

---

# Marianne Williamson's Dubious 'Be Courageous' Prescriptions Need a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Upgrade



R. Michael Fisher

© 2020

---

**Technical Paper No. 112**

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

Marianne Williamson's Dubious 'Be Courageous'  
Prescriptions Need a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Upgrade.

Copyright 2020

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  
920A- 5 Ave. N. E., Calgary, AB  
T2E 0L4

Contact author(s):

[r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com](mailto:r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com)

First Edition 2020

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

Printed in Canada

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

---

## Marianne Williamson's Dubious 'Be Courageous' Prescriptions Need a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Upgrade

R. Michael Fisher,<sup>1</sup> Ph.D.

©2020

*Technical Paper No. 112*

### Abstract

After decades of following the potent leadership capabilities of Marianne Williamson, and especially her last few years centralizing her activities within the active political leadership races in the U.S.A., the author concludes it is critical to evaluate all her spiritual and political prescriptions for a 'better life' and 'better America' a 'healed life' and 'healed America' via a critical assessment of her uses of the term "courageous" of which is directly related to her uses of the term fear and fear management. This introductory critique raises questions regarding contradictions in her claims and dubious prescriptions about courageousness and her vision of a 21<sup>st</sup> century politics and "New Enlightenment" for American society.

### Introduction

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisher is an Adjunct Faculty member of the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, AB, Canada. He is an educator and fearologist and co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ) and Research Institute (1991- ) and lead initiator of the Fearlessness Movement ning (2015- ). The Fearology Institute was created by him recently to teach international students about fearology as a legitimate field of studies and profession. Fisher is an independent scholar, public intellectual and pedagogue, lecturer, author, consultant, researcher, coach, artist and Principal of his own company (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>). He has four leading-edge books: *The World's Fearlessness Teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (University Press of America/Rowman & Littlefield), *Philosophy of fearism: A first East-West dialogue* (Xlibris) and *Fearless engagement of Four Arrows: The true story of an Indigenous-based social transformer* (Peter Lang), *Fear, law and criminology: Critical issues in applying the philosophy of fearism* (Xlibris); *India, a Nation of Fear and Prejudice* (Xlibris); *The Marianne Williamson Presidential Phenomenon* (Peter Lang). Currently, he is developing The Fearology Institute to teach courses. He can be reached at: [r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com](mailto:r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

Even though fear has a prime directive to keep us safe and comfortable, it has grown into the *single greatest threat* to humanity and collective survival....With global pandemic [and social conflict] disruptions and rising anxiety levels, now is the time to shine a light on our deepest fears and examine the society that fear [i.e., culture of fear] is creating....But fear not—inside [this new book by Dr. Faranda], you’ll learn about....<sup>2</sup>

There are many kinds of authors, speakers and teachers who are leaders of movements and even self-help initiatives, who all have their own implicit or explicit prescriptions of what they consider the ‘best’ ways to manage fear. For over three decades I have taken on the systematic study of their discourses and their biases—their strengths and their weaknesses with a goal to improvement of FME (fear management/education<sup>3</sup>) in the world. My fearanalysis work<sup>4</sup> seeks to determine if their prescriptions of fear management are as valid *and* the ‘best’ for our 21<sup>st</sup> century world, as they and their supporters (and/or their publishers) claim. In the case of really significant leaders in the public sphere, like Marianne Williamson (subject of this technical paper and others I’ve written and/or lectured on re: her ethical leadership<sup>5</sup>), the public requires an especially rigorous scrutiny of the teachings and preachings of these great leaders because they impact so many people and the very direction of history and cultural (r)evolution.

Before turning to Williamson’s specific leadership and ideas about *courageousness* (as an indicator of her fear management prescriptions and her education about fear management) let’s look to the quote above to analyze a little bit. The claim that Faranada (2020) makes, amongst others likewise (including myself), is that paradoxically, as history has unfolded, as evolution has coursed through many paths, *fear* and how humans management it is “the single greatest threat to humanity” (and survival of all Life on this planet in the Anthropocene Era). Thus fear is simple and complex and critical to understand all at once. We need leaders-teachers to help us under-

<sup>2</sup> From publisher’s description (approved by Dr. Faranda, clinical psychologist and author) from Faranda (2020), *The Fear Paradox*.

