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# Educating Ourselves: A Lovist or Fearist Perspective?



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**Technical Paper No. 54**

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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## Educating Ourselves: A Lovist or Fearist Perspective?

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

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### Introduction

Arguably, how we *live* our lives is directly correlated with how we *educate* ourselves, as a species, as societies, as families, as couples, as individuals; and, the reverse equally true. How we live and educate our lives determines *policies* of our institutions and the less obvious and less formal regimes of rules and *visa versa*.

Yet, perhaps most explicitly and powerful in its effects are the policies that become collective, political, and inscribed in law and ‘normal’ social practices—these, we cannot so easily ignore without great negative consequences. They become our history, our legacies. The question of this paper is: *From what perspective (Lovist or Fearist) is it best to create such policies (rules of order)?* Our well-being depends on good policies rather than bad ones. From such a general inquiry are many derivative questions of which one is the focus here—that is, the *Educational question*: How do (and ought) *Love* and *Fear* impact our lives? Of course, all these are questions too great to respond to adequately in a short technical paper. The purpose is thus to introduce the problems so they may be pursued in the future with perhaps some fresh insights. To give you a heads-up, the *fearist perspective* promoted in this paper is based on the assumption that everywhere there are a whole lot of little “fear problems” that add up to one enormous (and somewhat mysterious) Fear Problem.

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<sup>1</sup> Fisher is co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ) and Research Institute (1991- ) of which archives can be found at <http://www.feareducation.com> (click on "Projects"). He is also founder of the Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education (<http://csiie.org>), and is Department Head at CSIIE of Integral & 'Fear' Studies. He is an independent scholar, public intellectual and pedagogue, author, consultant, researcher, coach, artist and Principal of his own company (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>). He can be reached at: [rmfisher.88@frontier.com](mailto:rmfisher.88@frontier.com)

## The Fear Problem: A Quick Overview

Before continuing to discuss the fearist perspective and its advantages, let me lay down some interesting initial empirical facts, that is, discourses (via as expressed in texts and quotes) in researching on “the fear problem.” I will also write a short response to each of them, although an essay could be done so per quote. My larger discussion of the Fear Problem, as I label it in my work, can be found in my book.<sup>2</sup> I find them all utterly fascinating. I have picked some, of many more, just to illustrate the diversity of which the fear problem has been talked about per se, and which impacts significantly some aspect of our lives and other creatures too. Let me start, noticing the categories I put them into as genres:

**A. Theology** (Religion and Spirituality) – (a.) *Hinduism* – “Out of the four problems of material existence, namely the food problem, the shelter problem, **the fear problem** and the mating problem, **the fear problem** gives us more trouble than the others. [Why? because] We are always fearful due to our ignorance of the next [upcoming future] problem. The whole material existence is full of problems, and thus **the fear problem** is always prominent.”<sup>3</sup> [bold added for emphasis]

[my quick response: is that this is an amazing logically deducted and ancient bit of wisdom not to be slid over in contemplating a reason why I (and the fearist perspective, generally) have characteristically and critically placed “fear” as humanity’s problem no. 1 — that is, at the foundation; and, that is an imperative based on the hypothesis that if we don’t get the solutions to this fear problem figured out, sooner better than later, then all our ways of trying to solve the other problems (in Hinduism, the big other 3 problems) in life will more or less fail. There is a parallel theology in Hinduism, based on the writings in the *Bhagavad Gita* (and I suspect the *Vedas*) that says that (paraphrasing) “fearlessness is the greatest of all the vir-

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<sup>2</sup> Amongst my other publications, see a good summary in Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world’s fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. See especially Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> The anonymous Hare Krishna author of this contemporary (populist) interpretation of the ancient *Vedas* [Hindu’s treasured sacred teachings and tradition] points that all the above “problems” are only illusion anyways and that is seen so once one has heard the Lord Krishna and felt the pure Love]. Excerpt from Baktivendanta Book Trust (1976). *Back to Godhead: The magazine of the Hare Krishna movement*, vols. 12-13. Baktivendanta Book Trust, n.p.

tues” and it argues that if we don’t get that one foundational virtue right, then all the other virtues to follow will become corrupt and that is, corrupted by the poison of fear (or, as we are writing here, “the fear problem” according to this Hare Krishna writer in the mid-70s)]

A. **Theology** (Religion and Spirituality)—(b) *Christianity* – “Usually fears are birthed during our early years in life. Fear keeps us from moving forward and trusting God. Fear also tries to rob us from having the joy of the Lord.... [biblically, King] David resolved the **fear problem** by saying, ‘Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusts in Him.’ Satan wants us to focus on our fears and doubts rather than on the goodness of God.”<sup>4</sup>

[*amen*: indeed God and humanity have had a long tradition of trying to solve the fear problem; and, I must say I am skeptical as to how this tradition has gone about doing so, as I see a lot more fear in contemporary Christianity, two millenia of this method, and what is there to show for it(?); and, at the same time, I am sympathetic with the up-lifting seeking spirit to overcome fear, yet, we all know that Christian traditional doctrine will not let go of the sacred ‘trump card,’ which says (more or less, paraphrasing), ‘be free of fear except the “fear of God”’; I think this will always be one of the Western fear problems and it is also one many people of all kinds have written and taught about—we, fearists have to study that discourse closely to understand our Christian ancestors, then and now and make perhaps better fear management theories and choices in the future—oh, also note in the quote, by its standards, a fearist, like me, is listening to Satan]

B. **Military** (History and Psychology)—(a) *soldiers*- “And there is a ‘staff’ solution to **the fear problem** which has been popular among military theorists at least since the [American] Civil War: when under shelling and mortar fire and scared stiff, the infantry should alleviate the problem by moving—never back but forward.”<sup>5</sup>

[*everybody has a solution to fear* or so they think they do; they have a pragmatic one, a ‘good enough’ one, but the question for the fearist is, but is it really ‘good enough’ to dissolve the fear that starts the wars in the first place; that’s the problem with analyses like these and their simple ‘com-

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from Scott, S. B. (2008). *God in my coffee*. Xulon Press, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from Fussel, P. (1990). *Wartime: Understanding and behavior in the Second World War*. NY: Oxford University Press, 274.

mon sense' solutions, they never penetrate deep enough to the source and treat only the symptoms of the fear problem; also, what I read into this strategy suggestion to improve the fear problem (and its negative effects) for scared soldiers under fire, is to turn "flight" reactions into "fight" reactions, the latter which brings out a channel for fear, you could say, but in the form of aggression (violence); I don't think this is a great teaching for our children do you? Of course, none of what I have said is a criticism against the fact that "it worked," of which the pragmatic philosopher would go on and on defending and of which I am not much interested because I am not a committed pragmatist per se; most, call me an idealist, which is not really a fair assessment in total, but it is more true probably than even I can see]

**C. Animal Behavioral Science** – (a) *horse back riding*- "All degrees of fear of horses can cause problems with the horse, and the horse that is too much for you to handle can cause **the fear problem** to develop in you."<sup>6</sup>

[*just imagine* how contagious fear is (that's a problem with the problem of fear itself); then imagine applying this principle of source of the problem to children and adults in our world, with students and teachers in our institutions, as well; I have often thought that we adults have not nearly (due to adultism + fearism) ever dealt well with our "fear of children" (aka "fear of parenting" and "fear of teaching")—which is pretty foundational to the growing fear problem in our Education systems today—don't get me started]

**D. Politics of Fear** – (a) *modernity's secret flaw* – "All of these recent [philosophers: Hobbes 16<sup>th</sup> century to Arendt 20<sup>th</sup> century] diagnoses of fear [i.e., the fear problem], I argue, share the same deficits of their predecessors [back to ancient Greece]—a disregard for the political dimensions of fear, an obfuscation or elision of its repressive functions and inequalitarian consequences, and a [misguided] hope that fear can serve as a ground for political renewal [e.g., as many thought 9/11 did in America].... To some degree, Hobbes is the hero—or antihero—... the great visionary who defined the problem of fear most acutely, and for whom we still have much to learn."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpt from Twelveponies, M. (2001). *There are no problem horses, only problem riders*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, xvii.

