METUS REVEALED. HOBBES ON FEAR

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Abstract: Fear is a universal emotion, experienced by everybody. When it becomes collective and social, it can enter into the processes of political imagination, being used for political purposes. This article is a brief examination of the meanings and functions of fear(s) in Hobbes's thought. Some of his views may be 'historically' related to his own time, the Seventeenth Century, and others may be linked and confined to his own theory. However, his reflections on the importance of the *perturbatio animi* of fear for human psychology, and its impact on human interactions and collective behaviour, are still interesting for us today. The various meanings of fear highlighted by Hobbes (especially in his political works: *Elements of Law*, *De cive*, and *Leviathan*) are here synthetically reconstructed, with particular emphasis on fear as passion, expectation and will, and on fear in his various social aspects: mutual fear and fear of death, which give rise to the political community; fear of punishment and fear for the laws, which help to maintain the State and finally, fear of invisible power and *timor Dei*, from which religion originates, and the religious power that Hobbes wanted to be held by the State.

Keywords: Hobbes, political imagination, fear/*metus*, mutual fear, fear of death, fear for the laws, *Timor Dei*.

INTRODUCTION: FEAR AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION

Fear is an individual emotion[1] but under certain circumstances it can become 'social', involving many people, and changing their social attitudes and mutual behaviour, as happens with the collective fear generated by political terror today (the post-9/11 events being paradigmatic in this sense). Collective fears have always accompanied humankind. It is sufficient to think of the fear of the end of the world in the Middle Ages, that is re-echoed in today's fear of the year 2012 - the only difference being perhaps that the latter is a *technological* fear. With the expression "technological fear" the reference is to fears which have their origin within society (usually for economic and/or

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[1] See R.C.Solomon (1993). *The Passions. Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett, pp.353-354.

political purposes) but then are constructed as collective *phenomena* by the mass media, through the process of mass communication itself. Technological fear and terror are the product of "a conflation of truth and fiction"[2] that generates in many people a sense of dangerous reality, that in turn creates the basis for insecure living.

In his book *Liquid Fear*, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes: "In the liquid modern world, the dangers and fears are also liquid-like – or are they rather gaseous? They flow, seep, leak, ooze... No walls have been invented yet to stop them, though many try to build them"[3]. Then Bauman refers to the paradox - highlighted by Robert Castel in his book *L"insécurité sociale*[4] - of the modern society in Western developed countries: it is the most secure society that has ever existed in human history, but at the same time its members experience many fears, arising from insecurity: "It is our 'security obsession', and our intolerance of any minor - even the tiniest - breach in security provision that it prompts, that becomes the most prolific, self-replenishing and probably inexhaustible source of our anxiety and fear" (Bauman 2006, 130).

Collective fear is so powerful a passion that can be used for political purposes, even in democratic contexts, where the person or group who is able to provide protection may have better chances of being elected. Collective fear is also a way of "imagining the political", a function of political imagination, influencing internal and external State politics. For instance, xenophobia is used by right wing parties in continental Europe to gain consent, while Islam-phobia, and the collective fear of terrorist attacks were used to justify "the war against terror". Tzvetan Todorov has recently written that, to build a safe and inclusive world, Western societies should free themselves from 'fear', while Muslim societies (and those living in the West who accept their values) should free themselves from 'resentment'. It is necessary to try to live in a plural world, where self-affirmation should not imply the submission or destruction of the other[5].

Bearing this 'contemporary thoughts' in mind, it is useful to consider one of the most in-depth analyses of fear (individual and

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[2] See Richard Kearney (2003). "On Terror", ch. 5 in *Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting Otherness*. London-New York: Routledge, pp.109-137.
[3] Z.Bauman (2006). *Liquid Fear*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 97.
[4] Robert Castel (2003). *Qu"est-ce qu"être protégé?* Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
[5] See Todorov, Tzvetan (2008). *La Peur des barbares. Au-delà du choc des civilisations*. Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 330.

collective) ever carried out in the history of Western thought, that of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). He is perhaps the philosopher who has attributed the most prominent role to *fear* within his system of thought, as well as in his consideration of human life. In his own words: "Life itself is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Fear, no more than without Sense"[6].

