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# Hypnosis to Feargnosis: An Introduction to Trance-Formations



R. Michael Fisher

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**Technical Paper No. 75**

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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## Hypnosis to Feargnosis: An Introduction to Trance-Formations

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

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### Abstract

This paper explores initial theories, ideas, and examples of *feargnosis*. This new term, created in Feb. 2018 by the author, is intended to help us all work with fear in text, conversations and teachings with an improved sensitivity to the way hypnosis, and trance, and other arational modes of consciousness impact on our fear-knowledge and basic learning about this topic of fear (and fearlessness).

### Background Historical Context

#### *Basic Definition: Feargnosis*

Although this Technical Paper No. 75 is a first introduction to my newly coined term, *feargnosis*, which is meant to sound and perform like *fear* and *hypnosis* joined together; more literally, it means *fear* and *gnosis* (= *knowledge*)—or *fear-knowledge*; albeit, the Merriam-Webster dictionary is more particular, and seductive, in defining *gnosis* as “*esoteric knowledge of spiritual truth held by the ancient Gnostics to be essential to salvation.*” I am not a Gnostic *per se*, but I am a contemplative and critical thinker, who for a long time, has believed ‘good’ fear-

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<sup>1</sup> Fisher is co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ) and Research Institute (1991- ). He is also founder of the Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education (<http://csiie.org>) and is Department Head at CSIE of Integral & 'Fear' Studies. He is an independent scholar, public intellectual and pedagogue, author, consultant, researcher, coach, artist and Principal of his own company (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>). Currently, he is developing The Fearology Institute to teach courses. He can be reached at: [r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com](mailto:r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com)

knowledge and insight that comes from fearlessness with it, is the “best” way to grease the path of liberation (i.e., “essential to salvation” as the dictionary says).<sup>2</sup>

As much as I like that more literal definition and believe that good quality fear-knowledge will set us free, I want to distance the emergent shaping of *feargnosis* from only such “esoteric” (or hidden or cultish) knowledge held by the privileged or elite or mystics alone and passed on via ‘rituals’ to their students. It is rather my interest to create not mere “knowledge” with *feargnosis*, though that is a component, but actual relational co-inquiries that embody real powerful practices (e.g., analogous to *hypnosis* and *trance-formations*<sup>3</sup>) of the magical, the therapeutic and/or healing practices, which all require special knowledge (including theory) and some training skills and good education with rigorous discipline.

I turn to Carl Jung’s words in light of the relational way and transformation processes:

The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances; if there is any reaction, both are transformed.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, I have no interest myself to promote more self-occupying growth and development technologies to a Western (at least) society of well-to-do hyper-individualists and their accomplishment success-drives. Liberation work is not about individual “salvation” over and above social and global transformation. I am always centering my work now on the relational in the largest sense of the term—because I believe that is the kind of essential healing, transformation and liberation work required today and in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> From the earliest conception of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989- ), which I founded, was the sense that a ‘fear’ vaccine process needed to be created for contemporary times on a global scale. I appointed one of the first ‘fear’ vaccines as: “good information about fear and fearlessness.”

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful for the term “*trance-formations*” (as interrelated but distinct from transformations) to the hypnotherapists and communications gurus from way back in the 1970-80s, that is, John Grinder & Richard Bandler, see their 1981 book *Trance-formations: Neurolinguistic Programming™ and the structure of hypnosis* [Ed. by Connirae Andreas]. Moab, Utah: Real People Press.

<sup>4</sup> Found quote on a university date calendar (August, 2018).

Feargnosis is to be for the common person(s), relationships, as well as all others (including professionals, and leaders). It is meant to bring freedom (i.e., “salvation” perhaps)—or, at least, it is a practice, like hypnosis itself that can bring significant change and restoration—then, going the deeper way for the better, into work with the unconscious and pre-conscious processes of the mind/body and self/system relations; and more of interest to me, it can bring transformation (*via* trance-formations), the latter terms I’ll define below later.

### *Context(s) For Meaning*

I look forward to teaching feargnosis *per se*. This Technical Paper is only the briefest sketching of my preliminary thoughts on the topic. What I’ve realized of late, to my delight, is that in many ways, I have been teaching aspects of it over the decades, but didn’t label it as such (e.g., aspects of what I call *fearanalysis*<sup>5</sup> are related to feargnosis but there are differences).

Before diving into the nitty gritty of the practice and theory of *feargnosis*, which is only in its very nascent stage of development, there are many roots and routes that have come into my life that have prepared me to take on this new feargnosis practice and offering to the world. I’ll share some of these first. I’ll also locate feargnosis in the field of Transformation. Okay, if one reads my work, you’ll know I have been consciously creating ‘fear’ vaccine processes to counter the hegemonic and insidious ‘Fear’ Project (i.e., Fear Problem<sup>6</sup>) that is destroying Life on this planet. Feargnosis is my latest addition to that vaccine kit and falls within my umbrella grand-scale conceptions of a *Fearlessness Paradigm* and/or *Fearlessness Project*, and/or *Fearlessness Movement*.<sup>7</sup>

Below are a few more locations for feargnosis in my work:

### *Philosophy of Fearism: Feariatry Location*

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Fisher (2012).

<sup>6</sup> “*Human Fear Problem* – the generic term and phenomena which involves many of human being’s worst problems that are traceable to a source in fear (‘fear’)—that is, how well we do fear management/education” (Fisher, 2010, p. 91).