<sup>7</sup> Excerpts from Robin, C. (2004). *Fear: The history of a political idea*. NY: Oxford University Press, 30, 29.

[*what recent historians on fear* in post-Enlightenment era (of the birth of the philosophy of liberalism) are showing, as does Robin show, that contradictions are severe in the diagnosis and solutions to fear in the political arena—both then and now—and we have not yet improved on this because we (the people and the political folks) have not invited in a fearist perspective fully, such as Hobbes but I mean in current postmodern form as with a fearologist like myself or Subba; maybe someday, they’ll realize that their efforts to free us from fear (which the Enlightenment era gave lip service to) are still fear-based—the result of that failure to manage fear well leads to an increasingly toxic build up of what is called a “culture of fear,” a topic of my own expertise]

**E. Criminology (Policing)**—(a) *fear of crime problem*—“The key features of a problem-oriented approach to the **problem of fear** of crime are careful identification, thorough analysis, and then the application of responses that are tailored to the specific nature and causes of the fear problem being addressed. [“personal policing,” and “community engagement” are two of many strategies that have arisen because of the fear problem in contemporary W. societies mainly beginning in 1970s-80s].... Many police departments give lip service to reducing fear, but relatively few can actually specifically point to activities specifically targeted at fear reduction.”<sup>8</sup>  
[*long ago I heard on the radio* a chief of police in my home town say (paraphrasing) “we don’t have a crime problem in this city, we have more a fear problem” by which he meant that policing was becoming harder with growing fear of crime and how that was affecting neighborhoods and people and making their policing job more consuming; what I have never seen in the literature or in conversations with police, or at panel conferences, is how the police are better educating themselves about the nature and role of fear—rather, they focus on the simplest level of understanding “fears” and that’s what most of the criminology literature does as well—I think it is too shallow to make much impact on reducing fear anywhere; and, if there is a time for this all to reform itself, just look at the growing fear amongst Americans (especially people of color) in most American cities when it comes to police and shooting and killing people on the streets, often when they have no weapon in hand at all; yes, fear creates riots and *visa versa*! and then police have a real big problem on their hands as we’ve seen in recent years across the USA]

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpts from Cordner, G. W. (2013). Fear of crime. In K. J. Peak (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of community policing and problem solving* (pp. 161-66). Sage, 165, 161.

**E. Criminology** (Policing)—(b) *community responsibility*- “Cognitive responsibility for the problem in the lack of social control in some communities. To ameliorate **the fear problem**, the control must be reasserted.... if the community is *empowered* through its local organizations to assert the control, fear will be reduced.... That is, the reduction of fear follows from the process each interest group puts into action through its analysis and strategies [among which 3 “competing positions [i.e., *coercion, cooperation, empowerment*], each of which offers a vision of how fear might be reduced...”<sup>9</sup>

[we have a social problem, we have a gun problem... but rare in public discourse, and certainly it won’t be said by a President of the United States, or other government leader today: “we have a *fear problem*” at root—and we need new ways to figure out how to solve it because what we have done so far hasn’t much helped the fear problem; gosh, would I ever like to hear that pronounced somewhere by world leaders—oh, you may recall around 1933, Pres. F. D. Roosevelt said something like that on public air waves: “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself”—that should of, but didn’t start a new wave of improvement in our research and understanding of fear—and I mean in the largest sense, as the Fear Problem; we seem fearful today to say it “we have a fear problem”—why is that?—over a year ago after the Sandy Hook shooting tragedy in an elementary school in the USA, I sent the Pres. and Vice-Pres. a copy of my book—and offered my services—and, never heard a thing back since]

**F. History of Emotions** (Fear)—(a) *culture of fear* (in America)- “Seeking to banish most fear and risk, modern American culture has actually opened the door to new, and often, needless anxieties; understanding this historical process is the first step to redress. Addressing what can fairly be called **the fear problem** involves responsibilities from leadership and the general public alike. Leadership involvement must include an awareness of the pitfalls of current American culture of fear [i.e., “fear appeals” and “fearmongering” used by leaders and media].”<sup>10</sup>

[we would do well to listen to the historians on the fear problem, because they take a macro-view and give us perspective in ways we cannot arrive at

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from Lewis, D. A., and Salem, G. W. (1988). *Fear of crime: Incivility and the production of a social problem*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc., 121.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpt from Stearns, P. (2012). *American fear: The causes and consequences of high anxiety*. NY: Routledge, 221.



any other way; very important knowledge beyond the personal/individual psychological dimension of our relationship to fear; and I totally agree with the great contradiction in our ‘normal’ fear management practices that results in a pernicious culture of fear (defined by me as a contradiction—that is, a *culture of fear* is created and demonstrated when the attempts to manage fear are fear-based themselves, and thus, cause more fear not less)]

**G. Psychology of Fear** (Social Phobia) – (a) “... avoidance of feared situations is understood to maintain **the fear problem** through a mechanism of reinforcement.”<sup>11</sup>

[*quickie response*: don’t believe everything clinical psychiatrists and psychologists say about fear because they think they are the experts on fear and its treatment; at the same time, they have partial truths worth considering; yet, they too have found contradictions in our very ways (via a “disorder” of our psyche) of trying to manage fears which only reinforces them (as the phobia definition above suggests)—why is it that we are so ridden with contradictions from so many of the quotes above in this paper I am writing?—that’s the bigger kettle of fish to solve than one person’s phobia]

**H. Fearology of Fear** (Universal Rights)—(a) “Fortunately, at least humanity has recognized the universal nature of **the fear problem** as a basic issue in the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Complaining as a critic [which I am] of human beings and their lack of enthusiasm to tackle the fear problem more rigorously is, however, not very useful either. The words ‘cowardice,’ ‘lazy,’ ‘apathetic,’ or ‘stupid,’ come to mind. Not all that productive.”<sup>12</sup>

[*so true, so true...* ]

#### Interlude from the Unconscious to the Conscious and Back Again

[note: the following is an unpleasant segment of this paper; no need to read it per se, but it will likely bring up some stirring of deep terror in you because of its raw honesty; I include it because this work of revealing the

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from Milosevic, I. (2015). Skinner, B. F. (1904-1990). In I. Milosevic and R. E. McCabe (Eds.), *The psychology of irrational fears*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 352.

<sup>12</sup> Excerpt from Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world’s fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 93.

Fear Problem is not just academic work, which it can sometimes sound like—no, it is always a ‘working through’ as they say in psychoanalysis. Just skip it if you are not ready for it today. Maybe another day your spirit will be strong and wish to investigate deeper into the unconscious-conscious dynamics that I have to deal with, in dreams (as is the case below) as another format for teaching me the lessons I need to learn. They are painful, I assure you. And, there is seemingly no other way I have found but to go through this pain, what seems like punishment. Okay, that’s enough intro.]