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive review of my construction of “FME” see e.g., Fisher (2010).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Fisher (2012, 2015, 2016, in progress).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., written works: Fisher & Subba (2016, pp. xxxi-xxxvii, xlvi, 22), Fisher (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2019a); video lectures (Fisher, 2020e, 2020f, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e).

standing this greatest threat. For that I have no problem. When I get more critical is when I see things (so often) as in the quote above that now that fear is seen as the serious ubiquitous problem that it is (really, a Fear Problem<sup>6</sup>)—then, the author-leader makes a claim of how best to manage the fear (problem of fear)—in Faranda’s book the claim is typically the solution offered as a prescription: “But **fear not**—inside [this new book by Dr. Faranda], you’ll learn about...”.

“*Fear not*” is extremely common discourse on fear management across disciplines, throughout history in populist arenas and/or in academia. Book authors and teacher-leaders seem to just ‘fall’ into this discourse as if it is presumed to be a good high quality fear management tactic. I question that. Re: one principle of fear management, the claim “Fear not” is dubious in its effectiveness in real terms of experience. I don’t know about you, but when I am stressed out (e.g., afraid) and someone I know who I even trust intimately, says to me as they observe my state condition: “**Don’t be stressed...**”—I immediately feel invalidated as to my real experience, and even if I may in my stressed condition be hallucinating in terms of reality and/or just exaggerating things, either way, to be told “Don’t” (like “Fear not”) is an insult and demeaning (as I said, invalidating to my experience, and it is impossible to do<sup>7</sup>). Because, the person obviously is not attending unconditionally to my state of distress (e.g., fearfulness) as part of a hurting process (e.g., part of a trauma dramatization perhaps)—and, thus, their lack of therapeutic attention will create a sense in me that I’m only acceptable to them once I “fear not”—meaning, once I fear no longer so much as to disturb them and their comfortable world (at least, apparently for the moment). There is an implicit moral judgement applied with “Fear not” which tells me my fearfulness is not being accepted fully as legitimate experience and part of my growth and development process.

I think you get what I mean about the demonstrable lack of a therapeutic and healing perspective that is represented by claims and prescriptions of generic “Fear not” discourses (i.e., moralism<sup>8</sup>) re: fear management. Yet,

---

<sup>6</sup> “The Fear Problem” (see Fisher, 2020f).

<sup>7</sup> At least, it is improbably to do (for most), because “distress” is real and physiological and stays chemically (at least) in the body for hours if not days. To de-stress is a process not something you can just jump from one state (distressed, e.g., fearful) to another state completely clean (e.g., destressed, e.g., fearless). Life systems do not work like that.

<sup>8</sup> I have a longer critique of the moralism ideology (i.e., virtues psychology) that impinges in just about everything in our world today (e.g., I mentioned the Judeo-Christian roots of that as one part of it). My own work (re: fearlessness psychology and pedagogy; see Fisher, 2019f, 2011) is on recovering from that imposition of toxic virtues moralism and its domi-

the problem goes farther in the case of Faranda's moralistic prescription and the current world situation.

In Faranda's case, if you read the book, you'll see how entrenched the problem of fear is within culture itself—literally, he (and many others, myself included) claim we live now in a “culture of fear.” So, please, tell me how “fear not” is a solution to life within a culture of fear? Maybe it is just a slang expression of an idiom of not so serious analysis but rhetorically is popular and perhaps ‘sells well’ to some mass audience. Perhaps. But does that make it good fear management? Why else would one say it, use it, and make it so upfront in the Introduction of a book or in the case of Faranda (2020) it is made by the publisher as the foremost statement of motivation for why a reader should *buy* this book. These uses of terms and prescriptions have meaning, they have weight, and they have histories of intentions, unconscious and sometimes conscious. We need to ‘stay awake’ to their impacts rather than be entranced by their ‘authority’ and power to persuade—if, not their power to (supposedly) cure.

