

---

An Introduction to an Epistemology of 'Fear':  
A Fearlessness Paradigm



R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.  
© 2012

---

**Technical Paper No. 2**

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

An Introduction to an Epistemology of 'Fear':  
A Fearlessness Paradigm

R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.

Copyright 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher/author. No permission is necessary in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews, or other educational or research purposes. For information and permission address correspondence to:

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute  
507 S. James St., Carbondale, IL  
62901

Contact author:

r.michaelfisher@yahoo.com  
First Edition 1995  
Second Edition 2012

Cover and layout by R. Michael Fisher  
ISOF Logo (original 1989) designed by RMF

Printed in USA

The In Search of Fearlessness Institute is dedicated to research and publishing on fear, fearlessness and emotions in general, as well as critical reviews of such works. Preference is given to works with an integral theoretical perspective.

---

# An Introduction to an Epistemology of 'Fear': A Fearlessness Paradigm

- R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.  
©2012

*Technical Paper No. 2*

## **Preface to the 2nd Edition**

The world's fear problem has not improved much since I first penned this Technical Paper No. 2 in a series that is still running today. It is now nearly 18 years later, and things seem worse; yet my work in *fearology* persists. And more importantly, I'm optimistic that a new scholarship on fear<sup>1</sup> has emerged, expanding methodologies and epistemologies for discovering truths about fear (and 'fear') as well, even if it came about because of 9/11, 2001.

In re-reading this paper, I recall how important it was then, and still is, to have a rigorous and systematic approach to understanding fear ('fear') and the "*fear of fear itself*," as I presented it in 1995 a "*haunting phrase that human beings are going to have to deal with in the future*." And "'fear' is no longer to be kept restricted to people with a 'problem'" in a private sphere. If there was anything more important for me to convey, I don't know what it would be. I was interested then, as much as now, to take fear (and 'fear') out of the fear-closet, from out of the shadows of repression and denial, and into exposed light and dialogue, into systematic professional and popular conversations, all as part of a compassion-based democratic growth and maturation. We can have no true democracy if people are overly afraid, feel unsupported in their fear(s) and not even knowing of what it is they are sometimes afraid of, or more accurately that they have become 'fear' itself. No intention to make this spooky, or sound like a sci-fi horror movie, as there are plenty enough people doing that today in some way to make a buck or win a vote. That's not what I am doing.

*Epistemology* is a big word, most people can't remember what it means, never mind how to pronounce it, even when they have heard it several

---

<sup>1</sup> There have been a number of academic journals that began to feature entire issues dedicated to fear. A quick glance and validation of a new scholarship on fear (and a new vocabulary that is arising with it), I recommend the significant (yet incomplete) overview by Brissett (2003).

times. That was the case for me for years. Yet, I knew in my heart that the big name is not what is important, but more what it stands for as a type of philosophical inquiry—that is, asking tough critical questions about how I or others come to *know fear* and inquire deeper into how we distort what *fear* (and *'fear'*) is in the very process of knowing it and ourselves. This, I believe is the way to salvation from 'fear' itself, or what I originally (1989) called the 'Fear' Project and now conceptualize it as the 'Fear' Matrix.

I've now written numerous publications on this topic, which can be found on my various websites.<sup>2</sup> In 1995, I had no idea that fearology would be my chosen career focus but I did know that the study of fear and fearlessness was extremely important to the future of humanity and indeed became my passionate life purpose.

Technical Paper No. 1 is the companion piece for Technical Paper No. 2. I recommend reading and studying them both. The not so obvious shift in the subtitles from No.1 "*A Spectrum Approach*" to No. 2 "*A Fearlessness Paradigm*" tells a lot about where I was heading then, and still am today. My original insight, sometimes hard to see underneath all the detail and layers of complexity in this paper and my writing since, is that Ken Wilber's work helped organize my thinking about fear into a spectrum of consciousness model (No. 1); and, I put together that Wilber's model could easily, with some theoretical and empirical evidence, be translated to be a continuum (i.e., spectrum) of fearlessness. This latter theme, being most prominent in my current synthesis in *The World's Fearlessness Teachings: A Critical Integral Approach to Fear Management/Education*.<sup>3</sup> And with that book you can see I have added a third label for my approach "*critical integral*," which combines the two previous approaches, and in the end all are appropriate and, more or less, the same methodological and epistemological orientation of choice for this work.

Although I had written many unpublished pieces before 1995,<sup>4</sup> trying to make sense of all the different writings (discourses) of fear and on 'fear' across the disciplines and in popular culture, Technical Paper No. 1 and 2

---

<sup>2</sup> The author is co-founder and director of In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute (and co-founder of the In Search of Fearlessness Project, <http://www.feareducation.com>). He is founder and former director of the Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education (<http://csiie.org>) and Director there of the Department of Integral & 'Fear' Studies, and a consultant with his own business firm (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>).

<sup>3</sup> Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world's fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21st century*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

<sup>4</sup> The very first pamphlet-booklets, under 8pp, on fear and related topics, were produced in 1990, when I was freshly embedded in the co-founding of In Search of Fearlessness Project, with assistance some times from my partner at the time and co-founder, Catherine Sannuto.

pretty much laid the technical foundation as official publications for my future trajectory as a researcher and teacher. It is because of this status as classics in my repertoire that the re-typing of them in complete original form into a digital format is worth the effort. In 2003, I put extracts of this paper online on my website archive but no attempt was made to add any changes or write a Preface. This 2nd edition of the paper is kept accurate to the original with a few minor changes: copy editing, bracket inserts to add a comment or enrichment and footnotes to guide further explorations. Note: to distinguish the original ms. footnotes I'll insert [original]. This ought to help make it more contemporary with my thought today. On that note, the basic content is still sound and reflects my general orientation to 'Fear' Studies today.

I cannot overemphasize that any postmodern and/or holistic-integral study of *fear* and/or '*fear*' will have to deal with the problem of defining and making meaning of the topic and phenomena in question, and inherent in that problem is *how to know we know* and *how good is what we know from that approach to know*. This is what epistemology is for me. Finding a universal common language in 'Fear' Studies would be ideal, yet, I have argued in Technical Paper No. 1, and this remains my view now, that there is never going to be *one and only one* definition of fear we'll all agree on, and everyone will still continue to make their own diverse meanings of fear and/or '*fear*' no matter what universals (orienting generalizations) and theories can be agreed upon to guide the inquiries. Add to that from Technical Paper No. 2 that similarly, there is never going to be *one and only one* way to know fear and '*fear*.'

The world is highly globalized and so should be the definition and meaning and ways of knowing. Technical Paper No. 2, like Technical Paper No. 1 anticipated that need for diversity, yet with some integration and synthesis potential. And, more importantly, both papers point to application of an integral theory and method (thanks to Wilber's work) that can embrace but discern "better" ways of knowing and definitions of fear (and '*fear*') than others. More accurately, it can help us discern the value of our ways of knowing and our claims of truth. Yes, one has to be philosophical and more or less rigorous to free ourselves from the 'Fear' Matrix.<sup>5</sup> It won't happen by chance, hope, luck, or less than the "best" forms of knowledge and practices. You see, the moment discernment enters the picture and "better" and

---

<sup>5</sup> "Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to experience for yourself," says Morpheus, to Neo, in their first meeting (from The Wachowski's *The Matrix* sci-fi film, 1999). This movie is brilliant on many levels, but it is the best performance of the problems of an epistemology of '*fear*' that I know. The issue of "knowing" is paramount in the film's narrative, and the distortions to that "knowing" of "the truth" about what imprisons our minds. See Fisher, R. M. (2009). "Unplugging" as real and metaphoric: Emancipatory dimensions to *The Matrix* film trilogy. Technical Paper No. 33. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

"best" become goals, we are now in the domain of ethical concerns, not merely some psychology of fear.

