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The Love & Fear Problem: A Response to Michael Bassey Eneyo

R. Michael Fisher

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to engage the critiques of Michael Bassey Eneyo's views of the philosophy of fearism (*a la* Desh Subba and R. Michael Fisher). Eneyo is invited to respond to this and Fisher will respond to it. All others who wish to respond to this exchange between Fisher and Eneyo are welcome to send in their contributions of which are potentially publishable in future issues of the *International Journal of Fear Studies*. Fisher makes the case that Eneyo has not fully owned his own disciplinarity in shaping his work as a philosopher of fear, and his own Christianity privileging of a faith in love; and thus, when he compares and contrasts his claims with Fisher (and somewhat with Subba's philosophy of fearism) this leads to inevitable tensions and clashes. Fisher offers several creative and productive routes for ways of improving how to work with his own views, with fearism, and those of others, especially the new breed of serious and respectable philosophers of fear, like Eneyo. The ultimate goal is to improve awareness in the "fear

territory” (*a la* Eneyo) and its embedded philosophical, theoretical and practical applications to fear management/education.

Philosophers of Fear: More Than an Identity Label

I appreciate he [Eneyo] has been one of a rare small handful of thinkers over the decades, who has actually written and published something critical about my work.

– R. Michael Fisher

The following is an introduction to some of the ways I have come to engage Michael B. Eneyo’s work and some of the critiques he has made of my work on fear and fearlessness. It is by no means going to be complete and thorough but only a beginning of clarifying and debating a few important issues. And, yet, I want to assure Eneyo and readers of this article that the ultimate goal is to improve awareness for all in the “fear territory” (*a la* Eneyo)¹ and its embedded philosophical, theoretical and practical applications to fear management/education around the world. It will be an intense read. I have taken extra time and caution to be as accurate as I can in citing Eneyo’s work and others where necessary.

The topic covered and Eneyo’s critiques are really important in my view to the well-being of the *philosophy of fearism* movement (*a la* Subba). I am attempting to be pre-emptive in my writing and thinking on this so as to avoid unnecessary ideological (and/or disciplinary) “splits” in the overall area of Fear Studies and philosophy of fearism in particular. At the same time, I welcome intense and diverse views and critiques to Fear Studies (and the *International Journal of Fear Studies*) and/or philosophy of fearism, as part of its growth and development and maturation as a legitimate and scholarly field of work. I see Eneyo’s work on a “philosophy of fear” as part of the global Fearlessness Movement. As this article unfolds, these terms and labels will be defined.

I have recently been recognized by a UK academic theological scholar as a “Canadian philosopher of fear,”² which is *not* a label I have given to myself since I started the In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989-), and not since I have written more about fear than anyone else. I am more prone on rare occasion to use “philosopher of fearlessness,” but I am open to other labels as well.

To this day globally, there are no full-time academics or scholars who I would call, nor do they call themselves, a “philosopher of fear.” There are many who write about fear but that’s not their specialty. Yet, even if I make this distinction of who qualifies as a “philosopher of fear” in a serious way and based on a systematic ongoing commitment to study fear philosophically and otherwise, there are many others, inside and outside of the academy, who will give titles of “philosopher of fear” to thinkers/writers and traditional philosopher-scholars like Thomas Hobbes³ or Martin Heidegger,⁴ for examples. To date, no set of standard criteria exists to make these assessments.

¹ Eneyo (2018), p. 17.

² Quote by Dr. Terry Biddington in the UK, <https://terrybiddington.wordpress.com/2017/07/11/a-new-book-on-fearlessness/>

³ Anker (2005), called Hobbes “the most complex philosopher of fear.” Marcano (2017) called Hobbes, more specifically, “the political philosopher of fear” (p. 238).

⁴ <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Angst>

Over the last 30 years, for example, I have been impressed by the late Jiddu Krishnamurti's eclectic mystical philosophical investigations into the depths of "fear" and our relationship with it,⁵ but there are so many others I have drawn upon, secular and sacred. Krishnamurti despite his brilliance of thinking on fear is not to me a "philosopher of fear" nor has he systematically developed a philosophy of fear *per se*. However, a new breed of philosophical thinking and writing is appearing in the last decade or so that, more or less, warrants the label. Outside of the academic field, there are a few contemporary intellectuals who have dabbled somewhat seriously, writing only one book on fear *per se*, and publishing under titles like *A Philosophy of Fear* (Svendsen, 2008), *Philosophy of Fear* (Eneyo, 2018), from Norway and Nigeria respectively.⁶ Their work characteristically is disciplinary⁷ in scope because of their own commitments to knowledge/truth *via* their formal philosophy education. Less so Svendsen, and more so Eneyo, these are recent examples of philosophers taking on the topic of fear seriously with contemporary and widespread applications. Eneyo is by far advanced beyond Svendsen in commitment as a "philosopher of fear" and thus I take his work particularly seriously and would recommend all my students of fearology⁸ to study his work.

The recent movements to expand the study, epistemology, methodology, writing and education on fear (and 'fear'⁹) *via* inter- and *transdisciplinary* (e.g., Fisher's critical holistic-integral) frameworks is barely being taken up seriously by anyone—other than, Fisher and Subba (e.g., their combined "philosophy of fearism" in Fisher & Subba, 2016, p. xxxi), respectively, as Canadian and Nepali amateur philosophers and public intellectuals, largely outside of the academy.

Michael Eneyo (2018, 2019), a self-proclaimed and independent "philosopher of fear,"¹⁰ and fearist¹¹ in his own right, has for the past couple years maintained a respectful intellectual engagement with the work of "the two most renounced [sic] world fearists," in his words—speaking of Desh Subba and myself.¹² However, in his study and philosophical thinking on *love* and *fear*, and his decidedly Christian philosophy/theology (i.e., faith) as basis, Eneyo says, "I will humbly depart" ways with Subba and Fisher, which includes parting ways with the form of

⁵ He's written and taught in volumes, one example: https://kfoundation.org/the-root-of-fear/?gclid=EAlalQobChM1pK7G0q_w4QlVWiCtBh059w77EAAYASAAEGKjPD_BwE

⁶ Kalu (2016, 2017) has also written in this area but less systematic philosophy books on fear. A graduated philosophy student, he might call himself a "philosopher of fear" but usually he calls himself a "fearologist"—and, like Eneyo, philosophy and psychology are privileged as disciplinary focus on *fear*.

⁷ Eneyo (2018) demonstrates his explicit view of a modernist certainty what *philosophy is* and his disciplinary approach/perspective (not merely a fearist perspective) on the topic: "Philosophy of fear therefore, is a philosophical approach into the study of fear, its scope, nature, types and its effects on all beings. Since the core function of philosophy is to discover *truth*, it can also be said that the core function of philosophy of fearism is to discover the truth about the whole body of fear..." (p. 6).

⁸ I am since 2018, founder/director and instructor at The Fearology Institute; <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/forum/fearology-training-institute-perspective-map>

⁹ The formal (') marks indicate the term and concept (meaning and definition) of "fear" as normally understood in the various literatures and disciplines, is under deconstruction and reconstruction, as well it strategically tries to ensure complexification where nearly all writing and thinking on fear tends to reductionism, exclusive disciplinary, "common sense" domination, and pragmatism—leading to distortions (e.g., see Fisher, 1995).

¹⁰ Eneyo (2018), pp. 18-19.

¹¹ One who practices a *fearist perspective* (*a la* Subba) as centralizing *fear* as core to human activity; see a fuller definition in Fisher & Subba (2016), p. 157.

¹² Eneyo (2018), p. 16.

philosophy of fearism as it has developed so far. This is because his own work and thinking interprets our writing such that he accuses us as positing an absolute declaration (in his own words): “*Fear is greater than love.*”¹³ On surface appearance, this may be a self-evident and justifiable initial interpretation. I do not typically write a lot on love *per se*, which doesn’t mean I haven’t experienced, read and seriously thought lots about love. That said, I (and Subba) have no faith and/or religious commitment to love, as Eneyo does.

Yet, Eneyo’s accusation is not sufficient for clarity or legitimacy in itself, if and when one looks at my philosophy and theorizing overall—because Love is *always* dialectically situated with my understanding of fear and fearlessness.¹⁴ Troublesome in his strong claim, Eneyo at no point has engaged us directly in person beyond our writing to actually understand what our views are on the relationality of *Fear* and *Love*.¹⁵ Albeit, I have reviewed his manuscripts for both his books and offered him more nuanced information and critiques at times. Puzzling, he has taken some of my offerings (e.g., Uni-Bicentric Theorem) of *Love-Fear* meta-motivations theory and metaphysics to interpret it as “Fisher is arguing that the dynamic nature of things.... are interwoven and love is the primary imperative or motivator”¹⁶ of Creation, evolution and living system dynamics.

It is odd then, in the same book, Eneyo makes one claim about my work (and Subba’s) as placing in some absolute way that “*fear is greater than love*” (Eneyo’s own words) and then says later I am arguing “*love is the primary imperative or motivator*” of Creation. That seems inconsistent to me, or it reflects Eneyo’s own ambivalence or initiatory thoughts only about my stance re: Love and Fear. Whatever the case, Eneyo explicitly calls for me to respond and show why love is not sufficient to solving the Fear Problem or why I tend to downplay its powerful role in human healing, health and development overall (with moralistic interests of course).

He believes I am limited in my understanding of love and its power, having spent a disproportionate amount of my time studying fear and fearlessness, because I have had “no time to research much about the concept of love.... I do not understand....”¹⁷ he writes, which means Eneyo indirectly claims to understand love so much better. I’ll return to this presumptuous claim of Eneyo’s later in this paper, and I’ll ask Eneyo himself to enter dialogue with me on this as we both seek better understanding of each other’s positions and truth(s). The ultimate goal is to improve awareness in the “fear territory” (*a la* Eneyo) and its embedded philosophical, theoretical and practical applications to fear management/education (FME).

¹³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴ There are several of my publications dedicated to studying the literature across disciplines and in popular culture on Love and Fear and likewise in many of my teaching videos and lectures, including the name of my consulting company for over a decade: <http://www.loveandfearsolutions.com/>. The *Uni-Bicentric Theorem* notion offers one ‘big picture’ (metaphysical) view of the Komos as I understand, theorize and philosophize about it, wherein “Love” (with “Fear”) are seen in my work as “the basis of the Fearlessness Movement” itself (see Fisher, 2017); another way to explore this topic is my contrasting “lovist” and “fearist” perspectives (see Fisher, 2015); also I recently engaged with two women, spiritual feminists, on love in FearTalk 4 Part 2, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIVB1f45UqI>. As well, I am currently supporting 2020 Presidential candidate Marianne Williamson and her “*Politics of Love*” approach in general, even if I have critiques—see my videos on my Youtube channel on her work; her latest book: <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062873934/a-politics-of-love/>

¹⁵ Sometimes I use the capitalizing convention to point to the metaphysical, ontological, if not archetypal, qualities and respect that I have for these meta-motivations or arche-emotions, *Love and Fear*, of which many others have also designated as such (see a review of the literature, for e.g., in Fisher, 2012).

¹⁶ Eneyo (2018), p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 100-01.

I have often suggested he isn't reading correctly my intentions or theories because it is clear to me he doesn't actually understand them....

Rather than asking questions and/or engaging in direct dialogue on his critiques of fearism, Eneyo seems to prefer reading text and writing his own contra-views as well as summarizing our views. This is unsatisfactory for many reasons, not the least of which, one can pull out a quote, without context, and over-read what it means without understanding the larger contextual meaning the author intends. And, perhaps one reads the text with an already biased disposition that rejects the contextual parameters that give meaning—which, is something I believe is going on with Eneyo and his underlying critique of fearism as articulated by Subba and myself.

My work over 30 years on the topic of *fear* is vast, and typically I find most people take many years to sort it out carefully for understanding correctly, if they ever do. Of course, typically readers, with relatively little duration of study of my work, will just make up their mind and write and/or publish their views. On the positive side, Eneyo has always been open and inviting to receive my critiques of his book ms. drafts.¹⁸ I have often suggested he isn't reading correctly my intentions or theories because it is clear to me he doesn't actually understand them and hasn't spent long enough study to make his claims with legitimacy.

There is of course the fair position that any critic of mine could take when I say these things about “understanding correctly.” It could be that there is disagreement between my view and their view of how *best* my work ought to be studied and understood. The critic may disagree fundamentally, and/or mistrust, my context of research and ideological positioning as a philosopher-teacher and as a person. I think this is somewhat the case with Eneyo's accusation re: Love and Fear. Another issue is: they (critics) may believe they are reading my work correctly and thus making their critique of that reading appropriately. I grant there is no one “correct” reading of my work or anyone else's either. I believe that also has some validity. Arguments become complicated when this is the case. As a scholar myself, I have to decide where I think some critic is coming from and whether they are merely giving opinions, stating faith or belief claims, and/or are they practicing good scholarship. Equally, my critics can and sometimes will assess my work this way too. This is part of good knowledge production and integrity of what is involved in philosophical work and the very general practice of critique and building legitimate knowledge, more or less.

However, my concern with Eneyo's reading of my work is more what I believe is a contextual problem where he doesn't grasp accurately the way I frame my inquiries *via a critical holistic-integral* approach to the topic fear (and its management)—and, concomitantly, an approach to the topic of fearlessness and love. I do not think he well understands how I use “Fearlessness.” These contextual and conceptual areas are very complex in my uses and he tends to typically oversimplify them and thus commits error(s) *via* a reductionism. There are a few reasons for that which I'll return to at the end of this paper, in order to assist him and other readers to find their way into better understanding my work.

¹⁸ For e.g., my Foreword in Eneyo (2018), pp. xi-xv.