<sup>7</sup> To follow the Fearlessness Movement (ning community), go to:  
<http://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com>

Following the “Philosophy of Fearism” work of Desh Subba, from Nepal (now living in Hong Kong), since 2014,<sup>8</sup> I have come on board with interest to amalgamate his work with my own *philosophy of fearlessness* in a fresh new East-West dialogue on fear that has never been seen before in history (e.g., see Fisher and Subba, 2016). In our collaboration we identified “three pillars” of study and intervention into the global Fear Problem: (1) *fearist perspective*, (2) *philosophy of fearism*, and (3) *fearology*. Within the last pillar are sub-fields called *feariatry*, *fearanalysis* (p. 141) and *fearcriminalysis* added recently (see Fisher, Subba, & Kumar, 2018). Within feariatry<sup>9</sup> (like psychiatry but with a central focus on the nature and role of fear in medicine, wellness, therapies and mental health) is where I have sought to construct a place for feargnosis as a practice; again, much like hypnosis but in my own perspective on that powerful technology that has captured a lot of attention, at least in the West, and psychotherapy communities and the field of communication studies since the 1980s especially. See more on that later.

### *Making Hypnosis & Trance Ordinary*

“To me everything is real....What happens in the imagination is not fiction.”  
-Gloria Anzaldua<sup>10</sup>

Feargnosis, like hypnosis and trance experiences are from the imaginal realm (sub- or unconscious), and perhaps “fantasy” depending on who is labeling the phenomenon of altered states of consciousness. Anzaldua, a mestizo theorist, argues that we are nearly always shifting modes of states of consciousness (e.g., rational to arational), like when reverie or daydreaming or doodling emerges when we are supposed to be focused on something else in the everyday world of banal reality or consensus reality. She wrote, “Most people don’t realize that they are [naturally] switching mode[s] or when they do” and she suggests there is a seamless interconnection between all such modes, “Nothing is separate.”<sup>11</sup> Four Arrows (see below) makes a similar point, and emphasizes that if we are not aware of switching modes, and not aware when we may be entering

<sup>8</sup> See his classic text on the topic in Subba (2014).

<sup>9</sup> For e.g., see Fisher (2016, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Anzaldua (2009), p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

“trance” (light or deep), there is then the danger of someone else (especially, authority figures) manipulating that trance-state and using it against us (e.g., using “shock” tactics [*via* fear<sup>12</sup>] to then pass on propaganda). We learn differently, and sometimes very deeply (and permanently), when we are in trance-mode and/or other kinds of states of consciousness beyond the ‘normal’ and consensual state.

In Appendix 1, I outline a brief listing of (nearly) all my various memories of trance-related kinds of activities and learning in my life-time. I’ll mention a few of them in the main text, but not all. My partner and artist-educator-researcher, Dr. Barbara Bickel,<sup>13</sup> has also done a conversation with me that proved to both of us to be quiet revealing. Neither of us has studied hypnosis *per se* nor deeply explored hypnotherapy. Yet, we both have rubbed up against it in many and various ways, sometimes by accident, unconsciously, and/or at times we have enabled and nurtured the trance-experiencing.<sup>14</sup> We both see *trance* as a process and meta-skill at the core of hypnosis/learning. And equally trance-formations is also at the core of learning and transformation in the authentic sense of those terms. And “authentic” refers especially to what I’ll introduce as “Trance-based learning” or TBL; see later below.

You may have noted above that I also included in feargnosis, the notion of magic (or some call “magik”). Again, such details will come later to some degree, but suffice it to say that all of feargnosis (trance, hypnosis and magic) is foundational to what Barbara and I have longed called accessing the “*A*rational” world, sphere, and perceptions that arise within this paradigm and reality. For some this sounds strangely, perhaps uncomfortably, “mystical” but I assure you it both is that and it is in another way very “empirical” and not mystical at all. Everyone experiences trance (and the arational) but most of us don’t know it, pay much attention to it, or label it—because it is not given privilege in contemporary life for most of us—it is below normal consciousness and besides modern

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<sup>12</sup> Four Arrows has discussed this link carefully between Fear and “hyper-suggestibility” in animals and humans (e.g., see Fisher, 2018b, pp. 218, 286).

<sup>13</sup> Any search on Google using “trance-based inquiry” will give lots of websites to her work.

<sup>14</sup> One of our talks is recorded go to: [https://soundcloud.com/barbara-bickel/parallel-recording-ten-bickel\\_fisher-2018?in=barbara-bickel/sets/parallel-recordings-with](https://soundcloud.com/barbara-bickel/parallel-recording-ten-bickel_fisher-2018?in=barbara-bickel/sets/parallel-recordings-with)

(Western) culture does not typically teach us anything really important about it. I see it as a mode of Intelligence.

Let me explain briefly what that term *arational* means to us, especially from the point of view of learning, change and transformation, and later in terms of the practice of feargnosis. Also, I want to let readers know that most of this Technical Paper will entertain and explore the “arational” and “rational” work of a marvelous Indigenous-based scholar, educator, activist, Dr. Don Trent Jacobs, whom I’ll refer to as Four Arrows, his Lakota given name by his mentor. He also happens to be a trained and certified hypnotherapist. His writing and thought have of late greatly influenced me and my work. I have completed a two and a half year intensive study, while knowing his work for over 11 years more or less, in order to write and publish a book on his life and work in the form of an intellectual biography (see Fisher, 2018b).

