
Fearlessness Paradigm Meets Bracha Ettinger's Matrixial Theory



R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.
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Technical Paper No. 46

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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Fearlessness Paradigm Meets Bracha Ettinger's Matrixial Theory

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Abstract: This paper introduces my recent exploration into the matrixial theory of feminist, post-Lacanian psychoanalyst, and artist-activist, Bracha L. Ettinger. I envision she will be one of the most important revolutionary theorists, the likes of Freud, in changing the way we look at ourselves, our relationships, and their aesthetical-ethical foundations, for compassion. The purpose of this paper is not a full overview of her work, as that can be found elsewhere by other scholars (e.g., Griselda Pollock), but to relate her work to my project of bringing integral theory together with a fearlessness paradigm, within a vision for a "fearless society."

Introduction

I am grateful to my life-partner, artist, researcher, educator, Barbara Bickel for bring my attention to the work of Bracha L. Ettinger two and half years ago. She has published several arts-based research articles on Ettinger's work since. The summer Barbara told me about Ettinger, I had just discovered the fascinating work on aesthetics in the *perinatal* developmental process *via* the psychoanalyst-theorist, Christopher Bollas.² Ettinger focuses on *prenatal* developmental relations as aesthetical and proto-ethical foundations for ethics and politics today. Barbara and I have not been full-force readers of psychoanalysis,³ and yet it seems the draw to it had to be

¹ 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 a consultant, coach and teacher and principal of his own company (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>). He can be reached at: r.michaelfisher@yahoo.com.

² Bollas, C. (2009). *The evocative object*. NY: Routledge.

³ I have long been interested in psychoanalysis as theory, as meta-psychology with sociopolitical implications, and as therapy; but have not partaken in it, as I have also been very critical of it, as is Ettinger. That said, I have long been steeped in the project of depth psychology and analysis. See Fisher, R. M. (2013). *Shadow problem, Fear problem: Jung meets fearanalysis*. Technical Paper No. 42. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

through the eyes of a practicing professional artist, of which Ettinger is as well as a psychoanalyst and psychological-developmental theorist.

My purpose is not to outline all the work and critiques and admiration that has come from and towards Ettinger's work in the past 20+ years. She is a French/Israeli and her work is still relatively unknown and still maturing. A search on Wikipedia (online) will lead you to a great deal to read and study. I recommend her recent dialogue with Judith Butler <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5O9KsXVpLI>.

The main point of my interest in Ettinger's work is the inquiry she has made in the artistic-aesthetic and psychoanalytic experience and its relationship to the archaic elements of our (largely) unconscious sense of self-Other bound directly with the universal experience of the m/other. That is the location of foundations of all our relationality development, our ethics toward others, and our very basis of aesthetic development and motivations based on desire and fear, etc.

In particular, Ettinger is reframing the nature and role of the artist, the therapist, as well as the everyday citizen, in regard to what it means to live in a post-traumatic era. She is particularly interested in the post-WW-II historical trauma (e.g., the Holocaust)⁴, and post-Hiroshima event, and I am adding to that the post-9/11 event. The *culture of fear*, what some call a *culture of death*, that accompanies such post-traumatic events and cultures is not by accident. I have written extensively on this elsewhere and will not repeat that here.

Thus, Ettinger contextualizes what we do as artists, therapists, activists, educators, leaders, and citizens, in a postmodern world of globalizing complexity and trauma. She is decidedly psychopolitical and that appeals to all my interest in bringing together conflict theory, critical theory, feminist theory, postmodern theory, emancipatory traditions, and integral theory to a critical understanding fear ('fear') today. I have written some pieces utilizing her work in blogs, and other bits but have not as yet given full attention to it in a technical paper.⁵

⁴ Ettinger's parents were Polish, and both had experienced the concentration camps at Auschwitz.

⁵ Blogs: 2012 "Sexuality, Fearuality, Spirituality: Lens of Matrixiality (3)." 2010 "Missing the Matrixial: An Integral-R Corrective." Unfortunately a hacker erased these from the internet. I have only hard copies. I am currently working on a journal article with Barbara as well.

Ettinger's notion of the Matrix (feminine) sphere is a pivotal concept because it offers, in a conflict theoretical way, a challenge to the dominant hegemony of the Phallogentric (masculine) view of the human subject (identity)—the latter, a shadow cast across the whole dominator patriarchal traditions of W. civilization and many cultures within that.