From what I read of Eneyo's work and interpretation of mine, he has not studied the "integral" approach.¹⁹ This creates a significant ontological-epistemological barrier, with ethical implications. As well, because Eneyo and I have never met in person, nor has he experienced my decades working in the field, teaching, doing therapy, etc. with people, he has no experience of my actual practice applications of the ideas and theories I present in my writing or teaching videos. He doesn't know how I actually apply "love" in my relationships and broader into forging my worldview *via* (at least) a worldcentric perspective.²⁰ So far, he relies on a distant abstract text reading *only* and this makes his analysis susceptible to several mis-interpretations. Of course, he can still argue potentially he understands my work and is still critical in the ways he has expressed in his two books (Eneyo, 2018, 2019).

With what I have repeatedly encountered as significant mis-interpretations at times of my work on key points in Eneyo's crafting his own philosophy of fear critique, I began in late April of 2019 to study more closely Eneyo's critiques. I then invited him to respond to my response to his critiques to create debate and dialogue for this issue of the *IJFS*. I appreciate he has been one of a rare small handful of thinkers over the decades, who has actually written and published something critical about my work. He has appropriately called on me to address various positions I take in my work, of which particularly important is my view on love, fear and fearlessness. He wrote, "Fisher needs to tell us what he meant by *love is* '... [typically] uncritical philosophically and theologically.'"²¹

Situating My Basic Position/Passion as Critic

I once published a Technical Paper "On Being a 'Fear' Critic."²² However, true that is, my critical thinking goes far beyond that topic. Briefly, it will be helpful to Eneyo and readers to be informed, if not reminded, that I have both an interest in researching about Fear Studies, fearology, fearism, etc. but equally, I have a vested interest to challenge the politics of knowledge and in particular, "educational" approaches of others—especially, those involved in FME of some kind—and, Eneyo has been (and still is) teaching within this domain for the past few years, as with his last two books. I am obligated to watch what he does and ask myself about its influences as I would with any other FME practitioner or philosopher. I declare I watch somewhat as an amateur "philosopher of fear" myself; albeit, I prefer a very inter- and transdisciplinary approach when philosophizing, of which "fearology"²³ with fearanalysis have been my speciality because they are by definition so transdisciplinary. I consider Eneyo much more informed in the discipline of philosophy than myself. I have things to learn from him because of that. However, being a fearist myself, with a critical holistic-integral methodology and paradigm I bring to Fear Studies, I refuse to be delimited to Philosophy as a discipline or such a philosophy of fear as Eneyo and others practice.

¹⁹ For e.g., I am referring to "Integral" approach, and "Integral Theory" (e.g., Ken Wilber and integral philosophy).

²⁰ See Wilber (2000), for e.g., on somatocentric, egocentric, ethnocentric (or sociocentric), worldcentric and kosmocentric perspectives that have evolved in the spectrum (hierarchy) of the evolution of consciousness of humans and within individual's development.

²¹ Eneyo (2018), p. 100.

²² Fisher (2002).

²³ "Fearology- the inter- and/or transdisciplinary systematic study conducted by fearologists into the relationship of *fear*, in the widest and deepest sense, with Life" (Fisher, 2018c, p. 1).

I try to take the best from each other thinker and educator or teacher-philosopher, and then leave behind the rest due to my criticisms.

Now, to the educational part of my work in FME. I have three post-secondary degrees in “Education” as a discipline, with a Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction. I am an education expert. Eneyo has no such degrees or expertise. In one of my recent teaching videos I call myself an “*educational philosopher*” with 45 years teaching experience, sometimes professionally paid for this work and I now am Adjunct Faculty in the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. I take “educating” very seriously. I also identify myself as a “therapeutic educator” in that video, and I could have just as well called myself a liberation educator or critical educator, integral educator, etc. Point being, my critiques of Eneyo’s work in this paper involve my perspectives and experience gained through a life-time of careers in education and fearwork both.

And, I say in the same video “I’m pretty much critical of everything” when it comes to people offering the *best way* to teach, to guide people, to liberate people and/or to bring about freedom, salvation or enlightenment, if such terms are appropriate. I’m critical of anyone who teaches about “love” just as much as anyone who teaches about “fear.” I try to be self-reflective and critical about my own teaching practice as well—so as to be a professional with integrity. I try to take the best from each other thinker and educator or teacher-philosopher, and then leave behind the rest due to my criticisms. And, finally, in this video I present myself as influenced by “*process-oriented thinking*” and learning and philosophy. This is not to be ignored by those trying to understand my approach to critique and education, etc. I also say, “Always in my teaching [45 years] I feel I’ve been political. Which really means I have critiqued the norm, the status quo.”²⁴

As part of this postmodern research and writing practice of self-locating, there is another aspect to mention briefly that is potentially useful and/or potentially distorting if kept unconscious in the background of my critique of Eneyo’s critique, especially due to Eneyo’s religious (i.e., Christian) background and faith commitments. I am not religious *per se* and never have been, other than I have many experiences of Christians—enough to write a book on, including two of my wives, past one was an x-Catholic nun and my current one a daughter of a long line of Lutheran ministers, including her father. Christian thought and practices are nothing foreign to me. The incident I want to reveal as part of my emotional and intellectual transparency comes from being in love deeply with a woman after the divorce from my first wife. This woman was co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989-), so the experience is great and painful in that she left me and the project suddenly because of an illicit affair. That said, the actual incident of some trauma for this woman came when we went to open the first piece of mail that came to us as leaders of In Search of Fearlessness. It was early 1990, and I remember the details very clearly. I opened the envelop and my partner and I stared at the image and the big letters scrawled over the page: “YOU ARE WANDERING JEWS.” We are not Jews. They had picked up some of our ISOF Project literature in the city somewhere and were responding and telling us that religiously (and spiritually) we were, obvious to this person, on the wrong-side of the tracks of history (in their worldview)—in other words, we were “wandering Jews” who could *not* accept the true reality of the Savior, that is, the Love of Jesus Christ and God and thus we were lost and wandering, “godless.” The call in the message to us was to become believers, who could then be saved from fear and suffering, sin, etc.

²⁴ All video quotes come from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE7iqnz6FXM>

I recall a book where “Freud” (an atheist) was called “a godless Jew” and the critique in the book was that only an atheist would have ever invented psychoanalysis.²⁵ Hmmm... would most Christians think the same about my invention of fearanalysis?

I’m making this the quick interpretation of the message: they said what they did in this letter to us because “In Search of...” in our name of the project, obviously indicated that we had not yet found the final and ultimate God (goal), freedom from fear and the way of the true (and only) liberation/salvation, etc. We used the word “fearlessness” rather than “love”—and, that too I believe triggered the criticism from this anonymous person (a Christian I presumed) who sent us this mail. Was it sent with love or fear? They asked for nothing from us, no interest to talk to us, no contact number, just the criticism and a few Bible quotes, as I recall. This really freaked out my partner as she wasn’t used to being a public religious/political ‘target’ ever. We both felt the dark grey cloud of oppression flowing over us and through us—yes, we felt fear, and she felt terror. She was now aware of being a minority (non-believer), in a Christian country.

It felt like hate-mail to her and was invasive. I was more used to it and I thought that indeed ISOF Project will, if taken seriously, be a threat to all kinds of people, including the vast majority of Christians and their privileging worldview or cosmology. Empirically, this proved true over the next 30 years of me leading this project. I researched the Bible now and then to find the words “fearless” or “fearlessness” completely absent.²⁶ Love is the Christian God and solution to fear—as the famous quote is incessantly cited by Christians, and most everyone else too: “*perfect love cast out fear.*”²⁷ And, I have experienced many attempts of Christians to convert me and assert their “perfect love” cure, because I was obviously going down a stray path away from God (i.e., their God, their Love = God, their nothing is stronger than love = faith). On a bad day, I can get righteously angry about this kind of fear-based conversion-type judgement by others; and especially enraged when they don’t make much of (or any) real authentic attempt to read and understand my fearwork nor take a moment to reflect sincerely and maybe critique themselves in their hegemony to dominate the public (political and educational) discourse possibilities on the “best” ways to handle the Fear Problem.

Love when ideologically (and philosophically) hegemonic tends toward a pathology of premature closure on all other possibilities. Christians far too easily, not always, stop thinking critically. “Spirituality” and positive initiatives with good intention, are too often subtle forms of oppression and diminishing of “fear” for the so-called “higher” energies and divine that are by default privileged in the “spiritual” (or religious) worldview. For example, a recent poster came across my desk to indicate this subtle but insidious premature closure on fear and the study of fear as a legitimate field in itself. The poster, from a ‘new age’ source²⁸ reads:

²⁵ Gay (1987).

²⁶ There are hundreds of quotes in the Bible that use “Be not afraid” and “Fear not.” It is clear to me, the Biblical writers wanted there to be *no* in between—it was Love or Fear (Love vs. Fear) that was the right formula; and, that’s where I part from that binary *only* means to understand the Love and Fear Problem and to look for a best *cura* for it. *Fearlessness*, in one of its manifestations, is about the *between path*—i.e., the dialectical (and trialectical) growth and healing dynamics of a system of meta-motivations; this is a point I’ll come back to at the end of the article.

²⁷ Quote from 1 John 4: 18. This is the core of Christian fear management/education (FME) in a nutshell.

²⁸ Quote is by Nirmala Raniga, Founder *Chopra Addiction and Wellness Center* (endorsed by Deepak Chopra).

How to Turn Fear Into Love

Faith (have it)

Embrace change

Accept uncertainty

Release the emotion

It may look innocent in its positive discourse, at first. As a fearist, I look beneath and see the hegemonic discourse of *Love is greater than fear*. Because the whole aim of knowing fear is to know love—but it goes even further and takes the word (letters) of F.E.A.R. and converts them “into Love” (aka *fear ought to be love*) and that’s what a critical fearist cannot leave unchallenged. At least, not this fearist! Christianity, and at times the discourse of Eneyo (his criticism of philosophy of fearism) tracks in this same kind of discourse hegemony, even if subtle, even if not intended. I find it to be oppressive and undermining to the well-being and development of fearism and/or my own fearlessness philosophy and paradigm. This example above is the most overt conversion strategy I have ever seen, and over the 30 years of my research I have seen a lot of diverse acronyms for F. E. A. R. in various literatures but they all have kept the F. E. A. R. variant meanings (teachings) as related to fear itself,²⁹ and not tried to convert it typically, and immediately, into love-positive concepts.

I also have very good friends and colleagues who are Christians, some are devout men-of-the-cloth³⁰ and support my work. And as you’ll see later, both Eneyo and I (and Pfister, for e.g.) are critical of the distortions (pathology) of “love” *via* many Christians (and others) and institutional Christendom around the world. Note, I don’t want to only pick on the religion of Christianity *per se*, as a case could be made historically how other religions have gone down this same nefarious path, often led into it by higher caste/class and racial groups dominating others and exploiting lower caste/class superstitions (fears).³¹ I’ll leave this experience here, and bracket it in the background. I’ll watch for my passions as I continue to write and debate arguments.

Now, I assert: one cannot talk about Fear without talking about Love and *visa versa*. Thus, I begin my more formal critique of Eneyo’s critique of my work.

A Grand Problematique: *Fear Over Love* (?)

The problem of fear is the problem of life itself. If it is overcome, then we can say we have overcome the world.... Among Christians, fear is subtly leading the way because of the over-emphasis on the importance of dogma instead of love which is supposed to be the hallmark of Christian teachings. This according to Fisher [sic] has led “*to the complete worship of dogma with the result that frequently, and perhaps in most cases,*

²⁹ The AI-Anon movement (of 12 step programs) has used this as False Evidence Appearing Real, for example.

³⁰ For e.g., see a good dialogue with them on fear and religion; Fisher, Coyne & Biddington (2016).

³¹ “Fear is the defining element of superstition according to writers like Plutarch,” says Gray (2004), in the book descriptor. Also this point of caste/class and the causal relationship with lower caste/class fears is well argued in the history of India (i.e., Hinduism, Islamism, etc.) by B. Maria Kumar and Desh Subba (see Kumar, Fisher & Subba, 2019).

*Christianity ceased to be a religion of love and became a religion of fear...*³²
– Michael Eneyo³³

Christianity is the good news which turns this earthly existence into the greatest misery, and then into the most anxious effort, in fear and trembling—and in this way Christianity is the good news about eternity.
– Soren Kierkegaard³⁴

As I emphasized in the introduction of this article, Eneyo explicitly calls for me to respond and show why love is not sufficient to solving the Fear Problem or why I tend to downplay its powerful role in human healing, health and development overall (with moralistic interests of course). As I see it, there are two distinct parts to his challenge of the fearist re: the analysis of the Fear Problem and development of FME as an intervention and solution to human misery:

- (a) love as insufficient and,
- (b) downplaying love's role in general human/moral development.

I will come at these two important challenges by Eneyo in a roundabout way and eventually return to them very specifically in my summary near the end of this article. I wish to build more context around these issues of the Love and Fear Problem and my own work and what I see as Eneyo's overall project and why he has entered into the domain of fearwork and his unique way of doing that. My writing on the largely oppositional tendencies of the Lovist vs. Fearist positions,³⁵ in pursuit of understanding the nature and role of fear and FME, ought to be sourced by readers as further background. I will not re-articulate all that herein. "Fearist" (lens, perspective) is Subba's original term³⁶ for doing fearwork and fearism, and I have supported it since late 2014, although, I have my own nuances of what it means to be a fearist that are distinct as well from Subba's. I hypothesize that Eneyo is, conscious or unconscious, choosing to be (in my words) a Lovist/fearist, in an inevitable tension and/or conflict with Subba and I because for Eneyo the former ought to dominate and the latter is subdominant. This is his stance so far as he pursues inquiry in his early development of FME re: applying and critiquing fearism. Subba and I are distinctly committed fearists and have, as I will show below, little to no interest to develop a lovist perspective, at this time. Indeed, we are critical (not dismissive) of a lovist perspective, especially when it juxtaposes itself with fearism. More on that to be said below.

³² This quote is actually from Pfister (1948), p. 24; Eneyo is citing from my hand notes on Pfister's work that I sent to him.