First, the arational sphere of reality is not the same as *irrational*. We and others have made that distinction to avoid an unfortunate confusion and conflation of all arational (e.g., dreaming, visions, imagining, altered states, artistic experience, emotions, feelings) with the irrational (i.e., as if it is some form of disease or dis-ease). The arising of Modernism historically as Western Enlightenment philosophy was (and is) dominating and violent in reducing anything not seen as “reason” or “rational” or “logical” as its opposite—that is, the “irrational,” and thus as something that undermines the rational functions of the mind and reason.<sup>15</sup> We who are greatly influenced by this tend to mistrust and/or fear, if not loathe the feelings part of life, for example. Men typically led this belief and confusion in their privileging celebration of Reason—although, to be clear historically, no such confusion seemed apparent in philosophies in pre-Modern times (and other-than-Western cultures) and certainly not in ancient primal times. Mostly, overall, children and women (females) are more adept and comfortable with feelings and the arational, for example.

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<sup>15</sup> Barnesmoore (2016) wrote that “Modernism develops social systems like ‘the police,’ ‘the courts’ and ‘the prison’ under the assumption that order in human society can only be produced through hierarchical domination [including mind over matter, reason over emotion] (as seen when ‘irrational life’ is faced with scarcity) [i.e., fear-based “reason”]” (p. 105).



The *arational* is unique and different (albeit, related) to both the irrational and rational. It is truly complementary with the rational, and from our own experiences with it as a mode of inquiry (e.g., aesthetics and art-making).<sup>16</sup> Trance and hypnotic states are arational processes typically that work below (but along-side) the rational and irrational. Barbara and I confine the definition of the “irrational” as our *wounded* (neurotic state) nature, which is usually based on fear and trauma from the past,<sup>17</sup> still remembered and stored in the body/unconscious, and can still be “triggered” and impact us negatively in the present. Arational is not of that world of woundedness *per se*, but it does interrelate with it and can bring about great healing of the irrational (i.e., fear-based wounds). That’s the nutshell definitions for you to get a hold of before reading on too much more in this Technical Paper.

### *Self-Reflection Moment*

So, take a bit of time to review these distinctions (above), and even go back further in this paper to the beginning and re-read and dwell in the words, ideas, and realities of which I am speaking of. No need to pressure yourself to “get it all” right away either. It takes time when learning new distinctions and some new vocabulary and besides I cannot adequately explain in words on paper exactly what it is I am speaking to as real experiences. I am giving only a rough portrait. I recommend this slowing down and going back, because it is (unfortunately, in the modern West at least) so easy to get fearful of “hypnosis” anything and the word “trance” can bring up images of horror movies, and possession etc. In the Foreword of Grinder and Bandler’s (1981) book “*Trance-formations*,” the editor wrote,

Hypnosis is a word that usually gets strong responses from people—some positive and some negative. Some people think it’s a hoax or only for making people act like chickens, some people think it will

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<sup>16</sup> It is good to see *arts-based research* being accepted more and more in the rationalist-driven academy in the last two decades—a growth that brings better complementarity to knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> We do not exclude there may be nearly pure genetic-physiological complications in organisms (e.g., “disorders”) that cause “irrationality” but Note: “wounded nature” (or “unhealed painful memories” or “traumatized”) is a problem with many organisms, and even social groups or nations for that matter. The individual and the collective of living beings can experience such woundedness (i.e., fear-based manifestations). A much larger discussion is going to be needed down the line in terms of defining “pathology” as related to “irrational” aspects in life but that’s beyond the scope of this paper.

cure everything from dandruff to flat feet, and others think it is so dangerous that it should be left alone completely [or only for the qualified therapists and clinicians]. Trance experiences [part of hypnosis] have existed in different forms for centuries,<sup>18</sup> usually surrounded by a [respectable] mystique [sacredness] of something “magical” and unexplainable.<sup>19</sup>

Barbara and my experience, and that of Four Arrows, is that most people have a spontaneous *fear-reaction* to the words hypnosis and trance, and are very skeptical of it being used by non-experts and especially of it being used in schools or other settings as part of a learning technology. I am sympathetic with that response and don't blame anyone for it; more so, I blame the particular fear-based biased modern curriculums that are out in the world that exclude (typically) the emotional and arational dimensions of human experience and want to *only* focus on the cognitive (i.e., ‘superior’ reason modalities of knowledge, knowing and understanding). This is a disastrous social-conditioning of contemporary humanity that has made people *afraid* of what is completely natural—that is, hypnosis and trance. This *fear* from the society and historically can greatly get in the way of readers coming to a notion of feargnosis for the first time. That's why I want to give space here and encourage a reflection on your own social upbringing and education to see your own biases and reactions that may be coming up already.

I'll admit, when I discovered earlier this year *Trance-formations* and read it, and read the experiments and teaching practices of Grinder & Bandler, I was both fascinated and at times revolted almost by what seemed like unethical practices and manipulation of people's minds and emotions—and, maybe at the time of the early 1980s practitioners were more creative and overt in what they did in workshops (of which this book is a transcribed version of their live teachings). I also really appreciated the honesty which G & B brought to this work and that such books I don't believe you can find anymore that are so “fearless” and open-and-risky. Publishers are much more “cautious” (against, being sued).