Without going into fine detail here, simply, most all of us who have encountered Christian hegemony in just about everything to do with W. civilization for the past 2000+ years knows that “Fear Not!” is a heavy prescription in the Bible, and in the Judeo-Christian and Muslim religious traditions. So, how is that now, still (supposedly) such an important and appropriate ‘best’ prescription for fear management in a very different complicated 21<sup>st</sup> century context? Well, it probably isn't all that useful, is my point. And worse, it may be distracting and (mis-)guiding in terms of truly learning a critical vocabulary and literacy on fear management (FME) for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So, it puts in question where Dr. Faranda, a contemporary W. trained clinical psychologist and leader in teaching about fear (*via* his new book), is coming from (?). Of course, if Faranda is under the lens, it is only because he is one of the latest writing a book on fear but to be sure he is one of tens of thousands of case examples whom I could put under this same lens. Marianne Williamson comes next.

Re: Faranda, what critical awareness does he or his publisher, or his

---

nating fear-based psychology (if, not religious ideology) that has too long ruled the world of fear management education (FME). My revisionist view on FME needs a new sub-field of ‘Fear’ Studies (e.g., Fisher, 2006, 2018). All my interventions are based on transdisciplinary contexts in understanding fear (‘fear’) and thus I do not fall into the clinical biomedical model of most authors-leaders on fear management which hover around the hegemony of individualism (i.e., self-psychology) as the ‘best’ way to understand and manage fear.

psychological clients, have at their disposal(?); and are they being nourished educationally in order to critically assess the fear management prescriptions of this leader-teacher-clinician? Such questions are part of my own *21<sup>st</sup> century prescription* for interventions appropriate to the Fear Problem today and the exacerbation rate of intensity of that phenomenon in the next few years—in a very precarious world in great danger—and, a world with great opportunity in this crisis to ‘turn around’ and as Marianne Williamson (1997) reminds us in her leadership work:

...[E]verything will erupt in time if we do not attend to the inner life [e.g., fear management]....The curtain is now set to rise on the drama of the twenty-first century; we hold in our minds the possible scripts for its beginning scenes. As Thomas Paine proclaimed in speaking about the American Revolution, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” (pp. 33-34).

### Marianne Williamson’s<sup>9</sup> Prescription(s)

FME, is the umbrella concept/theory and referent for critique in better understanding any teacher-leader who talks about fear and how to manage it better. FME, stands back and takes a holistic-integral perspective of analysis, from all prescriptions, and investigates them *via* fearanalysis in order to look deeper into the make-up and philosophies behind claims re: the nature and role of fear, and how best to manage fear.

Marianne Williamson speaks and writes a good deal about *fear* and *courageousness* (and love). Her leadership potency, at least in some circles, is undeniable. Her run for leader of the Democratic Party and potential to be elected as President of the USA in 2020 is undeniably a courageous event in her life but I think also in the historical unfoldment of the history of the USA in general. Politics is uniquely ‘touched’ and will not forget Williamson’s dramatic political activism, vision, and her unique style of delivery to go about it (see Fisher, 2020a for a summary).

So, in that sense, she makes a great exemplar case study in fear management (and FME) in the contemporary world. Will she indeed bring about the Thomas Paine proclamation of renewal—the remake America great again like the American Founders idealized? She wrote in her 1997 book, the first concentrated thinking on politics for public consumption:

---

<sup>9</sup> Go to Wikipedia to search more about her and/or Marianne 2020 website which focuses on her campaign run and policies <https://www.mariannenow.com/>

“*The New Enlightenment*” The American Founders were intellectual citizens of the Age of Enlightenment [17-18<sup>th</sup> century]....Now, at the end of the twentieth century, the world has corrected and improved upon Newtonian Science [and reality as depicted by Newton that heavily influenced the Founders of America]....We are exiting a Material [Newtonian] Age, which has lasted for thousands of years, and are entering an Ideational Age....We are living during dramatic times of historical [and paradigmatic reality shifting] transition, in which our psyches and our social orders are trying to adjust to the often violent shift from one primary mode of civilization to another. (pp. 35, 37)

Indeed, this “New Enlightenment” vision and Renaissance that Williamson is promoting in her leadership is exciting and yet, it needs to be examined carefully, especially in terms of the demands on the “psyches” of Americans (but all) peoples today.