Hobbes is not a sociologist because he lived in an age when Sociology had not yet been born; but he is certainly a social philosopher, whose theory investigates the genealogy of society, and the construction of politics, seen as a way to achieve social order, and a peaceful happy society. The first scholar, who worked on some important Hobbesian manuscripts preserved in Chatsworth house, and discovered some previously unknown Hobbesian works, is the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, the author of the famous treatise *Community and Society*, that saw several editions in the first part of the XX Century. He also wrote a book on Hobbes's life and works that has never been translated into English: *Hobbes Leben und Lehre* (1896) where he writes that, for Hobbes, "[…] the rational nature of men is at the same time their social nature. From hence it derives the universal or political community"[7] (not in a cosmopolitan sense: unlike Kant, Hobbes is mainly concerned with State politics).

For Hobbes, the social nature coincides with the *rational* in the sense that it is through reason, and by reasoning, that men find a way to escape their unbearable "natural" condition of war of all against all, and build up a community regulated by civil (political) laws. In this process, reason is helped by passion, and precisely by the passion of 'fear'. In fact, Hobbes *imagines* the political community as arising from the main necessity of human nature: self protection, the avoidance of pain and death in order to escape suffering and remain alive.

As it's known, Hobbes elaborated a tripartite system of philosophy, containing a section on *body*, one on *man* and another on *citizen*, which resulted in three works written in Latin, published at different times: *De corpore* (1655), *De homine* (1658) and *De cive* (1642; 1647 with additions). Many of the themes explored in these

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[6] Hobbes, Thomas (1651). *Leviathan*, edited by R. Santi, Milan: Bompiani, 2004 (English version) VI,58 – for the Hobbesian works, all references are to chapters and paragraphs, which are the same in almost every modern edition.

[7] Tönnies, Ferdinand (1896). *Hobbes Leben und Lehre*, Stuttgart: Frommans Verlag, 83 (my translation).

works had already been the subject of *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, circulated in manuscript copies in 1640. However, Hobbes' most famous work is *Leviathan*, which appeared in English, in 1651, and in a somewhat revised Latin version in 1668. In its first two Parts, *Leviathan* contains a sort of synthesis of the three 'systematic' works - with a partial re-elaboration of the content of *De cive* - while the last two Parts constitute an entirely new treatise on religion, theology and religious power.

In all the works mentioned, the concept of *fear* plays a key role at different levels. In what follows, I will seek to explore the most important meanings of *fear* in Hobbes' thought, considering firstly the *individual* dimension of fear, and then the *social* dimension in its various aspects. This theoretic framework is both useful in treating such a complex matter so briefly, and consistent with Hobbes' hermeneutic indications[8].

FEAR: THE INDIVIDUAL DIMENSION.

FEAR AS *PASSION*, *EXPECTATION* AND *WILL*.

For Hobbes, every kind of knowledge originates with sense and is caused by motion. Everything existing is of bodily nature, and everything that we perceive is the effect produced by external bodies, setting our senses in motion with their matter (Hobbes 1651, I-II).

Fear is first and foremost a passion belonging to the individual[9]. But what is passion for Hobbes? Passions are common to everyone; it is their object which may vary: for instance, the object of desire (Hobbes 1651, Introduction, 3). They are emotions in the etymological sense of the Latin word *emotio*: *e-motio*, movement from, or - as Hobbes prefers to say - 'motion' caused by something.

Thus, all passions are reduced by Hobbes to motion. They are movements (internal to the subject) *towards* or *from* an object, that can be actually perceived (a sensed / perceived object) or was perceived in the past (a remembered object) or is fancied by the mind (an imagined object).

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[8] See for instance Thomas Hobbes (1640). *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*. J.C.A.Gaskin (ed.), Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp.1-182, XIII, 1.

[9] On the passions in Hobbes, and in the wider intellectual context of his century, see Susan James (1997). *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*. Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press.

In *The Elements of Law* (and in *Leviathan* also) the kind of motion belonging specifically to passions is called "endeavour" - that stands for the Latin *conatus* (this is a central concept in Hobbes' thought[10]) - or "the internal beginning of animal motion" (not to be confused with "vital" motions, as the circulation of the blood). Endeavour is defined as "a solicitation or provocation either to draw near to the thing that pleaseth, or to retire from the thing that displeaseth" (Hobbes 1640, VII, 2).

