

CSIIIE: Department of Integral and 'Fear' Studies

A New 'Fear' Studies Vocabulary DIFS Yellowpaper #3

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Introduction

Having coined 'Fear' Studies in the early part of the 21st century, it was a move I felt necessary in a post-9/11, 2001 era. The world had changed. The talk about fear and terror had become, and still is, a new cultural and political trope. The psychological and spiritual impact of this is still largely unknown but many critics sense that something deeply has changed. I saw this period opening up a new opportunity for us to re-examine as a species our relationship to what we've called "fear" (and its many cousins). Of course, this is an English-biased view, yet studies have shown that "fear" is a universally recognized biological state with various cultural interpretations and ways of describing it in different languages.

However, whether fear can be detected, measured, and read in the body, mind, soul, spirit is debateable. Fear is real, and fear is a word, a concept a construction of a particular cultural mind-set. Once we begin to question the nature and role of fear, not as mere biology or psychology, but as a construction of a particular kind of knowledge, and vocabulary, or discourse, then we have begun what is called deconstruction as a methodology of knowing. In that sense, 'Fear' Studies is the study of the deconstruction of fear, and that is a postmodern approach. The use of (') marks on fear (e.g., 'fear') is a strategy I began some 20 years ago when I took this topic on as a life-long commitment to improve our understanding of the accumulated knowledge of fear. I put fear under deconstruction and reconstruction as 'fear.' I wanted us to no longer take for granted we human know now, or knew in the past, what fear is. 'Fear' is something else, still unknown fully, and still under investigation, without the confidence we know what fear or 'fear' is exactly and thus, without the concomitant confidence that we know best how to manage it. Whatever it is, fear, 'fear' (and all the forms and sub-species thereof) it is a beginning point to say, we human likely don't understand it well, because it (whatever it is) has us in its grip. All evidence in human history shows me that, for the most part, we don't manage fear ('fear') well, and arguably, to this day, it will be our demise.

Yet, for this introductory vocabulary paper, it is not the focus to expand all the arguments I have made that led up to the identification and call for a new kind of 'Fear' Studies. The purpose here is to give readers a sense of the neologisms involved—there are new terms and concepts unfolding in my own thinking and practice of fearology, as well, others from various disciplines have also been creating new terms to go with fear. This has been acknowledged in my own paper published in 2006¹ and an article by another scholar on

¹ Fisher, R. M. (2006). Invoking 'Fear' Studies. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 22(4), 39-71.

the new scholarship on fear emerging in the past decade or so, published in 2003² (the same year I finished my dissertation on the topic and declared my formal intentions for a new 'Fear' Studies to the academy). The gist of all this new vocabulary and new scholarship on fear was that it was being taken out of the sole domain of a dominant hegemonic discourse on the topic under the neurobiological and psychological fields (including medicine and psychiatry). In a sense, fear was going 'fear'—that is, going viral, and the sociological, cultural, political, historical, and other fields were taking it up with a new seriousness, and a recognition that fear is more than fear as we have known it and taken for granted we have known it. But that is a longer story, and my interpretation of the new scholarship on fear. I'll admit, my reading of this emerging interest in fear has its critique and I have taken a much more radical route of inquiry. I do appreciate however, the impetus to expand our knowledge of fear ('fear') and thus, to improve how we manage it and teach about how to know it and manage it.

I've written a critical essay (yet to be published) recently on an integral gnoseology as a critical and emancipatory educational practice.³ Gnoseology is an old term, one that critical pedagogue Paulo Freire used to describe his work. It is a complex term but it invokes a study of terms, concepts, and how they are organized, and how they represent reality, and also prevent an accurate reading of reality. In other words, words can help us and they can corrupt and oppress us. Language does that. It's a double-edged sword. To study language in a gnoseological way, that is, to study the categories of knowledge we create and how they create us, can lead to a powerful critique of such categories and knowledge—and thus, it puts our terms and concepts and categories under the lens of deconstruction, and eventual reconstruction. The point here, is that in creating a gnoseology of 'Fear' Studies, there is not anything arbitrary about it as in creating neologisms for the sake of it. The work is systematic and critical, as part of liberation praxis. There is no way the old language around fear is good enough, at least not from a postmodern (and integral) perspective. 'Fear' Studies, and the fearology I practice is postmodern. Rare is this kind of work going on with this topic. More recently, I have written about an integral fearology as the best descriptor of what I do.⁴

The list below is relatively brief and preliminary, undetailed, and largely an unreferenced one. A full list, with detailed definitions and full references, is eventually required; a task perfect for DIFS students to take on. For now, I'll give you what I see as the main new vocabulary (most of it my own).

² Brissett, W. N. (2003). Bibliographical essay on fear. *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, 5(3), 115-23.

³ Fisher, R. M. (forthcoming). Integral gnoseology as critical educational practice: Re-reading Freire and Wilber. In S. Esjörn-Hagens (Ed.), *True but partial: Essential critiques of Integral theory*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

⁴ Fisher, R. M. (2011). A research agenda to legitimate the study of 'fear': Beginning fearology 2000-11. Yellow Paper DIFS #2. Carbondale, IL: Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education.

