

COMPETITION OF VICTIMS IN A SOCIETY OF COWARDS

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Fear as a subject, so fruitful and traditional for political philosophy, has long and firmly been given to political psychology or even social biology and bio-politics in vain. Standing in front of a board with the agenda of a conference on political psychology, I was thinking **what a grandiose and mystical idea mass psychological conditions might be.** How convenient it is to think that defensive biological behavioral stereotypes of self-preservation never fail. What a strange science social psychology is: it proceeds from the premise of a nation's universal soul and rests on accidental social experience.

However, I would like to remind that there is one more affective dimension of politics besides the public wailing about a 'horrible life' in blogs and familiar political rhetoric that presents security and freedom as inversely proportioned (as if one can be exchanged for another in some sort of fictitious balance, and as if the goal of social

coexistence has unanimously been agreed to be that of mere survival).

This affective dimension of political action has traditionally – since the times of Plato and Aristotle – been related to **the horizon of the proper, where fear is opposed by courage as the main political virtue.** Here fear is hardly a norm and condition of social proposition but rather a condition requiring negotiation and transformation. Every political decision is a sum of courage in the form of an impetuous willful move and a reasoned and thoughtful acceptance of fairness. In other words, fear, panic, anxiety, uncertainty – all these affects are a part of a multifaceted philosophical argument asserting the immortality of the soul; but as Skinner noted some time ago, they work only under conditions of a strong and influential field of publicity where the scariest end would be public shame and dishonor.

Let's see now if there are any reasons in our contemporary or non-contemporary Russian situation for a nominal 'classic' political figure to avoid public shame and to defend his honor? Once, an acquaintance of mine – a political technologist who is no stranger to the Russian political 'backroom' – explained to me explicitly that public resonance is the only thing that matters. Symbolic capital is not made of recognition and merit, but is simply the accumulation of

tion of political news drifts ever closer to society gossip. And this transformation of political and public space has yet to attract any serious study.

What about another famous political argument where the dread of death and the wish of self-preservation has played such a significant role? How shall we treat the justification of fear as a productive regulator of social relations? Let's not forget that a Hobbesian fear is not an affect, it is a rational wish of self-preservation; it is reasonable and quite universal. It is a vestige of primitive determination to be 'a wolf' and to defend individual interests. It is amazing but it is true that there is nothing that moves us further from Hobbes's social universe than the current parade of victims.

Critical theory has made human beings so painfully vulnerable and narcissistically concentrated that everyone considers himself to be a 'victim of a murderous regime' or a repressive state. **We can see a real competition of victims in contemporary Russian politics.** For example, in the confrontation between the Church and the museum community, or in the opposition between the academic community and the pool of political experts. Taken together, they testify the end of a political era when a solution for the sake of political virtue or on account of a brave wolfish egoistic

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references regardless of the context in which this or that figure has been mentioned. In other words, **the political and public space in our country is organized similarly to a circular space, in which the func-**

interest was possible. It should be recognized instead that our political community has now become a community of political cowards. ■

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