*How we educate ourselves...* was the title I gave this paper. It is not an academic writing going on here. It is a psychosocial analysis of ours (and my own) practices we have been fear-conditioned to in the ‘Fear’ Matrix. Like white lab mice, we “men” and “women” and “children” have been Agents of this very process, a process by any other means is one of creating the fear problem (now, Fear Problem). What does it mean to be the Fear Problem, is a whole other depth of fearanalysis, than merely researching on, learning about and writing about the fear problem like a scholar or fearist would. I am saying that there is conscious work going on in this paper you are reading. I am pulling out a “pattern” of information, which is deeply coded in you (and me) to *forget it* has been plugged in there like a microchip in the brain—telling us to not unveil the toxic fearism (I call *fearism-t* in my recent book with Subba, to distinguish it from his use of the term in the philosophy of fearism). And if we forget the fear-condition of the ‘Fear’ Matrix, then we forget our role in co-producing it every day, from individual to individual to groups and societies and the world. This is a big Fear Problem being unwound in my writing and work, and there are consequences—there is a battle between my unconscious forces of habit and coercion to forget at the rational level and just be ‘normal’ like everyone else. These forces, are dark when they have defended the territory of fearism-t for generations and generations, as some of this writing portends above and in my other work, and which is really the basis of a lot of the what the historians of emotions (especially, fear historians) are doing. The scholar in the emotional territory of history, of civilization, like Freud was, among others, is going to ‘pay for’ revealing these truths (secrets)—and lies—and to find it hard at time psychically to pursue this kind of fearanalysis in the underground place of burial, where our souls are barely breathing under the rubble of “forget this.” It is one way I can describe the message (no it is not ‘Satan’ speaking; but who knows). It is some unconscious collective creative defense to keep this all secret, your at least keep it all creatively hidden and disguised, but it still leaks out. I am putting together as a fear researcher all the pieces and bits that leak. I am kind of a WikiLeaks operator. And

we have seen what has happened to people who leak out the secrets of power (Power) in a society. I won't give all the gory details, more the punishing details, of the kinds of dreams that I have when confronting this 'Fear' Matrix in late night writing. But to not mention the repetitive nightmares I have after creating documents like the one you are reading is not helpful. I have to be honest it is difficult work not for all personalities or temperaments to pursue (or so it seems that way). Not horrible, but difficult to face, and I face the fear, guilt, shame, dread of it all in day light and especially punishing at night when my unconscious (the collective unconscious Defense) arises with a furry—and a demonic quality in how it punishes my psyche and puts me down into the lowest of lows in the dream narrative. It is a good thing I have often recorded these just to not end up being "afraid" of them or try to avoid them, because then the 'fear' patterning would re-boot itself in my being through such a reaction on my part. I have these writing vehicles and I can also tell my spouse or even do art around these night terrors (which these days don't have as much affect of panic and heat as feelings, they are more just grouching and "test" my metal, as they say). I do not like them at all. Exhausting to my being, to the bones! Very unpleasant. It can take a few hours to wake up and shake 'it' off. And, of course, like the sticky glue of the cement holding in the wall of my imprisonment—of our collective imprisonment—there is no escape (as the existentialists have said). Some may argue, and I sometimes agree, the attainment of a highest stage or state of consciousness, "fearless" may be the end to this suffering of the fear problem, but it is not going to be truly a freedom until all of us have achieved that at the same time. That's not going to happen, any time soon. We are in the realm of fiction—and my dreams tell me in fictional narrative what is not a fiction—maybe that's the only way to communicate the darkest depths of the Fear Problem so that I can "taste" its bitter horrid bite. I feel 'gripped in fear' (and all its cousins)—and I feel punished. It is my responsibility as a fearanalyst not to take that personally. He jokes! Thank you for reading this.

I wish to end this brief exposure with a quote from the contemporary scholar historians on fear, in particular Corey Robin, the political historian, Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, City University of New York—here below Robin writes an endorsement, a revealing one, of the book *American Fear* (by Peter Stearns, founder (with his wife) of emotionology, whom I cited in the above quotes). Robin wrote [back cover],

Uncovering the American way of Fear, Peter Stearns shows that how we fear comes from how we raise our children, how we insure our

selves against risk [loss], how we fight the world, and so much else. He also shows how exciting it can be to watch a master historian of the emotions finally nab and net a quarry [the fear problem] that has eluded historians for years.

“[H]uman temperament is an exterior form, anxiety is deeper inside, and fear is the deepest inside” (Subba, 2004:196). I like the expression here from my colleague of the philosophy of fearism in Nepal. He captures, as the artist in him does, as well as the philosopher, the essence of the core message in this paper. The fearist perspective *is deepest of all!* My nuance would be to add that “fear” like “the fear problem” is not just inside, as Subba says in this quote. It is more an archeological (genealogical) ‘dig’ going on into the buried layers... but that is only one metaphor, and Robin tells another metaphor of the methodology (and skills) of Stearns “nab and net a quarry”—and so, then the subject “fear” (i.e., “the fear problem”) becomes a more alive slippery kind of creature. No wonder I have called my self at times a *fear watcher*, a *fear hunter*, a *fear naturalist*, and by logical deduction—a *fearologist*. I also wonder what dreams Peter Stearns has at nights. Lest we not forget!

Oh, last quick thought, I have found useful to describe this archeological (and forensic) work: it is like working in the dungeons of the collective Shadow of humanity and being exposed meantime, with all thrills aside of the discoveries to be made, to low grade radiation (toxic fearism). The radiation can get to ya! One has to do recovery and healing work to cleanse from that radiation but I think it still is there’s damaging going on at one level but who knows.

#### Lovist vs. Fearist and All Things Complex

For 26 years I have systematically been studying the way we construct ideas of Love and ideas of Fear, often in *opposition*.<sup>13</sup> The most brilliant historical analysis of fear by Professor Corey Robin (2004) really validated my own thinking on this, because he made fear not merely an “emotion or feeling” to document and manage, but he nailed the label on: “fear as an idea”—and that sets our fearanalysis into a whole different game, and

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<sup>13</sup> Of the many works I have published synthesizing this oppositional discourse going back to near the beginnings of recorded history, I would advise readers go to Fisher, R. M. (2012). Love and fear. Yellow Paper DIFS-5. Carbondale, IL: Center for Spiritual Inquiry and Integral Education. Avail. in pdf @ <http://csiie.org/mod/page/view.php?id=3>

rightfully so. And, I don't mean to reduce for a moment, nor does Robin as a historian, that fear as an idea can be understood and resolved by cognitive behavioral therapy or cognitive sciences and brain sciences in general, no such would be a fallacy of scale. I'll not track out that problem. The real emphasis of Robin's work is to understand, at least, *fear is not what it used to be* when we only conceptualized it as a feeling or emotion. The real emphasis for research and further analysis and dissolving of the negative excesses of this 'fear' is to treat it as a different unit. No longer is fear (or 'fear') the unit of choice in doing critical analysis but the *fear problem* is as good as any to use as the subject of study. Fearology certainly proceeds in this fashion, and Robin and others I have quoted above in this paper do as well, some more than others.