³³ Eneyo (2018), p. xxxi.

³⁴ Kierkegaard (1968), p. 136.

³⁵ Fisher (2015).

³⁶ Subba (2014), p. 11; see also Fisher & Subba (2016), p. 157. Basically, a fearist argues that "fear" is central to human existence and always has been—fear ("fear") is, arguably, one of or it is *the* most powerful force shaping human behavior. The technical use of the term in Fear Studies and philosophy of fearism is not to be mistaken for populist use which is a derogatory version equivalent to a "fear-based" position and thus a fearist in this use is fearmongering, more or less. A fearist is, one could say in the technically correct use, one who is decidedly *fear-oriented* and uses a *fear-lens* to look at the world and reality. To complicate that, I would argue I attempt to use a "Fearless" (lens, standpoint) as well. Eneyo, for example, is a fearist to some degree but he clearly is not fully committed to the Subbaian understanding and fear-lens as a methodology for his overall teachings (*via* Eneyo, 2018, 2019).

When Subba (2014, Chapter 3) arcs out the entire history of humanity in his provocative, and I think amazing theory, of “Age[s] of Fear” he really shows in depth what it means to embody fully in a philosophy the “fearist” perspective/lens. No one else has ever done this large overview this way. He describes in hierarchical order of unfolding nine Fear Ages, all with different names, and all leading up to our contemporary period “Extreme Fear Age,” as he calls it. When I started reading this nearly five years ago, and still I’m amazed, he then lists the tenth age (period of human history) that awaits us and is partially already being born—that is, “Fearless Age.” Note, he does not label the tenth “Love Age.” That’s a fearist!

Recognizing a Subbaian fearist positioning is not that difficult in most cases, as I offered the example in the introduction of this paper re: mentioning in the locating of myself earlier and how I critiqued the lovist poster that generically and symbolically displaces and/or erases F.E.A.R. with love-oriented meaning—albeit, with an innocent good intention to help people shift from Fear to Love, as supposedly a good/moral thing. My second example of a fearist positioning comes from a hyperbolic statement I published nearly 25 years ago (be it true or false is not so much the point, right now, because it is heuristic and fearist in its intention):

Defining ‘fear’ is like trying to define ‘Love,’ except the former is likely to be a thousand times more useful to human liberation.³⁷

And a third example, I wrote a couple years later:

I like the word *fearlessness* and how often new age [or Christian] people are shunned by the expression because it has the word ‘fear’ in it. They tell me, that to search for fearlessness is to live in fear and by focusing on ‘fear’ I will only attract more fear into my life. They often are not interested to listen to my radical definition of ‘fear.’ Their minds are made up it appears. I should only be focusing on Love, Light and Spirit for nothing more is needed, they say. They want me to change the names of my courses, our In Search of Fearlessness Centre and non-profit Society too, because they believe then we will attract more people with a “positive” name. The pendulum swings once again. My comment: “*Love may be our purpose, though ‘fear’ is our daily task.*”³⁸

I get a little heated with the Love n’ Light hegemonic discourses, from many parts of Western societies, and especially now there is a strong “culture of positivity” that I believe is shadowed with pathological elements that debilitate the very growth and applications of Fear Studies overall.³⁹ But that is another topic for another place, yet it is good to hear in Eneyo’s work that he is not merely a Love-positivist thinker and rather incorporates in his *philosophy of fear* (i.e., on the role of fear, 2018 book) and *philosophy of unity* (i.e., on the role of love, 2019 book) an acknowledgement of a concept of “negative love” as “the love that leads to sin”⁴⁰ or in my words, the *love that is a mask and disguise for authentic love* that is actually fear-based “love”—to make

³⁷ Fisher (1995/2012), p. 7.

³⁸ Fisher (1997), p. 8.

³⁹ Fisher (2019).

⁴⁰ “*Negative love*- the love that leads to sin. In philosophy of fear, negative love refers to a fearing/fearless decision based on the influence of negative love” (Eneyo, 2018, p. xliii).

things more complicated.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Eneyo has ignored my work on the Lovist vs. Fearist positioning⁴² and that limits his ability to critique beyond merely a “negative love” concept. All this said, the remaining unanswered question is: what is the proportion at any point in time of negative love to positive love? How would we assess this? And how could we improve this situation? Off the top, Eneyo would likely say, after Pfister’s and Kierkegaard’s critique, things would improve when fear of punishment due to doctrinism/dogmatism in Christianity ends.

For me, both Fear and Love “need” each other as part of a learning process, of the evolution of consciousness and our species, and thus I often refer to them in a *dialectical* relationship, although in certain ways, paradoxically, they are also “opposites.” It depends on how I define fear (‘fear’), and what perspective of analysis used, in this regard. My very motivation to pursue research on fear (‘fear’) as priority has an explanation autobiographically. In that same unpublished (1997) ms. (as the quote above) my intimate phenomenological experience (1989) with the co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project was described by me:

From that [mystical] place of ‘Love’ this partner and I knew together, without words, and with words, that there is *only one thing that gets in the way of this ‘Love’... and that is ‘fear.’* It was experientially a great Truth to us that ‘fear’ could only fully be understood from this standpoint or reference of the full experience of ‘Love.’ Spurred on by this [transformative born-again] experience, I pursued research into ‘fear’....⁴³

My passion comes through in the claims above, alright. I still believe it all “true.” However, the key point most people miss about my work, and Eneyo included, is the distinction I make between *fear* and ‘fear’—though, I will not be making that argument over again herein—readers ought to study this distinction⁴⁴ to understand my reasons for saying things I’ve said above, as a fearist. And, for the record, nothing in these quotes (my views) above displaces or erases or diminishes the role of Love (‘Love’) in my work.⁴⁵

Why would a religion of love (if it actually exists or existed) become a religion of fear (which definitely exists)?

Now, to return to the fascinating quote (*via* Eneyo) at the beginning of this section (above). On a troubling reality of the human condition, whereby a *religion of love* turned into a *religion of fear*. Both Eneyo and I, as typical fearists, hold a general similar criticism *via* fearmongering (i.e., using fear as a weapon⁴⁶), as he puts it, of “doctrine or the canon of dogma [which, in Christianity, at

⁴¹ I have written off and on about the masks and disguises of “fear” that pretend to be or mimic everything from faith to courage, to hope, to love itself. For a good guide to this argumentation see Overstreet (1951/1971) and “Why Our Fear-Problem Remains Unresolved” (p. 11) and details in Chapter 7 (pp. 90-102).

⁴² To be precise, he never uses the word “lovist” in his two books.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁴ Some early propositions I make on ‘fear’ (as “not ‘natural’”) etc. can be found in Fisher (1995/2012, p. 19).

⁴⁵ “Note: ‘fear’ is written with a small letter with (‘) marks to indicate the term is under [deconstruction and] re-construction and metaphysically *a posteriori* to the concept of ‘Love’ (with a capital) which is the Ground of Being (Fisher, 1995a)” (Fisher, 1995, p. 7). Ontologically, ‘Love’ is in that sense *greater than ‘fear’*—a point I’ll return to philosophically—later in this article.

⁴⁶ “Anything can be used as a weapon.... Even fear” (Eneyo, 2018, book front page). Subba (2014) is one of the first to directly articulate the “fear weapon” (p. 235). Today, several commentators on society, critics, are using the term “weaponization of

least] increases fear in those who adhere to the dogmatism of religion,” because of a fear of punishment from some authority’s coercion (real or imagined) for not bowing totally to dogma.⁴⁷

Indeed, there can be little or no freedom to worship and construct one’s faith under such oppressive conditions as fear-based dogma. We could apply this same criticism to the realm of culture and politics, equally in the secular dimension as the sacred. Dogma is virtually defined here as “fear-based,”⁴⁸ as I see it. From the quote above comes also an issue of tension which needs to be addressed. In the form of a germane question: *Why would a religion of love (if it actually exists or existed) become a religion of fear (which definitely exists)?* The simple answer one could offer: The first is the ideal abstract possibility, and the second is the actual reality of the situation as less than ideal. But, is there something more important lurking below that which Eneyo and I have to sort out? Yes, I think so. It is the issue of: *Is Fear greater than Love?* It is upon this latter question that Eneyo has launched his critique of the philosophy of fearism (*via* Subba and I).

Be it Love-positivists or Fear-positivists,⁴⁹ I get critical. I don’t even think dividing Love or Fear into “positive” and “negative” is particularly useful or transformative (i.e., it won’t solve the Fear Problem)—it serves rather only a preliminary easy distinction dualism tendency⁵⁰—there’s much more work to be done beyond that binary arrangement and theorizing, even when Eneyo, for example, says he wants to unify and balance positive and negative fear in his non-dualist complementarist position.⁵¹ As a fearist (and certainly as a fearologist), I am sensitive to when this argumentation arises in all kinds of ways, discourses, and how it has arisen throughout human history. Being sensitive for me means being critical of what is being attempted to transmit as learning—and, as a teaching, if not as an indoctrination. I am speaking here beyond the positive-negative issue, and to the specific emphasis and hegemonic of Love discourses. Most theologians (especially, of the faith in the Abrahamic traditions) would tend to argue: “Love is greater than fear” (e.g., the Biblical dictum: “*perfect love cast out fear*”). They may do that very explicitly or implicitly. They are promoting a powerful worldview in doing so because Love and Fear are recognized by many (as I said earlier) as meta-motivations, arche-emotions, and as opposite forces, etc. Which is strongest of these meta-motivations be it real or idealized (theorized) really has profound implications on one’s view of reality, personal and relational psychology, and on one’s culture as they adopt such a worldview. And, let’s not forget to mention the profound impact it will have on their bias towards FME. I’ll return to this latter point in the conclusion of this article.

fear.” I think, we have to be equally cautious, a point I’ll make later in this article, of the weaponization of love (e.g., its pathological and distortive or neurotic forms—a point made by Pfister (1948) as well).

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. xxxi.

⁴⁸ See my justification and specificity of defining fear-based *per se*; where this refers to over 50% of one’s thinking and actions are motivated by fear on average (see Fisher, Biddington & Coyne, 2016).

⁴⁹ For e.g., see my critique in Fisher (2010), pp. 100-02 etc. “Fear-positivism” is a type of ideology that lacks good self-critique and tends to merely think it is doing a ‘balance’ between seeing “fear” as negative and seeing “fear” as positive. They argue, for too long fear has been seen largely negatively and that’s not been helpful to understanding fear better. So, they want to now make it more positive. I agree with that in part, however, they tend to leave out way more complicated problems with the very epistemology of fear (‘fear’). Eneyo and fearists in general, tend to fall into fear-positivism for most of their work, and thus I am critical of it for that reason, at least.

⁵⁰ Fisher (2018a).

⁵¹ Eneyo (2018), p. 18. He finds most all the “philosophers of fear or fearists are dualists of some sort” (p. 19); so, he is going beyond them to an improved paradigm, his so-called “holistic” (which I call integrative or a balancing strategy).

Taking Christianity, for example, it hardly seems palatable for a religion to be popular to many followers if they had to believe in a God (*aka* God is Love) that is not all-mighty—meaning, stronger than any other force in the universe (and, especially stronger/greater than the opposition—that is, Satan). So, logically, and emotionally, there is the tendency in this Christian worldview, more or less, to exoterically exclaim the superiority of its own monotheistic God, that is Love, over all other forces and especially over Fear (*aka* Satan is Fear).

Thus, God is love-based, Satan is fear-based—all falls into binary place—and, seems a typical and understandable common sense position and worthy thing to believe if one identifies as a Christian. Uncontroversial overall, this positive theologically-driven belief is taught systematically and demonstrated in multiple discourses in virtually every aspect of Christian education (and/or propaganda, as dogma), formally or informally. This is analogous to the victory of God over Satan, Good over Evil etc. A fearist asks: “What justification is there for this superiority of Love over Fear—and, more importantly, what does it leave behind in its exuberant leap and claim of truth—in terms of the nature and role and value of Fear?” What does such a Love-bias leave as left-over also for the value of a philosophy of fear(ism) or fearology? One could not, it seems, be a fearist and fully accept this ontological and theological devaluation of Fear (fear)—and, thus keep quiet about the Love-discourse prevalence, especially its hegemonic rule in the Western world, at least. I have always felt this insidious superior positioning of Christians (and others, and monotheists) in the Western world of North America where I was born and raised.

Thinking overall, and values especially, are so shaped and formed and manipulated under this flag of Christianity with this accepted (‘normal’) discourse of superiority of Love over Fear—that is, a positioning of *Love is greater than fear*—as a basic premise to thinking itself, never mind living life itself. All kinds of folks and institutions, not Christians or even religious, have accepted this unquestionably. Spirituality (e.g., positive thinking) in the ‘New Age’ and Human Potential Movement, for example, is saturated with this adopted belief.⁵² Yet, if this is true, then we have the problematic issue raised by Eneyo at the opening of this section of the article, and his agreeing quote of my critique of what seems to dominate the empirical world is a “religion of fear” not a “religion of love.”

As a fearist, I am doubtful, on many dimensions, to buy so easily the discourse of *Love is greater than fear*. That said, I have many times in my early philosophizing said as much—and, have agreed with this religious, spiritual, ethical, psychological and philosophical position. What has change for me over the decades? Obviously, from reading Eneyo’s work (especially his 2019 book *Philosophy of Unity: Love as an Ultimate Unifier*) there has been no doubt in his mind of the Christian premise of the superiority of Love over Fear. He has now grown a doubt over the premise of the philosophy of fearism that Subba and Fisher have adopted in some absolute conceptualization that (in his words) “Fear is greater than love.”