I loved it and really pondered carefully their theory<sup>20</sup> and ideas behind the practices, but I also found much lacking in their theory,

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<sup>18</sup> Most serious hypnotists, who do their historical and anthropological homework, admit that the roots are in shamanism (medicine people) of primal societies.

<sup>19</sup> See Andreas (1981), p. 1.

and ethics, which was basically situated in two things, as they came to uniquely shape how to use hypnosis process and trance with ordinary people communicating: (1) Neurolinguistic Programming™ which they wanted to be a successful personal growth and development training business of theirs alone, and (2) communications theory and knowledges about how to improve how humans communicate with themselves (e.g., their body and subconscious) and between themselves. So, it was a great idea, and they were masters at the NLP techniques of using hypnosis and trance, and the book really reveals the architecture of those technologies of “change” and “communications.” Note, they operated NLP as an intervention but were reluctant to call it a psychotherapy or hypnotherapy *per se*—in fact, although they were experts because of their study of the hypnotic-therapy genius of Milton Erikson, they moved away from the clinical field and office, and had the goal to bring the best of Erikson’s work and others and their own into every day practices of communication enhancement and human potential expansion. I appreciate that because of my goal is somewhat similar (but different), that is, to bring feargnosis to the everyday and common people as well.

The editor of *Trance-formations* continued in the Foreword in regard to just how every day/normal hypnosis really is:

When John Grinder and Richard Bandler do a seminar on hypnosis together, one of them usually says, “All communications is hypnosis” and the other says “I disagree, nothing is hypnosis; hypnosis doesn’t exist.” There is a sense [in their ironic playfulness and seriousness] in which they are both right, and both are saying the same thing.<sup>21</sup>

*Trance-based Learning: Our Ancestors’ Legacy*

Fear doesn’t always get the ‘right’ kind of attention, is the basic Fearlessness Paradigm.

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<sup>20</sup> There is theory there, but G & B almost make out that there is none, and all that they do is pragmatic—based on experience of what works, and they do not care how it works. Of which, I myself find that disturbing as an attitude for teaching and learning or therapy.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

This is one of my basic teachings on feargnosis—perhaps it is just a hypothesis or theory, but everything I do is within a Fearlessness Paradigm<sup>22</sup> in terms of managing, transforming fear (and ‘fear’).

What G & B were getting at in the above quote about their antics in workshops, I believe, was intended to deconstruct the “mystique” (and fear of such) by not making a big deal out of hypnosis as something learners were taught it was, or believe it is. It’s just a word. Yet, we also know, Word(s), as Four Arrows conveys, have great power for ‘good’ and ‘harm.’ What G & B somewhat wanted people to really get was just how ordinary hypnosis is, as ordinary as communicating.

Four Arrows (1998, 2016), while also making hypnosis ordinary or natural based on his studies of the Indigenous practices, takes the hypnotic process further and relates it to our primal ancestors but also to other beings (i.e., non-human) and how Indigenous peoples communicate with ancestors and other beings of all kinds, right down to minerals, air, water, etc. by using hypnotic and trance experiences to “connect” and “communicate” wisdom and guidance.

I really like this addition that you don’t, unfortunately, find in G & B’s work or most all other “hypnotists.” In this regard, I am critical of the construction of “hypnosis” and all that goes around it today in the modern world, that is so disconnected from Nature and our primal ancestors or wisdom teachings. In fact, I am so skeptical of ego and capitalist-business interests in the power of hypnosis (like a “drug” or “technology” of quick-fix), I want to share in this Technical Paper my own ideas about feargnosis, as a process built upon hypnosis, but I also don’t want the field of modern hypnosis and its teachings to be the over-influencing knowledge I bring forward. I want to think about this with my own experience and perspective as much as possible, and keep the inquiry dwelling always with the first primary interest in *fear itself* (what I call fearworking), not hypnosis as primary. My expertise is in the study of fear(ology). We’ll see how successful I am at my construction.

So, let’s continue with the editor’s next comments on *Trance-formations*:

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<sup>22</sup> See e.g., Fisher (2013).

If I tell you about going snorkeling on my recent honeymoon in the Yucatan and describe to you the swift movements of the brightly-colored tropical fish, the rhythmic sound of the gentle waves against the shore, and the telling of rising and falling with the warm waves as I scan the underwater scenery, hopefully I will alter [immediately] your [normal] state of consciousness so that you can experience some representation of what I experienced [and, that is the essence of good communication any time]. If you become excited about going there yourself, I will have used the same patterns of communication that are used by successful hypnotists ... and by successful poets, salesmen, parents [and teachers], politicians, religious leaders, etc. If you think of hypnosis as altering someone's state of consciousness, then any effective communications is hypnosis.<sup>23</sup>

I used a similar visualizing-story-telling approach carefully in my own book (Fisher, 2018b) when I attempted to help people learn from Four Arrows' true adventure/teaching stories about fear and courage and fearlessness. Four Arrows labels this (in part) "Trance-based learning."