My approach has been holistic-integral and transdisciplinary. In other words, there is no place I won't look for knowledge on the topic. There are no bounds on the creativity that accrues either, because the "unit" of analysis (i.e., the subject topic) ought to be allowed to enter research by any creative modes and ideas and "morphs." On the back cover of Robin's (2004) major text on W. fear, the publisher writes:

[the book] "examines the shift in how Americans have traditionally coped with anxieties, and shows how this has morphed into the widespread apprehension caused by the outsized influence of fear exerts on everyday life in America today" [i.e., the "culture of fear"]

My point is that if our ways of coping with fear (risk, loss) have "morphed" (and I agree they have, as do all historians of fear) then, so too is fear itself (i.e., the fear problem) morphing, you can bet on it! Remember this, so that when the terms below Love and Fear are utilized so cleanly in text, logical arguments and as signifiers, please remember how dynamic they are each in their own right, and then in their own dialectical interplay and co-evolution with each other as forces, as ecologies, or whatever else we can conceive they actually are. Yes, they are ideas too and that involves the imagination—so, they are endlessly fascinating and amorphous, circulating powers for sure, yet, so hard to pin down. All this awakening to the nature and role of fear brings out the problems of the *epistemology of fear* (and love, and fearlessness)—this latter issue of how do we know fear is the main topic of the new book Subba and I have just written and is forthcoming.

*Love* and *Fear* are problematic. Their tension, if not conflict, is something that I have suggested cannot be ignored by anyone, especially educators and other leaders. These two great and deep *meta-motivational forces*, Love and Fear, as variant articulations of *dual motivation theory*,<sup>14</sup> shape our lives like no other forces, and will continue to do so into the future. We have to understand their relationship to everything and our way of making them part of our policies and educational practices. What philosophies, theologies, and social, cultural, political and psychological research can we utilize in order to *best* resolve the *Love-Fear Problem*?

We are analytically challenged by such a daunting task from the beginning. How do we even bring shape to the Love-Fear Problem? For most, they do not even recognize its form of a problem, never mind the actual problem(s) created from it. The research-educator in me whirls with this challenge, feeds off its immensity and poignancy, and at times feels drained and overwhelmed. Yet, to persist has been well worth the effort. I'll share some first insights into this problem, and in a turn from my usual ways of crafting the Fear Problem, or the Love-Fear Problem, I will begin with a discourse whereby we examine the lovist and fearist perspectives.

For brevity in this introductory paper, I chose *only* to focus on a *fearist perspective*—one, highly informed from my recent collaborative work with the founder of the *philosophy of fearism* (Desh Subba, Nepalese philosopher, poet and novelist, living in Hong Kong). Our work has been an E-W dialogue (with a forthcoming book<sup>15</sup>) to *better* uncover the nature and role of fear in our history and lives today and in the future. We have the long-term agenda to improve our species management of fear. We think this is long overdue and as a result the Fear Problem has grown to extreme proportions with a plethora of negative impacts.

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<sup>14</sup> Contemporary psychological research indicates this universal pattern of fundamental motivation along a polar continuum with “Freedom” (Growth) (could be Love) at one end and “Fear” (Defense) at the other both operating in a dialectic relationship shaping most everything humans (and other species) do. See a good summary in Pyszczynski T., Greenberg, J., and Arndt, J (2011). Freedom versus fear revisited: An integrative analysis of the dynamics of the defense and growth of self. In M. Leary and J. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 378-404). NY: Guilford [2nd

<sup>15</sup> Fisher, R. M., and Subba, D. (forthcoming). *Philosophy of fearism: A first E-W perspective*.

Subba (2014) finally published in English translation his philosophy of fearism project,<sup>16</sup> after 15 years of background thinking about it and publishing in Nepali. He has not worked alone on this project and many great thinkers, especially from literary circles in Nepal and N. E. India have helped him shape his ideas on the fearist perspective. This perspective, the loosest form of his nascent philosophy of fearism, is something I believe people in larger audiences can absorb, without having to have a philosophy background. So, I begin by selecting out pertinent quotes from Subba (2014) on the fearist perspective, as well as adding several quotes from other philosophers and critical thinkers in the W. (particularly, a cadre of contemporary *fear historians* who are doing remarkable scholarly work). I believe each of the below authors are creating and enacting a version of a fearist perspective. I define the *fearist perspective* myself (in its most simple version) as:

**fearist perspective-** a perspective on reality as determined by looking through the lens of fear's nature and role in shaping life's relations.<sup>17</sup>

Laypersons, professionals, and scholars of all stripes have been writing on the nature and role of fear in our history and lives. They often have articulated how important it is, and often arguing *fear* is the *most* important shaping motivator (emotion) of all the others. Yet, that conclusion is not always agreed with and sometimes hotly debated. Many advocate *love* is the *more* important shaping emotion amongst all the others. Some argue that both are equally important.

At the level of *life-orientation*, valued *worldview* and *policies* (formal or not), the *lovist replaces* the fearist perspective with its own. The fearist *replaces* the lovist perspective with its own—and the battle for domination of worldview (policy) is enacted everyday—at least, that is the theory I am working on based on years of research support. We may have a *Love-Fear Problem*, but we have no one answer to it. I think we need many answers. Yet, what we need most is that each of the policies (and their makers), with

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<sup>16</sup> Subba, D. (2014). *Philosophy of fearism: Life is conducted, directed and controlled by the fear*. Xlibris.

<sup>17</sup> In Fisher and Subba (*forthcoming*) we make a distinction that the *fearist perspective* “is to identify the loosest and most open of concepts... and then becomes more rigorous in how that can be interpreted and critiqued in and through a *philosophy of fearism* as distinct from, but overlapping with an *ideology of fearism*” (see Figure 4, pp. 186-87).

their favored (biased) life-orientations, are informed by good information and arguments not mere beliefs. In that sense, that is what a philosophy of fearism, ideally, is about. Subba and I discuss the Love-Fear Problem overtly in the Introduction to our new book forthcoming, we think it is that important. We don't want to ignore it. We respect both positions, lovist and fearist, and yet, we are in favor of articulating a better fearist perspective. There are a lot of reasons for that choice, but this is not the paper to discuss those in detail. We also would admit, we can always learn more about the lovist perspective and more also about the fearist perspective in a life-long inquiry. Unfortunately, we have found those who take a lovist perspective, *contra* a fearist perspective, have tended to be less curious of the other perspective and less generous. They actually seem afraid of the fearist perspective. That's intuited and speculative and there's no point pursuing it further here. There are arguments to be heard on both sides.

We think the black feminist postcolonial thinker-educator, bell hooks, says it well (at least, applicable to American society): "In our society we make much of love and say little about fear."<sup>18</sup> The fearist perspective, in a sense, demands a *greater attention* on fear than love, because it is hypothesized (and intuited) that such a shift in attention will prove to be more effective today in erasing (dissolving) the barriers to Love's actualization on this planet in the future.

There is no avoiding this polarity, at some level, because the polarity of Love and Fear require us to pursue which is the *better* one to inquire into at this time, and which perspective, lovist or Fearist, will produce a better truth, better policy, better education, and a better solution to the Love-Fear problem in the first place? For simplicity: Which way should we go to better understand how to make the world a better place? Again, that all would be an argument for another paper. Subba and I choose carefully, ethically, and informed as we can, suggesting the fearist perspective, under the lens of a developing and critical philosophy of fearism, will bring about the *more good* for all at this time.

#### A Fearist Perspective: Some Generic Aspects

Let's move now to ferreting out a generic "feel" of a fearist perspective, while realizing these mostly are generalizations and would need a lot more nuanced delineation in a longer work (e.g., Subba, 2014). Nonetheless, this is a starting point. It is important to make a distinction before proceeding.