Fear and the psyche and social order, and politics are obviously all tightly knit into a meshworking, and that is why emotions and emotional intelligence and education are part of Williamson’s (rather feminist-spiritual) platform for renewal. Her *Politics of Love* (e.g., Williamson, 2019) is potent in human potential and cultural renewal/revolution and enlightenment and simultaneously, it is constituted upon her contrasting polarity of her in depth indictment of Fear (e.g., see Fisher, 2020a, 2019b). And it is not “fear” *per se* she is critical of, but the way societies teach about fear and how they typically do a poor job of teaching fear management.

Williamson’s theology follows (in good part) *A Course in Miracles* theology and spiritual psychology, whereby Williamson takes the starting spiritual absolutist perspective on fear, when she diagnoses humanity overall with the following formula:

“*God is not the author of fear. You are.*” (Williamson, 1992, p. 22)

She then argues *only* love is real and thus *fear is an illusion* (Williamson, 1992, p. 23). And, when it comes to primary prescription of her FME, it revolves centrally around the claim (a psychological and moral prescription): “**Love casts out sin or fear...**” (p. 23).<sup>10</sup> Note, this is not her most

---

<sup>10</sup> This discourse has origins in the Judeo-Christian teachings, e.g., 1 John 4:18.



popularized writing on fear<sup>11</sup> but it is more fundamentally theological and philosophical and impacts everything she says and does re: fear (that is, FME). The religious sound of her prescription is not without merit of further investigation, but that is beyond the scope of this technical paper. I would want readers also to know she is of a committed Jewish heritage and has respect for Judaism (in part) but that she sees herself identified with inter-spirituality rather than religion of any kind. She is relatively well read in Eastern and Western theologies and philosophies. How to bring that to politics is part of her unique work, and she is all for a new politics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is influenced by traditional wisdom but also the newest findings in sciences, as she prescribed in 1997: “we should try to apply the principles of modern physics and metaphysics to the politics of our time” (p. 37). It is this latter application of metaphysics that brings a lot of criticism to her work and leadership in general when it is introduced in the public (political) sphere. Her metaphysics of fear (and love) is central in all her decades of public leadership. The quotes above on fear are essentially her metaphysics of fear in generic form, the details of applying that metaphysics is what makes for important contributions to the field of FME.

### Williamson’s Current Discourse(s) on Courage(ous)

Like with any teacher-leader, their discourses on courage(ous) are significant pointers to what their discourses are on fear. Obviously, these are dialectically related, fear/courage is a ‘unit’ we may call it of human behavior. It is also a unit of which has brought forward a lot of theological and philosophical thought—including, theorizing about psychology and social order, etc. So, we are now in the territory of politics and emotions. Even though, I am critical of making “fear” only an emotion but that’s another story. Back to Williamson, she is also making fear an emotion but more than that she is making it a *metaphysical* phenomenon (i.e., an “illusion” of distortion of reality itself—so, here, she is not just talking about a feeling or an emotion but a perceptual *lens*, of a particular perspective, on reality and on the nature of the self). It’s not good. “Courage” as a positive concept and prescription she throws around a lot, all of which, more or less, comes out in the form of (demonstrating and/or) teaching a positive attribute (or virtue). Of course,

---

<sup>11</sup> Truly one of the most commonly cited quotes of Williamson’s work in the past 30 years, and remains very popular on the Internet and in books, etc., is “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure...” (Williamson, 1992, p. 190).

Williamson like most people would not support a courage that is headless and careless. She places an ethical (Aristotelian) limitation on the value of the virtue called “courageous.” Going from there, now, let’s look at what Williamson has very recently said about courageousness and its importance in our times, and especially, in American culture and politics as the upcoming November 3, 2020 Presidential election is going to change everything.