How to do that sorting and classifying of concepts, terms, methodologies, and epistemologies, is where things get really complex, if not tedious and technical. Conflicts will exist and some polarities grow rather than dissolve. This is all basically healthy for the field of 'Fear' Studies and fearology, as long as the various 'camps' don't form their isolating groups and claim superiority of their favorite *way of knowing*, while they breast-feed off their chosen political ideologies (and narrow-mindedness), and/or try to convince themselves they don't have such dis-eases nor value-based ideologies (which is even worse). My point is, there is, arguably, in a postmodern and/or integral view, no value-free position to take on the definition of fear. Technical Paper No. 2 supports why that is the case. I was still a bit naive at the time it was written, it was before my graduate school days, but it is still a solid foundation, and can be supplemented with other later specific papers I have written on a fearlessness epistemology and paradigm.<sup>6</sup>

The postmodern and integral (or spectrum and fearlessness) paradigm asks us to use many methodologies, and modalities of knowing. When I look back over the years, I see myself as a naturalist exploring how wild animals are very different in relation to fear than humans; I see myself as a scientist and observe systematically and create studies of how fear ('fear') works; I see myself as an artist exploring how we represent fear ('fear') in images, and similarly when I have done art therapeutic work with myself and clients; I see myself as an anthropologist (if not an alien from another planet) at times, as a fearwatcher, recording mercilessly a library of fear quotes and holding them as an archive for the future, when humans in greater numbers will realize that a fearlessness paradigm, and the knowledge on fear ('fear') is 'gold' or 'medicine' like herbal essences, that need to be brought back to life and utilized for cures to the human Fear Problem.

In one footnote in Technical Paper No. 2, is the apt claim I made: *"So, it looks like my own research agenda is making things more complex and the transpersonal [integral] approach (fearlessness paradigm) says take in all phenomenon and aspects to 'fear' across the spectrum—to many, that is*

---

<sup>6</sup> See Fisher, R. M. (2012). Beginning dispensations of integral fearology: Systematics and problematics in the study of fear. DIFS-5 Yellowpaper. Carbondale, IL: Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education; see Fisher, R. M. (2012). Towards an integral fearlessness theory (Part 1): Nondual integralism. Technical Paper No. 41. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute; see Fisher, R. M. (2007). Conceptualizing a fearlessness philosophy: Existential philosophy and a genealogy of fear management system-5. Technical Paper No. 23. Vancouver, BC: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute; and, see Fisher, R. M. (2006). Integral fearlessness paradigm. Technical Paper No. 20. Vancouver, BC: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

*overwhelming in complexity. At another level the added distinctions and spectrum model gives a new "order" and simplicity that I find is not a "defensive act" but really gets to some fundamental truths about the nature of 'fear.'*" I was defending against a criticism from Jack Gibb that too much differentiated vocabulary around fear is probably a defense and avoidance of dealing with the simplicity of fear itself. One has to turn an eye at the whole issue of my vocabulary in fearology, it is unwieldy sometimes, even for me, yet, the foundation of Technical Paper No. 2 is that we are in a time on this earth and its evolution of consciousness where merely accepting everything we believe about "fear" as taught to us, is not good enough. The creating of 'fear' (with single apostrophe marks) isn't totally original in the world of postmodern analysis and deconstruction methodology. Yet, I seem to be the first person to do this systematically re: 'fear' and even 'fearlessness.' It's worth as a strategy, will be told by historians far in the future.

Point is, integral fearology is a critical praxis and theory which demands we challenge the pre-givens and meanings already offered, and ask tough questions, un-pack those pre-givens, and see if we can re-construct "better" definitions, meanings, conceptual frameworks and theories, ways of knowing and philosophies, for understanding fear (and 'fear') and its role in human affairs (not to exclude all sentient beings that are impacted by human fear management). It is not going to be easy to unplug ourselves from the 'Fear' Matrix (all due respect goes to The Wachowskis' sci-fi film trilogy beginning with *The Matrix* in 1999).

I've often wondered where are all the copies of this first version of Technical Paper No. 2 are today. I probably printed 30 or so over the years of the mid-1990s and some people bought them for the cost of \$4, but mostly I gave them away. I must admit no one ever talked to me about this paper. And that brings up three problems, I'll briefly address as we move into the future with an ever-developing program of improving humanity's epistemology of fear.

The first problem is one that just occurred to me as I re-read and re-typed this digital version. The term "epistemology of fear" can be easily read in two very different (if not opposite) ways: (1) *epistemology of fear* could mean a discourse *of* fear<sup>7</sup> itself that is intended to promote more fear, consciously or unconsciously, which is not a good thing—meaning, it could refer to a type of epistemology that is motivated *by* fear and colored with fear, which is not a good thing, and, (2) *epistemology of fear*, as I've always used it, is our study of the *ways of knowing fear*; and, in a critical in-

---

<sup>7</sup> This concern comes because of my research distinction in fearology between a "discourse *of* fear" and a "discourse *on* fear" (the latter, which is not generally attributing to more fear in the system) (see Fisher, 2006, pp. 51-53).

tegral and fearlessness paradigm, that way of knowing is thought to be one of the best to get to the truth of our knowledge about fear (and 'fear'), and that's a good thing.

The second problem is one that also just occurred to me, and it involves when I, as a fearologist and fearanalyst by profession, have 25 years of practice in *knowing fear* (and 'fear')—*via* a conscious lived-epistemology, not mere intellectualization or careerism. What does that make another person feel like when they confront my writing, teaching, or critiques? Surely, it must be somewhat intimidating and raise fear, if not envy, if not a form of hatred (passive or active)—especially as they "reject" everything I say and who I am. Mostly, they don't engage it. Elsewhere, over the years I have called this the complex of "Fear Wars."<sup>8</sup>

My point is, I am a living-epistemology of fear (and 'fear') (i.e., a fearlessness one)—I breath it, it is me, I am it. Now, that living aspect is interrelated with my discourses and writing argumentation but at another level it is separate. I have no answer for this problem, but I am well aware it is a problem in being heard by the public and other professionals or scholars, all who may have very strong views about fear and its management and they don't include my views. They automatically assert, implicitly or explicitly, they know as much about *fear* as I do, or more. How to gain mutual collegial respect is difficult in my experience. In a footnote on "humility" as researchers (knowers) herein I wrote: "*Even a bull rider must follow tradition and watch the master riders to learn how to handle a bull and know it well.*" Today, "masters" are often hated (i.e., feared) by many.

And the third problem, related to the above, but a larger generic problem I have experienced, is what I call the inertia of the "good enough" fear theory. Most people are willing to learn a little more about fear in their knowledge repertoire but they quickly withdraw from learning more, where I'd like to see them go, and thus, they imply a rather rigid stance that "I've learned enough" and it is "good enough" for them, and the world. My question, I'd wished they ask is, can one's fear management/education ever be good enough, in terms of a post-9/11 world and the increasing challenges that fear and 'fear' are putting on us (e.g., the culture of fear and politics of fear)?