I love this simple description above, and wish to draw on it over and over as I come to my own construction of hypnosis to feargnosis. And, at the same time, it is not so simple, and/or 'neutral' or only benign as a powerful influencing of behaviors, moods, and of the nature of oneself and others. There's an art to mastering this metaskill of creating trance experiences in order to "connect" and bring about hypnotic changes, if not transformations. There is also a sacred sense of ethics in using such technologies, that I also want to share.

All things, like hypnosis or feargnosis as "technologies" can be used for less ethical ends than the example the editor gave us above. Four Arrows has written about the "mass hypnosis syndrome" (or Trance-based Learning "gone awry") as "the only explanation that makes sense of how modern educated societies, especially, have rationalized their technologies of domination, their polluting of their own nest, and their addictions... [that] destroy life."<sup>24</sup> I am reminded of how long ago I was introduced to "guided visualization" technologies and "biofeedback" and "relaxation training" when I was in my early 30s. I used this in my classroom with grade

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> See Fisher (2018b), p. 2.

5-6 students to help them better memorize, *via* “superlearning” visualization technologies, fractions and tables of numbers without all the boring stress of normal learning and memorizing. It really worked better as the students told me.<sup>25</sup> So, I have been interested in Trance-based learning (TBL), long before it was ever called that. As a therapist, I also know I have used some of these hypnotic techniques in the counseling room, but not that I was all that aware of them *per se*; but they came into the sessions spontaneously, although I also used arts therapies methods consciously; bottomline: I used all of these to help communicate with my students and clients. And I know they mostly really worked. Now, I am thinking through how to bring this into feargnosis systematically, and be able to teach this to others in a wide-variety of settings, but also specifically within the domain of the medical world and feariatry in the future.

So, to return to Four Arrow’s and TBL, it is worth telling a story (and analyzing it for you, one approach) from my new book, which he shared with me from his own life experience many years ago in remote Mexico amongst the Indigenous people he was staying with and learning from (especially, the 104 year old shaman Augustine Ramos):

The aim is to use feargnosis practice to *improve* the transmission and learning going on between speaker or writer and listener or reader. For example, there may need to be very particular skills and meta-skills to learn in order to be a masterfully *effective* communicator when the topic is “fear” (as subject, object, process). “Fear” may be overtly felt or mentioned in language, or it may be more implicit in the communication—but, it is there.<sup>26</sup> Arguably, *fear* is unique that way in requiring a thorough *concentration of attention* in communicating about it. Four Arrows calls this CAT (Concentration Activated Transformation) as the “start” of TBL.<sup>27</sup> This will, more or less, involve communicating both with and around the conscious mind and learning to ‘*talk*’ to the *unconscious*—and then integrating that, more or less, with the conscious mind concomitant with parallel behavioral and/or value changes.

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<sup>25</sup> Fisher (1982).

<sup>26</sup> Subba (2014) and philosophy of fearism makes this assumption on a grand-scale.

<sup>27</sup> One really needs to read and study on CAT-FAW/N (Four Arrows’ theory of TBL); I won’t cover it here in this paper but a good short summary can be found in Fisher (2018b, pp. 4-9).

Little Girl Story<sup>28</sup> (in *Primal Awareness*, 1998, p. 87): Ramos' Teachings

As I glance over p. 87, there's this very first psychic telepathic communication of a recordable discursive text that comes to FA. It's a pedagogical and highly epistemological utterance (I keep wanting to come back to again and again for myself). Keep in mind the context of Four Arrows' field work for his dissertation here, in that he is meeting with Augustin Ramos the 104 year-old Rarámuri Indigenous shaman from remote Mexico. They don't have a common language to connect, so the communications happen in another (arational) mode, more in the body language, energy fields, and more subtle realms of the telepathic, as Four Arrows has described it—and, much of the utterances below are Four Arrows recording what he thought and/or heard in an 'inner voice' coming from Ramos to him.

Augustin Ramos: "*Listening is different than thinking because it is more reflective, more observant.*"

Deep unconditional, non-judgmental listening—this seems the crux of the Ramos teachings as far as I am concerned. Hypnosis and trance involve this too as part of 'good observation' and thus good communications. Now, I had from "The Little Girl Story" this material for translation arising, so I could put this into a Fearlessness Paradigm rendering with the laser-focus on this situation *and* the generic situation be it (A) real concrete enacted fear for reactive adaptive survival purposes, or (B) a dramatized (enacted<sup>29</sup>) fear for heuristic or counseling therapeutic purposes, and/or (C) an idea, thought, imagined more abstract, theoretical and philosophical discussion on fear or knowledge-growth purposes. Ramos' teachings converted, as I have here below, sound something like this (I'll begin with the true story told by Four Arrows first, then my fearanalysis as part of articulating basics of feargnosis):

Although Augustin continued to treat me like a stranger, his innate kindness and generosity allowed my persistent intrusions [as a researcher] into his

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<sup>28</sup> I'm having ideas of analogies between Ramos and Amundson's story of the little girl who wouldn't walk.

<sup>29</sup> I'm thinking of *enactivism* theory which, in my translation, is fear and fearlessness co-evolving as 'one system' always throughout evolution in a kind of *ecology of fear* with the total situation and environment simultaneously. Herein, with the understanding of the structure and function of the ecology of fear (meta-level motivation 1) is where "equilibrium" and/or "balance" or "harmony" that Ramos speaks to later can be found.

life...I was learning about Rarámuri lifestyles and personalities, but I still knew next to nothing about their philosophy of life and their approach to learning.