The essence of the argument that I am interested in, is how the Phallogentric view (e.g., Freud, Lacan) in psychoanalysis has led to us accepting a generic state of anxiety (i.e., fear) as the primordial and archaic condition (state) of human nature and human development. Massumi⁶ and others, including myself have begun to critique the very inscription of fear as the nature of the self, our identity, our esteem, our perceptual orientation to the world that has come as part of that long trajectory and history of the phallogentric hegemony. This phallogentric theory and premise, and its biased lens (if not pathology), has potentially paralyzing implications in terms of a liberation model. Ettinger brings that traditional theorizing up to a new postmodern radical relationality as form of psychoanalysis, from the matrixial lens.⁷ And it is there, in her feminine, feminist, and womanist articulation of matrixial theory, that I find a great potential value to construct a new fearlessness paradigm⁸ in contradistinction to the fear paradigm of W. civilization.

Of course, in my work I have constructed the alternative *fearlessness paradigm* before without using psychoanalysis explicitly. The addition of Ettinger's work is a complementary path to my project and the notion of a "fearless society."⁹ And in fact, Ettinger is explicit that her matrixial theory is a challenge to but not an erasure of the value of the phallic domain and theory of human development typical of psychoanalysis and many other psychologies and theologies. She wants them merely to run side by side

⁶ See Massumi, B. (Ed.) (1993). *The everyday politics of fear*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

⁷ Her feminine rendering of the interrelations of the Lacanian notions of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic "through notions of *sinthôme* and the Moebius strip, Bracha Ettinger carefully re-braids, with a Deleuzian twist and a feminized Merleau-Pontyan swerve, these three levels of the human unconscious in their relation to the transgressive co-emergence-indifference with the m/Other' (Pollock 2006, p. 59) (cited in Condren, M. (2010). Relational theology in the work of artist, psychoanalyst and theorist Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger. In L. Isherwood and E. Bellchambers (Eds.), *Through us, with us, in us: Relational theologies in the 21st century*. (pp. 230-262). London, UK: SCM Press.

⁸ Fisher, R.M. (2006). Integral fearlessness paradigm. Technical Paper No. 20. Vancouver, BC: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁹ Fisher, R. M. (2012). Do we really want a fearless society? Technical Paper No. 40. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. [available ERIC ED537337 pdf]

and both be seen as equally valuable. Whether that integrative approach is possible, is another story.

Ettinger's Matrix Concept

Although many people may use the term "matrix," it is particularly used here in reference to "womb-like" and/or "gestating" structure and process by few, of which I know of no other systematic relational theory of matrix as that of Ettinger's "matrixial theory." Her book *The Matrixial Borderspace* (2006, University of Minnesota Press) is a good review of her work and one will find descriptions there by scholars such as Butler, Massumi and Pollock as well as Ettinger's writing about her work, providing a good introduction to her work.

Be prepared that this is hard stuff to grasp on a first or second or third reading. Ettinger has believed, like other contemporary theorists, that we need to create a new and sensitive (matrixial) language to talk about the matrixial sphere of experience. We are in the land of the Matrix not the land of Phallus. We are in the Feminine not the Masculine. And of course, we have to negotiate and live in/with *both* these braided worlds and experiences, each, as Ettinger argues, with its own particular phantasm, aesthetic, language, trauma, and expressions. And be clear, unlike much theorizing you may have read about the "feminine," Ettinger sees it as very active and not passive—the latter, too often is used to characterize the feminine as in opposition or complement to the more important masculine action energetic and forms.

I remind readers I could write pages about each of these concepts, problems of defining them, like "feminine" etc. I will leave that detail and argumentation outside of this brief introductory paper. There are more specific linkages that I wish to create here, specifically in terms of how the Matrix reality and experiencing from the view of the maternal and feminine subjectivity, as well as matrixial theory, brings a foundational scholarly view forward for consideration, within a patriarchal culture, that is too often denied, and made "abject," "mad" or "refuse," if not toxic and pathological. This has been a major counter-project of Ettinger's for over 20 years. I totally support that overall reclamation project as well to reclaim the "feminine" and not shadow-cast it under the language and conceptual frames of masculine dominated theorizing and actions.