I don’t see any real change in Williamson’s basic understanding of courage over the decades, so I’ll only analyze a couple sample recent uses (below). In almost every interview I’ve seen of Williamson in the past two years, with her political hackles up, she demonstrates and propagates confidence and woman’s power with what she calls her “truth” speaking-to-power, the bread-n’-butter of any good activist’s narrative. She’s proud of it. Courageous truth-teller, that’s what she is best known for and always has been, at least from my study of her 35 years of teaching in popular culture. So, courage(ous) is very familiar to her and signifies her activist-teacher-leader persona in public, at least.

In her current heated Opinion pieces in *Newsweek* magazine, we can see examples of Williamson’s preferences (biases) for how to best understand and place *courage*, as well as how it is should be used by citizens (and/or other leader-types in politics) as a prescription for fear (management/education):

The pillars of American democracy are often represented by marble columns, but those aren’t the ones that are falling down [today]. They are merely symbols of the pillars that hold up our freedom, and we’ve kidded ourselves that if those were erect, then we were OK. But we are not OK, because the pillars that are the real foundations of our democracy are philosophical and spiritual as much as legalistic and material. They are *courage*, devotion, love of country and the selflessness to pursue something bigger than just the betterment of our own material circumstances. And those pillars have been rotting slowly for decades, to the point where they are creaking [spp.]....Millions of us are afraid...that the roof might, in fact, come down on this magnificent edifice whose strength we so childishly took for granted [for several generations].<sup>12</sup> [italics added for emphasis]

---

<sup>12</sup> Williamson (2020).

*Courage* is not just her view of one of the pillars of American democracy and the nation known as United States, but courage is part of “our character” as (good) Americans, she argues as well.

She means *good* character of course, because she thinks and talks and teaches in terms of virtues all the time. Virtues of the good life, love, hope, courage, reason, etc. And to not follow virtues, means to follow vices (sins), is the basic bi-polarity of her moralistic teaching and philosophy, and politics. Then she makes a diagnosis beyond the loss of the virtues in American recent history especially, and makes the concomitant diagnosis that, unfortunately, “**Millions of us are afraid**”—and, even though in this article she says that such fear is (normal) “legitimately so” as it represents a response to the falling American empire/nation (at least, highly likely)—she is also bringing home the diagnosis and asking implicitly that Americans admit they’re afraid. [note: all bolded words in MW’s quotes are mine]

Admission is a start to recovery, she would say. This is like a common ground, no matter what partisanship is involved, **we’re all afraid**. At least that is her view and she is not going to let up in this piece of writing. She brings out her repetitive doctrine, *via* the preacher’s hammer on the pulpit to really let it fly—the same article proceeds with her prescription to fear:

...a catastrophic moment [in US history, with November 3 presidential election looming], with millions of Americans almost paralyzed with fear....The enemy has the keys. And way too many Americans are actually inviting him in.

We need to summon layers of personal power now, from a deeper intellectual understanding to a meaningful amount of courage. We need a holistic [21<sup>st</sup> century] paradigm of [psychological] societal and political change....We need to be braver than we have ever been before.

If you’re **afraid** to say it [truth] because it might put you on some list like a McCarthy-era blackballing of suspected communists; say it anyway. If you’re **afraid** to do it because your customer base might not like it and you could lose some revenue; do it anyway. If you’re a politician **afraid** to vote courageously because you’re still playing the old political game, have some chutzpah, for God’s sake, and vote your conscience. If you’re **afraid** to take a stand for the ages because they might come and get you, stand tall, stand proud and keep standing.

It will take all our courage... to bring it [democracy and liberty] back to life.