⁵² For autobiographic purposes, my co-founding In Search of Fearlessness Project, was continually criticized by all kinds of people as being “too negative” and they recommended I should replace Fearlessness with Love and that would be much more appealing and better. I listened to their arguments for this, and never found them at all compelling, but merely a fetish for “love” and “light” and the articulation of a “positivity culture”—all very problematic to me and to anyone with a critical eye for superficiality when it comes to contemporary “spirituality” (at least, in North America). Even the buddhist and yoga types of folks have also fallen into this privileging of Love over Fear discourse, much to my chagrin.

Fear Conquers Love: An Equally Credible Positionality

So, my effort is to answer Eneyo's challenge to my claims on the relationship between Love and Fear. I have argued that *Love conquers fear*, or *Love is greater than fear* already exist historically and at present—and, more importantly they have a political knowledge/power on us all—as they are the dominant discourse regarding these two meta-motivations and forces that shape existence—especially, as humans experience it. I am going to posit, as a fearist rather than lovist, there is another legitimate (perhaps better) option for understanding small 'reality' (and perhaps, large Reality). So, by 'reality' I mean the human experience in the everyday world, not just some metaphysical or theological and philosophical abstract world. Sure, practical philosophical world is another way I conceive of fearism, as does Subba.

The alternative view is *Fear conquers love* or *Fear is greater than love*. For some years I have played with an art project on this tension and conflict between worldview logics. I made a poster that looks like this, and put it in art exhibitions to see how people would respond:

1. Love > Fear

2. Fear > Love

Greater than (or >) is a simple mathematical sign recognized around the world. So, there is something universal being expressed here. Now, does it hold up? Logically, it seems valid to claim the 1. premise and if that is the case, logically the 2. premise is also a possibility, unless one assumes a totalism or absolutism of Truth and Reality to 1. premise. Some may do that and thus reject even the thought of the latter. Arguably, one could however suggest with some compelling reason, that there is always a dialectical movement in all human thought and communications systems. "Opposites" are always interacting and impacting each other, at one time one polar end is dominant then the other, and the pendulum swing between them—which makes movement itself in that tension and conflict. There are whole philosophies based on this in history. I won't go into that. But, visually my art piece shows that it would be narrow-minded (i.e., absolutist) to claim only premise 1. is possible. So, now we see premise 2. and we can begin our inquiry in that direction—and, perhaps we are dealing with the dialectical relation of the premises with *thesis* (premise 1.), *anti-thesis* (premise 2.) and, perhaps a *synthesis* (premise 3.) is yet to emerge from this dialectical inquiry.

So, let's see what is said by others than myself about this *anti-thesis* briefly (sampled) from across the literatures of disciplines and time. Oh, by the way, *fear conquers love* could just as easily have been *fear conquers hope, charity, courage, faith* (all Christian virtues). Any ways, I'll focus on love.⁵³ And remember in this sampling underneath I have the haunting question from earlier (*aka* Pfister, and Eneyo): why does a *religion of love become a religion of fear?* OR, why does a choice to love yield and become a choice to fear? OR, why is a loving parent eventually a fearing parent

⁵³ I realize by not defining "love" here there is only a common sense definition and imaginary being invoked; for simplistic and heuristic purposes, I think this is good enough to make the case. Obviously, love is much more complex than what I or the people in the quotes I am gathering are depicting. It is however, common discourse.

over their children? OR, why is a loving leader eventually a fearing leader over their nation? OR, why is your lover suddenly your enemy (a fearer)?

From popular culture, and it is not uncommon, a website described this top professional wrestler (Kingston): "... has a very simple motto that he follows as he lives his life... 'Fear is greater than love, fear will always win.'" A contemporary musician⁵⁴ creates a 'mix' recording called "Fear is Greater Than Love." There is a distinct Machiavellian underpinning to this discourse, one linkable to Thomas Hobbes and from there to the famous quote by the corrupt former U.S. President Richard Nixon with a blunt honesty (and partial truth): "People react to fear, not love—they don't teach that in Sunday school, but it's true."⁵⁵ Nixon promoted that in his leadership, as so many leaders do, with current President of the U.S. Donald Trump being a classic case in point—but, Nixon as he said that quote of cynical "realism" about the human condition did not question whether it was ethically justifiable. It actually becomes a kind of propaganda and self-reifying "rule" about how to manipulate people by mis-use of fear.

On a psychological reality, one individual talks of swimming in the ocean: "... [its] rhythm is a beauty that is peaceful, powerful, awesome, endless, tremendous. In its presence [however] my fear is greater than love. In my vivid imagination, [poisonous] man-o-wars, the undertow, jagged coral, sharks and even tidal waves..." become larger than life.⁵⁶ In a self-help book, one author wrote, "Life is about learning to be human and mastering the art of love. Sometimes fear is greater than love—[e.g.] the fear of giving it all and receiving nothing in return."⁵⁷

Now, I am interested in how the above discourse, and/or other discourses flow in society and offer some sort of "solution" to the *fear conquers love* reality. For example, one author (above) admitting "sometimes fear is greater than love"—they, retort, "Maybe fear is love itself in a different way [form]."⁵⁸ Eneyo with his unifying and complementarist non-dual position might go for such a claim as well; I have seen others in various Eastern spiritual traditions and philosophies, from a unitive perspective consciousness (philosophy) argue this as well. They don't want anything to do with absolute opposites, like good and evil and don't believe that is the nature of Reality anyways. As a fearist, of course, I am open to this potential reframing of the relationship of Love and Fear—maybe, such a unitivist view⁵⁹ is worthy to a point. I think it also has a slippery-slope of being used by people who just don't want to deal with fear and prefer to deal with love (i.e., "spiritual by-passing"⁶⁰)—and, prefer ALL is Love. That's their ontological security in a nutshell. This can easily become part of the appropriation of and diminution discourse I criticized earlier in this article around authors and teachers turning fear into love—Fear into Love, as their

⁵⁴ Artists name: Audio3x, from the album *Cyclic Law of Death*.

⁵⁵ Taken from https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/richard_m_nixon_400958

⁵⁶ Ranaghan (1984), p. 5.

⁵⁷ Zacarias (2016), n.p.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁵⁹ Technically, from the transpersonal perspective of human development of consciousness, unitive is called "Stage 6: Absorptive-Witnessing" of which is often associated with mystics (East-West) and nondualism (see Forman (2010), pp. 150-65. Note, I am not declaring at all that Eneyo has reached this higher nondual stage in his development or thinking but he has traces of non-dual (and integral) qualities in his thinking and perspective in his philosophy.

⁶⁰ Masters (2010).

ideal transformation process (and victory speech⁶¹). Then such a “transformation” in my view is dangerous in its direction (especially, if it is unconscious) because it undermines the valuation of Fear Studies in general—and fearism, etc. I think that’s why Fisher & Subba (2016) came out with the philosophy of fearism (East-West dialogue), in part at places, to counter any such tendencies. For example, read our dialogue (excerpt) that follows from us quoting the ‘new age’ minister Marianne Williamson’s teaching on Love, p. xxxi):

Desh: *ACIM* [*A Course in Miracles*⁶²], and many other philosophies, traditions or movements around the world, teach often quite different from a philosophy of fearism. *Fear* is the foundation of all philosophies and you could add traditions and movements that are setting themselves out to improve the human and/or planetary condition. I’d go so far as to claim, with good arguments I make in my book, that to think about fear is to minimize fear. What do you think of that?

Michael: *To think about fear is to minimize fear.* Wow. I’m intrigued. It seems quite in contrast, if not contradiction, to the Williamson quote, in which she sets the movement of liberation/enlightenment up as moving from fear to love—again, I often do that in my own work, albeit, like you Desh, I don’t focus on love either. I could make a strong case, evolutionarily and developmentally that most often fear is stronger than love—yes, *fear conquers love*. I know that goes against a lot of philosophies [e.g., Eneyo’s], religions or spiritualities that say and/or believe as faith, more or less, that *love will conquer fear*. That’s their great hope offering.

Desh: They say it alright—*fear is the problem* and *love is the answer*, in one form or another. However, *fear* and *love*—if we accept they are great motivational forces in the universe—can take many diverse and complex forms. That’s where it is *not* so simple of a faith formula that I can accept as legitimate; nor is it likely the best way to be thinking and creating knowledge about the nature and role of fear in the future. So, it is not that these movements are wrong in any absolute way. I think they are partial in their perspective.... they have not yet practiced or understood fully... [the advantages of] a *fearist perspective*, as the philosophy of fearism does.⁶³

Back to our sample, this hypothesis that *maybe fear is love itself* can take another form, again, one which Eneyo may be quite comfortable with as well. Victor Hugo wrote in a story dialogue “Fear conquers love until love conquers fear.”⁶⁴ This is a pragmatist view of the relationship between the two great forces. And, I found a Christian Reverend (mid-19th century) telling a story of something (albeit, more poetic) than the above but pretty much with the same theory:

Did fear gain the mastery [of me in that moment of moral challenge]?.... Did my guilty conscience array the Almighty with the emblems of terror and vengeance? —then love

⁶¹ The subtext, re: Christianity’s victory, is that Christ overcame death (mortality) for life ever-after (immortality)—i.e., Love conquers Fear.

⁶² This book (teachings) has lots of Christianity, Gnosticism, mixed with Advaita and some Buddhist principles (see Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975).

⁶³ Fisher & Subba (2016), pp. xxvi-xxvii.

⁶⁴ Perron (2014), n.p.

spread its wings and fled from a scene so alien to its pure and gentle nature, for love can live only in an atmosphere of light and faith. *Fear cast out love...* [But] Did I look at God in his own light rather than my own? Did I catch once more a glimpse of him as in *Christ?* —then fear took itself to flight... unable to bear the light. *Love cast out fear.*⁶⁵

Other Christian teachings⁶⁶ echo this same flip-flop dynamic is true, and they acknowledge that “The two [love and fear] simply cannot live together in the same house.”⁶⁷ Yet, this generic discourse is committed *a priori* to Love as Almighty. Simple as that. Yet, to allow for the everyday dynamics of human existence (not in the Perfect state⁶⁸)—there is allowance for fluctuations, human choice, shifting perspectives (from ego to divine), and psychological contingencies, etc.

I am all in favor of a more dynamic relationship between Love and Fear in this sense. However, it is unavoidable to conclude *via* Christianity, at least, that Love is the ontological favored ground—a tenable conclusion that I myself have taken at times. My point, is that the human experience can be ‘read’ from another ontological position *a priori* where Fear is greater than Love, as some in this sample also suggest, albeit, none of the quotes are part of a systematic transdisciplinary study of Fear (e.g., such as fearism, fearology, etc.). Thus, I hold all their conclusions lightly, as a possibility; perhaps, as strategically useful, even if one were to accept Love as Almighty (or, G.O.B.= Ground of Being). And yet, returning to Pfister’s long experience in theology, ministry, and psychoanalysis training included, what seems important is to acknowledge the reality that in practice that as Pfister “reads the history of the Church through the lens of psychology” he could not help but conclude fear dominated over love⁶⁹ just as any pathology can dominate over well-being. Unfortunately, Pfister’s early to mid-20th century analysis of fear is *not* nearly adequate, and lacks distinctions such as fear and ‘fear’ and fearism. In that as one instance, combined with my own life experience and research on this planet for 50 years being aware of ‘larger’ things going on, I conclude, *fear conquers love*—not, necessarily in a metaphysical sense but in a psychological, sociopolitical and every day sense. To deny this, I think is a form of fear-based denial. It is one of the great realities of our suffering, and tragedies of the existential realm.

The trouble is, Eneyo I will argue later, is not fully cognizant of the Lovist vs. Fearist discourse history he participates in, and its political hegemony in terms of knowledge/power constructions. He underplays, or ignores, his own biased hegemonic positioning as a Christian and Christian thinker when he comes to exchange with the philosophy of fearism, for example. I’ll close this section with a Christian-Faith website⁷⁰ article recently that concludes “Fear is Nothing More Than Faith in the Devil” (now, where does that leave a philosophy of fearism?):

Fear is rampant in the world today, of every level of man’s living.... Fear is the greatest single emotion influencing us.... Fear is nothing more than faith in the devil.

⁶⁵ Cameron (1876), p. 306.

⁶⁶ James (2006), p. 25.

⁶⁷ Shillington (2003), p. 41.

⁶⁸ Aka “perfect love” (Biblical fear management, according to 1 John 4:18).

⁶⁹ According to Carlin (2014), p. xviii.

⁷⁰ Excerpt from: <https://www.christian-faith.com/fear-is-nothing-more-than-faith-in-the-devil/>

It is this kind of “philosophy” and fear management thinking and values that gets me riled up. No wonder I said what I said that Eneyo (2018) took to task: “The Fear Problem is not going to be solved by love, to put it bluntly.”⁷¹ Does it need repeating, that such a Love-positive hegemony and discourse is generically very damaging to the growth and well-being of Fear Studies and a philosophy of fearism? Maybe, such authors holding such views will realize one day that “fear” (“fear”) is not merely an “emotion” and that alone may be a quantum leap realization to take us out of the dark ages and into the light of a truly liberational transdisciplinary FME for the 21st century. Unfortunately, the glossary definition of fear in Eneyo’s philosophy of fear book is so reductionistic and shows his still being heavily influenced by disciplinary mainstream modernist psychology, philosophy, and his Western Christian discourse heritage. He defines “Fear: an emotional threat...”.⁷²

Fearlessness Movement Context: *Via Negativa* Path

I see Eneyo’s work on a “philosophy of fear” as part of the global Fearlessness Movement.
– R. Michael Fisher

[Eneyo] [H]as coined a couple of new concepts on fear and has presented some fresh and novel ideas on fearlessness which may give new insights to scholars who are interested in exploring the philosophy of fear.... [*Philosophy of Unity* is] a philosophical masterpiece.
– Dinesh Nagar⁷³

Indeed, I agree in part with Nagar that Eneyo has contributed some fresh ideas on fear, however, I am not aware he has done so on fearlessness.⁷⁴ This section of the article will inquire into his views (“novel ideas”) on *fearlessness* especially (and less so on *fearless*). Point of this inquiry, is that if Eneyo has concerns about how I conceptualize and value fear(ism) it is dialectically logical then, he should also have concerns about how I write and teach about fearlessness—especially, as related to Love. He well knows, or ought to know, my basic dictum: “*when fear arises, there will be fearlessness*” in one or more of its multi-diversified forms as fear management.⁷⁵

A year ago he joined the Fearlessness Movement ning (2015-), an online community where I began to coordinate international interests and promote fearwork with the generic purpose: “Better, and more critically, understanding the role of fear and fearlessness in our lives and world is critical to healthy sustainable life.”⁷⁶ Clearly, he joined this movement on the ning for diverse reasons, though *not* because its purpose was to focus on, study and/or directly promote Love *per se*. That said, any depth of analysis of my work shows that “I see myself as an educational architect” of motivation and researcher of history, organizations, societies and philosophy (etc.) as models that,

⁷¹ Fisher (2018), p. 15.