In my own work, the "matrix" has appeared as a concept of great importance.¹⁰ Let me connect these with Ettinger's work, with some specula-

¹⁰ Fisher, R. M. (2012). *The Fear Matrix: The making of a revolutionary lived curriculum*. A CSIE Yellowpaper, DIFS-4. Carbondale, IL: Center for Spiritual Inquiry and Integral

tion. First, in 2000 I watched *The Matrix* sci-fi action film (1999) by The Wachowski's, thanks to my daughter Leah who brought me into cyberpunk genre art. This movie was very difficult to understand until after several watchings and serious analysis. It then totally captivated me as a contemporary art piece, which led the structuration of my entire dissertation research.¹¹ I have written many pieces on this movie narrative and its emancipatory potential as a 21st century postmodern-integral curricular tool. It's sequels up to 2003 and the discussion of Ken Wilber (integral philosopher) Cornel West (black culture theorist) on the 2004 ten vol. DVD set of the trilogy. is fascinating and worth listening to. Suffice it to say, this movie attracted a lot of attention from the mass public to scholars of culture, film, politics, psychology, sociology, philosophy and theology, from around the world.

My quick take, for our purposes here, is to say that I interpreted The Matrix as represented, performatively and aesthetically, in the trilogy as a '*Fear*' *Matrix*. It is a futuristic movie in c. 2199, and by then the machinic Matrix (see Deleuze and Guattari's "machinic" dimension of the "plane of organisation") was pretty dark and oppressive to humans. Of course, it is arguable, as the movie suggested, that humans started it in how they oppressed A.I. (artificial intelligence and machine-world), which they had created until through mutant enunciations the A.I. forms began to resist their creators and a mass warring world ensued, destroying the planetary life-systems as we know it. Machines (A. I.) designed their sustenance of energy from human bio-fuel (i.e., human bodies were farmed). You get a sense of the human dystopian nightmare of this great art work of the 20-21st century.

From the human point of view, at least, 'Fear' Matrix was what almost everyone was living in, as part of The System/The Program of The Matrix. But it was all artificial in a sense, and controlled by A.I. (machinic principles and codes of rules, maintained by Agents as antagonists). The few humans who escaped from full-embodied and unconscious embeddedness in The Matrix, were the protagonists of the movie (e.g., Neo, Trinity, Morpheus characters). They were part of the revolution and fought against the Machines (i.e., The Matrix). However, they needed The Matrix to do their battle, so they lived in the liminal zone between worlds to launch their attacks. So, there is no sense of erasing one to save the other. The process is more integrated and messy, if not complementary in a sense. But humans

Education; see also Fisher, R. M. (2009). "Unplugging" as real and metaphoric: Emancipatory dimensions to *The Matrix* trilogy. Technical Paper No. 33. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. [available ERIC ED503743 pdf]

¹¹ Fisher, R. M. (2003). Fearless leadership in and out of the 'Fear' Matrix. Unpublished dissertation. Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia. See also the discussion in Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world's fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21st century*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

needed to transform, but also The Matrix transforms as humans do. That's all part of the trilogy story beyond what I can talk about more here.

My point of raising this is, that I saw the simulacrum (*a la* Baudrillard) effect of The Matrix in the movie. Nothing was real. It was all an illusion people in The Matrix were living, few were conscious of this condition and 99% were ignorant of that fact they had no real mother to raise them. You'll hear the wisdom critique of nondual, mystical and esoteric dimensions of religious traditions from the East and West arcing parts of the story as well. How do we become awakened and get free?--free from The Matrix(?), is a question that dominates how the film was marketed and still persists, and is part of my own fearlessness paradigm question: *how do we get out of the 'Fear' Matrix (or fear-based paradigm) of our existence?*

The Wachowski's film depiction and imaginary of The Matrix is a conscious twisted form, a pathos, and a pathological version of the Matrix of Ettinger's depictions. In other words, the film version is quite real (in my opinion, and many others) in terms of the human condition of our existence today and for a long time, yet it is not Real (*a la* Lacan). In fact, The Matrix paradigm and world is very Phallic (Symbolic), and fear-based; or what psychoanalysts call anxiety-ridden. So where is the real Matrix (feminine) in the film?

To simplify my point, The Wachowski's have used great art to show the disaster of a "matrixial" phantasm-mentality of plane of organisation, without the real feminine Matrix. It was a false or constructed Phallic-version of a Matrix but not a true and healthy Matrix-version of a Matrix. That's the same problem I mentioned, when reading Ettinger's work, that to shift into the matrixial language and world is very difficult when we are thinking and using language and concepts and theories that are Phallic-made, not Matrixial-made. Big problem; but not impossible to discern. It is the same problem I face when attempting to construct an alternative to the fear-based paradigm ('Fear' Matrix), based on fearlessness. It is hard to create a language (and self-identity positioning) to talk about fear and fearlessness that is not already laced and embedded in the fear-based language of the 'Fear' Matrix. Yet, this is exactly what we need to do.

