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ABSTRACT

The Concept of Fear

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Background: A Palestinian student fulfilling a course assignment (final essay) about a text called “The Leviathan”

Objectives: To explain the concept of fear in the text of Thomas Hobbes (The Leviathan) and how this topic was explored within two other authors’ works.

Methods: Close textual analysis of the main text and then research about two other texts.

Results: The two other authors strongly disagreed with Hobbes’ ideas and rejected his claims.

Conclusions: To sum up, the idea of fear is presented as a trade-off in The Leviathan. The people can replace their continual feelings of insecurity and survival fears with ones of fearful respect for their leader by accepting the supreme and absolute control of the powerful central leader. However, Hobbes argues that people should embrace the Leviathan's authority because they are more afraid of chaos and anarchy than they are of tyrannical government. According to Hobbes, a government's authority is legal as long as there is no immediate threat to survival and as long as it can take steps to reduce that threat. People pick society and a common sovereign authority because they fear nature and the implied state of conflict; yet, it will also be fear—fear of the sovereign authority, fear of God, and despair of reverting to a state of nature and conflict also keep people devoted and submissive to a common-wealth. In Hobbes's day, when fear of battle and death was prevalent, fear was a useful argument, and he utilizes that terror to forward his beliefs and philosophies. Hobbes' appraisal of people in The Leviathan is consistent with his claim that “life on its own is

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merely motion, and can never be without need, or fear.” (Thomas Hobbes). In addition, some academics who examined Hobbes' theories strongly disagreed with him. For instance, Elijah Weber mentioned Jean Hampton, a philosophy writer, in his journal. She rejects Hobbes' claim that only an absolute sovereign can maintain peace since it conflicts with his claim that members of the Commonwealth have a right to self-preservation, which entitles them to overthrow the sovereign when doing so is in their best interests. Because the sovereign does not totally control the major power or authority, each citizen will continue to live in fear of death or disobedience. For John Locke, the circumstances in which they both authored their articles had a significant impact on their debate about the structure of government. Thomas was exposed to England's extreme political unpredictability, which led him to prefer absolutism to all other systems. Locke supported the idea that government should have a restricted scope and be answerable to the people it serves because he lived during a stable political era. Therefore, it is apparent that both Hampton and Locke have different opinions regarding both the concept of the Commonwealth and the most favorable form of government; as these disagreements resulted from the different contexts that the writers lived in and the different perspectives that they use to see the world.

Keywords: Fear, Commonwealth, peace, and power.