Fear, in particular, is endeavour "in respect of the displeasure expected" (Ibidem) and since the things that displease are called "evil" (Hobbes 1640, VII, 3) fear is also defined as "the expectation of evil" (Hobbes 1640, IX, 8 - in *De homine* XII, 3 fear is the feeling that a good might be lost, or that it might cause an evil associated with it) its contrary being hope as "the expectation of good to come" (Ibidem).

It is to be noticed that the notion of "expectation" involves a cognitive dimension. We can expect something only if we have an idea of what it is, and of the consequences it will have upon us. Hobbes is perfectly aware of this. He writes that "passions [...] consist in conception of the future", "a supposition of the same proceeding from remembrance of what is past" (Hobbes 1640, VIII, 3).

Experiences and the remembering of their positive or negative outcomes form the basis of expectations for the future. However, fear is a passion that can be felt also in absence of a past direct experience of an object. As Jan Blits has emphasized in the article "Hobbesian Fear", "desires presuppose experience, fears do not [...]. While we can desire something only if we know it, we naturally fear something precisely because we do not know it"[11] (cf. Hobbes 1651, VI, 4). Be it the result of the ignorance of an object, or of its knowledge and its negative effects, the passion of fear is based on expectation (a conception of future arising in the mind) that - as we read in *Leviathan* - "proceeds from foresight of the end, or consequence of things" (Hobbes 1651, VI, 12; cf. III, 7).

With regard to fear, the expectation is that the object will hurt, fear being defined as "*aversion*, with the opinion of *hurt* from the

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[10] See G.B.Herbert (1989). *Thomas Hobbes: The Unity of Scientific and Moral Wisdom*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

[11] Jan Blits (1989). *Hobbesian Fear*, "Political Theory", 17, n. 3, 417-431, p. 424.

object" (Hobbes 1651, VI, 16) - in the Latin version: "*Aversio*, cum opinione damni secuturi, *metus*"[12].

An "opinion" is a proposition that we think is true. In this case, it indicates a view about the future, being synonymous with "foresight" of things to come (in Latin *praevisio*). In other words, being an anticipation of a future happening on the basis of past experiences, it is an exercise of what Hobbes calls "prudence" (cf. Hobbes 1651, VIII, 11).

When defining fear in *Leviathan*, perhaps Hobbes has in mind Plato's definition in the *Laws*. Plato asserts that "there are opinions about the future (*dóxas mellónton*) which have the general name of "expectation" (*elpís*) and the specific name of "fear" (*fóbos*) when the expectation is of hurt (*lúpe*) and of "confidence" (*zárros*) when of pleasure (*edoné*)" (Plato, *Laws* I, 644; my translation). Another relevant source may have been a passage of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. In his selective translation of this text, published in 1637, entitled *A Brief of the Art of Rhetorique*, Hobbes writes: "Fear is a trouble, or vexation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of an evil at hand (*ek fantasías méllontos kakoú*) which may hurt or destroy"[13].

The effects of fear are not limited to the mental and internally emotional sphere of the individual. They go far beyond that. Indeed they do influence human behaviour. In fact, fear motivates human action, especially when it prevails in the decision-making process, that Hobbes calls "deliberation".

In the *Elements of Law*, Hobbes explains that "an alternate succession [in the mind] of appetite and fear, during all the time the action is in our power to do, or not to do, is that we call *deliberation*" (Hobbes 1640, XII, 1; cf. Hobbes 1651, VI, 49: instead of appetite and fear, "desires, aversions, hopes and fears" are found here). He then adds that "in deliberation the last appetite, as also the last fear, is called *will*"; more precisely: "the last appetite will to do; the last fear will not to do, or will to omit" (Hobbes 1640, XII, 2; cf. Hobbes 1651, VI, 53).

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[12] Thomas Hobbes (1668). *Leviathan*, R. Santi (ed.), Milan: Bompiani, 2004 (Latin version) VI, 15.

[13] Thomas Hobbes (1637). *A Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique*, in *The Rhetorics of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy,* John T. Harwood (ed.), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986, 33-128, II, VI (with reference to Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1382a).

Fear then, as we read in *De corpore*, is "deliberation from aversion"[14], and the last fear - fear as the final evaluation in a series of alternate thoughts - is will to avoid an action, upon the expectation that it will cause a certain kind and degree of pain.

When an action or an attitude based on fear involves other human beings, we enter the domain of social relationships.

FEAR: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION I.
MUTUAL FEAR AND *FEAR OF DEATH*.

