhaps the deepest and most obscure secret of history. Even in the poorest and most ignorant societies the rudiment of authority can be found" (14).

Power generated by fear that individuals have of each other is forced to induce fear in order to be obeyed. But this means that power is dominated by fear of the revolt of those who are governed, a fear that Elias Canetti subsequently called the "anguish of command".. Every government knows that revolt is latent even in most submissive obedience; men are afraid of the government, which is oppressing them, the government is afraid of the men who may revolt. Backed on Gaetano Mosca, his close friend and opponent, and his concept of "political formula", Ferrero's main concern is to address the problem how to quell fear by exercising command according to principle of legitimacy. Principles of legitimacy are justification of power, that is, the right to command.. Such justification is essential requisite of social order, since of many inequalities between men, none have far-reaching consequences, and hence such need of justification, as inequality deriving from power. "At very heart of the principle of legitimacy is capacity to exercise mutual fear that always arises between power and its subjects. The most important part of society, government, can attain its perfect state, legitimacy, only by means of unspoken contract. The principle of legitimacy are simply the different formulas of that unspoken contract" (15) If unspoken contract is violated, The Hobbesian state of nature re-emerges, and widespread fear grips everyone. In such situation, the whole society is fallen into chaos; people suddenly discover that they can no longer trust one another; unspoken contract is of no value, and fear dominates society, altering all behavior. According to Ferrero, nothing better display such condition of "great fear" than French Revolution. Ferrero interpreted 1789 as an "abscess of fear" that terrified first France and then all Europe. At this point, Ferrero begins his analysis of revolutionary dictatorship, which, in his opinion had its first expression in the political power of Napoleon Bonaparte. The great political crisis (the "great schism") and the war that followed consolidated an entirely new form of political domination that endangered civility and political liberty. Ferrero follows the pattern of liberal thought stretching from Constant to Talmon, but his interpretation of the totalitarian nature of revolutionary dictatorship is particularly original because it highlights the generally neglected problem of fear in political theory. Napoleon power is seen as an example of power that is violated democratic legitimacy, suppressing the right of opposition and the freedom to vote. Such government is inversion of democratic formula, for the will of the nation is silenced by government itself. The nation is said to enjoy sovereignty, but it is actually deprived of all essential component of such power, even in its

moment of maximum glory. Such government is quasi-legitimate government , since instead of freeing its subjects from fear, it makes them, in unprecedented way, its victims. Fear is energetic principle of such power hiding the principle of force and insecurity behind apparent institutions and apparent legitimacy. In such order nothing is stable and permanent.

Refernces

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