On my seventh day something remarkable happened that gave me an opportunity to learn more about Rarámuri philosophy than I'd ever imagined possible. Halfway to our first stop [walking together without speaking] for the day, a young [Rarámuri] boy rushed over to Augustin and urgently spoke to him [in their native tongue]. Augustin calmed the boy, then walking a bit more briskly than usual, followed him. The boy led us to a rancho that I had not seen before. I recognized the owner...as one of the men whom I had helped plant corn. He greeted Augustin with the first solemn expression I had seen on a Rarámuri's countenance thus far. Augustin followed the man into the house.

Half a dozen children were gathered outside, and I played with them...As I watched the children play, I thought to myself, dirty and poor as they were, I had never seen children so full of life, joy, and curiosity. Cooperation, not competition, ruled their sense of play....In a little while Augustin emerged from the house with the man [father of a little girl], talked to him for a few minutes, and sat down on a wooden bench in the yard. The man went back inside, and the children I was playing with suddenly scattered into the wilderness. Then, for the first time, Augustin looked me in the eyes for a few moments before he returned his gaze downward and fiddled with some small rocks.<sup>30</sup>

It was at this moment that Augustin Ramos began a telepathic communication with Four Arrows for the rest of his field trip.

Augustin Ramos: *“Listening is different than thinking because it is more reflective, more observant.”*

After Augustin shared his impression (and critique) of Four Arrows (in one sentence, above) as basically “too busy thinking about too many things,” Augustin communicated the important issue at hand about this little girl and her sickness that the father had just told him about:

*Let us go, my friend* [Augustin Ramos “spoke” in silence]. *The little girl’s soul must return so her fever can be cured.* His communication [and actions] brought me out of my trance. His message possessed a rhythm that vibrated into my entire being. It was a serious message, but it also had a sense of humor and joy in it that made my reflections on our dialogue seem unimportant [i.e., arational more important than rational, at this point].

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<sup>30</sup> Jacobs (1998), pp. 86-87.



I jumped to my feet and cheerfully followed him toward his next stop.

Although I knew something miraculous was happening, only a few minutes after Augustin's last communication to me I was accepting the phenomenon [of telepathic communication] without surprise or hesitation. I could analyze it later, in the privacy of my camp; for now, all I wanted to do was experience what was to me the easiest, most natural [hypnotic?] form of communication [between us]. It was similar, I thought, to talking with wild horses. A difference, however, was that Augustin conveyed ideas, both abstract and specific, to my mind. The horses communicated almost exclusively in terms of feelings, not thoughts, ideas, or commands.

...I relaxed into a walking meditation....*What happened to cause the fever?* I projected toward him. Almost before I could finish the thought in my mind, I knew the answer. *The little girl frightened her soul away after almost falling from a cliff while playing with her brothers. I helped make it so it might come back. We are going to the place where it happened. The energy there needs to be balanced again because she left one of her souls where it does not belong. This is why she has a fever.* Augustin conveyed the answer to me matter-of-factly, and I repeated his words into my tape recorder soon after I "heard" them.

In a short while, we arrived at the edge of a cliff overlooking a steep canyon edged with some kind of oak trees. Augustin took something out of his pocket and placed it in his fist...a large peyote button. He held it up to the sky and then blew on it. He repeated the action with his fist pointing towards the rocks near the top of the cliff. After returning the item to his pocket, he closed his eyes and stood still for a few moments.

*There is power in rocks, spirit, energy. They are always related, the spirit energy and people's souls. In this place, fear broke the harmony. The words of the children [i.e., brothers] caused some problems too. Words are like prayers, very powerful. I talked to the spirits here. They are listening. Can you feel it? Her soul is here somewhere.*

Just then, the little girl's father arrived, carrying his daughter in his arms. He set her down close to the cliff and Augustin whispered something to her. In a few moments, she crawled to the edge of the several thousand foot drop-off and sat with her legs hanging over the side. She smiled, and Augustin felt her forehead and smiled back. The fever was gone.<sup>31</sup>

Now, I'll begin my initial (incomplete) fearanalysis for the purpose of uncovering some of the basics of feargnosis. This is really a thought (interpretive) experiment, and I am going by intuition mostly here. First, I re-

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

translate in my own specialist fearological vocabulary the Augustin Ramos teaching to Four Arrows at the beginning just before the “Little Girl Story”...

RMF: *“Listening to/with fear is different than thinking about fear, because it is more primal and less distorted.”*

Corollary 1: Listening to fear *via* wit(h)nessing the action and intention of the *soul*<sup>32</sup> in the fear experience itself puts fearlessness as the imperative “first witness” (at the ‘crime’ so to speak). The soul is based in fearlessness (i.e., a higher 2<sup>nd</sup>-tier consciousness and FMS<sup>33</sup>) and offers a unique perspective and creative response-ability that the 1<sup>st</sup>-tier ego-based (fear-based) consciousness is not capable of. In other words, listen with “fearlessness” to fear, and more will be gained, if not healed and made whole (‘balanced’) again. Think of this in the peer-2-peer relationship dyad, as I am thinking of feargnosis typically involving a process of communications in and/or around the topic of fear (‘fear’).<sup>34</sup>

Augustin Ramos’ 2<sup>nd</sup> teaching in this story is: *“The little girl frightened her soul away... (p. 88) [with the help of her brothers’ re-active or thoughtless actions and words while in a CAT-Fear state]*

RMF: *“Humans frighten themselves to illness (or death)...”*

Corollary 2: Listening to fear (be it the girl’s or the brother’s<sup>35</sup>) as the only guide in the situation, without a Fearlessness Paradigm or perspective, is poor guidance to follow; and each such act of doing so leads to a distorted

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<sup>32</sup> For the moment I am not going to try to define “soul”—that’s a longer discussion for another paper. I just think the word is better than “psyche” or “personality” etc.