The other positive notion of the Matrix comes in later integral philosophy and methodology of Ken Wilber when he begins to talk about the AQAL¹² Matrix as his non-oppressive, all-inclusive, structuration and process of an epistemology that (theoretically) is not fear-based—although he doesn't exactly come out and say that directly in referring to the AQAL Matrix, but it totally fits because that AQAL Matrix is constructed with/in a 2nd-tier consciousness structure called "integral." You can read this in most all his later works since 2000 but his 2006 book *Integral Spirituality* is a good place to

¹² The acronym standing symbolically for "all quadrants all levels."

see the AQAL Matrix developed. I use this as part of my critical integral approach in the study of fear and fearlessness. Yet, I have also critiqued Wilber, is AQAL (quadrant) model and other integral theorists for not being "feminine" (i.e., matrixial) enough in their conceptualizations of ontology, epistemology, axiology and integral education curriculum and pedagogy itself. My alternative approach can be seen in my Department of Integral and 'Fear' Studies (@ Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education), where some emphasis has begun to take place where arts, aesthetics and matrixial theory have shaped the inquiry.

So, to turn now to Ettinger, is to turn to the non-phallic at its best of what the Matrix is. The two examples of The Wachowski's and Wilber's work are still quite phallogocentric despite their great teaching value to nudge out of and beyond the fear-based Matrix. One of the things Ettinger often teaches in her seminars, is that you can read matrixial theory, play with it, and even think you have understood it but really, most of that will be only intellectualized.

Her own discovery of the matrixial bases for her later theory development came first from her practices as a visual artist. I'd say the same is the case for Barbara Bickel and myself, and our coupleship for 22 years, which is based on that arts-focused healing-focused process of creation-making, and relating, and the ethical and therapeutic advantages of such a path. The other expression I have given this is the path of fearlessness. Barbara relates to it that way too but she would prefer (as woman) to call it matrixial relationality. And I am fine with that too.

Ettinger then put her academic study of aesthetics and art (her Ph.D.) together with her training as a professional psychoanalyst, and after many years working in psychoanalytic sessions, she merged her art practices with her therapeutic practice. Matrixial theory emerged from that combination. She has critiqued all the other big psychoanalysts and ethical theorists (including Levinas). She has her own version to put forth.

Her idea of the Matrix is central, and no one has theorized it, and most all the big male ethical theorists and psychoanalysts have moved away from the feminine, the woman. Ettinger argues that you have to do matrixial aesthetic practices, and ethical practices, to emerge with a true understanding of the Matrix and its world. She also believes that involves by necessity the foundational re-processing and 'working through' (via healing) the early childhood experience of which her work is primarily based on inside-the-womb and mother-with-the-pregnant womb (prenatal mother-child communications). In simply terms the maternal and feminine subjectivity-side of our lives.

Matrixial Aesthetics-Ethics

Matrixial aesthetic-ethics, is a way of indicating these realms are not to be taken artificially apart; they belong together. They are also primarily unconscious to us as individuals and as a collective. Our societies pay little attention to this aesthetic-ethical template of prenatal experiencing, for designing our outside world, for shaping it, for organizing it, for ruling it, and for the very education and socialization process itself. As a curriculum designer and theorist (also artist), I am very interested in this matrixial aesthetic-ethical template as a healthy and sustainable way to construct a better world without fear (i.e., a "fearless society"). Btw, if you search any major academic educational databases there is no mention of "Bracha Ettinger" or "matrixial theory." But that is rapidly going to change as Barbara, myself and a handful of other educators are onto Ettinger and publications are appearing and will soon be indexed.

Education and socialization, as I have experienced it, is primarily Phallic and fear-based. I know I am not alone in knowing this. But 99% of the people in the W. world anyways, are also experiencing this but are not aware of it. One of the reasons is that they have not learned anything (because they have not been taught) about fearlessness or matrixial. It has been kept hidden and unconsciously repressed, but also by many authorities it has been relegated to the abject and transgressive (shadowed) domain, and thus suppressed *via* disappearance. Of course, feminists have been telling us this for well over a hundred years.¹³

The good news is that Ettinger has really broken out of the Phallic-shell, escaped to a large degree the 'Fear' Matrix of psychoanalysis and the issues of human subjectivity formation, development and psychic health and ill-health. Her theories are revolutionizing many disciplines, including the worlds of aesthetics and arts, philosophy and theology. Again, much of that you can read about elsewhere, and one of the major (if not the best) sources for interpreting her work is the feminist art historian and critic Griselda Pollock.