And, as you get ready to read the original 1995 edition, there is one more major problem, that I was well aware of then, and it continues to remain a

---

<sup>8</sup> Without going into detail here, "Fear Wars" refers to both the big wars that groups and nations fight, or "gangs" or "researchers" and "teachers." Yes, it is all the same basic vicious conflict where one tries to prove the other is more fearful than they, and if the other so accuse of such does not admit they are (whether they are or not), then the accuser will prove how fearful they are by bombarding them with assaults of one kind or another. Both sides, usually doing this to each other in an endless cycle of fear/violence perpetuation.



major issue in fearology. I wrote in 1995: "*If our very methodology of knowing is 'fear'-based and motivated by 'fear,' then we will never see 'fear' itself because our own method of knowing [i.e., our operative epistemology, conscious or unconscious] gets in the way of revealing anything new about 'fear.'*" The problem: *our greatest fear is that we don't know what fear is,* and we intuit we don't know, and then we deny what we intuit. The manifest symptoms, if not pathology, of that dynamic is we become ignore-ant and arrogant<sup>9</sup> towards 'new' knowledge about fear and fearlessness. We think we already know what we need to know, period!

\*\*\*\*

## An Introduction to an Epistemology of 'Fear': A Fearlessness Paradigm

Robert M. Fisher  
©1995

**Abstract:** The temptation to think we know what *'fear'* is all about, is one of the key factors that gets in the way of truly understanding ways of knowing 'fear' (and fear<sup>10</sup>) as a very large and complex topic [subject]. This paper will introduce some of the various ways of knowing 'fear' as a holistic phenomenon and not merely a "feeling or emotion" [as is *fear*, usually defined].

To date, no other author/researcher has attempted a systematic critical exploration of a theory of how to know 'fear' [and fear]<sup>11</sup>—i.e., an epistemology of 'fear.' There have been many attempts to know 'fear' from mythology, to philosophy, theology, physiology, psychology, anthropology and sociology [to name some]. There has been no systematic attempt to *know how we know 'fear' and there has been no attempt that uses the spectrum model of analysis. The spectrum approach (a la Ken Wilber) is a key component of building a new epistemology of 'fear.'* 'Fear' is tricky to know [see

---

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, these two qualities, ignore-ance and arrogance, are 'Fear' itself and I have articulated that in a Love and Fear theory, led by the integral philosopher Ken Wilber in his discussion (after Plotinus' insights) about *Thanatos* (ignore-ance) and *Phobos* (arrogance). Of course, 'Fear' itself is much more complex than these two qualities. See Fisher, R. M. (1997). *Thanatos and Phobos: 'Fear' and its role in Ken Wilber's transpersonal theory.* Unpublished paper.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, in 1995, I mostly used 'fear' when I wrote about this subject and rarely would use *fear* without the apostrophes, because it was foremost on my mind as a culturally constructed phenomenon (i.e., 'fear') and less purely biological and natural as a "feeling or emotion" (i.e., fear). Sometimes in this 2nd edition plain fear is the term suited to the context of the discussion but from here on you can assume I am writing about both fear and 'fear,' and sometimes I won't put that in and sometimes I'll put it in to remind you. Sorry for it being a bit cumbersome.

<sup>11</sup> Unbelievably, this is still true to this date, some near 18 years later.

Technical Paper No. 1] because its very purpose is to 'not know'—to deny—to lie—to delude and ultimately "hide from itself" etc.<sup>12</sup> If our very methodology of knowing is 'fear'-based and motivated by 'fear,' then we will never see 'fear' itself because our own method of knowing [i.e., our operative epistemology, conscious or unconscious] gets in the way of revealing anything new about 'fear.' 'Fear' cannot see itself. The '*fear*' of '*fear*' itself is a haunting phrase that human beings are going to have to deal with in the future. 'Fear' is no longer to be kept restricted to people with a "problem" [i.e., or pathology] and thus kept in the private sphere of society [or abnormal psychology]. 'Fear' has to be re-visioned and re-contextualized as both a psychological and sociological aspect of contemporary life, whereby 'fear' is inherently a political phenomenon of oppressive societies.<sup>13</sup>

A pure research agenda, as opposed to a traditional applied research agenda in knowing 'fear' is called for in this paper and constitutes the work at the In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. A *fearlessness paradigm* for researching into the phenomenon of 'fear' is recommended and the basic premises of that paradigm are outlined.

Note: 'fear' is written with a small letter with (') marks to indicate the term is under re-construction and metaphysically *a posteriori* to the concept of 'Love' (with a capital) which is the Ground of Being (Fisher, 1995a).

*How can one know 'fear' when they are afraid of it and not willing to look at it directly? How can one know 'fear' when they have a 'fear' of 'fear' itself?*

#### A Spectrum of Ways of Knowing 'fear'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> This is one of the strongest positions I take epistemologically, and few others (with exceptions like Jiddu Krishnamurti, for e.g.) have done so in such a direct way. Eventually, years later, I came up with the concept of *fearism* as an ideology to explain this hiding from itself, which is also us hiding from ourselves which have become so embedded in fear, and fear in us. Most all my writing since 2003, after graduate school, likely has some mention of fearism.

<sup>13</sup> In 1995 and for some years after I had tightly, perhaps too much so, linked 'fear' with that of oppressive societies. They are linked, and yet, the original intention since 1990 or so, when I used apostrophe's on the word, I meant it is under deconstruction and reconstruction as a word and thus, we have to stay open to what it may mean (see Technical Paper No. 1).

<sup>14</sup> [original] In conceptualizing and defining 'fear,' based on the research I have collected, there are two conventions used in the text: (1) 'fear' is written with a small letter because it is metaphysically *a posteriori*, an ontological derivative of 'Love' (written metaphysically with a capital letter—the metaphysical dynamic of this I have written about elsewhere in two as yet unpublished manuscripts: *Growing Up Isn't Straightforward* and *What Happened to 'Love', And Where Cometh 'fear'?*—specifically, see my mapping of the universal forma-

As in defining 'fear' [and fear], the search for an epistemology of 'fear' is equally demanding of the researcher, [so as] not to attempt to [be] too precise too quickly. The word fear and its meaning has been so commonly bandied about in our civilization and upbringing, that we think we know what we are talking about when we use "fear" to describe the human experience. But how many times have we looked at the limitations of our knowing fear [and 'fear']? How many times have we questioned our assumptions about it?

Are we really willing now to let go of a lot of those familiar definitions and assumptions and open to the possibility we may know very little about fear [and 'fear'] and even less about what to do to transform it and liberate ourselves from its oppressiveness? I assume we are generally quite ignorant about 'fear' because the very nature of 'fear' patterning is to keep us "afraid" and therefore blind to what is really going on in the world. I just have to look at the planet and see how much 'fear' there is with all the violence/hurting going on. I don't have to look hard to see the 'fear' of pollution and war [for examples]. I see these forms or symptoms of 'fear' everywhere and they are increasing globally. We haven't been able to stop the cycle of 'fear' and violence/hurting because we can't see past our own 'fear' and our 'fear' of 'fear' itself. That is a start to the underlying context of this paper.

**How to know 'fear'** [and fear] is the question of epistemology.<sup>15</sup> How to *best* know 'fear' the most accurately is another question of an epistemology of 'fear.' The best way to know 'fear' is to develop a *critical theory* and a *fearlessness paradigm* that is open and upfront with what assumptions it makes about Reality and the best way to know anything. A fearlessness paradigm simply, is a way of knowing that assumes it is best to be critical of the "norms" and "familiar" of traditional ways of knowing 'fear.' Fearlessness means nothing is denied from view and nothing excluded from critical evaluation and re-evaluation. Yes, this fearlessness paradigm is value-laden and biased normative theory. I am not interested in merely describing such an important phenomenon like 'fear' in purely descriptive and value-neutral language as scientists try to do—for it is impossible to do anyway, because there are always hidden assumptions, beliefs, and values underneath the surface "facts" of any phenomenon that humans attempt to describe and understand.