<sup>33</sup> In Fisher (2010), such terms as Fear Management System (FMS) and 1<sup>st</sup>-tier and 2<sup>nd</sup>-tier are distinguished using “Integral Theory” (e.g., Ken Wilber). For our purposes here, these are too technical of terms and not that important for basic explanations of feargnosis.

<sup>34</sup> I can think of many writers on fear management, or fear transformation that more or less are aware of the “acceptance” of being with fear is better than denial or dismissing or trying to conquer over fear with will and reason and other such less evolved techniques that do not deeply listen/communicate in/with fear (and in/with one’s relational partner in a feargnosis session; anyone who knows my work/teaching, knows there are some parallels here to Liberation Peer Counseling (LPC) that I teach as well).

<sup>35</sup> The little girl’s older brothers, as fear-based Authorities, in this site of trauma, using Words likewise without a corrective CAT-FAW/N or CAT+ directionality and intentionality, to use Four Arrows’ fearlessness theory CAT-FAW/N (e.g., see details of his theory in Fisher, 2018b), caused harm on top of the girl being scared enough nearly falling to her death.

relationality with the *self/other/fear* dynamic (i.e., *ecology of fear*<sup>36</sup>), and otherwise is what leads to a disconnect/separation process we could call *trauma*.

I am thinking about *fear-teaching* as a category of analysis and then the shamanism reliance on *dream-teaching* and *nature-teaching* (*primal-teaching*) *via*, more or less, an animistic worldview (this I have categorized as FMS-2, which I am asking the question in the Ramos teachings analysis “What can the shamans offer fear management/education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”) My interest is in how primal-teaching subverts the contemporary/modern/colonialist paradigm to attempt to (*via regress*) access “forces” that can assist the Fearlessness Paradigm. I also note that Four Arrows starts his (Indigenous-based) sourcing of fear (Fear) within a Virtues Paradigm<sup>37</sup> as well as *via* Nature (*nature-teaching*), with its rather cognitive-behavioral slant, i.e., meta-cognitive intervention rather than a full Fearlessness Paradigm across the ‘abyss’ of ‘Fear’-barrier-2 on my developmental/evolutionary schema.

So, the above gives me a primal (FMS-2) type of sourcing for the construction of *feargnosis*, and it honors the Indigenous worldview, *contra* the Dominant worldview as a starting place, which analogously is not all that different from the generic Fearlessness worldview (paradigm) and Fear worldview (paradigm). I want to supplement that with aesthetic/artistic, integral, feminine/feminist, “gift of fearlessness” (*dana*) perspectives.<sup>38</sup> It is this combo I have long ago decided will give some of the best sourcing from which a Fearlessness Paradigm can be constructed and enacted today.

Ramos’s 3<sup>rd</sup> teaching in the story: “*In this place, fear broke the harmony.*” (p. 88)

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> *fear-teaching* of Ramos-Four Arrows and the situation in remote Mexico. Most starkly, as requiring a deep listening or unconditional attention to which I can (I believe) work the sourcing hypno-elements and

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<sup>36</sup> “Ecology of fear” is a very complicated term and phenomena, which I won’t go into here but it can be found in some of my writings (e.g., Fisher, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> This is directly related to an ideology of moralism, something I have initially categorized and began to critique, recently in Fisher (2018c).

<sup>38</sup> Note: I am leaving out the “sciences” worldview and perspective and paradigm overall because of its modernist Western and colonizing history and its reluctance if not resistance to critically examined the cognitive-pathologies and fear-based motivational structuration behind it as Maslow pointed to.

suggest how TBL can work *via* a fearlessness technology of dehypnotizing, which both Four Arrows and I are onto<sup>39</sup>—and, my latest form is *feargnosis* (under Fearing). I’m having to proceed slowly and document, and, re-thread the elements to keep the anatomy aligned congruently.

*RMF: “Every fear is in place and belongs in a place; otherwise it is broken loose, sharp-pointed and spinning causing harm everywhere it touches.”*

Corollary 3: Embrace and embody *feargnosis* practices by seeking all the surrounding ecology of fear factors and dynamics to source what it may take to restore complementarity (harmony) of fear and fearlessness again in that event, and all that may follow from it.

### **Feargnosis: The Basics, The Future**

It ought to be clear by now that hypnosis is linked with feargnosis. I believe feargnosis as developed in the years ahead could be the next generation of hypnosis work—but with “fear” (and ‘fear’) at the center of the change and transformation technologies that can come out of this. I don’t believe I have this sorted out or envision as well as it will be in a year or two or three. But, with that in mind, let’s proceed anyways.