¹³ I note here that anything suppressed so systematically for that long, is a problem when it returns. When it leaks out or is dragged out, or emerges out again to daylight, that great "twists" may also be within its formation now until those are healed and 'worked through.' I don't believe Ettinger is unaware of this in terms of the return of the Matrix. However, you'll not find a lot of discussion about this problematic in Ettinger or Pollock or others who are now supporting Ettinger's matrixial theory. I actually believe, that the fearlessness paradigm work I have done can both be impacted well from matrixial theory and at the same time better inform matrixial theory so they both benefit and will design better applications in the future. That's a speculation that I have not yet discussed with anyone. And at this time I have not had contact with Ettinger directly.

Without examining her art and aesthetic sensibility as a matrixial artist, I wish to keep a focus for brevity on her emphasis on affect, empathy, compassion and ethical implications that support the fearlessness paradigm.

Let's hear directly from her with a few extracts:

Maternal subjectivity, which contains pre-Oedipal and post-Oedipal positions, is also a carrier and transmitter of feminine-matrixial connectivity that is charged by—and charges—specific modalities of affected encounter-eventing and makes their effects specific. Maternal subjectivity works inside the subject by inspiration. As a way of beginning I would like to make two points.... The infant meets the maternal subject via its own *primary affective compassion*.¹⁴ I view the effect of primary compassion as a primal psychic access to the other. It arises before, after and also alongside abjection. Being primal, it is not a reaction but an arousal and, like anxiety, a signal. Compassion signals contact and connection, yet it is not reactive. Contacting yet not being reactive—here is a psychic potential for subjective freedom.¹⁵

From a fear and fearlessness reading, I hear her talking about a "subjective freedom" from fear-based (reactive) existence and identity, and free from fear-based (reactive) relations in the future. That is the matrixial potency and location for a proto-ethical foundation for ethics. Even her naming of "anxiety" one must be cautious of that terms use. I tend to use anxiety as a cousin of the fear-tribe of affects, and in the way Ettinger is using it in the pre-natal sense, this is not an affect of compassion if there is fear-base in it, and thus, I'd restore the term to one of excited desire not anxiety. At the same time, as constructing a fearlessness paradigm for the maternal subjectivity that we all have in us, men or women, boys or girls or all variations between, she acknowledges also *awe*, and acknowledges that this maternal space of connectivity is not all positive and wonderful but also has trauma and fear depending on many and diverse conditions as contextual to the co-encountering of non-I (child) and I (parent and/or caregiver).

She writes of awe and compassion in this maternal subjectivity:

Primary affective awe arises too during being-with and becoming-with

¹⁴ Note: most of the time, outside of this context of primary affective compassion, Ettinger uses the term very consciously in the form of hyphenated "com-passion." They are similar conceptions but not exactly the same. I am not making that distinction in this short paper and thus keeping my remarks framed primarily around this pre-given primary affective compassion and awe experiencing (or template).

¹⁵ From Ettinger, B. (2010). (M)Other re-spect: Maternal subjectivity, the *ready-made mother-monster* and the ethics of respecting. *Studies in the Maternal*, 2(1), p. 1 @ www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk.

[the co-emergent relational 'we' dynamic of mother and gestating child in the womb]. When the affections of awe and compassion arise in an encounter they counterbalance abjection.¹⁶

Within the fearlessness paradigm, I start with the evolutionary and healing logic of self-regulation and defense systems, whereby I claim that *when fear arises, then so does fearlessness* to counter-act it. No organism wants to remain in a fear state, for long. I have labeled this the spirit of fearlessness and it has many forms, developmental from most immature and simple to mature and complex (i.e., bravery and bravado, courageous, fearless, fearlessness, and fearless), which articulate a spectrum of fear management systems (0 to 9).¹⁷ Ettinger's matrixial theory postulates a similar, differently labeled, counter-force (she calls "counterbalance") to abjection. Whereas abjection, for Ettinger, is any reactive fear-based formation of exchange in a co-encounter event of mother-child relations (even in the womb but mostly after the birth). She asserts a primary affective template *apriori* as Real for human organisms. This arises in forms of compassion and awe to "counterbalance" fear (i.e., abjection). I would agree with this.