Evidence collected so far indicates there is a definite *spectrum* of different definitions of 'fear'<sup>16</sup> and also a spectrum of different ways of knowing 'fear.' [original: This spectrum approach is a *transpersonal approach* and the work of Ken Wilber, in the references, is the best source I know to explain what a transpersonal view is]. This paper introduces the reader to some of these different ways and suggests

---

tive pattern of values I've called the "Uni-bicentric Theorem," (2) both 'fear' and 'Love' are written with (') marks to indicate when I am referring to the largest metaphysical [if not evolutionary and Kosmic macro-level] sense of these words in the human subjective experience. These marks also indicated the words/concepts and definitions are under de-construction and in re-vision from an entirely new viewpoint than the norm of traditional view (consciousness). I often call this new view a fearlessness context (paradigm), which is what I would distinguish as a transpersonal view [today, I would call it an integral view].

<sup>15</sup> [original] 'Epistemology' is a branch of philosophy "dedicated to the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> [original] See Fisher (1995). [and 2012 edition].

what may be most fruitful paths to take in knowing 'fear' better than we do at present. I being the building of a new fearlessness paradigm as the most accurate (expansive and "embracing"<sup>17</sup>) way of knowing the truth about 'fear' [and fear].

### Why An Epistemology of 'fear'?

To my knowledge, no author/researcher has attempted a systematic critical exploration of a theory of how to know 'fear' that examines the limitations and validity of methods of knowing it. Although one does find the behavioral experimentalist researchers on fear [some of] the most precise with their methods of researching fear, they have not attempted to look at the spectrum of methods of either defining or knowing fear [or 'fear']. Specialists still dominate the scene of knowing fear—this is not necessarily 'good' or 'bad,' nor 'right' nor 'wrong'—merely it is too narrow and incomplete a methodology. The neurophysiologist or behaviorist researcher is likely as ignore-ant of the ways of knowing 'fear' as outlined by the philosopher-sage J. Krishnamurti, as Krishnamurti was as ignore-ant of the neurophysiologist or behaviorist's ways of knowing fear [and 'fear'].<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> [original] "Embracing" is the term Ken Wilber (1995) uses in his epistemology of a transpersonal consciousness, which is very similar (at least analogous) to a fearlessness paradigm, as recommended in this technical paper.

<sup>18</sup> [original] This paragraph is an attempt to let the reader know that I am following a hierarchical (holarchical) consciousness model based on the work of Ken Wilber, a transpersonal psychology/philosophy theorist and proponent of the Great Chain of Being and perennial philosophy [i.e., with his own critiques as well of these philosophies]. Without getting into the technical aspects of this theoretical foundation, suffice it to say that I am interested in the most embracing thinking (higher/deeper consciousness level) in exploring the Truth about 'fear' as a holistic phenomenon. I'm more certain that neurobiologists and experimental behavioral psychologists studying fear are less informed about the transpersonal work of J. Krishnamurti on fear than I am about J. Krishnamurti being ignore-ant of the neurobiological and behavioral approaches to fear. I say this with some confidence in knowing that the level of consciousness of J. Krishnamurti is more embracing of the lower developmental levels of consciousness (e.g., eyes of senses, scientific ways of knowing) and therefore is informed of those prior levels developmentally. I hear Krishnamurti's awareness of the limitations of scientific ("naming") ways of knowing Reality and Truth and especially knowing 'fear'. Yes, this embracing consciousness of the transpersonal dimension is not saying that earlier developmental levels of knowing (like the neurobiologist, or behaviorist) are not valid or not important. They are what they are—they are merely less embracing of a larger Reality and Truth about 'fear'—or they are less embracing of metaphysical perspectives. A common conflict which Wilber deals with in his epistemology of consciousness is how those at an earlier (developmentally prior) level, e.g., neurobiologist, take exception to being categorized as such and in fact will ignore the transpersonal level of contemplative knowing and the work of say Krishnamurti or perhaps myself. These more embracing levels are often disregarded by the scientists as "fluffy" and "spiritual" or "too subjective" and not valid or provable. This is an unfortunate rejection by these earlier levels of consciousness [i.e., by *Thanatos* = 'fear' of the higher] of anything "higher/deeper" or more embracing (and I prefer this latter term). As Wilber says over and over again in his writing, that a "higher/deeper" level of knowing or consciousness doesn't exclude or invalidate earlier levels but rather integrates them into a more encompassing synthesis (a spectrum view) [i.e., if the higher level is healthy]. Experience shows that this integrating is interpreted by the earlier

Talk about fear is common in the Recovery Movement (12-step program) and the Human Potential and 'New Age' movements in general. However, there is rarely any discussion of a theory of how one knows so much, or so little, about fear—instead, unexamined assumptions are made about the claims about fear in these popular movements. Gaylin (1979), a psychologist of repute, wrote a book on feelings, saying: "Most people recognize fear" (p. 11). I would strongly challenge this kind of generalization and the assumption it makes about fear [while excluding 'fear'] as so easily recognized by most people. Any therapist knows that most people have an unconscious side to them that is loaded with 'fear' but it is unconscious and thought to be the cause of all neuroses [a la Freud]. Gaylin's statement also suggests that fear is a feeling or emotional experience, which is a very narrow definition, which excludes any acknowledgement of the spectrum of definitions of fear [and 'fear'] (see Technical Paper No. 1, *Defining 'fear': A Spectrum Approach*).

Basically, people seem to think there is nothing really new to know about fear [and 'fear'] and there is thus no questioning that popular knowledge about fear [and 'fear'] which is circumspect, and requires constant critical examination and re-evaluation. The research of the In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute is dedicated to identifying the spectrum of ways of knowing fear [and 'fear'] as a first step in the overall study of 'fear'—thereby, bringing back a more generalist-synthetic approach to our knowledge.

### Spectrum Approach and a Fearlessness Paradigm

The spectrum approach is key to building a new epistemology of fear [and 'fear']. This means that rigorous scientific and philosophical analysis has something important to say about how to know how to know about 'fear.' Yet, everyone's experience has a lot to offer to a spectrum of knowing about 'fear.' The implication here is that it is "best" (at least valid) to know 'fear' by looking at all the full spectrum definitions, methods, experiences and beliefs about 'fear' across the multi-disciplines of inquiry ranging from neurobiology to psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and religion—but not excluding the phenomenology of common experience either.

The method or ways of knowing 'fear' are diverse. It requires a fearlessness paradigm, which does not limit the scope of the study. For now, I remind the reader that a fearlessness paradigm doesn't exclude anything from the field of knowing. It is a paradigm that challenges and critiques itself (and the researcher) to not be viewing from a 'fear'-based motivation. The rationale for this non-exclusion is based on a lot of research beyond the scope of this paper, that indicates that 'fear' itself is always "excluding" and "denying" and "reducing" the larger Reality/Truth of anything to a smaller reality/truth [partiality] and in some cases a pseudo-reality [pathology]. A

---

levels as an attempt to subvert or minimize, or destroy the earlier levels validity of claims and value. Nothing, could be more a misinterpretation of the principles of the Great Chain of Being theories and the perennial philosophy (see also Footnote #24). For a technical exploration of these misunderstandings, see Fisher (1997). It is a worthwhile hypothesis, and with some good evidence, that the nature of 'fear' pattern (as talked about in this technical paper and Fisher, 1995b) is one of reducing "higher/deeper" transpersonal levels of knowing to smaller pieces and fragments so as to gain greater power and control over them (see Maslow's, 1966 critique of science).

fearlessness paradigm attempts to stay fully conscious and vigilant to *not* operate out of any 'fear' patterning while researching 'fear' [and fear].  
But Again... Why an Epistemology of 'fear'?