Feargnosis is many things, if not mysterious itself. It involves how humans have created, continue to create and/or dramatically (sometimes) play-out discourses in communicating with each other about fear (which is ultimately about fear-relationship dynamics; or what I have called an “ecology of fear”—that is, which includes the fear-fearlessness dynamic and/or dictum<sup>40</sup>). If we focus on the “play-out” part of that description, the implication of feargnosis is that a hypnotic/trance component is at the core (e.g., TBL) of the learning to talk about, imagine, and play-out “fear”—in relationships, in societies, etc. There has been fear-conditioning, in other words, and much of that is unconscious.

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<sup>39</sup> See, for e.g., Fisher (2018c), pp. 2, 6, 181.

<sup>40</sup> “When fear appears, so then does fearlessness” or “*when fear arises, there will be fearlessness*” (Fisher, 2010, p. xxviii).

*Fearlessness practices are trance-hypnotic practices....*

I wrote this some months ago and it is worth putting-out there again for consideration—more accurately, now, I would say fearlessness practices are de-hypnotizing practices, be they conscious or not. The most effective will be conscious (e.g., see Four Arrows’ CAT-FAW/N theory/praxis).

So, if there is a “problem” of which feargnosis is invoked, it might be:

How to create a context of communication so that fear can be the “subject,” “object” and “process” of human beings recovering from past influencing fear-based hypnotic patterns that interfere with living a quality sustainable life, individually and collectively?

So, if there is a “premise” of that problem... it might be:

We are all, more or less, ‘hooked’ on a pervasive “shock learning” system and no more profoundly has that impacted all our knowledge and knowing than in the domain of *fear-knowledge* itself. We need to deconstruct past learning, and re-learn by non-shock-based (i.e., fear-based) learning processes re: our core relationship with fear and fearlessness and each other.

The current spreading Fear Problem is the outcome of poor quality, fear-based learning systems imposed on us (and inducted *via* TBL), more or less, from the time of conception. These can be reversed through systematic reconstruction and anti-hypnotic technologies leading on to be more interested in fearlessness than the typical overt symptoms of fear. This is essential to building a *healing paradigm* and culture over and above the current long-dominating *coping paradigm* and culture—the latter, which has increasingly not managed fear well at all.

*Definition of feargnosis* (coined by Fisher in late Feb. 2018):

The anti-hypnotic technology, used as one type of ‘fear’-vaccination, based on a pedagogical and/or therapeutic concentration between practitioner-learner regarding the presentation of fear-knowledge (literally, *feargnosis*).

There is no one feargnosis practice but many, as creative as people can be in applying the principles behind feargnosis in specific cases.

Meaning & Principles:

The overall purpose of *feargnosis* is ultimately to re-circuit past unhealed hypnotic effects that are related to fear and the acquisition of fear-knowledge (i.e., fear management/education).

The most basic principle of *feargnosis* practice is to work with the fear-fearlessness “natural” dynamic and dialectical flow of self-system regulation *via* collaborative (peer-2-peer) learning, which utilizes a context of some form of fearlessness so that the concentration requirement (threshold) is achieved whereby trance-based learning for positive change can occur—be it of an educative and critical manner and/or a deeply therapeutic and transformative manner.

Assumptions:

If the intention is healing and/or liberation or enlightenment, fear-knowledge is more important to interrogate and learn about than is fear itself or fear(s).

Co-created concentration (also called C.A.T.<sup>41</sup>) is seen as relevant to producing both good communication resonance with another (e.g., as a counselor-client would), and artfully setting a hypnotic language patterning frame for all *feargnosis* practices—the most basic of which is communicating about fear in some quality and attentive sincere way (e.g., with vulnerability not bravado). The communicating may involve sharing as well as teaching about the nature and role of fear in shaping individual and social life.

There is no reason to be afraid of fear itself—any such feeling, thought of being so is because of prior “shock learning” about fear. No one typically receives an excellent education on fear. Feargnosis is the re-learning how to learn effectively about fear and fearlessness dynamics (and, the “ecology of fear”).

The vast majority of what we think we know about fear is false and/or misleading, and needs corrective learning and therapeutic processes (e.g., de-hypnotizing technologies) like feargnosis.

Application Example:

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<sup>41</sup> Concentration, Activated Transformation (CAT for short), is developed by the hypnotherapist and Indigenous-based scholar and educator Four Arrows (aka Dr. Don Trent Jacobs).

If a fearologist for example, is writing an article to teach others to understand better what fear is and how to manage it, they may in some cases decide to do that in new ways based on fearagnosis practices. For example, they may construct a fictional dialogue which “models” the very qualities of the communication effectiveness they seek in their normal texts. This allows for greater accent on timing, word use, tone of voice, somatic (body) gestures, amplification, creating hypnotic induction and so on.

In order to be effective in the above “modeling” of de-hypnotizing, there has to be great awareness on the writers/practioners/teachers part re: “trance” experiences and basics of hypnosis, and CAT-FAW/N theory (at least) as taught by Four Arrows and Fisher. There is thus, a whole course (or many) to be put together on the fine-details and skills and meta-skills involved in fearagnosis work. I trust some of the stories, fearanalysis, and discussion about hypnosis here in this paper will begin to guide readers to sources for more studies, but also to ensure them they actually know the experience of being in trance, of switching consciousness states, and of perhaps some basic techniques of hypnosis. However, the real challenge is to put all of those together into a Fearlessness Paradigm and basic good quality fearwork.

I look forward to your feedback, and future dialogues on this topic.

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