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Unravelling Philosophy of Fear: A Move to Overcoming Negative Fear

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ABSTRACT

Through history, fear has been conceived as something negative with the potency to kill human dreams and potential. Thus, the discussion on fear, as shown in this work regarding the Greek philosophers before the systematic study of “the philosophy of fear” emerged, was saturated with negative ideas about fear. In this work, I traced the origin of fear studies to the ancient Greek philosophers. I acknowledged that this does not imply that other worldviews were not concerned about fear, but there are no or little pieces of literature available as evidence. I argued that the Greek scholars' perspectives on fear were mostly animistic and reductionistic in nature, while acknowledging their negative undertones. Despite agreeing with Subba (2014) on the notion of positive fear, I showed how it has spurred industrial and scientific progress in human civilisation. Likewise, since fear is an existential threat to humans throughout civilizations, I also show how the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian War have engaged the world negatively in a “game of fear” during the early decades of the 21st century. Lastly, against the backdrop of modern challenges that engender fear in the world, I proposed two principles that can be used in overcoming negative fear: “the acquaintance method” and “the love-fear method.” This work was carried out majorly with the method of content analysis—examining the central ideas of some existing literature relating to “fear studies” and the “philosophy of fear”, while also using the deductive method of philosophy to propose the two principles as solutions to the problem of fear.

Keywords: Fear; Philosophy of Fear; Negative Fear; Acquaintance method; Love-Fear Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions make us who we are; they are the driving force behind a variety of human acts, for which there are several descriptive terms in our languages. For example, Averill (1980) claims that there are 550 terms in the English language that correspond to the word ‘emotion,’ but people struggle to describe their emotions to others (Zajonc, 1980). A feeling state comprising physiological, cognitive, and behavioural components is a highly individual and subjective experience known as an emotion (Carlson & Hatfield, 1992). Thus, feelings and emotions are real to people but somewhat difficult to express adequately. Fear is one of human basic emotions.

Fear has played an important role in the evolution and survival of mankind. It may be suffocatingly potent and incapacitating, yet it is necessary for human safety. Fear of death, fear of poverty, fear of the gods, and fear of suffering have been humanity’s most significant phobias. It has been widely documented by Greek philosophers and poets. These anxieties are also apparent in both the Biblical Book of Job and the Homeric literature. One thing is certain about ‘fear’: it heightens a person’s awareness and leads them to assume that their expectations and desires do not coincide (Mikulincer et al., 1990). It is also a prevalent emotion that arises when there seems to be a threat, danger, or lack of sufficient understanding (Wolff, 2006). Whether the danger is real or imagined is irrelevant; what counts is that it makes us feel nervous. The victims may not always be conscious of their fear, which may be very brief or last for an extended period. Fear is sometimes referred to as the future when the predicted outcome is unknown. Fear influences the perceptions, emotions, and behaviours of individuals toward many things and situations.

In my *Philosophy of Fear* (2018), fear is categorized into positive and negative. Since fear is natural to man, elimination of fear becomes impossible. However, there are fears that are caused by man. These are the kinds of fears I refer to as the “accidental fear of fear culture. It is the fear culture or accident of fear that people intentionally design to influence other people’s emotions negatively that the *Philosophy of Fear* is working to overcome.

Fear has a lengthy history in both political theory and in actual politics and society. In many variants of the social contract idea, fear of the state of nature is the impetus for the establishment of government. Fear, according to Thomas Hobbes, first led humans to abandon the state of nature (Thornton, 2005). By choosing to join society, people relinquish their ability to instil fear and grant the state a monopoly on producing this primitive feeling. Without limitations on its ability to instil terror in its subjects, the state risks becoming dictatorial. But without this power, the state can’t protect its people and make sure the laws are followed. Thus, fear is as old as man and human society at large. However, this is expected to be applied from the horizon of love and not from hate.