Clearly, without doubt, Williamson teaches about fear and courage (and bravery), American style. Agree with her or not, she knows what it is that needs to be pounded down in her moralistic prescriptions to make the world a better place (at least, America). Note the repetition of “afraid” in those quotes. She is literally shaming anyone who is “afraid” (i.e., beyond the initial natural fear of the reality America is falling)—and won’t act courageously. And, for her in this speech above you see that courage has to have action, that is, ‘just do it!’ Now, does that phrasing, with some slight variations in her speech, sound familiar? Of course, 1990s, Nike’s ad: “Just do it” that it played for a long time over popular cultural air waves, by telling people, you may be afraid of this, and this and this, (using humor)—it then ended the problem of fear in the world with—[buy Nike’s] and “*Just do it!*” This slogandia<sup>13</sup> was everywhere in that time, and Williamson seems to be just appropriating it now in 2020, on such a critical issue as the very functioning of democracy and the fate of the nation. I find that a hard ‘pill’ and discourse to take seriously, which is the last thing she would intend. I’m not sure if anyone else would take this sermon seriously either, today?

I wonder if there’s some hypnotic (commercial) entrainment (i.e., manipulation) being trotted out here unconsciously, and Williamson doesn’t catch she is using it (?). Her intentions so pure, perhaps in her own mind, she’s quite blind to the adopted dubious commercial manipulation that Nike has always used to ‘sell’ something. And Williamson is definitely selling her prescription for a fear ‘pill’—for being *afraid* (meaning, ‘too afraid’ for your own good and the good of your country). Can you see why I am picking up on the guilt and shame basis behind in the underbelly of an otherwise, ‘good’ sounding coaches speech for Americans today? She’s battling fear with courage—that is, “just do it” technologies from a dubious source. I don’t know if she is conscious of copying Nike’s ad formula (i.e., con-

---

<sup>13</sup> E.g., “Nike [tries to] associate its products [made in sweat-shops] with a healthy life-world [wellness market]....Nike finds a deceptive way of playing on women’s fears [guilt and shame] of being overweight. AD 1 [actual] *fear of failure fear of success fear of losing your health fear of losing your mind fear of being taken too seriously fear of not being taken seriously enough fear that you worry too much fear that you don’t worry enough your mother’s fear you’ll never marry your father’s fear that you will....Group therapy from Nike—just do it!*” (cited in Anselmi & Gouliamos, 1998, pp. 103-04). The fact that Williamson has taken on the problem of weight control (and women’s problems) from a spiritual perspective for decades, is ironic—that is, IF Williamson actually was mimicking the Nike ad formula in her speech.

sciousness colonization) or not. Only she would know. But we have to challenge it's foundations, as they are not the foundations of the American Founders whom she idolizes so often. That's my point of the contradiction of who she says she is drawing from as the pillars of the Founders and the American Revolution (Enlightenment)—and, who she (mis-)uses in popular speech discourses in 2020 (i.e., Nike ad) to persuade.

She is definitely a 'tricky' rhetorician. Beyond the 'too afraid' problem she points to in her speech—with courage as the antidote—then, there is a more archaic connection in her rhetoric to repeat the pattern of moral condemnation that goes with 'Fear not!' (as I mentioned earlier in this paper). The speech harkens to a religious authoritative God(s), or Angels, or some higher heavenly source, of some kind that gives the dominant prescription in the Judeo-Christian tradition, to not be so afraid, be brave and courage, have faith, etc. Williamson is well steeped in and comfortable with that kind of discourse on fear management. But it is more than FME that interests her, she is interested in changing the 'character' of people, and by changing the way one is afraid, to suit her prescription of 'be brave' and courageous, then, she's happy she's achieved her educative goal. But is that good FME for our times today? A much bigger problem and analysis is required to fully assess this. I am merely pointing to some of the issues.

I could easily give a number of other uses of "courage" by Williamson, I could point out she uses it in the same breath as quotes she takes from Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., as political spiritual heroes in her life, etc. (or Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous dictum and prescriptions re: the problem of "fear of fear itself"). The multiple examples and fearanalysis are important in future conclusions as to just how adequate is Williamson's FME and does it need upgrading for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to truly meet her aims for an "integrative politics" and "holistic paradigm."