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<sup>18</sup> hooks, B. (2000). *All about love*. NY: William Morrow, 93.



It is a common (mis-)understanding that the fearist perspective is a perspective that focuses on fear (almost entirely) in attempting to understand evolution, history, human behavior, etc. Some will stereotype (with a negative connotation always) that being a *fearist* is to look at the world through the lens of fear, with all consequences of doing so. Robin (2004), a W. contemporary political historian, tells of a colleague who questioned Robin on why he was researching on Thomas Hobbes (the great 16<sup>th</sup> century W. modernist philosopher of liberalism). The colleague demeaned the inquiry by suggesting there was nothing so great about Hobbes's perspective (and political philosophy) because "everything with him is fear."<sup>19</sup> Robin wrote, "But more than Hobbes's insistence on fear's centrality makes his account so pertinent to us [today], for Hobbes was attuned to a [fear] problem we associate with our postmodern age, but which is as old as modernity itself" (p. 31). Hobbes was indeed a first budding W. fearist; which, is not to say he was a good fearist but he definitely was a fearist we cannot afford today to dismiss too easily if we truly want to understand the Fear Problem.<sup>20</sup>

Supporters of that kind of fearist perspective say that is "realism" and its detractors say that is biased and "too negative" or "too dark" of a despairing view of reality, and thus they may choose a more hope-full and care-full lovist perspective (more "idealism" and "optimism"). The latter, typically are looking for, or desperate for "hope" as they look into the future of human affairs, individually and collectively. Some critics will call that a Romanticism. Again, I mention these without nuance just in order to show the tensions, if not conflicts and battles going on about what is the *best* way to see reality and the world. It's a battleground! Note, my own definition (and Subba's similarly) is distinct from the stereotypical definition of fearist. Let me repeat:

*fearist perspective*- a perspective on reality as determined by looking through the lens of fear's nature and role in shaping life's relations

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<sup>19</sup> Taken from Robin (2004:x). Robin, with mixed if not paradoxical feelings, writes "To some degree Hobbes is the hero—or antihero—of this book, the great visionary who defined the problem of fear most acutely, and from whom we still have much to learn" (p. 29). Robin, C. (2004). *Fear: The history of a political idea*. NY: Oxford University Press.

<sup>20</sup> I have acknowledged Hobbes's contribution at the W. root of a fearist perspective now and then in my writing, whereas Subba has not.

The difference may seem subtle, but it is *not*, in impact. No philosophy of fearism rightly conceived would support looking at the world through the *lens of fear* (i.e., unless that claim was made metaphorically only) in exclusion of other lenses (e.g., a lovist perspective). We have to be open to many perspectives—such is my holistic-integral approach. Yet, my point is to ask that we look through the lens of fear’s nature and role (i.e., the fear problem), not to look *in/through fear* itself as the lens. Thus, I spent some time above in this paper articulating the potential use of “the fear problem” (or Fear Problem) as a good way to proceed and allow something fresh to be understood of this topic.

### *Desh Subba’s Fearist Perspective: Quotes*

The question then becomes: What lens is this then? I mean, there may be many lenses I bring to the research, yet, there is a core-central and essential one: it is a *fearless standpoint lens*;<sup>21</sup> as Fisher and Subba (forthcoming) argue for. Note: I do not speak for Subba in this technical paper, nor does he necessarily endorse my views. The outcome of such a research lens is quite opposite the stereotypical idea of a fearist perspective one might read on the Internet in populist discourses. I acknowledge that the actual epistemology and methodology of a fearist perspective so conceived by Subba and myself is still in its nascent formation. The quotes below are not so detailed to elaborate methodological issues. Now, on to some quotes on the *fearist perspective* (a term that Subba has chosen and written the most about directly):

“Fear is a powerful human circumstance. It has influenced most of our activities; above all, it has the biggest influence in our lives.... Its size is not smaller than the sky. We cannot go beyond it. It exists in every human being.... fear exists with knowledge...” (Subba, 2014:27)

“Man [sic] has adopted fear normally since prehistoric times.” (Subba, 2014:189)

“... the history of society is not the history of class [a la Marx ] struggle, but the history of fear struggle.” (Subba, 2014:207)

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<sup>21</sup> See also Fisher, R. M. (2008). Fearless standpoint theory: Origins of FMS-9 in Ken Wilber’s work. Technical Paper No. 31. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

“human temperament is an exterior form, anxiety is deeper inside, and fear is the deepest inside.” (Subba, 2004:196)

“The fearist perspective is a new dimension to look at life and the world.... How does the fearist perspective look at life and the world? The purpose behind fearism is to conduct continuous research, investigation, and invention in order to make life more comfortable.” (Subba, 2014:11)

“Fear occupies the human mind more than 75 per cent of the time.” (Subba, 2014:29)

“We have passed through different civilisations from prehistoric time to the present. Fear was powerful, yet it remained invisible in knowledge.... fear remained invisible in the minds of people” (Subba, 2014:25)

“Fear is significant in life. All the time, life undergoes fear.... Nothing is possible in the absence of fear.” (Subba, 2014:23)

“When a [hu]man knows about fear, [s]he applies all techniques and ideas to get rid of such fear.... Knowledge produces fear and it brings solutions too.” (Subba, 2014:22); yet, “[S]He can be free from some fears, but it is impossible to be free from some of the others—although such fears can be minimised.” (Subba, 2014:28)

“We are the greatest of all the sources of fear.... We are the guides to lead it to a positive and negative way.” (Subba, 2014:143)

“Fear is a driving force of civilization.... God is fear.” (Subba, 2014:14, 15)

“Fear was found to be the origin of Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and all other religions in the world.” (Subba, 2014:144); “All the liberations are in the journey of fearlessness” (Subba, 2014:164)

“Fear is a beautiful consciousness.” (Subba, 2014:13)

“Fear is a power that always attracts us.” (Subba, 2014:46)

“Fear is stronger than other temperaments.” (Subba, 2014:125)

“... every animal wants to be free from fear at any cost.... Fear differs on the basis level of consciousness.... It is an improper thought that everyone has the same kind of fear.” (Subba, 2014:98)

“Fear is a foundation for almost all philosophies and theories. We have never tried to understand the dominant role of fear till this time. Philosophies can be studied or de-philosophised through fearism” [Subba, 2014:332-33]... philosophy is essential for lives to live. Fear is the foundation of all philosophies.... To think about fear [make knowledge about it] is to minimise fear” (Subba, 2014:33)

“We are undergoing the extreme fear age....The last stage of fear [i.e., age of fears in evolution and history] is fearlessness.” (Subba, 2014:45)

“We always seek a fearless path, and our civilisation has developed continuously along this path.” (Subba, 2014:273)

[re: mental distress/pathologies/disorders] “But people have never made any attempt to interpret it from the fear[ist] perspective.” (Subba, 2014:109)

“Progress and success do not necessarily influence fear. Fear always moves in its own orbit.” (Subba, 2014:165)

“Creating a new fearist perspective, which is essential to ‘seeing’ things differently, requires neologisms.” (Fisher and Subba, forthcoming, p. 198).