What has been most disturbing is the seeming unawareness (presumptuousness) amongst many writers and researchers on 'fear' [and fear] of the limitations of their own epistemological assumptions. In other words, almost everyone is talking about fear and how to deal with it either clinically (via treatment) or spirituality (via transformation and transcendence)—without examining critically the validity and nature of the limitations of their own methodology of knowing and defining 'fear' [and fear]. This examination, though somewhat philosophical, of the foundations of one's "ways of knowing" any subject matter, is critical to the level of accuracy (truth) one can make regarding any claim about 'fear.'

Then there are the differences in truth claims from a scientific analysis and truth claims from a philosophical or phenomenological analysis of 'fear.' In this introductory technical paper we will only touch the surface on this very complex issue.

There is a continuing paradox that appears to arise in the study of 'fear' [and fear] as taken here by the In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. For most readers, the topic and approach we take is seen as rather cumbersome and complex. I often hear people remark that it is all too complex and there must be something simpler to know about 'fear'. There is a complexity to knowing 'fear' and there is a simplicity that cuts through all that complexity. This paper will attempt to always bring that dialectic of complexity and simplicity together.

#### 'fear' of 'fear': A Problematic Epistemology

The "**fear of fear itself**" is a phrase that has echoed through the decades [if not centuries before] since WWII, when the president of the USA, F. D. Roosevelt, first publicly uttered the phrase to the American public in his inaugural address [in 1933]. His words and purpose were simply to give importance to what he saw as the number one [socio-]psychological issue of the day in America and the post-Holocaust world. He said, this "fear of fear itself," if anything, would be precisely what could lead the world into another war.

The dominating presumptuous approach to knowing 'fear' ignores this warning call by F. D. Roosevelt and researchers and author's writing on 'fear' generally seem to deny it is a problem. Is there a pattern in the literature on 'fear' of oversimplifying and reducing the 'fear' phenomenon? And what might be the purpose of this presumptuous reductionistic attitude?<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> [original] Gibb (1991) an expert on the topic of fear (mistrust) brings out a paradoxical issue in building an epistemology of fear [and 'fear']. At one point I'm arguing that most researchers and the general public seem to be overly simplifying the conception and study of fear and yet in Fisher (1995b) I argued that these same researchers have created too much complexity and number of terms to describe and define fear [and 'fear'] that it starts to be unwieldy and un-useful to getting to the root of 'fear' in its essence as a human experience. Gibb (1991) suggests "*Much of the imputed complexity is a defense act.... I believe that much of the complexity comes from unnecessary differentiation of concepts*" (p. 80). At one level of analysis of the studies on fear I've seen, I would wholeheartedly agree with Gibb.

Some speculation upon this dominant attitude has led me to assume (hypothesize) that 'fear' itself has invaded the very epistemology and study of 'fear' [and fear] by most traditional<sup>20</sup> writers [teachers] and researchers [on fear]. Maybe, 'fear' is afraid of being known truly and deeply for exactly what it is. 'Fear' perhaps is "hiding" from the knower because the research has yet seen beyond 'fear'—due to a 'fear' blind spot—and its illusory masking of Reality/Truth?

Maybe, the researcher, the knower pursuing 'fear' is pursuing from a place ('fear'-based paradigm<sup>21</sup>) of 'fear' in themselves, so as to attempt to eradicate the very 'fear' they wish to "know" (a point Krishnamurti makes, 1973/91, p. 67). In simpler words, the knower searching to know 'fear' is trying to search for it in 'fear' and 'fear' cannot see itself. It ends up then being a game of the dog trying to catch and bite its own tail. A lot of energy is burned up but the game is impossible to end. Has the study of 'fear' been ridden with a 'fear'-based paradigm, 'fear' consciousness or 'fear' epistemology and that is why we have not been able to deal effectively on a global level with the increasing 'fear' and all of its destructive effects? Many questions arise.

Massumi (1993, 1993a) posed a very challenging point [of view] in suggesting the postmodern human [saturated with fear as the everyday context] has become fear—and so how will this human ever know fear [and 'fear'] and be able to study it outside of its own 'prison walls' and distortions? This is a hypothesis radical in critique and yet to be shown to have a lot of validity. In Fisher (1995, pp. 4-5) the beginning of a critique of the presumptuous almost non-existent critical epistemology of 'fear' was intimated:

*The primary motive of all the forms of knowing 'fear' is to be able to "get rid of it," or at least gain power and control over it. Therefore in defining 'fear' one raises epistemological issues immediately. I and several mystic-sages East and West have [critically] questioned an epistemology (way of knowing) that is*

---

Yet, to simplify and cut through the heart of 'fear', a sword of truth is required that makes more clear distinctions [differentiations] than are presently available. So, it looks like my own research agenda is making things more complex and the transpersonal [integral] approach (fearlessness paradigm) says take in all phenomenon and aspects to 'fear' across the spectrum—to many, that is overwhelming in complexity. At another level the added distinctions and spectrum model gives a new "order" and simplicity that I find is not a "defensive act" but really gets to some fundamental truths about the nature of 'fear.'

<sup>20</sup> [original] "Traditional" is used very loosely, and I apologize somewhat for my vagueness here. But "non-traditional" refers to the writers/researchers [and teachers] operating from a transpersonal [and/or holistic-integral] level (see Wilber, 1977/82) of consciousness or what one may call "spiritual" generically." [now, I would call this latter perspective 2nd-tier, using Spiral Dynamics integral theory]

<sup>21</sup> [original] This notion is confirmed partly by Maslow's (1966) critique of the nature of most scientific inquiry [i.e., it is deficiency-based]. He suggested most of the design of scientific ways of knowing (methods) [and epistemologies] are due to the fear of the scientists themselves. I know of no similar critique by a scholar in other fields of inquiry like philosophy or religious studies but I am assuming there could be an analogous critique (and it is implied in this paper). [now, I have found a scholar of the behavioral sciences with a similar critique; see Devereux, 1967]

*motivated to "get rid of" the very subject-object the knower desires to know. (p. 4).*

Being able to study 'fear' without trying to "get rid of it"<sup>22</sup> as an end in itself is a radical concept in the approaches to knowing 'fear.' Such an approach and epistemology of 'fear' is also characteristic of a fearlessness paradigm or what could be called a *pure research* agenda in contrast to the currently dominating *applied research* agenda with the latter putting emphasis on "conquering" or "getting rid of" 'fear' [and fear] in some way. The applied research agenda is looking to overcome a pathology or problem and is solution-focused.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas the pure research agenda is merely wanting to know the subject-object for the sake of knowing it accurately and no other purpose [necessarily]. Of course, in practice the two are likely to be involved because 'fear' has a reputation for being something that people don't really want because it stops them from all kinds of potential. On the other hand there is a strong emphasis in this society on believing a little bit of natural fear is good for you and protects you from danger. That assumption is not supported in the theory of 'fear' I use. I do acknowledge that a pure research agenda/paradigm will change or even transform 'fear' (and the knower) but it is the motivation for that change that is at issue—is it a 'fear'-based motivation or a 'Love'-based unconditional motivation? [i.e., it's an ethical issue re: knowledge and knowing]

One more reason for exploring an epistemology of fear [and 'fear'] is that once an accurate epistemology (or fearlessness paradigm) is built to know 'fear' best, then subsequently, and almost independently, a better approach and method of dealing with 'fear' has been created as well. Epistemology, defining, and treatment [i.e., management] methods regarding 'fear' are ecologically interrelated very closely—a point, that popularized psychology and marketable human potential [and/or 'new age'] leaders consistently omit. My point, in this fearlessness paradigm is that you cannot do one of them without doing the other and any attempt to separate (dissociate) them in our understanding and treatment of 'fear' is likely to remain incomplete (if not more destructive) and probably 'fear'-based itself. For example, the very treatment to get rid of 'fear' is using 'fear' itself. How will that affect a person? The same principle of critique would apply to any method of knowing 'fear' that was to exclude the spectrum of 'fear' as a reality in the human experience.