New Vocabulary for 'Fear' Studies

Human Fear Problem – a generic problem for humanity defined in terms of its evolutionary, developmental, and historical relationship with fear (and 'fear').

fear – a predominantly pre-modern and modern term, distinguished from a postmodern and/or integral term 'fear'; generally, an emotion or feeling, determined by discourses in psychology and base studies of neurobiology; found in dictionaries, encyclopedias and common usage; unquestioned for the most part that it is adequate to describe what it says it describes, and uncritically accepted for the most part by the vast majority of its users

'fear' – a postmodern term, rare in use, which consciously deconstructs and reconstructs *fear* as we know it; coined at the turn of the 21st century by RMF as indicative of a need to renew how humans understand and manage fear in a post-9/11 era; originally used to open up to an attitude of studying fear that was not to be fear-based itself, and thus requires an epistemology called "*fearless standpoint*" (*a la* integral); often it is a reference to the complex multi-layered notion of what fear has grown, mutated, morphed, and patterned itself into as a very toxic 'fear' that can no longer be known as simply a "an emotion or feeling"

fearuality- coined in the late-1990s by RMF, this broad term is analogous to sexuality, morality, spirituality, whereby an entire domain of human behavior and experience and reality are located and may be studied through inquiry to critique and back and forth as part of a critical praxis

power-knowledge-fear – is a core concept coined by RMF in 2002 as a construction and outcome of epistemological and political forces (a take off from Michel Foucault's *power-knowledge*); implies that a postmodern '*Fear* Studies and *fearology*, and *fearanalysis* would privilege the study not of fear or fears but of the knowledge that is created to define, explain, theorizing, philosophize about fear or fears—thus, fear-knowledge or knowledge about fear is the central important unit of study

fear studies – without the caps, is the ordinary common phrasing for a collective body of studies that involve fear

'Fear' Studies—with the caps, is recognition of a new scholarship, more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, where 'fear' is taken as something to inquire into in new ways, with new methodologies and a collective effort to unify these studies under one domain; RMF coined the concept with a vision of it as a new academic area, just after 9/11, 2001

'Fear' Project – is a complex (somewhat metaphorical) term RMF coined in 1989-90 to reflect an ontological (and phenomenological) "project-ion" based on fear ('fear') as an ontological (insecurity) defense mechanism from our origins of self-consciousness (self-

awareness), with historical trans-subjective *karma*; deep (esoteric) process in the dynamics of human existence and human fear-conditioning; thought to be the most destructive of all defense mechanisms combined (if not their root) because of its collective capacity and power to create illusion, denial, *maya*, and so forth; it ultimately is a self-destructive (retro-regressive “death instinct” (see Ken Wilber’s *Phobos-Thanatos* notion in integral theory) to put it grossly, in contrast to a “life instinct” (Ken Wilber’s *Eros-Agape* notion)

fearology—used in a variety ways most common in the last decade, popularly (see the Internet) and more systematically (by RMF), the former often related to *fearmongering* tactics, and the latter as “the study of fear and its relationship to Life” ;

integral fearology – includes fearology but transcends it and all the “fearologies” that are part of it; newly coined in 2010 by RMF it uses a meta-theory called integral theory to construct a “fearology of fearologies”

fearologies – a new coined term in 2011 by RMF to loosely describe all the ways that people have attempted to “study” fear (and ‘fear’)

‘Fear’ Barrier(s) –was originally used in phenomenological research (Mackie) in the 1980s without the (‘) marks, as a kind of filter that is constructed socioculturally by societies that is then internalized into a psychological and spiritual experience, where one “sees through” and/or does not “see through” the fear barrier constructed as part of the everyday perception; this was modified by RMF with (‘) marks to indicate a great deal more research (deconstruction and reconstruction) of the everyday fear perception (barrier) needs to be done, especially in a postmodern world (and post-9/11 era); conceived by RMF as an ontological (phenomenological) “structure” (kosmic habit) created by developmental evolutionary process plus oppression-repression dynamics; RMF has three ‘Fear’ Barriers in his latest model in the “soul’s journey”

fearosophy – coined by RMF a few decades ago to be an analogous term for sexosophy (i.e., the legitimate branch of philosophical study on sex and sexuality; and similarly with the analogy of sexology to fearology)

fearism – coined by RMF since early 2000s, the form of oppression-repression dynamic that creates a toxic ideology which both promotes *fearmongering* (explicit and implicit forms) justifying “fear” as “natural” and “normal” ; homologous with any ideology (e.g., classism, racism, sexism), it privileges (rationalizes) certain groups to perpetuate fear (‘fear’) in ways that are “invisible” and that cannot be thus regulated, critiqued, or disabled (at least, not without tremendous resistance created by fearism—which has the one task and that it is to keep itself in place); thought to be generated most powerfully in performative operations with adultism in the everyday; arguably, it acts completely in a ‘Fear’ Matrix and forces us to forget it exists, and to deny the knowledge that is capable of critiquing and undermine its oppression

fearmongering – (sometimes used like fearology in pop culture) a term used by critics who see unnecessary attempts to increase fear among people rather than reduce fear; often core to the practice of a *politics of fear* (thus, breeding mistrust, and paranoia, not trust and accurate perception of risk and reality); see also *culture of fear*