She continues,

[re: arising compassion and awe as primary pre-given affective templates] They counterbalance early forms of fear-shame and fear-guilt charged with anger. In their more elaborated forms [which I would categorize as fearlessness], they contribute to the transformation of fear-shame and fear-guilt into mature non-reactive forms [I would call 2nd-tier fear management systems of *fearlessness* and *fearless* proper]—ethical shame and ethical guilt, and also, they directly effectuate forces of freedom and resistance.¹⁸

Again, I find her depiction here very consistent with the tenets of a fearlessness paradigm, albeit, she would use terms like "ethical shame" and "ethical guilt" as the newly transformed and healthy-side of "fear-shame" and "fear-guilt" and that is interesting and creates a whole larger topic for debate. My fearlessness paradigm and new languaging, unlike her matrixial paradigm and languaging, would create new words beyond shame and guilt of any kind, in a more radical move outside of the roots of the fear-stem of linguistic signifiers and meaning frames. I think the human being is totally capable of ethical response-ability *apriori* but that it has to be integrated with cognitive, affective, and moral development lines (see Wilber's integral theory). If this is a holistic-integrative and healing socialization and educational process of growth, the legacy of fear-roots of all kinds is dis-

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁷ See my book, *The World's Fearlessness Teachings*.

¹⁸ Ettinger, 2010, p. 1.

solved and is countered continually by "forces of freedom and resistance" (of which I would call the spirit of fearlessness).

I could go on to say a whole lot more about the feminine-matrixiality and woman-artist concepts she uses. I have myself gone deeply into those transformations as an artist, as a person healing and being a therapist-healer, etc. In the late 1990s I disidentified myself from the primary Phallic "male" positioning and began a journey of becoming "female" (woman) consciously. I did this for many reasons, beyond the scope of this paper, but I have now found a satisfactory identity as a 60:40 biological male, meaning 60% woman, and 40% man. In Ettinger's framework, I'd call this a matrixial man. I am dedicated to serving the matrixial relationality and improving and spreading the matrixial theory wherever I can. It is a primal affective conditioning template, in the best sense of the word, in the best sense of re-specting the m/other relations (and our mothers). It is a good pathway of fearlessness from fear management system-0 forward in evolution.

I particularly would like to spend more time writing (later in other publications) about the notion of "self-fragilisation" and "vulnerability" in matrixial theory with notions of beauty, primary awe and fascinace (to use Ettinger's terms). It is beyond the scope of this short introduction, but suffice it to say, all of those qualities and experiences, if not forces and imperative principles of human development (e.g., beauty, awe, compassion, fascinace) are essential to any definition of fearlessness and actually do align quite nicely with "fearlessness" as defined by most Buddhists. The notion of empathy is also made more complex and problematic in Ettinger's work. She takes empathy to a new ground in matrixial theory.¹⁹

She wrote (primarily to practicing psychotherapists today):

Empathy-without-compassion and empathy-without-respect produce an attack on various aesthetical and ethical potentialities of the subject itself [in/with its matrixial net of relationality]—an attack on the potentiality to transform traces of trauma and pain into beauty, an attack on the passage from proto-ethical awe and compassion into the ethical positioning of respecting, and an attack on spontaneous self-healing, and attack on the restoration of basic trust.... Therapeutic interpretations [usually based when a therapist takes the role of protector of the client against the mother or parents in abusive contexts] that pathologise this experience shape the ways in which our mothers remain the craziest people we've ever met. Interpretations made by the analyst/therapist that are empathic with [this] 'ready-made mother-monster' (without compassion to the maternal figure) and which locate

¹⁹ Ettinger (2010).

a 'cause' of our sufferings (the 'unconsciously poisonous mother,' the 'intoxicating mother,' the never 'good-enough mother,' the always 'over-controlling' mother, the always 'constantly abandoning' mother) turn this important, painful and vital conscious and unconscious real-phantasmatom experience into a symbolic 'truth-cause' and turns the intimate mother to whom we are transconnected (whether we like it or not) into the craziest of all figures. But the infant, in each of us, doesn't expect that another adult (father, analyst, therapist) will confirm our intimate infant conviction in a way that will turn it into an objective 'truth' by which our mother is judged. On the contrary, the subject looks for ways to transform this idea, as it emerges again and again, and will always emerge, into a creative move.²⁰