### A Brief Review of the Spectrum of Knowing 'fear'

It is worthy to first mention that there is a general spectrum of knowing that Wilber (1990) outlined from classical theory of knowledge and called the "three

---

<sup>22</sup> [original] Krishnamurti (1973/91, p. 67, 69) and Masters (1990, pp. 141-42) have argued this point clearly and in depth.

<sup>23</sup> Today, I wrap all that paradigm into what could be called the "clinical" approach. This approach is big on solutions for clients, and short on in depth analysis, and especially short on critical self-reflective analysis of its own hegemonic assumptions and operational system.



eyes of knowing." He argues cogently, that there are different levels of methods of knowing and all can be complementary<sup>24</sup> [albeit, they are hierarchical]:  
 'Eye of the flesh' - the sensory-based world (sciences)  
 'Eye of reason' - mind, abstract thinking world (logic, mathematics)  
 'Eye of contemplation' - intuitive, transpersonal/mystical [theology]

Most research methods on fear have been developed within the 'eye of the flesh' paradigm or level of knowing—i.e., from the physical-biological sciences (neurobiology, experimental psychology, e.g., Kalin, 1993; LeDoux, 1994) and social psychology (behavioral psychology and psychoanalysis,<sup>25</sup> for e.g., see Rachman, 1990 for a good review). More recent methods of the cognitive sciences and applied behavioral psychology have moved into the 'eye of reason' in understanding fear and related phenomenon (see Rachman also). Humanistic-existential psychology has had an interest in anxiety (and terror/fear) for over 150 years, e.g., S. Kierkegaard (1844/1980), Tillich, and May, etc.). [not excluding Freud and psychoanalysis, see particularly Freud's (n.d.) *The Problem of Anxiety*.

My key point, in this introductory paper on epistemology of 'fear' is that none of these above have developed any significantly critical epistemology of 'fear'—i.e., they have not generally questioned the nature of 'fear' and how to best know it, nor have they looked at the fact 'fear' has been described and studied and talked about across a wide spectrum of disciplines (and, levels of consciousness) through time. Without acknowledging that spectrum of diversity, these traditional paradigms (of any of the three 'eyes of knowing) are suspect of being 'fear'-based [exclusionary] and reductionistic themselves to some degree and thus producing information about 'fear' that is incomplete, if not misleading and ultimately non-useful to discovering 'fear' with the greatest embrace of Truth. Only with a spectrum of fearlessness paradigm then, will we finally know what to do about 'fear' and its destructive effects to Life.<sup>26</sup>

Transpersonal psychology (including religious studies) as a whole has not attempted, as yet, any systematic understanding of 'fear' as a phenomenon with a unique epistemology, though Ken Wilber's transpersonal [integral] work touches on it indirectly (e.g., "Atman Project," "Phobos/Thanatos" = 'Fear' Project). Both humanist-

---

<sup>24</sup> [original] A critical epistemological viewpoint Wilber makes is that "*Each of these modes has its own unique data and facts, and each realm of knowledge only partially overlaps others. To confuse these realms, such as by believing that contemplative knowledge can be reduced to intellectual [eye of reason] understanding, is to commit a category error and to lose the unique information of each domain. However, each domain does possess appropriate means of assessing the validity of knowledge in its own realm. Failure to realize this has produced enormous confusion and conflict between scientists, philosophers, and theologians*" (Walsh and Vaughan, 1994, p. 14). This is a fearlessness paradigm [my words] quality to accept [and not fear] all levels of knowing and yet distinguish them and keep them with clear boundaries and awareness of their limitations. This is a complex issue that involves hierarchies (holarchies) and values which Wilber (1995) deals with brilliantly (fearlessly) for the keen reader.

<sup>25</sup> Today, I would not be so generalizing to place psychoanalysis in that category, especially once you move beyond Freud and his fetish for science.

<sup>26</sup> [original] In many other papers I have called this the 'Fear' Project.

existential and transpersonal studies along with religious investigations are generally oriented to the 'eye of contemplation' but there are variations within each that are less so. J. Krishnamurti (1995, is the best summary) and Cayce (1980) to a much lesser degree, have made some in-roads into developing an epistemology of 'fear' and both these authors are generally obscure and unknown to both fear researchers and the general public interested in the topic. My point, is that the 'eye of contemplation' is poorly explored as a valid and important epistemological approach to knowing 'fear.'

I see this approach herein this technical paper, as the most critical (fearlessness paradigm) and it is likely to produce the most useful results for a pure research agenda. Much of Wilber's work argues that the 'eye of contemplation' cannot be a replacement for the other two approaches of knowing but that it is 'better' and more "embracing" of a larger reality than the other two approaches. This is a very controversial statement to enter into here in this introductory paper.

### Finding a Fearlessness Paradigm in a 'fear'-based Self/Society

#### The Postmodern Challenge

*H. D. Thoreau once said, "For every thousand hacking at the leaves of evil ['fear'],<sup>27</sup> there is one striking at the root.*

*We can only achieve quantum improvements in our lives as we quit hacking at the leaves or attitude and behavior and get to work on the root, the paradigms from which our attitudes and behaviors flow.*

- Stephen Covey<sup>28</sup>

In Fisher (1995) I concluded that 'fear' can no longer be merely considered as a privatized "feeling or emotion" in the normal use of those words or conceptualizations. This larger embracing notion that 'fear' is equivalent to an entire psychosocial [and economic] way of valuing, motivating, organizing, thinking, acting and being in the world (in contradiction to the other option which is 'Love') is supported in Fisher (1995b) by over 130 authors and wisdom traditions from around the world and across time.<sup>29</sup>

From a liberational fearlessness paradigm/perspective, I argue that this most embracing conceptualization of 'fear' is ultimately the way that will get to the root and tell us the most about 'fear' and how to stop feeding its violent/hurtful/oppressive cycle. Marianne Williamson (Hay, 1994) summed it up in expressive language:

*Fear is at the root of all evil. It is the problem with the world and fear seems so more real than love.*

---

<sup>27</sup> This linking of "evil" and 'fear' is not inconsequential to my thinking then and now. Unfortunately, I have never been able to pursue this further but would like to soon.

<sup>28</sup> [original] Covey (1994), p. 288.

<sup>29</sup> [original] This universal "Uni-Bicentric Theorem" is a theory of 'fear' which I would like to see included in the perennial philosophy (e.g., see Wilber, 1993) theories, eventually.

Williamson is interpreting *A Course in Miracles*, which is founded on one of the most ancient spiritual philosophies the *Vedanta* from India. 'Fear' is all-pervasive in the modern organizational design of virtually everything. That is a hypothesis, with a lot of substantive back-up from the wisdom literature and from a lot of my own experience. The difficulty is that 'fear' [and fear] being so "normal" in our society has become "who we are," as Massumi (1993) has argued.<sup>30</sup> How do we know ourselves, if we are hiding in so much 'fear'?