For Hobbes, fear is also fundamental at a social level, shaping human behaviour toward others - namely, social behaviour.

From the first chapter of *De cive*[15], it clearly emerges that human beings are naturally unsociable, their actions being motivated above all by the instinct of self-preservation, and by self-interest. By nature, for their entire life they strive for honour and glory or, as will be said in *Leviathan*, for "power", in the form preferred by them: wealth, authority, honour, knowledge, etc. (cf. Hobbes 1651, VIII, 15; see also X, 1-15).

The human animal is far from being the Aristotelian *zóon politikón*. As Hobbes points out, "man is not born fit for society" (Hobbes 1647, I, 2; cf. Hobbes 1651, XIII, 10: Nature dissociates men, and renders them "apt to invade, and destroy each other") seeking, as he always is, his own advantage, not the common good; "profit" and not "friendship" (Hobbes 1647, I, 2).

But if this is really human nature, why and how is it that men live in society, build social order and create the State? Hobbes's answer is "mutual fear". In the "natural" condition, there is "a general diffidence in mankind, and mutual fear one of another" (Hobbes 1640, XIV, 3; cf. Hobbes 1647, I, 2) generated by "natural equality" (cf. Hobbes 1651, XIII, 3; human beings are born equal in body and mind; it is society that generates inequality) and by men's "willingness to hurt each other" (Hobbes 1647, I, 3).

This mutual fear results in a state of "war of all against all". Even if fighting is not ongoing, it is nonetheless always threatened, and this uncertainty influences everyone's way of living (cf. Hobbes 1651, XIII, 8).

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[14] Hobbes, Thomas (1655): *De corpore*, ed. K. Schuman and M. Pécharman, Paris: Vrin, 1999, XXV, 13.

[15] Hobbes, Thomas (1647). *On the Citizen*, ed. R. Tuck and M. Silverthorne, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, I.

To the objection that, if the natural condition of mankind (in absence of civil laws) was that of war, men could never associate and build a State, Hobbes replies that "fearing" is not only "being actually frightened". In fact, fear is "any anticipation of future evil". Thus, mutual fear results in the following attitudes: "not only flight, but also distrust, suspicion, precaution and provision against fear" (Hobbes 1647, I, 2). The consequence is that people live in a situation of "continual danger" (*periculum perpetuum*) and "fear of violent death" (*mortis violentae metus*) and life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1651, XIII, 9; cf. Hobbes 1668, XIII, 7)[16].

However, they soon understand that this negative situation must and can be changed, and it is their mutual fear (fear of violent death) that acts as a motivating force to operating in this sense. In this case, the passion of fear cooperates with reason, pushing toward a reasonable solution for a better life[17]. As Hobbes wishes to emphasize, "in the absence of fear, men would be more avidly attracted to domination than society [...] the origin of large and lasting societies lay not in mutual human benevolence, but in men's mutual fear" (Hobbes 1647, I, 2).

In short, "the passion to be reckoned upon is fear" (Hobbes 1651, XIV, 31)[18] for without this powerful passion, reason would be "disarmed", and people would never be able to escape from their natural condition of war. But they do - "the possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in reason" (Hobbes 1651, XIII, 13). While reason, as a way of building peace, suggests the "laws of nature" (Hobbes 1651, XIV-XV) "the passions that incline men to

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[16] On the analogies between these lines and a passage found in Hobbes's translation of Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War* - Hobbes, Thomas (1629): *Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian Warre Written by Thucydides*, ed. D. Grene, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989 - see Scott, J., (2000), "The peace of silence. Thucydides and the English Civil War", in G.A.J. Rogers and T. Sorell, *Hobbes and History*, London-New York: Routledge, 112-136, 123; on the influence of the Greek historian on Hobbes, see also L.M.Johnson (1993). *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

[17] On the role of "civilizing fear" as an aid of reason, see Remo Bodei (1997). *Hobbes: politica e paura* in *Geometria delle passioni. Paura, speranza, felicità: filosofia e uso politico*, Milan: Feltrinelli, pp.83-93. See also Carlo Ginzburg (2008). *Paura reverenza terrore. Rileggere Hobbes oggi*. Parma: Monte Università Parma Editore.

[18] David See Johnston (1989). *The Rhetoric of* Leviathan*: Thomas Hobbes and the politics of cultural transformation*. Princeton- Guildford: Princeton University Press, pp.98-101.

peace are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them" (Hobbes 1651, XIII, 14).