⁷² Eneyo (2018), p. xli.

⁷³ Nagar (2019), p. xxii. He’s Head of Dep. of Psychology, Barkatullah University, Bhopal, India.

⁷⁴ I’ll pursue this for heuristic purposes with the meaning I am giving it to see what appears in Eneyo’s writings; arguably, Nagar is referring to my novel or fresh ideas on fearlessness, that Eneyo is merely citing in his book(?).

⁷⁵ For, e.g., Fisher (2010), p. xxviii.

⁷⁶ Go to <http://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/>

... are not subsumed under the motivational Law of Fear but rather enveloped by the Law of Love... Who has been and could be adequate and qualified leaders to guide us beyond a *fear-based law*, paradigm and worldview? These questions motivate my fearlessness research and teaching....⁷⁷

Eneyo would support this agenda presumably because of his deep concern and frustration, like Pfister's of the state of Christendom, because Eneyo was born and lives in Nigeria as a Christian and things are not going well there. He wrote in his latest book,

Today, hatred (fear-based relations) has taken the place of love in the religious life of our people, especially among Christians and Muslims.... most religious leaders have taken religion from the celestial throne of love to the abyss of hatred.... We should inculcate the spirit of inclusiveness (fearlessness)... [oneness].⁷⁸

To situate my overall project on the study of *fear* and its relationship with *love* or anything else, it is essential to engage the deepest meanings and implications of what I call the meta-context of the *Fearlessness Movement*.⁷⁹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to articulate all that, as I leave that up to the serious reader-thinker to do their homework on why this has been named first "In Search of Fearlessness Project" and later "Fearlessness Movement" and why those obviously are not labeled with "love" replacing "fearlessness." From my major tome, of some 25 years research, I summarize (in the quote below) my project and the particular quest for a "*critical literacy of fearlessness*,"⁸⁰ which is far beyond merely tossing around the word "fearlessness" for anything, as Eneyo (above) makes fearlessness equivalent with his important concept of "inclusiveness" in his project for a philosophy of unity.

Evidence shows universally that the vast majority of humans have learned⁸¹ to organize their values, worldviews, their lives and institutions, largely around the Law of Fear instead of the Law of Love [*a la* Thomas Merton and Pope John XXIII].... The quest that drives me is to find the way *in between* the two "core emotions" *Love* and *Fear*.... [which] is the *path of fearlessness*.⁸²

And furthermore, I claimed,

My own work is based on a *fearless standpoint theory* (my own creation) in order to study fear uncorrupted (*via* fearology)—without falling into the trap (as much as possibly can be prevented) of studying fear by fear-based means. This is one theoretical [epistemological = methodological] device I've utilized in order to make sense of all the fear and fearlessness teachings (i.e., FME) throughout history.⁸³

⁷⁷ Fisher (2010), p. xii.

⁷⁸ Eneyo (2019), p. 88.

⁷⁹ See Fisher (2018b).

⁸⁰ Fisher (2010), p. xiv.

⁸¹ My use of "learned" has to be seen as a euphemism for been *fear-conditioned* and *hypnotized* (see Four Arrows, 2016, Chapter 1) and Fisher (2018d), p. 2.

⁸² Fisher (2010), p. xiv.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

He needs to engage what a fearless standpoint theory is....

Not that I'll pursue Eneyo's complete neglect in his two books of my fundamental methodology and epistemology for Fear Studies, it should suffice to say, his own methodology and epistemology is *not* of the same kind categorically—arguably, he constructs his Love and unity 'standpoint' approach as the best way to study "fear" and mitigate its negative impacts. In the future, he needs to make this explicit recognition of departure from my approach in his critiques, and justify his departure if he intends to continue a philosophy of fear development. He needs to engage what a fearless standpoint theory is⁸⁴ and why I give such care to developing such a methodology and teaching positionality re: FME that is "uncorrupted." He surely cares about how Love gets corrupted, and so do I. Let's look deeper into the roots of this problem then.

What else has Eneyo said about "fearlessness" relevant to this article? He opens his Chapter Five in the philosophy of unity book with his confident near poetic epigram:

For you not to be hurt while walking on the path of fear, you must put on the shoe of fearlessness and adorn the helmet of courage and love.⁸⁵

Again, Eneyo has given a meagre reductionistic definition of "fearlessness" in his glossary (inadequately; see below) and certainly has not developed it conceptually in the texts of his work and so one is left wondering if his definition is fixed (or is it in process?)—which, is quite in contrast to my own work with at least 15 definitions and meanings of fearlessness I have found as legitimate in the world's fearlessness teachings. He seems to ignore that literature I have synthesized. Eneyo pursues his own reading of only my view and pursues his own favorite way to throw the word around—and, interestingly, I see a potential bias here in the quote where he places fearlessness on the ground/feet and the higher crown of adornment is courage and love. Is this typical of a Christian discourse formation? Yes, it fits quite nicely the traditional hegemonic. I argued that earlier in this paper where "fearlessness" is not in the Bible but courage and love are for sure—as virtues. In my work, from the start one cannot ignore the earliest written religious texts (e.g., the *Bhagavad-Gita*) from the East that claim overtly fearlessness is "virtue of all virtues," what I suggested is decidedly interpreted in these texts as a meta-virtue;⁸⁶ whereby, if one doesn't get "fearlessness" correct then all other virtues will be corrupted. I think this is a wise claim, and, if one reads Eneyo's quote above in a different way than I did above, one might see that (perhaps unconsciously) Eneyo is echoing the wisdom of the East seeing fearlessness on the

⁸⁴ I give credit for his brief mention of my "integral fear management approach" (Eneyo, 2019, p. 108) but he doesn't seem to realize that is informed by "integral theory" (*a la* Ken Wilber) and it is from there that I source the initial constitution of a "fearless standpoint theory." Wilber (via "integral philosophy") are mentioned only once in his two books, in a brief few sentences where he agrees with Wilber's claim but then Eneyo quickly moves to say his favorite position philosophically is "complementary and unified approach" rather than "integral" as Fisher and Subba prefer (Eneyo, 2018, p. 40). This has very significant consequences in where he and I have tension and conflict in our views on Fear Studies and FME and what would constitute the best philosophy of fear(ism) and best understanding of the relationality of Love and Fear—and, the best construction of the Fear Problem itself. He simply doesn't often explicitly take up systematically enough in his writing these methodological and epistemological choices (favorings) he takes *contra* what I take (and Subba as well). Thus, his "holistic" approach (his own words) to studying fear and philosophy in general, as I pointed to in this article, are on a different level of sophistication than a holistic-integral approach I take.

⁸⁵ Eneyo (2019), p. 103.

⁸⁶ Fisher (2010), p. xxix.

foot and on the ground as the most fundamental, foundational, ground upon which one best builds their virtues—making sure fearlessness is developed without corruption. Yet, keep in mind, fearlessness is *not* merely a virtue either or set of behaviors virtue-like—and, that is what I have given great attention to in my work, for example, “Fearlessness is much more than just a virtue” it is a “code word for ‘fear management’” and more than that too.⁸⁷

Now, compare my notion (theory) of fearlessness and what it is with Eneyo’s, where he defines the term: “*fearlessness*- the quality of being fearless” and “*fearless*- to be free from fear: a state of not being afraid of something or people.”⁸⁸ He then summarizes my project:

He [Fisher] among others are dedicated to rescuing human beings from the enslavement of ‘fear’ and nurture fearlessness if not to ultimately become fearless in the journey to establish his envisioned fearless society.⁸⁹

Eneyo is right I am dedicated to nurturing fearlessness as the ‘solution’ to the Fear Problem. I do envision a fearless society. However, Eneyo goes off the rails quickly once he starts to define both fearless and fearlessness in his own way and then implicitly associates that *as if* it is my way of understanding these terms. This is not scholarly analysis or clarity,⁹⁰ especially when these words are so crucial to everything my work stands for. What I see is his behavioral-focused individual psychology biasing of the terms, mixed in with his modernist, pragmatic hegemonic Western Christian education/ thinking. I’ll not repeat that argumentation as I have given it adequate attention earlier in this article.

One final quote to close this matter of definitions and then I’ll move on to what I mean by the *via negativa* approach I have adopted—re: fearlessness, as one signifier of such a methodological move on my part, in contrast to Eneyo’s *via positiva* approach. Eneyo makes clear his bias again, in relationship to Love and (fear)lessness, he wrote,

Fear (negative) is a serious impediment to growth and development in human society, but love is growth. It means that for our society to grow positive, love be adopted as the only route to fearlessness.⁹¹

On surface reading this seems a fair enough claim, albeit, very generalizing. He shows again his privileging of love over (fear)lessness. However, based on his reductionistic definition of fearlessness, it is appropriate. I would say for our society to grow positive (healthily) *fearlessness* has to be adopted as the path in route to Love. And, dialectically fear(ism), for example has to be adopted likewise.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. xxix.

⁸⁸ Eneyo (2019), p. 266.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁹⁰ I think this lack of attention to definitions and meanings on these terms shows they are really not so important to him and his overall project which is much more about Love as focus, and concomitantly his philosophy of unity. I think his philosophy of fear is at this point, potentially comprised for his privileging of a philosophy of unity/love.

⁹¹ Eneyo (2019), p. 245.

There has been a long tradition, and growing popularity in a fear-positivism, as I argued earlier in this article. I am critical of that and I see the focus on Love by Eneyo and many others as the solution to all unity and human kind is part of a similar positivity culture movement. For Eneyo's version of this he wants to achieve the highest ideals (virtues) by adopting love (see quote above). Anytime that is made as the "only route" (his words), it tells me a lot about how someone thinks and values, and what their basic methodological and epistemological orientation is—to being Moral and Good—being God-like—being Perfect. There is a moralism bias in methodology that has a long and valid tradition in this approach. It is often referred to simply as "positive" philosophy or thinking—and with more sophistication, theologically it is called the *via positiva* path (cataphatic theology⁹²) by some.⁹³ It has to do with using positive (i.e., virtues and qualities) attributes to inspire one to move toward the divine—the goal of enlightenment and capital Love/God. Positive is good because God is good—and, so the self-reinforcing logic of this moralist trajectory goes. Most religions use this approach as predominant for faith and worship and their basic religious education. Eneyo, arguably, uses this a great deal too because Love/God/Unity all fall together in a nice big picture of Good. The way to be is this *positiva* way. When Eneyo suggests Love is ultimately the way—the answer to the Fear Problem and human suffering, etc., he is enacting his faith in the *positiva* path of FME. Let's look at the other path, the *via negativa* (apophatic theology⁹⁴).

I have long emphasized, in contrast (somewhat) to Eneyo's *positiva* path the near oppositional path of *fearlessness*. The very indicator of "fear" in the word itself indicates a general negative energetic and principle (even if, Eneyo admits fear has a positive side). "Negative" is not necessarily judged to be negative unless someone decides to do so based on their own worldview and assumptions and perceptions. I have already articulated earlier the strain within Christian discourse hegemony (explicitly or implicitly) to associate Fear with Satan in oppositional juxtaposition with God is Love. God is Positive. Satan is Negative. Dualism creates and maintains this binary, which may be more convenience than truth. It may be more a strategy of consciousness and defensiveness to avoid reality (Reality as Unity). Dualism has a function arguably to bring "security" ontologically as in 'black n' white' thinking and value systems. The other indicator of the *via negativa* path is focus on "lessness," as in my work; and how that is about a reduction (negation) not an addition (positive) on the way to God or whatever notion we can insert for the Ideal condition to reach as goal of freedom and/or liberation or even happiness.

There has been some postmodern backlash to all the, often superficial, "positivity" popularity of the day (it markets well), especially in the West. The positive valuation of "negative thinking" is one example (albeit, not exactly the same as a theology of the *via negativa* but there are some correlations). Two educators recently wrote,

One way to understand this dynamic [i.e., a positive correlation of increasing anxiety levels of school teachers with increasing degrees of conformity and instrumentalism in their thinking and practices] in teacher education [training] is in terms of positivity and negativity, whereby the positive refers to social structures, institutions and

⁹² For e.g., see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cataphatic_theology

⁹³ E.g., Fox (1986). Note: Fox offers a four-fold path (integral-like) of the mystical journey: *positiva, negativa, creativa, transformativa*.

⁹⁴ For e.g., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apophatic_theology

policies [of the *status quo*]—best practices or teaching standards—that have become reified [as the only right way to improve education and teachers] while the negative is that which unsettles and disrupts the comfortable stance of the given [moral-political-economic] order of things.⁹⁵

The above authors posit a ‘balance’ of complementarity ideally in the positivity and negativity approaches, lenses, perspectives on reality. Eneyo would like that. However, there is another deeper aspect going on in this juxtapositioning where the *via negativa* path is critical outright, and meant to take-away and somewhat undermine (as ‘correct’) the reified “positive” hegemony that is so easily consumed, marketed, and distorted re: those seeking to feel better, secure and good—that is, loving and loved—at the guaranteed side of God = Love. Seeking love is a dangerous road, is a point I’ll return to—especially, without the proper tools.