We assume we are not in 'fear' when we are researchers on the topic of 'fear'—that is our first mistake. A new humility<sup>31</sup> (contemplation) will be required in future re-

---

<sup>30</sup> [original] Massumi (1993, p. ix) says, "*Many of the recurring questions addressed implicitly or explicitly by the essays gathered here concern the consequences of saturation of social space by fear. Have fear-producing mechanisms [i.e., media, news] become so pervasive and invasive that we can no longer separate ourselves from our fear? If they have, is fear still fundamentally an emotion, a personal experience, or is it part of what constitutes the collective ground [social context] of possible experience? .... [I]n a sense we have become our fear...*".

<sup>31</sup> [original] This humility is not a guilt or 'fear'-based shameful humility as so often we see in W. religious traditions. It is merely a first step of admission in recovery from our addiction to 'fear' and our enmeshment with an unhealthy and unsustainable world view/paradigm and 'fear'-based consciousness. I have heard several times people in my workshops and classes say that they "would lose their best friend if they had no fear." Yes, so true, we have become so attached and identified with living in a state of 'fear' that we can't imagine a life without it. Unhooking from that enmeshment and identification with 'fear' requires the experimenter (knower) to go through their own process of recovery from the illusion (using E. mystical language) of 'fear.' [Today, I have set this out in my book *Fearanalysis: A First Guidebook* (Fisher, 2012)] I am calling for researchers (knowers) as part of their epistemological investigations to do their "homework" of self-healing and liberation—of self-knowledge in a Socratic way if they are to be clear in understanding 'fear' at this largest dimension. The contemplative tradition and the contemplative way of knowing has always required that the knower of this realm surrender (*via negativa* path) all preconceived ideas and notions about Reality, Truth, God or whatever is being explored (see Wilber's work) and yet, there is still a way of validating data in this realm of knowledge. Walsh and Vaughan (1994, p. 14) summarized: "... *contemplative understanding is best evaluated via inter-subjective testing by masters of this realm.*" Also, one as a researcher (knower) has to follow the prescriptive path to know (says Wilber) just as a mathematician has to follow certain premises and ways of knowing in calculus. Even a bull rider must follow tradition and watch the master riders to learn how to handle a bull and know it well. What modern science and rugged individualism (Wilber's critique of the "cowboy mentality" of Americanism) in the West doesn't like, is the final reliance for truth on a "master" of the contemplative realm to verify contemplative findings or knowledge of those lesser experienced and adept. It all seems "too subjective" for our current world of scientific verification by "objective facts" that can be shown—and Westerners don't generally trust or respect elders/gurus/masters or leaders much [of course, I am not referring to cults, or religious traditions here]—historically, we have crucified and killed them, e.g., Socrates, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Christ, etc. (ALL BECAUSE WE ARE IN 'fear' and they aren't). This controversy [i.e., tragedy] between the ways of verification in the 'three eyes of knowing' will not go away overnight. It is going to be a long historical battle for the Truth and how to know the Truth—and that is the study of epistemology.

search into the nature of 'fear' to be able to find an appropriate methodology to know (and verify our knowing) of 'fear,' as it goes beyond the notion of our "self" (ego) or personhood to a transpersonal Self (which I would call the "fearless Self"<sup>32</sup> as did Griscom, 1988).

Below, I will attempt to outline a few ways to begin this new humility and contemplation as part of the fearlessness pure research paradigm. One of the common experiences I have observed that prevents us from this new paradigm is our "impatience" (and insecurity) with the process of knowing itself, especially in the contemplative domain. I often hear clients and researchers desperately searching still to "conquer" 'fear' in all its pathological symptoms (e.g., anxiety disorders, phobias, panic, etc.), which are the No. 1 mental health problem in the world.<sup>33</sup>

It reminds me of the old analogy of a cartoon that showed a man sawing away madly at a task of cutting a cord of wood. The sweat was flying and he was getting exhausted after cutting a few logs. His friend comes by and suggests to the wood-cutter that he may want to stop and sharpen his saw. The wood-cutter doesn't stop for a second and in desperation shouts back, "I don't have time." This is a 'fear' pattern itself—that we will not have time [i.e., deficit thinking and motivation]—that we have to stop the 'fear' symptoms now—that is so much of the clinical attitude of the postmodern world. We are still in crisis management and I know it is important to some degree when we are treating suffering humans. However, beyond this applied work on 'fear', I am asking for more balance in the research agenda to a pure research motivation of the contemplative way of knowing, or a spectrum approach (transpersonal or fearlessness paradigm). This latter approach requires great patience and less patients.

### What's in a Name?

*Can you look at that fear without naming it?*<sup>34</sup>

What if we didn't name 'fear' by the label 'fear'? What would happen to our inquiry methodologies of 'fear'? I often thought it would be interesting to call it FPV+ ('fear' pattern virus). What would be revealed about the nature of fear [and 'fear'] and about the nature of our current dominant epistemology of fear [and 'fear']? I question the naming of fear because Krishnamurti (1973/91) argues cogently that we name it before we know it. Arcaya (1979) suggests to know fear phenomenologically, we have to first suspend "as many preconceptions as possible about the phenomenon [fear]" (p. 173). Krishnamurti (1973/91) says it well:

*Having never looked at fear you have never come directly into communication*

---

<sup>32</sup> [original] Griscom (1988) says the "fearless self" arises from contact with the soul and awareness of multi-dimensionality. [today, I would call it, integral, and post-integral thought i.e., multiple perspectives]

<sup>33</sup> [original] According to the National Institute of Mental Health and The Anxiety Disorders Association of America (1993).

<sup>34</sup> [original] Op. cit. Krishnamurti (1973/91), p. 67. [today, I see this demand answered, partially by my choosing the strategy of (') apostrophe's on the notion and term fear, in a sense to free it of its name/connotation that has been pre-given]

*with it; you have never looked at fear without naming it, without running away from it [via abstractions, words, and preconceived conceptualizations] (p. 67)*  
 To look at fear [and/or 'fear'] so intimately and freshly requires a [trans-]discipline of looking in a new *fearlessness* way. Simply, that is a way of looking "inside" first—at ourselves and how we look—and how we look at fear [and 'fear']. Hayward (1995), following the Sacred Warrior tradition and E. philosophies, makes a suggestion:

*The reason to face fear is to discover who we are.... (p. 80) We see fear most clearly in the gaps between our masks [habits].... There is always a moment of hesitation and vulnerability before we put on a mask. That is the moment to catch fear. (p. 88)*

"Can you watch fear without any conclusion," asks Krishnamurti (1995).<sup>35</sup> Standard 'fear'-based habit patterns of looking and researching (knowing) 'fear' require re-evaluation based on a new *fearlessness* paradigm and on the hypothesis described in this paper. The contemplative approach to 'fear' is one of self-reflection as much as observation of 'fear'. Krishnamurti (1973/91) summarized:

*You observe from that [isolated self] centre and you are still caught in fear, because that centre has separated [dissociated] itself from the thing it has called fear; it says, "I must get rid of it." "I must analyze it," "I must overcome it," "resist it," and so on; thereby you are strengthening fear.... Can you look at the fear without naming it?—the moment you name it 'fear' [habit], it is already in the past. [p. 67]*

Do we have a "naming" (i.e., escaping) addiction<sup>36</sup> when it comes to fear [and 'fear'] especially?