Fear of death (and wounds) "dispose men to obey a common power" (Hobbes 1651, XI, 4) and so peace is constructed through an act of political imagination: the creation of the "great Leviathan", the State - which Hobbes calls "Commonwealth" or "*Civitas*" (see Hobbes 1651, XVII, 13)[19] - with an authorized sovereign power, exerted by "the civil person", and with laws to keep men under control.

FEAR: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION II.

FEAR OF PUNISHMENT AND *FEAR FOR THE LAWS.*

Once the State is born, it is the "fear of punishment" for breaking the laws (cf. Hobbes 1651, XVII, 1) that functions as a means to maintain social order and obedience (sometimes, under certain particular circumstances, fear may cause crimes; see Hobbes 1651, XXVII, 19-20).

Since "the end of commonwealth [is] particular security" (Hobbes 1651, XVII, 1) and "the end of obedience is protection" (Hobbes 1651, XXI, 21) "the obligation of subjects to the sovereign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them" (Ibidem). But when protection is guaranteed, the subjects must obey the laws. Thus, the "mutual fear" of the state of nature is replaced by what we could call State fear or fear of the State.

However, as Quentin Skinner has pointed out[20], in *Leviathan* the fear of punishment is not in contradiction with the citizens's "natural" liberty; for Hobbes, in any kind of State, under any form of government, the freedom to disobey is always retained (freedom being the absence of physical obstacles impeding one's actions) so "fear and liberty are consistent": "Generally all actions which men do in commonwealths, for fear of the law, are actions, which the doers had liberty to omit" (Hobbes 1651, XXI, 3). Moreover, Hobbes also indicates that the well being of the State and the "Commonwealth"

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[19] "According to Hobbes, both kind of commonwealths, those formed by institution and those formed by acquisition, emerge as a result of fear", Bernard Gert (2010). *Hobbes. Prince of Peace*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p.114. See also Giuseppe Sorgi (1997). *Quale Hobbes? Dalla paura alla rappresentanza*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

[20] See Quentin Skinner (2008). *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.157-162.

itself cannot be based on the fear of punishment; the citizens must be educated to understand the importance of obeying laws for the common good.

For instance, and very importantly, if rebellion is to be prevented, then the "grounds" of the essential rights of sovereignty "need to be diligently and truly taught; because they cannot be maintained by any civil law or terror of legal punishment" (Hobbes 1651, XXX, 4). Thus, education is fundamental. By means of education, fear of punishment should turn into a genuine "fear for the laws", in the sense of the *respect* for them, even when they seem to be against the citizens' immediate interest. In the "Review and Conclusion" of *Leviathan*, "fear for the laws" is considered as a high moral and civic virtue. Hobbes depicts his friend Sidney Godolphin as embodying all the characteristics of the perfect citizen: "I have known clearness of judgement, and largeness of fancy; strength of reason, and graceful elocution; a courage for the war, and the fear for the laws, and all eminently in one man; and that was my most noble and honoured friend" (Hobbes 1651, Review and Conclusion, 4).

Being the object of people's "fears" - in the double sense of being frightened by possible punishments, and having great respect for the laws as Sidney Godolphin did - Hobbes's Commonwealth is itself immune in respect to fear - at least when it functions well: in the Introduction to *Leviathan*, "sedition" is called the 'sickness" of the State, and "civil war" its "death"… Hobbes compares the Commonwealth to the biblical monster Leviathan in the book of Job (Hobbes 1651 and 1668, XXVIII, 27): "There is nothing, on earth, to be compared with him" (*Non est potestas super terram quae comparetur ei*) and "He is made so as not to be afraid" (*Factus est, ita ut non metuat*) - the first verse also appears in the engraved title page of the so called Head edition of *Leviathan*.

But if there is nothing on earth that can be compared with the State, what about the ultra-terrestrial dimension?

FEAR: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION III.
FEAR OF INVISIBLE POWER AND *TIMOR DEI*.

We enter now the field of religion, that is defined by Hobbes as the "*fear* of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed" (Hobbes 1651, VI, 36 and Hobbes 1668: VI, 29).