Assurance like that just mentioned is not a trait of the *via negativa* way, quite the opposite, for the negativity as used in this meaning frame here is antagonistic, dissensus attracting, without guarantees and a full-blown letting go of the easy and habitual “positive” qualities (supported in one’s exoteric religion, or culture, or family systems) and a more radical trusting in the ‘dark’ side that *via negation* and subtraction—that, if done well and with discipline, one will (potentially) reach God = Love. I’ll return to this point and my own chosen directionality in emphasis on fear(lessness) as *via negativa*. It is crucial to my critique of Eneyo’s critique of my work. There is the same end, just two very different means of achieving it.

Eneyo’s Critique On the Table of Critiques

After that roundabout way of both introducing some of Eneyo’s basic critique of my work (a. love as insufficient and, b. downplaying love’s role), I am returning to refine his critique and offer my critique briefly in return. I have given lots of referent contextual material prior to guide you if you wonder what my position and experiences are that lead me to my critique. I have also hopefully provided some better understanding of Eneyo’s work (albeit, one would have to read it directly to fully understand it). I expect, rightfully so, he will respond and ‘correct’ me where I have not read his work well enough and have mis-interpreted. This is how Fear Studies grows in a good way *via* constructive critique and dialogue among peers.

There is something particularly re-stimulating, if not distressing and even perhaps terrifying, when people of many kinds read my work and/or hear in my teaching that I give more attention and valuation to *fear over love*. Perhaps with his own distress, Eneyo (2018, 2019) makes the reverse claim and challenges my claims (and/or Subba’s philosophy of fearism) that indicate fear is somehow more powerful than love; and, with that equally he challenges that I place *fearlessness* as the better way to go than love as an intervention into the thinking and actions of individual and collective endeavours of humanity. In a particular explicit critique of my thought, Eneyo (2018) interpreted the issue between us as:

⁹⁵ Clarke & Phelan (2015), p. 257.

Contrary to the above [Eneyoian] view, Fisher in his dialogue with Subba... had given the credence of the more enforcing meta-motivational influence to fear over love within the context of philosophy of fearlessness when he said, ‘... *I could make a strong case, evolutionarily and developmentally that most often fear is stronger than love—yes, fear conquers love....* Fisher is suggesting... within the context of fearism; that fearlessness is a better and a more appropriate path to be followed in search of solution to the problem of fear than love.⁹⁶

Eneyo (2018) followed with another poignant and distressing quote for him, from my Technical Paper No. 76 (Fisher, 2018),

‘*The Fear Problem is not going to be solved by love, to put it bluntly.*’ I do not understand why Fisher should have alleged that love is ineffective and that it is undertheorized. Fisher needs to tell us what he meant....⁹⁷

First, it is accurate for Eneyo to read into my work that *fearlessness*, as I conceptualize it in a very complex way (far beyond what Eneyo gives credit for), arguably, is often a *better* and a more appropriate path than love for effectiveness in the intervention and undermining of the Fear Problem as it exists today in the early 21st century. Note, that Eneyo misses the subtlety of my words in the quote. I say, “*most often*” fear is stronger, and I do not say anywhere in all my writing that (in Eneyo’s words) “love is ineffective.” Love is effective, it just too often, as I have learned, is mis-directed, corrupted, immature, and it is not effective in true liberation. People make “love” is my point. That’s the realist constructivist thinker in me. Living systems are not merely made of metaphysical aspects, nor Ideal philosophical images based on arguments. “Love” (like fear) goes through developmental and environmental contingencies in its manifestation. It’s certainly not a perfect process and it goes from birth to immaturity to maturity and beyond to well... the “divine” some might say. It goes from pre-personal to personal to transpersonal in manifestations if all goes well and human potential is encouraged and flourished to reach its greatest potential. Yet, there are limitations and pathologies on the way. I simply, cannot get into all my arguments and how I see this. I have published on this in my various works. Humans being raised in a “culture of fear” or ‘Fear’ Matrix, as I have suggested, is not a pretty picture and Love takes a beating down to love and to ‘love’ (and its twisted forms = disguises⁹⁸).

“Love” in some form may bring pleasure, I have no doubt. It may serve some good means. Overall, however, I believe that today it will ultimately fail and not be as effective relative to fearlessness and fearism. As I said before, I cannot prove this. It is speculative, and I have given lots of reasons in this article and what is to follow for my supporting evidence and ideas in this claim I make.

I am always contextualizing my comments, because I would like readers to understand my work within fear management/education (FME) applications. After 30 years of systematic research on fear and fearlessness and love, yes, I feel confident to claim the *better* FME to offer is one based on a paradigm of *fearlessness*⁹⁹ (as a *via negativa* path)—rather, than on *love* (as a *via positiva*

⁹⁶ Eneyo (2018), p. 100.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁸ Recall Overstreet’s (1951/71) revealing work on this especially.

⁹⁹ And/or better yet, a “fearlessness paradigm” as I sometimes have articulated (e.g., Fisher, 1995b, 2006, 2013).

path), even though they always go together trialectically (see Fisher, 2017a) as an integrated, perhaps even complementary, whole system of dynamics, with *fear* as central, as the philosophy of fearism purports. Eneyo prefers *love* as central though he's willing to draw on fearism and my work for integrating into his own. That's fair enough. I would just like to be sure he does my work justice in doing so, as I'm sure Subba would as well.

Love has many problems. It is not the purpose of this article to go into that research and analysis fully. Even Eneyo problematizes love, and I appreciate how he does that with his “positive love” and “negative love” distinction. When I have been confronted many times with my methodological and philosophical focus on fear and fearlessness, it reminds me each time of the moment and following days of my own conversion (born-again) experience in 1989 with my partner at the time and at the birth of In Search of Fearlessness Project. It reminds me of the thinking I had to do later to justify my taking the ‘road less traveled’ to work on the liberation of humanity. The thought that came up, and still seems to hold after all those years is that “Love” is too easily corrupted by a culture of fear, by an oppressive society, by a pathological society for the most part always seeking some ‘pleasure’ in the form of addictive patterns—patterns of avoid and “splitting” from reality. Seeking ‘heaven’ can also be such a pattern—a type of near psychotic state; but then, seeking healing and transformation, a redemption and re-organization of our relationship with Love is not necessarily an avoidance of reality—it may be truly sanity and that may be truly frightening and/or terrifying to face at first—the existential real. Yet, existentialism does not as a philosophy or view on reality have the last say either. One wise psychotherapist offered this view of relationship between love and fear in the basic human experience of hurting and healing—a view I highly regard as sacred and universal—albeit, it is more psychological than philosophical, and more disciplinary than transdisciplinary. She (Segal) wrote in characteristic but a unique form of *via negativa* path discourse,

[There are many ways to find one's sanity as long as one is willing to admit their insanity first. In a healing perspective,] Once we have faced the frightening realities of the past, it becomes easier to face the frightening possibilities of the future, for it is in experiencing the *feeling* of fear that we break its power over us. We realize that we are not dealing with an uncontrollable monster bent on crushing us. Each time we meet the challenge to acknowledge our fear, we grow stronger, more vital, more self-assured. We even begin to look for the challenges, the lessons, that ultimately will enhance the quality of our lives. But this is not the end. It is, in fact, the wondrous beginning. There is more to come than you could ever imagine. If fear were a stone you could crack open, inside you would find buried a gem of indescribable worth and beauty—and that would be love.¹⁰⁰

Eneyo has a Love-gaze (i.e., unitivist-gaze, and a concomitant via positiva epistemology....

Segal's clinical experience, at least, guides her (as it does me) to assert a focus on “experiencing the *feeling* of fear”¹⁰¹ –as cracking open that which yields a production of “love.” Note, her

¹⁰⁰ Segal (1987), p. 90.

¹⁰¹ Not that I think Segal is offering the best view on fearwork here either, because clearly she is stuck in a psychology of fear discourse, even if it is a highly matured and transpersonal one, which I admire. The critique of her approach would begin for me

somewhat fearist positioning is that like a Subba or myself, where we do not focus our philosophical and transdisciplinary gaze on “what is love” and on the achievement and process of experiencing the *feeling* of love. Eneyo has a Love-gaze (i.e., unitivist-gaze, and a concomitant *via positiva* epistemology)¹⁰² on his quest to find (in his words) “a unifying method to the study of fear... a holistic enquiry”¹⁰³ to Fear Studies and to the Fear Problem. It is this latter point of “unifying” project in Eneyo’s two important latest books that has me concerned, *and* also inspires me (in part) to take time for this lengthy response to him and to clarify problems I see in his unifying project. I snoop out that his faith in a Love-gaze is perhaps his strength as a philosopher and his weakness—especially, when he brings that into the transdisciplinary field of fearism and/or Fear Studies.

Faith in Love is one thing. Eneyo, I have charged in this article has faith in Love. Later, in my Recommendations, I think it may be heuristically very useful for him to explicitly claim he is a (Christian) *philosopher of Love/fear*; rather, than trying to be a generic *philosopher of fear*. I find it interesting, and troubling, Eneyo (2019) makes the massive generalization, “Fear (negative) is a serious impediment to growth and development in human society, but love is growth”¹⁰⁴—because his equating love with growth raises eyebrows, showing to me just how in love with love (Love) he is as a so-called “philosopher of fear.” Growth is a process so much larger than love and so much deeper, so much more embattled, when looked at from an integrative and/or integral perspective¹⁰⁵—e.g., as I have claimed in several of my more metaphysical musings on the meta-motivational dynamics of Love (*Eros-Agape*) and Fear (*Phobos-Thanatos*).¹⁰⁶ As a fearologist and fearlessness philosopher, my critique of Eneyo circulates pivotally around such a potent absolutist claim “love is growth.”

It is because of his hyper-faith in Love I make that recommendation he is a Love/fear philosopher—and, that raises questions of what about his faith in Fear (and concomitantly, Fearlessness)? My reading, is that Eneyo has not yet got beyond the early conceptualizing stage of *fear is positive and negative* and thus, he reifies a common discourse in many literatures today and in the past, that *fear is a factor*—in growth and development and advancement of human society. He really has not made a paradigmatic shift to see Fear (‘Fear’) in the light of how Subba and I construct our approaches—e.g., fearism. When he writes “my paradigm” (i.e., “holistic”) re: fear(ism), I still see he has kept *fear is a factor* as central in everything he thinks and writes about fear(ism) and fearlessness. Subba and I have long left behind that initial realization of the

with my own critique that claims we have to also look beyond the hegemonic discourse of *fear is a feeling (emotion)*—see my postmodern pursuit towards conceptualizing ‘fear’ as “*fear without feelings*” (Fisher, 2013b).

¹⁰² One could launch an intense and complicated integral critique on Eneyo’s approach here by studying and applying Wilber’s (1995) analysis of what he called the “Great Dualism of all dualisms... between ‘this world’ and an ‘other world.’ [materialists vs. spiritualists, Eco-camp vs. Ego-camp] It has infected our spirituality, our philosophy, our science”—it is a battle of accusations between what he terms the “Ascenders” and “Descenders” (e.g., see Chapter 10). And, I think Eneyo has a hidden curriculum of such a dualism himself even when he tries to create a non-dual position in his study of Love and Fear. Within his apparently innocent and benign Ascender Love-gazing unitivist agenda and discourse, lies deep metaphysical trouble, as I see it. I simply, cannot enter this Wilberian framework to make such a critique more explicit but in many ways my thinking is underpinned throughout this article by my adoption (and adaptation) of a Wilberian perspective on this “Great Dualism” that most people would never recognize in the first place, never mind be able to use it as a referent point of philosophical critique.

¹⁰³ Eneyo (2018), p. xxxiii.

¹⁰⁴ Eneyo (2019), p. 245.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., see Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Arndt (2011).

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Fisher (1997).

importance of *fear is a (major) factor*—and, recently, Subba, the philosopher, has argued *fear is existence, which precedes essence*.¹⁰⁷ That is a whole lot deeper and expansive opening in consciousness than claims based on *fear is a factor* type of (common) thinking.

Now, faith is obviously to me not the problem I am addressing but how that faith-process is conceptualized can be problematic. Faith-actualization, like self-actualization, depends on many factors and one's developmental level of *faith-self-identity* line of development is a crucial concept from a holistic-integral perspective; that is, each level or stage of consciousness on the spectrum of maturity (*a la* Wilber) producing a substantively different configuration and manifestation of "faith" and thus of "love" and thus of "self" and thus of one's meaning-making, cosmology, worldview and concomitant ethical and moral knowledge, knowing, understanding and actions.¹⁰⁸ Again, at least, that's a critical holistic-integral way of analyzing the faith in Love phenomena—claims and arguments re: "Love as an ultimate unifier" (*a la* Eneyo) cannot be a phrase or adequate philosophical position without a good deal of troubling, and cannot be merely taken on its own merit, at least not as I have pointed out from my views and frameworks of critique in this article—albeit, my purpose never was in this article to give a critique of Love as focus—rather, to be clear, it was Eneyo's leading me to address his questioning and provocation to further justify my own philosophy and what he said is my "credence of the more enforcing meta-motivational influence to fear over love within the context of philosophy of fearlessness"¹⁰⁹—which is his problem with my generalizing claim "fear is stronger than love"—a claim of which Subba would also likely concur, from his philosophy of fearism.

To seek Love is not by itself a great focused practice or living pathway to liberation....

Not raised in any ideological and/or religious background of any commitment, nor have I made such a commitment other than the Fearlessness Movement,¹¹⁰ my faith is in the process of Life itself, and the reality of a Defense Intelligence that is linked to our critical literacy of fear and fearlessness—much as our critical literacy to how we are hurt and how we heal, as the quote above is one directive of working through our frightening past, present and future. But I realize, everyone has different traditions, different hurts and traumas, they bring through their histories, their politics, their family lines and cultures, to fearwork and this task of building a Defense Intelligence and growing it to its highest potential. That's where Fear lays, and Fearlessness. I am fine with people's faith *per se*. Eneyo has his traditions and so will everyone else, more or less, more sacred or more

¹⁰⁷ "When it comes to age of knowledge, first stage is fear of existence. Fear of existence changes into existence of fear. Existence of fear precedes [proceeds?] to essence" (Desh Subba, personal communication, May 2, 2019). See also a more sophisticated notion of fearontology in line with a philosophy of fearism in the thinking of Kalu (2019).