“In the absence of fearist perspectives, the foundation of all philosophies—no matter Eastern or Western—will collapse. Their foundation is fearism. The fearist perspective, however core in lives and literature, is left behind.” (Subba, 2014:246)

“We fear the meaning of fear.” (Subba, 2014:258)

“Fear is as vast as the universe.” (Subba, 2014:14)

“Everybody is generally the victim of fear, but some people can tolerate it.” (Subba, 2014:316)

“Fear can be alleviated according to its nature. It cannot be alleviated without any idea about it.” (Subba, 2014:307)

“Fear is the cause of civil war, caste/ethnic conflicts, and world war. They must be interpreted through [a] fearist perspective, yet it has not occurred. Fear is the reason for murders, suicides, and migration. Nobody has attempted to interpret them from [a] fearist perspective.”

There's no end to attempting to get a 'feel' for a *fearist perspective*; and, in contrast to a *lovist perspective*, I have not chosen to pursue the contrast here. Perhaps, another paper later would do so. To me I like to leave it intuitive in the imaginary of readers. I am sure you can fill in the blanks of what a *lovist perspective* might be.

I wonder what you feel like after reading through these? What thoughts surfaced and are surfacing? This is time for self-reflection. This is a time to face contradictions in feelings and thoughts as well. Watch your dreams. Listen to the subtle intuition. And, logically write arguments. All are welcomed. Do you want to be a self-identified (or professional) *fearist*? We can help you if you do (sounds like a military ad doesn't it). Oh, and a reminder, I think the better unit of study for the future is "the fear problem" (or Fear Problem), at least better than studying "fear," and yet, this paper and other work I have written tells me an even better unit of study is the "Love-Fear Problem" suggested above, which this paper has not addressed so well. But, all in time and with all different ways into this *fearwork*—I let the reader and myself rest a little (joke).

This is all, at least, worth further respectful *dialogue* amongst us all. That's how the *best* of a *fearist perspective* will be created eventually. Subba and I (a few others) are starting to make this a conscious effort like never before in human history. We may even be on the 'wrong' path—and, we just as likely may be on the 'right' path. Collectively, we humans are going to have to assess this, if not the history of unfolding generations will be our only judge with the macro-perspective of tested time and distance.

I confess: in 26 years as a *fearist* (not that I knew what I was when I started), there's never been a dull moment of netting and nabbing—hitting and missing—I find *it* (*me* and *we*) absolutely the most exciting study of all!

#### Historicist & Fearist Perspective

It is a truism that the [W.] Enlightenment [the past 500+ yrs] aimed at emancipating humanity from fear. Even Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the movement's greatest critics, claimed that it "pursued the goal of taking fear away from human beings and establishing them as masters."  
- Ronald Schechter<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Schechter (2012:34). I have to say that when I read this conclusion of historians of the W. European Enlightenment "movement" (and project), it is enough to make me consider (almost) putting this movement down on the list of contributors,

The final section of this explorative paper on the fearist perspective, is my intuition that one could draw a strong link of support in developing a fearist perspective from the scholarship of historians on fear (I'll refer to as fear historians)—and their particular methodology and worldview that is a historicist reading of human emotions—in particular, I want to give some attention to the historians on fear (not just any emotion). Also sometimes this topic can be found under the label *historiography of fear*, which I rather like and have not investigated enough.

I pull this historiography into the mix because of my observation of a tenacity I read in these fear historians that is truly remarkable and I believe quite untapped as a resource—as a resource to battle to the 'Fear' Matrix (and its forms like the culture of fear)—a resource for a better fear education on this planet (or at least in the W.). The fear historians are pumping out (after 9/11) a whole lot of knowledge for us to examine from the 'archeological' layers of civilization itself—and, yes, so far as I know, this is coming all out of W. scholarship (for some reason—another hypothesis is cooking there). I'm thinking of half dozen (mostly very recent) books on the *history of fear* that show this topic is getting well-deserved *attention* in some circles of academia.

The fear historian takes a historicist perspective on reality, on the world, on life as we experience it. They also see history as important knowledge to guide us in the present and into the future. "[T]here are [amongst all the specific details and stories] patterns to the emotional states [in history and histories].... Close attention to these patterns can yield important information about discourses as well as emotional conditions" (Schechter, 2012:34).<sup>23</sup> But today this new brand of what some have called historians of the emotions, and practitioners of "intimate histories" is revealing a way to do history that is not just about dates. I'll quote from my own book a bit to show you what I have been briefly exploring over the years about the nature and role of history (and our ways of making sense of it)—especially, in regard to fear. I (Fisher, 2010) wrote,<sup>24</sup>

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historically, to the Fearlessness Movement (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Fear\\_educator/sandbox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Fear_educator/sandbox))

<sup>23</sup> Excerpt from Schechter, R. (2012). Conceptions of terror in the European Enlightenment. In M. Laffan and M. Weiss (Eds.), *Facing fear: The history of an emotion in global perspective* (pp. 31-53). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 33-34.

<sup>24</sup> Fisher (2010: 47-48).

As I posited earlier, the pathway of growth, development, evolution itself can be seen as one from *fear to fearlessness* [and to “fearless”] individually and from a culture of fear to a culture of fearlessness on a macro-scale. History, somewhat of a ‘nightmare’ (said James Joyce) is a record of the wobbliness of that movement and direction [I now have labeled Fearlessness Movement]. It is certainly not always straightforward, and during ‘crisis’ times seems to be heading backward. [Intimate] Historians, like Zeldin, have often constructed and taught a far less emancipatory perspective of history than I. He wrote,

The history of fear over the centuries shows that liberation from fear has from time to time been achieved, by two methods. The first has been with the help of fear itself, by escaping from one fear to another, [the latter] which contains [apparently, at the time] more hope. The second has been through curiosity about something quite different, which has temporarily blotted out the awareness of danger.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the historical condition and reality of humanity’s struggle, I agree [as does Ken Wilber’s integral philosophy of development and evolution of consciousness] that with new growth [to new levels of maturity] comes new fear(s) and challenges that humans need to learn about and overcome. That is fear management as a process moving dialectically moving between fear and fearlessness all driven by an inherently ethical *historical fearlessness* unfolding developmentally (a modified version of Hegelian theory).

My speculations in 2010 on the valuable historicist perspective is at once a fearist perspective—and, yes, it can be such even when I am writing out loud about my *emancipatory* approach to history and the nature and role of *historical fearlessness* (a concept distinct from *behavioral fearlessness*). Few historians, or anyone for that matter, has written on historical fearlessness; but has there ever been a lot of writing on historical fear, that is, the history of fear and its role in shaping nearly everything. I think Zeldin’s insights above are partially true, but that is another longer discussion than I wish to enter here. I want to say, before reviewing the historicist-fearist perspective of fear historians today, that there is no historian of fear I know of that is as emancipatory in historical outlook as Subba or I, but then Subba and I are not trained or professional (disciplinary) historians. I think the study of history all along in the late modern period (anyways) has become

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<sup>25</sup> Zeldin, T. (1994). *An intimate history of humanity*. NY: HarperCollins, 169.

more like a “science” and trained its historians to be ‘objective’ and *not* carry strong ideological and/or emancipatory agendas into their work because it may *bias* their accuracy of what actually was happening in history. That’s a generalization, with likely a few exceptions.

On that note, let me proceed to share a bit of this historicist-fearist perspective from the contemporary historians of fear (note: I’ll leave out the great history of fear in the W. (13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) by Delumeau,<sup>26</sup> to keep this short and with a contemporary focus, i.e., post-9/11 works). Indeed, a post-9/11 perspective is a form of a fearist perspective. A good deal more investigation is required there. The temporary or longer-term effectiveness of this form of a fearist perspective are yet known. The reality is, 9/11 took America and the UK into a tail-spin of terror, and the particular fear historians in these countries began to research and write on the topic of fear with a renewed spirit.