At the base of this "*metus potentiarum invisibilium*"[21], which forms the "seed" of religion, stands human "anxiety" for the future[22], with the need to always find a cause for everything: "It is impossible for a man, who continually endeavoureth to secure himself against the evil he fears, and procure the good he desireth, not to be in a perpetual solicitude of the time to come" (Hobbes 1651, XII, 5); therefore: "Anxiety for the future time disposes men to inquire into the causes of things: because the knowledge of them, maketh men the better able to order the present to their best advantage" (Hobbes 1651, XI, 24; see also XI, 25-26).

Being either the result of the logical chain that brings people to think of God as the First Mover (see Hobbes 1651, XII, 6; Hobbes' use of this 'Aristotelian' argument here might be ironic, given the fact that he usually criticizes Aristotle and his followers) as in monotheistic religions or the irrational outcome of a process of fear that brought the Gentiles to think of the Gods, religion has at its origins human anxiety for the future, and the kind of negative anxiety that is the fear of the unknown.

Hobbesian scholars are discordant on Hobbes's personal relationship with religion; he is considered a believer, an atheist, a deist, a heretic…; the only thing sure is that he was not a catholic (see the criticism on Catholic Church in Parts III and IV of *Leviathan*).

Hobbes writes: "This perpetual fear, always accompanying mankind in the ignorance of causes, as it were in the dark, must need to have for object something. And therefore when there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing to accuse, either of their good, or evil fortune, but some *power*, or agent *invisible*: in which sense perhaps it was, that some of the old poets said, that the gods were at first created by human fear" (Hobbes 1651, XII, 6).

If mutual fear and fear of violent death give birth to the State, the fear of invisible power (we could say, the fear of the unknown) generates religion, with all its related beliefs.

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[21] It has been argued that the fear of invisible power, as the fear of God, is the real fear that makes men overcome the state of nature: A.P.Martinich (1992). *The Two Gods of* Leviathan: *Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, p.60.

[22] It is also been argued that anxiety and not fear is the fundamental problem addressed by Hobbes: W.W.Sokoloff (2001). *Politics and Anxiety in Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan*, "Theory and Event", V, 1 (e-journal: www.press.jhu.edu/jornals/theory_and_event)

Because the fear of invisible power is more powerful than the fear of other (perhaps terrible, but *visible*) human beings, religion logically precedes politics - the fear of God coming before mutual fear and the fear of the State that is build on it: "The fear […] [of the power of spirits invisible] is in every man, his own religion: which hath place in the nature of man before civil society"; the consequence is that "before the time of civil society, or in the interruption thereof by war, there is nothing can strengthen a covenant of peace agreed on, against the temptations of avarice, ambition, lust, or other strong desire, but the fear of that invisible power, which they every one worship as God; and fear as a revenger of their perfidy. All therefore that can be done between two men not subject to civil power, is to put one another to swear by the God he feareth" (Hobbes 1651, XIV, 31).

Moreover, even after the creation of the State, the fear of God ("*timor Dei*") risks being more powerful than the fear of the State itself.

Because of the fear of eternal torments and death, the power of religious authority on people can be greater than that of civil authority; this is the reason why Hobbes also wants religious power to be in the hand of the sovereign, "the supreme pastor" (see Hobbes 1651, XLII, 10, 67-70; in *Behemoth*, in which he explains the causes of the English civil war, he writes: "As much as eternal torture is more terrible than death, so much they would fear the clergy more than the King"[23].

The sovereign (whether a king or a sovereign assembly) is seen by Hobbes as the only person who - being the "artificial" person of the State[24], who 'embodies' the citizens, and is authorized by them to rule - is able to transform human fears into means for human good. This idea might be described as a form of enlightenment[25].

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[23] Hobbes, Thomas (1670): *Behemoth or the Long Parliament*, ed. F. Tönnies, with an Introduction by S. Holmes, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, I, 14-15.

[24] See Skinner, Quentin (2002), *Visions of Politics. Vol. III: Hobbes and Civil Science*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 177-208.

[25] In fact, even in a Hobbesian commonwealth, "it would always be true that human beings were driven by passions […]. Laws would still be required, and punishments, inspiring fear, would still need to be attached to them. A rationally justified fear of the sovereign power would be a useful thing; even an image, in popular psychology, of that sovereign power as an entity greater than any human individual. But such fears would serve ends directly justified by reason; they would be quite different from the superstitious fears instilled and manipulated in the past by self-serving priestcraft. What this implied was, in other words, not utopianism, but

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