¹⁰⁸ See Fowler (1995), a scholar on psychology of human development and meaning, who wrote, "I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in.... I am offering a theory of growth in faith [psychologically and spiritually]" (p. xiii)—he offers six stages of faith, unfolding and expanding hierarchically as an evolutionary developmental trajectory of possibility. Most people, unfortunately, do not get far beyond stages 2, 3 (maybe 4 infrequently)—and, rarely to 5-6. For me, I could analyze these stages as growth levels of "fearlessness" (i.e., fear management systems) as part of maturation and eventually as liberation.

¹⁰⁹ Eneyo (2018), p. 100.

¹¹⁰ Similarly, Subba is an *atheist* philosopher. Less spiritually-oriented than I am, Subba has a political practical orientation which is "a 'new' communism" (see Fisher & Subba, 2016, p. 37).

secular. Yet, we can also all be critical not to just follow them, the *status quo*, without criticality as well as respect, without some enactment of a fearlessness paradigm to ensure fear does not rule the way those traditions operate, interpret reality and often dominate the lives of their followers and others who do not follow that tradition. I think Eneyo and I and Subba, for example, all bring this criticality to the domain of Fear Studies, albeit, each in our own way—but this is our common bridge to working together to improve FME on this planet.

To seek Love is not by itself a great focused practice or living pathway to liberation because I see “love” being constructed and not thought of critically enough—we just want or desire something like-love, but we really don’t understand it in the complexities of its dynamics and in the context of the 20th-21st century, at least, as I survey the Western experience and thought.

Cultural influences have greatly distorted and created so many meanings of *love*. It’s been thoroughly commodified in a predatory capitalism. Love has been preyed upon by the elites and many others (which is not to deny *fear* also has its share of such commodification and distortions; as with fearlessness and fearless likewise). I came up with in my reflections in those days of initiating the project direction to take, saying, “I prefer Fearlessness” to be in search of, not “Love.” Many reasons for that direction and strategy. I think less contamination has infested fearlessness, for one thing. And, because I totally trust Love is already there, has been, always will be—no need to go searching for it. “It is we who have lost looking for it in the right places.” Something like that came off my tongue back then, and still resonates with truth for me. Not sure it convinced anyone else. I knew it was a similar thought that the mystic Christian of Medieval times had—Meister Eckhart—on his notion of God—no need to go searching for a God who is always already present.¹¹¹ I also felt intuitively it was a wise truth. I’d rather focus on what gets in the way of Love (= God) or what needs to be “dissolved” that reveals love’s gift(s). Segal wrote, “Love surfaces as fear dissolves.”¹¹² Clinically experienced, she speaks in a language that very much resonates with my own experiences of healing work, and doing therapy, as well as being a therapeutic consultant for decades. She wrote,

I have learned that in order to love, we need not work at loving. There is nothing to do [cf. Meister Eckhart]. But we do have to work at acknowledging the painful and frightening emotions from which we hide. [in order to “find buried a gem... that would be love”]¹¹³

An even more potent critique lays in Segal’s thought,¹¹⁴ not one I will pursue in this article, but it has to do with a phenomenon I have seen many times: people too often pursue love because they

¹¹¹ I recall this from a lecture by Fr. Matthew Fox, a Dominican priest (x-communicated) and scholar on the work of Eckhart.

¹¹² Segal (1987), p. 90.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 90.

¹¹⁴ Reading in between the lines a bit, I see in Segal’s thought that “love is secured” in some kind of way, at some level of our being, at some level of our experience of reality, when (and only when) “Fear [is admitted as]... the common denominator in *everyone’s* protective responses [cf. my Defense Intelligence concept]. As you exchange fear for love, all your relationships will change in positive ways.... You will be willing to risk [beyond fears] loving and being loved.... Once love becomes the motivating principle [cf. *love and fear are more than just factors* in my argument] in life, pain and distress [*aka fear*] assume a much less active role [*aka one becomes more oriented upon fearlessness*]. Love in itself, by itself, is healing... on every level” [cf. Eneyo’s project] (Segal, 1987, pp. 96-97). What is so interesting for me is that Segal, *contra* Eneyo, is not a love-monger (cf. *via positiva Ascender Love-gaze*), she focuses more so on the *via negativa* path—but gets to the same end.

actually (unconsciously) fear authentic love (i.e., intimacy)—and, even fear God¹¹⁵ (*aka* God = Love).

The road less common, seen by many lovists as errant, is my road, is my way and perhaps is even God's way (at least, part of a whole path and way)—the *via negativa* path, *path of fearlessness*—and, I took that path because I trusted my actual experience in the deep (mystical) loving state with my partner at the time, and what arose spontaneously was the question of interest to us: “*What gets in the way of this love in us and for others?*” Her and I answered simultaneously, “Fear.” And, from there, I asserted: “*Let's start the In Search of Fearlessness Project on the planet.*” Let me assure readers both my partner and I at the time were not thinking in terms of merely *fear as a factor* that blocks Love.

I came up with another intuitive response to all my critics, and I think it is still appropriate to the critique of Eneyo. Using *Fearlessness* because it gets to the same end as Love, is better because it has the word “fear” in it to remind us of the most powerful meta-motivational force (and lens) that prevents full expression and growth of Love. Reminding ourselves on our path of liberation by reminding us of Fear is what my colleague and friend Four Arrows calls the path of “becoming a connoisseur of Fear”¹¹⁶ rather than one avoiding such important fearwork because pursuing Love is more pleasurable and popular—and/or, will get one to ‘heaven.’

Using *Love* all the time only hides the powerful *negativa* forces, and one can become easily blinded by the light of the *positiva* of such a pursuit for Love. In somewhat a similar vein of argument (*aka* Freud's psychoanalysis and depth psychology),

On a more philosophical—even mystical—level, the aging Freud (1920) offered a radically revised instinct theory in which impulses toward love, growth, and experience (*Eros*) are incessantly in competition with impulses toward withdrawal, cessation, and death (*Thanatos*). This is seen as a grand cosmic contest [*aka* meta-motivational and archetypal ‘Battle’] in which, inevitably, death takes the palm [i.e., ‘wins’ as our mortal fate; cf. Becker (1973)]. However, it is in the individual's best interest to avoid becoming thoroughly dominated by either *Thanatos* or *Eros* [cf. Fisher's *Eros-Agape* and *Phobos-Thanatos, a la Wilber*]. In other words, people should stay in touch with both their loving and creative impulses on the one hand and their destructive and retreating impulses on the other.¹¹⁷

The question in the future of Fear Studies is: How well will we integrate these sacred and secular approaches?

The lesson from this psychoanalytic-existential understanding (above) is: “to avoid becoming thoroughly dominated by either”—and, I take that seriously, so this article I have offered is not overall intending to dominate the debate with Fear (and Fearlessness) as the only way to go. Nor, is Love the only way to go. After we decide that, if Eneyo and I can agree, then becomes the harder

¹¹⁵ “Fear of God” is such a major concept and ethical imperative (perhaps, ironically) within the Abrahamic traditions.

¹¹⁶ See Jacobs (1998), pp. 156-75.

¹¹⁷ Anonymous (1993), p. 300. Note, this is an anonymous author because I could not find their name in the online search I did of this book (my apologies).

work of nuance and theory and praxis—that is, of how to put into applications the Love and Fear Problematic. We are still a long way away from that goal. I want to reiterate as the author does above that to enter this debate is a struggle of long historical importance—yes, it is an archetypal ‘Battle’ ground no less than that of Good vs. Evil theodicies throughout human history. Now, that’s a truly Big problem to take on! Which is fine by me, but we better bring a holistic-integral lens/methodology and all that goes with that to this task, or else we will surely cause more problems than not.

The two great meta-motivational forces (constituting a “dual motive depth psychology”¹¹⁸) are in ‘battle’ under many names and theological and philosophical ‘stories’—as in Love and (vs.) Fear as one of those stories (cf. theodicies)—presents humanity with this great challenge to sort and heal through. I appreciate the Love/fear philosopher Eneyo is doing his sacred-based (religious) part to bring clarity and solutions forward, as much as I appreciate equally the secular-based (psychological) part many thinkers have brought to the “Freedom vs. Fear”¹¹⁹ debates—I see them parallel and analogous, if not homologous works and research. The question in the future of Fear Studies is: How well will we integrate these sacred and secular approaches? I made sure I gave every effort to integrate the two basic approaches in my study of the dialectical relationship of fear/fearlessness in my tome *The World’s Fearlessness Teachings*.

I have obviously accumulated a lot of knowledge and ideas on why I believe fear (and ‘fear’) are undertheorized since the beginning of human history. Dialectically and trialectically in my view, then it is essential to apply that critique to fearlessness and love—equally, undertheorized. To make a critical case, worthy of pursuit, is my notion of an *undertheorized love* claim, which of Eneyo is presumptuous. And it reflects a would be likely characteristic critique from any studied Christian theologian-philosopher of his Eneyo’s ilk.

I do understand that concern because I know there is a vast amount of Christian (and other) philosophizing and theorizing on love across time and place and disciplines. My critique is not that all that is useless to bring to the Fear Problem and FME in general for our times. Rather, my critique is that, from what I have seen from Eneyo (2018, 2019) at least, and the vast majority of other Christian thinkers, is that they all fall far short of a transdisciplinary approach to the study of love, fear, and fearlessness in nuanced dialectical and trialectical arguments. I stand to be corrected. I am no expert Christian philosopher or theologian, I merely await for someone to show me otherwise so I would soften or disengage my critique of their work. A 21st century philosophy of fearism (*a la* Subba) and philosophy of fearlessness (*a la* Fisher) cannot make that reductionistic and disciplinary compromise (see f.n. 7) and feel that we are in our integrity with what our research has told us about the vast role of fear (and ‘fear’) on this planet. When Eneyo (2018) utters that his work is in keeping with the philosophy of fearism, that is, “to discover the truth about the whole body of fear”¹²⁰—I seriously question if he uses “whole” (as in *integral* and *holistic*) in the same way I do. I think not. I believe it is unfortunate Eneyo has more or less made meaning of *holistic* for his own purposes, and that is to make the conception/context mostly about his “unification”

¹¹⁸ Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon (1995), building on the work of Otto Rank and Ernest Becker.

¹¹⁹ Under the rubric of Terror Management Theory (*a la* Ernest Becker), I highly recommend the synopsis of this debate in Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Arndt (2011).

¹²⁰ Eneyo (2018), p 6.

and/or “complementarist” ideological agenda *not* to be a “dualist”¹²¹ when approaching his unique building of a contemporary general philosophy of fear.¹²²

One reviewer in Eneyo (2018), a priest named the Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Edem Eneyo, I think sets accurately the central parameters (paradigm) of Michael Eneyo’s conception and intention of a “*holistic*” approach (i.e., his project):

[Eneyo’s] Philosophy of Fear is indeed an emerging paradigm that is primarily concerned with the holistic study of fear. Its positive and its negative natures.¹²³

Eneyo (2018) echoes this by asserting his own version of his approach (project), re:

... a unifying method to the study of fear, by paying equal attention to its [fear’s] two categories [positive and negative, good and bad, right and wrong] given in this book... my own paradigm of making a holistic enquiry [i.e., “a holistic study of reality”]....¹²⁴

Unifying opposites, for example, *positive* and *negative fear* into one (unifying) philosophy of fear may indeed be an *integrative* strategy, that is, “complementarist” or a “unification” approach as Eneyo intends, that’s fine with me. It is arguably better than a more rigid conventional binary-logical dualism and/or merely a rational stance on everything. His intention, developmentally speaking, is generally a relatively cognitive-mature existentialist philosophical move and ontologically justifiable to reality, especially from a nondual standpoint.¹²⁵ That’s another argument for another place but suffice it to say there is more fearlessness in complementarity and unification approaches, as Eneyo is applying these compared to approaches based on *gross* dualism—the latter which he critiques.

However, his conceptualization remains relatively enclosed (with a more *subtle* dualism¹²⁶) in a reductionist view of a fully “holistic” (or holistic-integral¹²⁷) paradigm,¹²⁸ as it is known in the literature, especially that I am well familiar with in the West. He has not yet reached operations of

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18. He finds most all the “philosophers of fear or fearists are dualists of some sort” (p. 19); so, he is going beyond them to an improved paradigm, his so-called “holistic.”

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

¹²⁵ Technically, few people develop this “stage 4/5” level (out of 7 levels), only approximately 10% of the population in so-called “First-World” developed countries. This self-identity stage is also where there is a cognitive understanding of the need to integrate opposites, binaries, as they are not the way ‘reality’ is outside or inside the self—but it is also a stage where “full balance or integration of the various opposing forces” are not yet achieved with stability (according to Forman, 2010, pp. 134-35).

¹²⁶ This is a technically complicated assessment, and later in this article I’ll return to my reasons for making it; albeit, it is not the focus of this article so it will be left relatively unfleshed out and thus remaining a future topic of contention, perhaps.

¹²⁷ I particularly draw on Ken Wilber’s holistic-integral philosophy for a more accurate and sophisticated “holistic” approach (better called “holonic”), within Wilber’s Integral theory and philosophy. I bring that holistic-integral into all my writing on fear and fearlessness and love but it is not always explicitly written out.