### Studying the Species 'fear'

One more way to study and know 'fear' came to me one day while walking with a friend in the early morning. I saw a robin flying in front of us and then land in a nearby tree. As it sat there, it struck me that this is exactly how I want to watch 'fear.' I want to watch it as if it were a species of some kind. When I, as a naturalist-bird watcher, look at a bird in a tree, I don't think of getting rid of it, or conquering it, or resisting it—I merely watch it curiously without any preconceived judgments (moralism) that it is 'good' or 'bad' and that I have to do something with it or about its existence. In this way of fearless seeing, I am free to truly know Robin-ness in all its ways. I take the bird completely in—that I will later call 'Robin' (*Turdus migratori-*

<sup>35</sup> [original] "... without any interference of the knowledge you have accumulated about it? If you cannot, then what you are watching is the past, not fear; if you can, then you are watching fear for the first time without interference of the past. You can watch only when the mind is very quiet... only when the mind is not chattering with itself..." (Krishnamurti, 1995, p. 10).

<sup>36</sup> [original] Rowe (1987, p. 248) argued convincingly that among introverts in her clinical experience, "*The fear has to be named and explained...*" so, they feel they can deal with it, whereas the extroverts they "... always look, in the external reality, that is, in [their] body and in the place where the fear arose." Both ways are still attempts to flee from the 'fear' itself and themselves by objectifying the full 'fear' experience and abstracting it as removed and separate (dissociated) [and named] from them.

us). That is how I see a fearlessness paradigm working when we can look at 'fear' and study it without any preconceived moral judgments—that is what I am calling a pure research paradigm. Massumi (1993, p. ix) gave an indication of the kinds of questions a 'fear' researcher may ask from this new paradigm (though his political coloring to the questions biases the investigation overly so):

*How does capitalized fear circulate? Implant and reproduce itself? If we cannot separate ourselves from our fear, and if fear is a power mechanism for the perpetuation of domination, is our unavoidable participation in the capitalist culture of fear a complicity with our own and other's oppression? If we are in collective complicity with fear, does that mean that fear no longer sets social boundaries, but transcends them?.... how, now, does one resist?*

If I want to kill that Robin I see in front of me before I look at the full Robin-ness of it—I will only see what I want to see that is useful for exterminating it.<sup>37</sup> Then I am only seeing my motivation (and it is 'fear' itself) imposed on the object/subject of my viewing. That is epistemological "violence" (see Wilber, 1977/82). The reader may find this argument a bit "Zen-like" or Buddhist, and I am not saying there isn't some similarity in these Eastern spiritual and mystical traditions, however, my interest is to stay "naturalistic" rather than "mystical" as a way of researching this very important phenomenon 'fear'.<sup>38</sup>

I conclude this introductory paper on building an epistemology of 'fear' by saying 'fear' is the most "tricky" species on the planet to study and know. We have to stop "feeding" into it and getting into our own blind spot of 'fear' of 'fear' itself. That is why it has attracted my attention for the past decade. H. Cayce (1980), after 40 years researching the fear phenomenon across a fairly broad spectrum of disciplines concluded that,

*Fear, indeed, has many faces. Fear patterns become so entangled in our lives...". (p. 139)*

Much more work is required to disentangle 'fear' patterns in our lives and specifically in our ways to study and know 'fear' itself. Ultimately, this study of 'fear' in a pure research paradigm is a study of ourselves and what we have, *via* living in oppressive societies for so long. May this new fearlessness paradigm be part of the process of unwinding the domination of 'fear'-based oppressive societies.

---

<sup>37</sup> Today, I am working with the ethical basis to this fearwork, and to fearanalysis, and I find a good tradition to base the counter-approach being addressed here, is the work of Neumann (1949/73) and the tradition of analytic (depth) psychology (e.g., Freud, Jung, etc.) as they talk about how we can know, integrate, and transform the negative destructive-side of our Shadow (individually, and collectively). The way I conceptualize 'fear' is very much like, but not totally equivalent to, the Shadow in Jung's work.

<sup>38</sup> Krishnamurti was influenced by Eastern mysticism but he was no Buddhist, he was of no religious base, other than esoteric philosophies. Also, I am not intending to say that I don't use "mystical" ways of knowing to study 'fear,' as that is not the case, and in fact the entire In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ) is based on a profound mystical relationship and state experience.

\*\*\*\*

## References

- Arcaya, J. M. (1979). A phenomenology of fear. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 10*(2), 165-88.
- Brissett, W. N. (2003). Bibliographical essay on fear. *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture, 5*(3), 115-23.
- Cayce, H. L. (1980). *Faces of fear: Overcoming life's anxieties*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Covey, S. (1994). *Daily reflections for highly effective people*. NY: Fireside.
- Fisher, R. M. (1995). An introduction to defining 'fear': A spectrum approach. Technical Paper No. 1. Calgary, AB: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (1995a). *What happened to 'Love'?, where cometh 'fear'?* Unpubl. ms.
- Fisher, R. M. (1995b). 'Fear' names masking 'fear' itself. *In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute: The Re-view, 1*(1), 6-7.
- Fisher, R. M. (1997). A guide to Wilberland: Some common misunderstandings of the critics of Ken Wilber and his work on transpersonal theory prior to 1995. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 37*(4), 30-73.
- Fisher, R. M. (2006). Invoking 'Fear' Studies. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 22*(4), 39-71.
- Fisher, R. M. (2012). *Fearanalysis: A first guidebook*. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Gaylin, W. (1979). *Feelings: Our vital signs*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Gibb, J. (1991). *Trust: A new vision of human relationships for business, education, family, and personal living*. Hollywood, CA: Newcastle.
- Griscom, C. (1988). *The healing of emotion: Awakening the fearless self*. NY: Simon & Simon.
- Hay, V. (1994). An interview with Marianne Williamson. *In Touch Magazine*, Special Issue, n.p.
- Hayward, J. (1995). *Sacred world: A guide to Shambhala warriorship in daily life*. NY: Bantam.
- Kalin, N. H. (1993). The neurobiology of fear. *Scientific American*, May, 94-101.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1844/1980). *The concept of anxiety: A simple psychological oriented deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin*. (Ed. Trans. R. Thomte and A. B. Anderson). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Krishnamurti, J. (1973/91). *Beyond violence*. London: Victor Gollanz.
- Krishnamurti, J. (1995). *On fear*. NY: Harper Collins.
- LeDoux, J. E. (1994). Emotion, memory and the brain. *Scientific American*, June, 50-57.
- Maslow, A. H. (1966). *The psychology of science*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Massumi, B. (1993). Preface. In B. Massumi (Ed.), *The politics of everyday fear* (pp. vii-x). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massumi, B. (1993a). Everywhere you want to be: Introduction to fear. In B. Massumi (Ed.), *The everyday politics of fear* (pp. 3-37). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Masters, R. (1990). *Truth cannot be rehearsed*. Vancouver, BC: Xanthiros Foundation.
- Neumann, E. (1949/73). *Depth psychology and a new ethic*. NY: Harper & Torchbooks.
- Rachman, J. S. (1990). *Fear and courage*. NY: W. H. Freeman.
- Rowe, D. (1987). *Beyond fear*. London: Fontana Books.
- Walsh, R., and Vaughan, F. (1994). The worldview of Ken Wilber. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 34(2), 6-12.
- Wilber, K. (1977/82). *The spectrum of consciousness*. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- Wilber, K. (1990). *Eye to eye: The quest for a new paradigm*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1993). The Great Chain of Being. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 33(3), 52-65.
- Wilber, K. (1995). *Sex, ecology and spirituality (Vol. 1): The spirit of evolution*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.