### *Corey Robin’s Historicist-Fearist Perspective*

I discovered Robin’s book in 2004, then read many of his published articles going back into the late 1990s he published in journals. This pursuit of the role of “fear as an idea” in shaping ideological and actual political history in the W. in the past 4+ centuries was his dissertation work. He is relatively young as a scholar. He also seems to have left the field of fear, as far as I can tell. His book was a one-off project. That’s sad to me. His book, as the inside cover jacket says (in a post-9/11 era), [is] “the first intellectual history of its kind—fear has shaped our politics and culture since time immemorial.” And mostly, Robin attacks liberalist thought (and philosophy of liberalism, of the less emancipatory strains, that is) in the West since Hobbes (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century). He actually makes Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), a British political philosopher, the *first* to really go after fear so heroically and *centrally* in any political philosophy (albeit, Baron d’Holbach may be a slight exception, but was much later in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in France<sup>27</sup>). His book focuses on “*political fear*” (Corey’s term) but it is also equally

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<sup>26</sup> Delumeau, arguably was the first real W. fear historian (at least in part). His uniqueness compared to those that I focus on in this paper is his French origins [in contrast to American and British historians] and the time of his writing in the 1980s-90s in Europe. I have not yet studied this text to the degree it deserves. Delumeau, J. (1990). *Sin and fear: The emergence of a W. guilt culture, 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries*. [Trans. E. Nicholson]. NY: St. Martin’s Press.

<sup>27</sup> See Schechter (2012:35-53).



“historical fear” (my term) and historical terror that won’t leave the W. discourse of political and military thought.

In Corey’s Introduction to this great work of intellectual history of fear, one has to wonder where is he going to start, what lens is he going to cast across W. Enlightenment history up until today. He’s an American, and in a post-9/11 era, how is that all affecting him. His view is somewhat dark and pessimistic (but not totally). In fact, he laments in his critiques of most all W. political philosophers of the period that they are too driven by fear (i.e., the fear problem) and that creates a negative imagination for politics—more a going away from (a fleeing from) the ‘bad’ in order to achieve the ‘good.’ He thinks that is definitely the wrong direction to go. He takes somewhat of a fearist perspective however on the West and its cosmology right in the opening lines of the book:

It is seldom noted, but fear is the first emotion experience by a character in the Bible. Not desire [love], not shame, but fear. Adam eats from the tree, discovers he is naked, and hides from God, confessing. “I was afraid, because I was naked.”<sup>28</sup>

He asks, “Why fear?” was first, and then suggests: “for the authors of the Bible, fear is the most electric of emotions.” Now, another sub-narrative is constructed in Robin’s analysis of W. history (two millenia+ yrs old)—that is, once innocence of consciousness is lost in the Garden of Paradise, the whole of history can be understood best through following this first emotion, the foundational emotion, the designing emotion of all Creation (at least, for Adam and Eve and after). This is a fear story. This is a fearist perspective, and Robin, a secularist himself, is only too quick to not ignore this, despite what many Christians would argue misses the point of the biblical revelation that “God is love.” The fearist vs. lovist battle arises. Robin draws the biblical cosmology into a similar loss of innocence (sort of) in the American people and their political philosophies, before and after the fall (this time it is 9/11 in New York City, 2001). The further one reads Robin’s definition of “political fear” however, it is clear he wants nothing to do with crafting a gloomy fear-based view of history, nor political philosophy—yet, he is in fact doing exactly that in his relentless critiques. That said, I do not pick up the same enthusiasm or embrace of a fearist perspective as Subba or myself. And, it is like his very disciplined way of doing history and thinking politics won’t allow it. That’s a conversation he

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<sup>28</sup> Robin (2004:1).

and I have never had, even though I corresponded with him for awhile after his book came out. We've lost contact, not because I wished to.

*Joanna Bourke's Historicist-Fearist Perspective*

Bourke's female (woman) analysis of fear in history [at least 150 years she surveyed the UK and USA] is refreshing from all the other one's written by males (men). She comes from the UK perspective, unlike Robin from the USA. Nonetheless, 9/11 (and following terrorist attacks in London) greatly affected her and her people and no doubt stretched her to write more on the topic. She is more a cultural historian than is Robin. Her book sizzles more, and is ready for a popular well-educated audience. She is a great scholar and historian nonetheless. She writes in the opening Preface admitting her own "fear and trembling" (albeit, she is well seasoned in writing and publishing successful histories of war, killing, wounding, pain—dark-side of life) she wrote,

A few years ago, with fear and trembling, I set out to confront the most pervasive emotion of modern society: fear. Politically, the world was a different place then. It was before 9/11.... But personally, too, that was a more innocent time, before I was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and reminded of my own mortality. The past seemed safer. Within the austere shelter of dozens of libraries and archives, I spilled the contents of *other* people's lives on to my desk, and voyeuristically eavesdropped as they confessed to feeling scared. Self-proclaimed specialist [of diverse kinds in history] could be heard [interpreted] counselling these timid individuals. Often, however, those writers who preached secular gospels of 'fear not' were found to wallow in scaremongering. People everywhere seemed very apprehensive.... there were times when all of history seemed to be reciting a traumatic script, devoid of answers or 'sense.' On these occasions people's terror was so overwhelming that their most fundamental identities were in danger of being engulfed.<sup>29</sup>

You'd think this is sounding pretty negative and dark and a fearist perspective lost in seeing history through the lens of fear. But not so quick, Bourke reveals her break from falling into that lens:

It took sometime to notice the astounding creativity [resilience] with which these scared men, women and children made sense of their pre-

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<sup>29</sup> Bourke, J. (2005/06). *Fear: A cultural history*, ix.

dicament and remade their world in the wake of the crippling energy of fear. Looking at our society's fears, in both their past and present manifestations, enable us to meditate on the future. It is a future of our choosing.<sup>30</sup>

My dear friends, it is exactly this paragraph that 'saves the day' isn't it? It is this kind of speech and teaching about fear and its management through the historicity of her skills and discipline that make any publisher willing to put up money to print a book on the history of fear. She is a *positivist fear historian*, more so, but not unlike all of them, which I am overviewing so briefly here. They are typically (Robin a little less so) more interested to document the 'greatness' that comes from the travails of fear—that is classical W. thought, as far as I can tell. Bravery and courage is the sub-narrative of the history of fear books in the W. I won't go on with that critique here.<sup>31</sup> It is at this juncture in all these fear historians, with their one-off books on fear per se, that I become quite disenchanted with them. Which, is not to say they don't provide us with immense resources to understand the fear problem in W. history (at least in the last few centuries). I don't think she is a good fearist in that sense but then neither is Robin. I have a somewhat higher appraisal, from the fearist perspective, however, for the next two volumes and authors to follow the bold lead of Robin and Bourke.

*Peter Stearns: Historicist-Fearist Perspective*

An American historian, well-seasoned, in late career, choses in 2006 to publish his study which focuses on fear (i.e., American fear history). Prior to that he and his wife founded the history sub-discipline of *emotionology*. I read their earlier work and was fascinated, but his book in 2006 is a rich text, which I still have not studied well enough. He writes in the early pages,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., ix-x.