I'll rather swerve a bit her to pursue another angle on the problem of FME in Williamson's discourse and prescriptive medicine bag for people in general and the country of America. She has a very similar pattern of discourse I pick up that is very much related to her personal autobiographical experience. It goes back to when she admits she was a "mess" in her early 20s and depressed and couldn't get out of bed, and her father (whom she greatly admired as authority, hero and still does) told her to "get up" basically, out of bed, have a shower, eat something and let's get to work—take action on what needs to change in your life, but more importantly what needs to change in the world. 'Get over yourself' is the basic message of her father. It apparently, 'worked' for her at that time and age and stage of life. Now,

it seems she thinks everyone will benefit and it should work for them. You'll notice the repeating of "afraid" of x, y, z, in her speech, and just get on with it—is her basic pragmatism, just like her father's. That's the kind of courage that picked her up—it was forced on her by a 'loving' dictator—almost, if you get the sense of what I am describing here in outline. It's parental. Williamson seems stuck in this parental discourse pattern, unconsciously, or not. She loves using it in her fear prescriptive advice-giving.

And in the *Newsweek* article cited above it is so evidence the tone and pattern of courage being called for. I think most people (myself included) find that 'old schoolmarm' *parentalism* (in a postmodern world, especially) quite demeaning and infantilizing (the latter, is something she says she can't stand herself when politicians largely victimize their constituencies by this process of thinking they are 'stupid' and need to be 'told' all the time what they think and what they should do). The authoritative uncaring tone comes through alright, and nor more does it 'pop' like a pimple when she throws down the line: "If you're a politician afraid to vote courageously because you're still playing the old [fear-based] political game, *have some chuzpah, for God's sake...*". Yeah, there it is, and God is invoked (super-parent) on her side of being *right* about fear management—that is, her way (i.e., her dad's way). Of course, Williamson and her acolytes would say: "This is the truth" that no one else is saying much, except Marianne." I say, "truth" is relative to and as effective as is the motivational template from which it was derived in the truth-maker. Nothing, is "truth" that is infallible and inconsistent—that is, self-contradictory—and/or is merely ideological-speak.

So, I ask: Is that how one talks to peers (professional adults) in the polis—in the political sphere that needs so much healing (as Williamson advocates for so fervently)?....I don't think so.

### A Few Concluding Remarks

It will take all our courage... to bring it [democracy and liberty] back to life.  
-Marianne Williamson

Yes, great leaders (like Williamson) are 'only human' we often say, when there are contradictory aspects to their 'walking their talk' and so on. But being 'only human' doesn't mean much, when Williamson's own theology

is centered on “only love is true” (i.e., only the self is divine—Spirit). We’re more than human, in other words, at least, that’s one critique of the transpersonal perspective she brings to her work and teachings. So, on that standard of reference of subjectivity, there is no ‘letting anyone’ off the hook for contradictions and being “only human.” Great leaders are exemplars, and their writing and teaching is even more so required to be rigorous and impeccable (as possible). Followers depend on that kind of integrity. And when it comes to anything fear-based in leader’s teachings and writings, it ought to be critiqued. That’s all I am doing. Fearanalysis is a forensic operation in that sense—so, how teacher-leaders or anyone ‘selling’ ideas about fear and its management, need to go under scrutiny. I encourage others to take my work and improve on it. Do your own fearanalysis.

I ultimately, would like Williamson to do her own fearanalysis of her views on courage(ous) and fear. I think she had done much more theorizing and thinking about love than courage. So, with that note, I’ll respond to her quote at the beginning of this section (above):

It will take all our courage... to bring it [democracy and liberty] back to life.

Yes, it will, but courage needs to be defined and refined beyond “just do it!” rhetorics and prescriptions, which she falls into by default a good deal. Courage(ous) thinking for example, is needed to maintain a healthy society of democracy and liberty, and life-sustaining forces. Courageous thinking has to start with an improved, upgrade to the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century type of thinking about *fear* and its management—about ‘new’ definitions of fear that exists now in a “culture of fear” or in a ‘Fear’ Matrix as I like to say. And thus, the thinking about courage and its uses—equally has to undergo a deconstruction from the heritage uses of it based on old patriarchal notions (bravery, likewise; see Fisher, 2010). The reconstruction of fear and courage, therefore, is core to the reconstruction of the Thomas Paine world and the Marianne Williamson world of being reborn as a nation, a world, as a citizen. Only with such a fearwork agenda (not present in Williamson’s teachings to this point) can her ethical political vision of a (r)evolution ever really be transformative and healing. Fear is that important. Unfortunately, she has little to no incentive to improve fear education—rather, “fear is an illusion” in her theology and philosophy—and, unfortunately, that will lead her love education into a fragile condition—resting only on an ice flow in the ocean, under stressing conditions of global warming. And, we all know where that is heading.