¹²⁸ To add complexity, my *critical holistic-integral* paradigm is a *fearlessness paradigm*, in the ideal; but that takes us into a complex territory of development of my work, which is beyond the purpose of this article.

true Fearlessness (i.e., FMS-7¹²⁹) in framing his “holistic” paradigm (see Fisher, 2010 for fear management systems theory). Furthermore, the heavy attention on distinguishing “positive and negative fear” (keeping *fear as merely a factor*) is what I have labeled as the “first stage of a fear imaginary” (Fisher, 2018a). Fear Studies and fearist work has to include this first stage, as it is useful; but to also critique it, transcend it, and evolve beyond it to get to a *better* (holistic-integral) understanding of what the Fear Problem is (including ‘fear’)—to better understand the nature and role of fearlessness, a fearlessness paradigm and, thus, to solve that problem better.

Of course (and unfortunately), there is at this time no empirical concrete research compiled to ‘prove’ the speculative and theoretical claims I am making about “better.” And, there is no such similar research to prove love is stronger than fear or the reverse, or that love is the better solution than fearlessness either. We remain in the realm of philosophical debate (and faith).

A Few Recommendations: Understanding My Work Better

Whether or not this article is helpful, I trust it at least ‘maps’ the territory of the Big problem that Subba, Eneyo and myself have dedicated ourselves to—no less, is it than the Good vs. Evil problem throughout human history.

To make this article more helpful, I’ll summarize just *a few* (leaving out many more found in this article) points of contention between Eneyo and myself (and philosophy of fearism, *a la* Subba) which could be ‘resolved’ (potentially) by my recommendations. Others are invited to share their recommendations as well; and, no doubt many others have contentions with my work too.

1. Conceptualizing a “Philosophy of Fear” – my own work differs from those who could be labeled *philosophers of fear* because philosophy is not my specialty and I have not near done the homework on what all philosophers have said about fear, be they amateurs or professionals; Eneyo (perhaps, Svendsen, and others) are more qualified in the discipline, more trained, and better prepared to advance a philosophy of fear domain—and, I encourage that. Subba is also well situated, if not he is the most well-situated thinker, to be a *philosopher of fear* but I tend to demark a distinction in his work beyond others in this domain because of his decidedly and important *fearist* lens and perspective—it is truly unique in the history of thought—and, other philosophers of fear can learn from that (and, yes, critique it too)—but my point is there needs to be a thorough engagement of philosophers of fear (like Eneyo) with *fearism* (*a la* Subba, and now, with my additions to that work)—and, Eneyo, like others, fall short in such a thorough understanding from what I have seen they publish on it; mainly, that’s because I don’t think enough communication occurs between the thinkers (including myself)—so, as to sort things out before one makes a ‘big’ critique of the other’s work. Frankly, I still feel inadequate in understanding these philosophers of fear mentioned in this article; I simply have not given their work full attention long enough nor had sufficient exchanges and critiques passed back and forth. That said, my provocative insight in writing this article is that Eneyo (perhaps best) consider revising his self-identity as a *philosopher*

¹²⁹ Note: I have identified at least 15 meanings of “fearlessness” that are useful from across the disciplines and history (Fisher, 2010) but Fear Management System 7 (true Fearlessness) is a very advanced and mature level of consciousness and structuration for fear management systems—that is, it (FMS-7) is situated within “integral-aperspectivism” consciousness (see Jean Gebser’s work included in Wilber’s model, e.g., as defined in Wilber, 2000, pp. 26-27, 167-69).

of fear and (for all the reasons in this article) move towards calling himself a *Love/fear philosopher* or something of that kind—because, he has remained in his work as I read it, still very Christian and committed to his faith in Love (*aka* God = Love). One has to look at his philosophy of fear (his preference to call his work) within the context of his latest two books, which the second is a philosophy of unity (Love)—and, this impacts everything he perceives, thinks, writes—it impacts everything in a religious framework (not that that is a bad thing)—and, determines his fear management/education (FME) agenda—and, it influences how he frames his critiques of fear(ism) and my work on fearlessness. All philosophers of fear *ought* to look at my work over a long period of study, at least—and, they ought to compare it—while, at the same time acknowledging the ‘big’ difference between our works IF they choose (as Eneyo has) to stay embedded within the *discipline of Philosophy* (and/or Theology) because my approach (and Subba’s) is *transdisciplinary*—albeit, Subba is also a self-proclaimed philosopher of fear(ism). There is a longer discussion needed in Fear Studies overall on what is that difference of *fear imaginaries* that arrive from disciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (beyond interdisciplinarity). There is no doubt in my mind (at this point), that Eneyo is attempting to carve out a field of a philosophy of fear (e.g., title of his 2018 book) and he is doing this by a questionable (partial) very *disciplinary definition* he gives to the field itself:

Philosophy of fear therefore, is a philosophical approach into the study of fear.... Since the core function of philosophy is to discover *truth*, it can also be said that the core function of philosophy of fear is to discover the truth about the whole body of fear....¹³⁰

A working definition is fine—but Eneyo lays this out as if it is fixed and done—and, he has not had sufficient dialogues with others who are defining the philosophy of fear domain—which includes Subba and myself. His approach to this knowledge-building is decidedly a typical self-preference approach, non-relational for the most part, intellectual and decidedly stated only rationally and only with its approval, for he does not show in his writing adequate self-reflective critique of his own conceptualizing (e.g., his Christian bias and disciplinarity itself). This is not the way to advance a field of inquiry, in my view. It may advance a career or book sales, perhaps... but Fear Studies as an umbrella over and above the mere philosophy of fear needs to be open to self-critique as well as critique from peers and others. I’m sure with time Eneyo will improve his approach but it takes time—in my experience it takes not a few years of work on one’s ideas but decades, 2 or 3 or more to mature one’s philosophical and transdisciplinary expertise and wisdom. I’d like to see a lot more patience amongst all writing and teaching about fear—a patience with intent to integrity as scholars and/or even just as authors. Fearwork is that important to do really well. I have also mentioned the problematic hegemony of “psychology of fear” (a type of psychologism) in my work for launched critiques of FME over the decades, and as I see the *fear is a factor* discourse persists in Eneyo’s psychological work (“holistic” in his view, but still he’s quite reductionistic too, as I argue)—it tells me he still focuses on “fears” (negative and positive) he has *not* made the paradigmatic shift outside of the discipline of Psychology either. This all reduces fear (e.g., to fears) and only partially addresses ‘fear’ or fearism—I make these arguments in this article—albeit, I give Eneyo credit for at least studying somewhat what these different conceptualizations of *fear* entail—and, if applied, they will utterly also (i.e., dialectically)

¹³⁰ Eneyo (2018), p. 6.

alter conceptualizations of *love* (*Love*). Arguably, any philosopher of fear has to give a lot of attention to love—and, Eneyo has at least done that, where many others have not. However, he’s a long way away from a transdisciplinary view of love. As a start, he (and others) will better understand my work, my values and methodologies in Fear Studies if they understand what a *via negativa* approach is and why I have chosen it as the “road less traveled” in the study of fear—we need ‘balance’ I argue and thus, integration of this approach with the *via positiva* (which is predominant in Eneyo’s work).

2. Love Appropriating Fear- like so many, Eneyo has to be more careful when they critique things I put in print (and, likewise, I too have to be cautious and open to receive feedback)—the two concerns Eneyo raised in his books re: my way of handling “love” and making fear stronger than love, etc., are in part to be corrected by a more careful reading of my work—as in, I have never said (in Eneyo’s words) “that love is ineffective” in FME; my concern also travels forth into the way *fear is displaced* (i.e., appropriated) in Eneyo’s philosophy of fear (*aka* which seems more a philosophy of love)—and, I see this subtle domination at times in the way Eneyo says things, and dishes out labels, like the one he gives me “Fisher is a critical fearless philosopher who seems to be tired of situating himself in the dark world of fear.”¹³¹ Perhaps, it is a language use problem here I respond to, or perhaps not, but there is an inevitable raising of my eyebrows when I then see in his writing (definition of *fearless*) where he says “Love is fearless.”¹³² If Eneyo was to truly look at how I define “*fearless*” (in contrast to even *fearlessness*), he would see how mistaken his interpretation is and his superficial use of the term “fearless” is—and, yet, he ironically puts it with his most great and powerful term “Love” and makes them equivalent in this claim. And, therefore, logically, is he saying “Fisher is a ... love philosopher?” You get my point, of how there has to be more critical awareness by my critics re: how I use terms and how they use terms in Fear Studies. Again, without defining fear (‘fear’) carefully, Eneyo goes on to say “Those who love genuinely, don’t fear, because love expels fear” (cf. the Biblical quote 1 John 4:18)... truly, the jumping from his own favorite ways of saying things, to then associations with how I think or work, requires more careful transposing and clarifying of differences, and differences that have real consequences—they are not just words on paper.

3. Fear As Moral Reference – truly another “road less taken” because Love is usually the moral reference of so many discourses, especially in the West (e.g., the Abrahamic traditions, like Christianity which infuses itself in most everything). I think a lot of confusion people have with my work can be re-organized, perhaps transformed for the better, by two very simple dictums—one is my own, and one is by Jeanne Segal (cited in the article already): 1) Fisher says, *when fear arises so then does fearlessness* (the latter, which will direct us back onto the path of Eros-Agape = Love), and, 2) Segal says, “We are not ‘bad,’ we are frightened”¹³³—and, from thereon, no need to be entrapped by moralism as a way to correct humans, nor try to ram love down their throats in order to be good—the better way to correct humans is *via* fearlessness where no moralism is required *per se*. Nearly everyone who takes the topic of “fear” seriously, from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, etc., I always find they have a very moralistic (i.e., virtues) underlying agenda of associating fear is sin, fear with Satan, fear with bad/wrong, etc. because they want to correct humans to be Good, like Love, like God. The path of fearlessness (and Segal’s dictum especially)

¹³¹ Eneyo (2019), p. 244.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹³³ Segal (1987), p. 88.

circumvents, in a mindful way, that pervasive need to implicitly punish and make people who are ‘bad’ become good because of fear of the consequences—which is a very low-level of moral development on the scale of human motivations (e.g., see Kohlberg’s moral development)—but, besides that problem, I think Segal’s dictum with mine would make a combination that I sense would be a quantum leap in humans freeing themselves from “fear of God” (*aka* fear of Love) and *fear of* being bad (*aka* fear of Law¹³⁴ and fear of Fear itself)—oh, yes, that’s my prophecy, I recommend to all.

4. Holistic-Integral Methodology: Buddhist & Christian (Both)- I have deserved respect for Eneyo’s Love/fear philosophy project overall, and yet, his interpretation of my work (like many others) falls short in its understanding of what I often call a “holistic-integral” approach or methodology or framework. Since the late 1980s I have been greatly impacted by Ken Wilber’s work (i.e., Integral Philosophy and Theory) to organize an evolutionary, developmental analysis of fear management systems and my vision of FME and my conceptualization of Fearlessness itself (multi-dimensional, with at least 15 definitions/meanings). Eneyo’s work shows he rarely cites this part of my work and for various reasons he is not a developmentalist, as far as I can tell, he may even be not an evolutionist. This will prevent him (or others) from understanding my FME work and lead to many mis-interpretations as well. If being Christian may get in the way of reading and understanding Wilber (and my work), it may be in part due to Wilber’s decidedly Buddhist (nondualism) orientation—even though Wilber is well-versed and includes all the major religious teachings, more or less, in his Integral Philosophy/Theory. There are two recommended sources for those of a more Christian persuasion to enter into study of “Integral” canon¹³⁵; especially Mayes’s work is developmentally sophisticated re: curriculum and pedagogy and he has read and endorsed my work on FME.¹³⁶ McIntosh offers a good background to a lot of the historical eminent East and West philosophers before Wilber, who have built the “integral” perspective, or what McIntosh labels a “newly emerging worldview known as integral consciousness.”¹³⁷ This background philosophy and thinking beyond just philosophy is core to my *fearlessness lens/perspective* of which I bring to my thinking about fearism (i.e., a Fisherian-Subbaian version). Sri Aurobindo (mystic philosopher from the East) summarized “integral” in a basic definition and mission which Eneyo (and others) may find useful (albeit, still partial and needs to be supported by Wilber’s up-graded version, at least):

In its value aspects, the integral philosophy is the most satisfying rational formation of the inner aspiration of man [sic] to attain complete liberation of each part of his being, to transcend the present mental and spiritual limitations and to attain the highest and most integral supramental experience, and to establish on the earth the kingdom of Heaven.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ A point repeatedly argued in Fisher, Subba & Kumar (2018), see also Appendix 3 (Fisher & Barnesmoore, 2018) in this book.

¹³⁵ E.g., McIntosh (2007), Mayes (2003).

¹³⁶ Mayes (2010) wrote, “Fisher offers a vision of how this can be done educationally. And he wisely insists that because the terrible curriculum of fear has been implanted in us at every level of our being, it must be addressed in an integral, holistic manner that existentially transforms not only individuals but also their cultures” (p. x).

¹³⁷ McIntosh, S. (2007), p. 2.

¹³⁸ Aurobindo (1973), p. 11.

Mayes, is earliest of the Christian critics of Wilber’s model and suggests there can be more than just a “monistic” (i.e., nondualist and Buddhist) Eastern perspective on the spectrum of development of consciousness levels and strategies of growth and development (i.e., education). Mayes presents a seventh stage that aligns with a “dualistic religiosity” and one that Mayes, a Mormon, prefers in the integral world of theorizing. It is here where Eneyo may find affinity easier than with Wilber or even my own approach. FME, however, as I recommend in all my work, is *better* the more *integrally* it is conceptualized and practiced. Subba and fearism authors have not yet adopted this recommendation in their own work to date.

So, that concludes (partially) my synopsis of ways to better engage, understand and critique my fearwork. I look forward to where these critiques and counter-critiques may lead in the evolution of our relationship to Love and Fear as a pivotal point of departure in any good Fear Studies—and/or in any good philosophy of fear. Thanks to Michael Eneyo for nudging me, albeit implicitly, to write this article for our field.

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