Although so much could be said of this quote, it tells of Ettinger's commitment to re-configure the way we see 'mother' (and its foundation for all m/other and self relations). The 'mother' in other words, is not the source of fear but the ways we deal with her (HER) on all levels, Real, Imaginary, Symbolic, that does bring more or less a fear-based structure to the maternal subjectivity and that is a great error, which Ettinger argues persuasively. Why? The Phallic sphere is deeply embedded in this error. It is the substitutional simulacrum of a "matrix" that is fear-based, not good-enough, but of which we seem to be allotted. It is our fate. And there are great religious traditions that prey upon that in all kinds of ways, forcing fear-based ethicality upon us and subservience and sacrifice (instead of mercy²¹).

Ettinger's matrixial paradigm, as with the fearlessness paradigm, points to a radical reconfiguration of subjectivity, of maternity, and m/other and self relations (and thus ethics and politics). The direction is one of fearlessness as foundational (and/or "love"), not one of fear-based relationality or what Ettinger labeled as destroying "basic trust" (i.e., ontological security). If we don't get the truth and real Matrix (matrixially-made), then we get and construct the false "matrix" (or The Wachowski's Matrix nightmare). And from the false "matrix" we are going to live in/with fear (and 'fear') and all its relational affects as "us" not just something we "feel" but we are the FEAR subjectivation process itself and embodiment of its twisted and pathological desire which was "cut" and "split off" as Ettinger's work articulates in the over-dominating Phallus world.

What Ettinger brings out, over and over, and in the quotes above, is that the "child" (maternal-subjective part of us) is not totally buying into the Phallus construction ("matrix"). It resists it. It works to transform it toward "love." In my language-theory, the *spirit of fearlessness* can be damaged, denied, and suppressed, but it cannot be destroyed. It will surface, one

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²¹ See Condren (2010).

way or another as part of the sustaining inherent drive toward ontological security that is non-reactive but based on the Real of the fetus-mother complex ontological grounding—more or less, a 9 mo. period of primary affective compassion and awe, of complete but differentiation complex union and co-emergence without erasure of difference. There is no terror there. There is no fear there. It is only the later Imaginary and Symbolic realms of the Phallic world constructions (i.e., 'Fear' Matrix) that make us picture this ontological maternal as "mother-monster" in one form or another to place blame for suffering, and we see this in the Bible (Genesis)²² and we see it in the therapy rooms, it is everywhere. Once we reconnect with the true Matrix world and fearlessness paradigm, we will see this all very differently. That's my experience and a number of others I know who have gone through this artworking and reconstruction of the self to m/other.

I leave one thought ringing, with matrixial harmonies, and that is that the World's Fearlessness Teachings, sacred and secular, across time and cultures, are transconnected to the same matrixial maternal subjectivity of Ettinger. The strings, resonances, the braids and traces, all there, all from the womb of the Kosmos itself. It is our response-ability now to take them up in a transsubjectivity, in compassion and awe that is pre-given, and bring forth the enactment of a fearlessness paradigm as the only ethical way to go in the future. We have to say "enough!" and call the pathology of the Phallus construction what it has become, and hold space for it to be, not be destroyed, but to recalibrate, and re-architect itself into a complementary form of integrated design with the Matrix of the Ettingerian kind.

²² In Ettinger (2010), p. 6, she makes some great arguments for how "awe" (reverence-reverie) when understood in the matrixial, create a different outcome of "respect rather than fear, and trust rather than paranoia and greedy gripping." This would lead so nicely into a fearlessness paradigmatic reading of the Biblical texts and interpretations that lead into the notion of "awe" for God/Creator as ethical to religion, but that "awe" is translated into "fear of God" as respect and trust and faith itself. I have always believed that is a fear-based paradigm of the Phallic, and now, with Ettinger's work (and Condren's relational theology based on Ettinger) this can more effectively be deconstructed and reconstructed, where in the end, no such imposition of an ethical-religio imperative of "fear of God" would ever need to be the case; in the end, such a "fear of God" move only reproduces a fear-based toxic potential in one ontological development (*via* dualism)—and the outcome is an obsessive reactive "need" to get off this planet to Heaven for escape and freedom (the Ascender's path (as Wilber calls it), leading to a deadly ecological result we witness today, which I argue is motivated by *Phobos*, that is, 'fear' patterning).