'Fear' Matrix - a complex multi-layered term (metaphorical and phenomenological) that is a product of and site and structure of the reproduction of the *'Fear' Project*, and *fearism*; RMF created the term in early 2000 after watching The Wachowski's sci-fi action movie *The Matrix* (1999) which dramatizes, in his view, many of the dynamics of the 'Fear' Matrix (see RMF's dissertation in 2003)

fearanalysis – coined in the mid-1990s by RMF, analogous to Freud's psychoanalysis, is the practical analytic-therapeutic application of *fearology* (also could be a more specific *integral fearanalysis*, as in RMF's new book 2010); often equated with a critical discourse analysis of text (and discourses, *a la* Foucault)

fearless standpoint (theory) (FST) – coined by RMF in the mid-1990s, analogous to feminist standpoint theory, is the epistemological (and political, spiritual) positioning of an imaginary location that could potentially be useful to revealing knowledge about fear ('fear') from a new place, with new insights, new stances, outside (more or less) of *fearism*

critical fear theory – coined by RMF in the early 2000s, is a theorizing based on a fearless standpoint theory and on a critical feminist theory, critical theory, and all the other applications of critical theory to fields like criminology, disability, race studies, and so on

critical fear theory – similar to the above, coined in 2001 by RMF, but more queer theory-oriented in attempting to playfully and seriously deconstruct the categories and new vocabulary of 'Fear' Studies itself, as well as all the prior fear studies categories, definitions, meanings

Fear Management Systems Theory (FMST) – is a large conception created by RMF in the early 2000s (elaborated in his new book 2010); it is an evolutionary developmental theory, based largely in Spiral Dynamics Integral (technology and theory), and integral theory, where different consciousness structures (v-memes) are thought to have evolved with special intelligences (systems) to manage fear; the theory argues that there is no way to have fear, talk about fear, write about fear theories, etc., unless one is always already on the search for needing or wanting to better manage fear (and 'fear'); fear management is instinctual, not merely created by "man" and "culture" constructions, although, the latter are true as well and are highly influential and powerful forces (not all healthy); argues that there are 9-10 different FMSs available, all useful for different aims and conditions;

fear management/education (FME) – coined by RMF in the early 2000s is one of the major constructs in his notion of 'Fear' Studies, with an educational emphasis, as all

research on the topic is ultimately about educating someone; this broad umbrella term encloses all the discourses on fear ('fear') into pedagogical and curricular analysis and critique, which ask questions about how is fear management being taught all the time, and how do we know it is being taught in the best way, for all involved?

'fearlessness' theory – coined by RMF in his 2010 book, is what comes dialectically with a new 'fear' theory, and that *fearlessness* also needs deconstruction and reconstruction (see FMST for a breakdown of seven major types of fearlessness that are interpreted in evolution of the human species so far)

fearlessness – a term with a long tradition, mainly developed in the Eastern wisdom traditions and practices, is highly confused and appropriated unjustly in the West; for RMF in 2010 it is identified as FMS-7 (more a '*fearlessness*' notion)

fearless – a highly confused term, which RMF in his 2010 book attempts to tease out of the plethora of appropriations of its use in retro-regressive interpretations; he places it as the most highly developed FMS-9 on the spectrum of consciousness

discourse(s) of fear – these were defined by RMF in 2006 (*JCT* article) for the first time, where it is a way of speaking, talking, enacting, manufacturing "fear" (and 'fear') that is *fearmongering* itself in essence, even when such discourse(s) often on the surface look like and are intended not to do so but rather to reduce fear

discourse(s) on fear – also defined by RMF in 2006 (see above); they are more conscious and often critical of the very power-knowledge-fear dynamic with *discourses of fear* are not; theoretically, these do not add to fearmongering

climate of fear – a term with a long history in the West, but most recent in the post-9/11 era; tends to be used popularly in media and on the streets, less systematic than the term and conception of *culture of fear*

culture of fear – coined in research studies in Latin America in the mid-1980s, it derives from inter- and transdisciplinary analysis, where fear is more than an emotion or feeling (i.e., merely psychological), and is seen as becoming the very lens upon which reality and self and other, and culture, are perceived; based in *fearmongering* of one kind or another, RMF has refined this notion into a complex integral framework, and considers it foremost as the overt symptom of the long accumulation of the '*Fear*' Project and its cultural history for our species

politics of fear – a term used for a long time, but very frequently after 9/11, 2001; it is seen as based on *fearmongering* for some to gain privilege and control over others

ecology of fear – along with tens of many similar notions (e.g., geography of fear), these new constructions are part of the new scholarship of fear and require further documentation to define them (which will not be undertaken here)