We require a whole new 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm, a holistic-integral approach to FME—and, that is something Williamson has just not caught up with. My work on fear and fearlessness for 31 years is a good starting point for the upgrade, and Williamson all these years, continues to not engage or cite my work in hers. One has to ask why not?

\*\*\*\*

## REFERENCES

- Anselmi, W., & Gouliamos, K. (1998). *Elusive margins: Consuming media, ethnicity, and culture*. Guernica.
- Faranda, F. (2020). *The fear paradox: How our obsession with feeling secure imprisons our minds*. Mango Media.
- Fisher, R. M. (in progress). *A general introduction to fearanalysis: Putting the culture of fear and terror on the couch*.
- Fisher, R. M. (2020a). *The Marianne Williamson presidential phenomenon: cultural (r)evolution in a dangerous time*. NY: Peter Lang.
- Fisher, R. M. (2020b). Marianne Williamson's educational mission: Curriculum for ending suffering. Technical Paper No. 110. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2020c). Coronavirus and Marianne Williamson: Teachings for fear management education. Technical Paper No. 92. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2020d). Marianne Williamson phenomenon: Chapter six reading. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xesF3CTWz40>
- Fisher, R. M. (2020e). Marianne Williamson: New book dives deeper. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBo66hjmWg>
- Fisher, R. M. (2020f). The Fear Problem in many guises. Technical Paper No. 111. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2019a). Near-fearlessness women leaders and their shadow: U. S. presidential candidate Marianne Williamson. Technical Paper No. 87. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2019b). Marianne Williamson 3: Love and fear. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJzLb6ALHPg>



- Fisher, R. M. (2019c). New ethical leadership: Marianne Williamson 2. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHDIATRUYLM>
- Fisher, R. M. (2019d). Marianne Williamson: Fearmongering herself. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Satev8F7K14>
- Fisher, R. M. (2019e). New ethical leadership: Marianne Williamson 1. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjyENboIzxc>
- Fisher, R. M. (2019f). Fearlessness Psychology: An introduction. Technical Paper No. 79. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2018). 'Fear' Studies, 12 years later: Progress and barriers. Technical Paper No. 74. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2016). Invoking fearanalysis: A new methodology applied to wicked problems and paradigm shifts in the Anthropocene. A CSIIIE Yellow Paper, DIFS-15. Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education.
- Fisher, R. M. (2015). Fearanalysis: Further notes from a forensic craft. Technical Paper No. 56. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2012). *Fearanalysis: A first guide book*. In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.
- Fisher, R. M. (2011). A critique of critical thinking: Towards a critical integral pedagogy of fearlessness. *NUML: Journal of Critical Inquiry*, 9(2), 92-164.
- Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world's fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. University Press of America/Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fisher, R. M. (2006). Invoking 'Fear' Studies. *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 22(4), 39-71.
- Fisher, R. M., & Subba, D. (2016). *Philosophy of fearism: A first East-West dialogue*. Xlibris.
- Williamson, M. (2020). Marianne Williamson: America's Cold Civil War. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/marianne-williamson-americas-cold-civil-war-opinion-1534660>
- Williamson, M. (2019). *A politics of love: A handbook for a new American revolution*. HarperOne.

Williamson, M. (1997). *The healing of America*. Simon & Schuster. [revised ed. *Healing the soul of America: Reclaiming our voices as spiritual citizens*, 1997 onward].

Williamson, M. (1992). *A return to love: Reflections on the principles of A Course in Miracles*. HarperOne.