<sup>31</sup> I call it the *fear-positivist* perspective in many of my publications. The authors of this perspective work very hard to make fear a positive (not just negative) attribute. The more I read of history of fear/terror (especially Schachter, 2012) I am more and more skeptical and resistance to anything motivation trying so hard to make "fear" positive—history in the W. is full of this motivation, and includes making terror positive, as Schachter's study exposes so well, intimating simultaneously just how insidious is such a discourse history.

... history has to play a growing role in explaining ourselves to ourselves. [preferring the soft-intimate affective side of history, he concludes] Fear, as an urgent American policy and personal issue....<sup>32</sup>

Again, in a well-disciplined historicist manor, rather than casting fearism like Subba or I over history, he sticks to very specifics and goals that shy away from a philosophy of fearism and a fearist perspective per se. He wrote of his focus,

... this book attends to fear levels [quantity mostly] concerning domestic issues but deals particularly with the relationship between fear and foreign policy, adding a vital dimension to existing fear studies.<sup>33</sup>

I am less pleased about his lack of depth of a fearist perspective and larger macro-scale generalizations, and yet he is another of the great critics of the American “culture of fear” phenomena. He looks for “causes” and “consequences” much like a social scientist, and all of that leaves his work with not a lot of uniqueness with those findings. More than the other fear historians, Stearns is very pragmatic (typical ‘can do’ American) and offers a lot of conclusions in his study and a lot of recommendations. I like this approach to improving our fear management/education based on historical sense and good empirical data. He wrote in his conclusion, “Changing socialization is, of course, a challenging task, but it can occur and fear is a good place to start.”<sup>34</sup> However, like all the fear historians, they are not engaging with my work nor with educators who are exploring fear much deeper than they are. Without a full fearist perspective, which they seem to shun, there will not be the creative emergences and vision like Subba provides with his calling for *feariatry* (alternative to psychiatry) and/or *fearology* (alternative to psychology).

*Jan Plamper & Benjamin Lazier: Historicist-Fearist Perspective*

This work of Plamper, a historian of emotions, working as a scholar in the US, is newer to me than the others above, and comes as a very pleasant

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<sup>32</sup> Stearns, P. (2006). *American fear: The causes and consequences of high anxiety*. NY: Routledge, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 220.

discovery in both a special issue in a journal in 2010<sup>35</sup> and as an anthology, with Benjamin Lazier in 2012. In bringing together several disciplines, Plamper and Lazier note that:

If fear is everywhere and nowhere, in all things and no things, how are we to make sense of it all? How, intellectually, can we cope with its breadth and depth? [a similar point to the fearist perspective, where Subba, 2014:14 wrote, “Fear is as vast as the universe.”].... do we know it?<sup>36</sup>

The fearist perspective of Plamper and Lazier is engaged for sure, with seeing fear as so embedded in “everything” and yet, it is the epistemological question that makes their work so unique “do we know it?” And, this also gives them a typical academic (philosophical or scientific) focus to present many authors who struggle with that question each in their own way—yet, none of these authors make very strong claims about the *best* way to see the world and reality is through the study of fear. No, that doesn’t happen, at least not in their writing. As well, even though these authors are the most interdisciplinary of those mentioned above, they are not exactly transdisciplinary nor are they very creative/imaginative in their epistemological quest and wonderings. No, all the fear historians I know settle for the pre-given assumption (and hegemony) that “fear is an emotion”—even if it is hard to know. A fearist perspective has to be more holistic-integral and postmodern if not post-postmodern, and thus, all challenges to modernist language (i.e., “fear is an emotion”) has to go under deconstruction and reconstruction (of which I have signified ‘fear’ as the preferred form to do that).

*Michael Laffan and Max Weiss: Historicist-Fearist Perspective*

The last example of contemporary fear historians is Laffan and Weiss (editors), who produce a diverse anthology in 2012.<sup>37</sup> All these are interesting chapters in themselves, but *not* a strong fearist perspective globally or historically. It is quick that Laffan in the Preface to this book opens with:

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<sup>35</sup> For e.g., Plamper, J., and Lazier, B. (2010). Introduction: The phobic regime of modernity. In a Special Issue (Forum) “Fear Beyond the Disciplines” also edited by Plamper and Lazier, in the journal *Representations*, 110 (Spring), 58-65.

<sup>36</sup> Plamper and Lazier (2010:58),

<sup>37</sup> Laffan, M., and Weiss, M. (Eds.) (2012). *Facing fear: The history of an emotion in global perspective*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fear is everywhere, it is measurable, and it is reportable.... Such certainty about an omnipresent and scalable emotion seem to accord with the consensus of the analyses now available that ruminate on the supposed failure of the Enlightenment project to free us from so elemental a condition.<sup>38</sup>

Again, his interest is one valuing data as *facts*, you could say, even if they are accompanied by *meanings* and interpretations. He asks, “how different have the fears of the past been?” compared to today. What the authors in this anthology have done is discussed “specific histories of fear in various settings”<sup>39</sup> and all that tends to move away from a strong universal fearist perspective, rather keeping the ‘subject’ rather ‘objective’ and free of big picture vision and views, and philosophy. Weiss, opens his own chapter with the concern that the “‘problem’ of fear” is not easy to tackle because the many scholars (and others) “cannot be said to agree on its content, its form, or—in terms that are relevant to the concrete meanings of the idea—its opposites [e.g., love, courage].”<sup>40</sup> In reviewing some of the many authors already cited above, Weiss is quite technical in analysis and sticks tightly to the script of a good historian well-trained in objectivity, without vision. He also is not convinced other emotions could just as well explain “fear” and uncertainty throughout history. He concludes believing that “there has still not been much in the way of studying fear (and its opposites) in the past in any great detail.”<sup>41</sup> Again, I agree (more or less) with most of his claims, it is disappointing somewhat that a stronger fearist perspective is not developed. I haven’t read the other chapters, but in scanning over them at this time, they don’t appear to be fearist perspectives to the extent of Subba and myself. The field of historian players here is quite consistently *mild in their fearist perspective*, and are very limited in applying it to specifics in time and place and events in history—they seem shy (as postmoderns are) to make any grand narrative claims.

And so, I close this technical paper on many thoughts and questions left open-ended. I look forward to further refining the *fearist perspective* and

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<sup>38</sup> Laffan, M. (2012). Preface. In M. Laffan and M. Weiss (Eds.), *Facing fear: The history of an emotion in global perspective* (pp. vii-x). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, vii.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>40</sup> Weiss, M. (2012). Fear and its opposites in the history of emotions. In M. Laffan and M. Weiss (Eds.), *Facing fear: The history of an emotion in global perspective* (pp. 1-9). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 8.

where possible use the strengths of the fear historians to aid that project. I trust it is obvious that I do not, nor does Subba, suggest the Lovist nor Fearist ought to maintain separate ways without contact. How we educate ourselves has to involve both perspectives and many more. That said, the evidence for me points to favoring the latter perspective and may this technical paper make some degree of advance in showing why that is so.

I think I am left wondering about the same kind of pedagogical problem as Plamper and Lazier (2010) after they edited many papers for the special journal issue:

Whatever new insights the human sciences [and history] might offer into the process of how fear is constituted—as a phenomenon and as an object of knowledge—it remains to be seen whether such insights can be of use in public discussion, and if so, how they are to insinuate themselves into the public arena in the first place.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Plamper and Lazier (2010:64).