According to Gu et al. (2019), there are four types of basic emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger, which are associated with three core effects in different ways: reward (happiness), punishment (sadness), and stress (fear and anger). Thus, fear is one of the basic human emotions. The essence of this work is to unravel the philosophy of fear and the proposed solution to negative fear. This paper first exposes philosophical postulations on the methods to overcome the problems caused by fear. This work acknowledges that earlier philosophers have seen fear from a one-sided perspective: negative fear. While acknowledging positive fear, this work delved into discussing fear as an existential problem. The work finally proposed two principles for curbing negative

fear: the “acquaintance method” and the “love-fear method.” In line with the ‘acquaintance knowledge’ theory by Bertrand Russell and the mere-exposure effect from psychology and other sciences, this work argues that familiar things attract less fear than unfamiliar ones. This work also proposes a second principle titled the “love-fear method,” which argues that action should be performed from the background of love and not from hate if we wish to overcome negative fear. This method draws support from the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu and local wisdom from the Hebrew tradition, both from Rabbi Nachman and the Bible, and lastly, Mahatma Gandhi’s approach to nonviolence in the desire to show love in the midst of oppression.

DEFINING FEAR

Fear induces a heightened state of experience and causes individuals to believe that their desires and expectations do not align with reality (Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). It is a normal human feeling that arises in reaction to perceived danger, threat, or ignorance. The threat may be genuine or imagined, but the feeling of threat is often coupled with something definite. This anxiety might be either very quick or relatively long-lasting, in which case the objects are not always aware of it. Most times, fear is a reference to the future: the anticipated result is in doubt and frequently evaluated negatively. In some occasions, fear can be generated from antecedent events. Fear effects how individuals see and feel about various objects and occurrences, as well as how they respond to them. Fear has the ability to intensify irrationality, emotionalism, and distrust in others. There are other comparable notions that might elicit a similar emotion in a person or a group. Anxiety, which is closely connected to fear, is a sensation of unease and concern in reaction to an unidentified threat.

In the general sense, fear is an emotional threat imposed on the mind by thought, act, or object that compels a person to act or not to act based on the interpretation of the imposed thought, act, or object. It is also a strong feeling of threat which causes a person to feel unsafe or insecure (negative fear). In the positive sense, fear is the state of being in awe and respect for God, persons, things or places of honour which have been distinctively recognized because of their unique attributes (Eneyo, 2018).

Fear and anxiety, or its perception, are ever-present in civilizations (Delanty, 2008). Fear may occur consciously in reaction to a specific stimulus or, like anxiety, it can be experienced subconsciously. Fear or apprehension of it may exist implicitly, and when certain frightening events occur, they become actual. It’s part of the human condition. When all external reasons for fear are eliminated, the fear may still persist. People will always find something to fear, and they may even fear the idea that there is nothing to fear. There might be both external and internal causes of fear. External causes indicate that the source of fear originates from the outside, from something present in a society. When the threat is internal rather than external (e.g., an idea or a memory of a threat), it is termed internal. When fears have internal reasons, they are more susceptible to manipulation because they have been imbued with personal significance. The method of persuasion does not necessarily need actual events; emphasising the appropriate idea may be just as powerful. There are no recognised tangible or universal causes for all forms of societal fears. Different events, circumstances, reasons, uncertainties, unknowns, or opinions about them may produce fear in a society. Fear may be political or non-political, depending on the underlying causes. Different fears, such as climate change and environmental and ecological calamities, are examples

of non-political phobias. Political fear is caused by political events, disagreements, and situations both inside and between civilizations.

Everyone is afraid of something or someone, yet what terrifies one person may not affect another. Those who lack fear of specific things are more resistant to persuasion to support the same thing. Uncontrollable events and relational fear create an environment in which certain actors may use the fears of others for their own benefit (Altheide, 2018). In this process of politics based on fear, the objects are impacted by specific fears while the subjects are influenced. Subjects and objects are the actors in the influence process.

When agents that wield influence use it, fear becomes a means of influence. Therefore, fear as a strategy of persuasion may be characterised as the use of political fear in the process of persuasion. Otherwise, without the participation of actors, it is only a framework—the fear itself. A society develops a culture of fear when people anticipate danger and define their daily lives in part by these dangers. A culture of fear is a condition, environment, or society in which fear and worry dominate the political agenda through human manipulations. People have fear of various things in the society, and as a result, these issues become dominant. Fear can be called a culture when fear as an emotion becomes a pervasive and widespread experience and trend. A culture of fear might be an atmosphere that arises from scary events or myths told by some agents to control people's emotions. By creating fear, many agents may also profit from it or even build a culture of fear. A culture of fear as an environment may have a political basis, and it can be easily used to promote and amplify the role of instability, anxiety, and a feeling of disorder in a society and around the world in order to make rational people act irrationally.

ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHERS AND FEARS

Fear was a prominent theme in ancient Greek epic poetry and theatre, and it was a subject that biographers, historians, philosophers, and medics analysed in depth. I will focus on the physiological and pathological components of fear as they emerge in Aristotle, Epicurus, Stoicism, and Galen's philosophy. I will explore their reactions as to what consist fear and their solution, respectively.

Aristotle (born 384 BC in Stagira, Chalcidice, Greece—died 322, Chalcis, Euboea) believed that the complexity of the universe could be reduced to pairs of opposites, such as hot versus cold, dense versus scarce, potential versus actual, etc (Chaisson & Chaisson, 2001). Plato, inspired by the same tradition, made fear the antithesis of hope, stating that fear is the anticipation of evil and hope is the anticipation of good (Cairns, et al., 2020). Thus, fear is the anticipation of such ills as poverty, friendlessness, disgrace, agony, and death, according to Aristotle. According to Aristotle, excellence is the ability to overcome such emotions through virtuous actions, particularly - bravery (Mintz, 1996). Aristotle saw bravery as the midway state between excessive fearfulness and excessive fearlessness. As such, he did not see fearlessness as virtuous (Mintz, 1996). A courageous man or woman does not lack fear; s/he experiences fear but overcomes it. Thus, by behaving courageously, a person can achieve a degree of happiness, because happiness is the regular practise of complete virtue.

Aristotle also divided the soul into three parts, which he spoke of—with variations of terminology in different works—as rational, nonrational, and nutritive (Gottlieb, 1994). He argued that courage, along with the other virtues, must reside in the non-rational part of the soul because that part is the locus of feeling, and courage is a middle way between

feeling too much and too little fear. Fear, then, is a feeling and, as such, an activity; in Aristotle's language, it is a movement or kinesis of the nonrational part of the soul.

Epicurus, like other Greek philosophers, was concerned with the welfare of humanity, which he believed the greatest hurdle for most people was fear. Epicurus presented several common instances of fear and anxiety, which he explored in a didactic manner (Starkstein, 2018). Diogenes of Oenoanda, an Epicurean disciple, recognised two sorts of fear. The first conforms to the conventional understanding of fear, such as avoiding hazardous items (Gordon, 1996). The second kind of fear is vaguer and relates, according to Konstan, to the contemporary definition of anxiety: the fear is concealed inside us, and we cannot easily flee the danger (Gordon, 1996).

Usually, the second sort of fear makes it difficult to attain *ataraxia* (calmness untroubled by mental or emotional disquiet) since it is difficult to locate. The purpose of Epicurean ethics was to obtain *ataraxia*, 'for we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror' (Starkstein, 2018, p. 2). Philodemus, a disciple of Epicurus, summarised the fundamental causes of human fear, as outlined in the first four aphorisms of the *Kuriai Doxai*, 'Don't fear God; don't worry about death; what is good is easy to get, and what is terrible is easy to endure' (Sellars, 2022, p. 73). Thus, for Epicurus and his disciples, the first stage is to remove the fear of the afterlife, which should make it simpler to eradicate the fear of death. They urged that mankind abandon the superstitious components of religion and pursue well-being via scientific inquiry.

Stoicism is a Hellenistic philosophical tradition established by Zeno of Citium in early third-century BCE Athens (Erskine, 2000). It is a philosophy of personal eudaemonic virtue ethics, inspired by its system of logic and its views on the natural world, which asserts that the practise of virtue is both essential and sufficient to attain eudaimonia—thriving through living an ethical life. The Stoics described a life devoted to practising the cardinal virtues and living in harmony with nature as the way to happiness. According to Stoic thinkers, it is foolish to fear something we cannot control. The Stoic conception of destiny meant that human existence was predetermined by 'Divine Reason' rather than by chance, and thus, life must be lived in accordance with nature's plan (Jedan, 2009). For instance, the Stoics believed that fear of death was illogical given that death is a natural process and that mortality is an essential characteristic of being human. The Stoic notion of people as rational creatures by nature explains why their ethical system was geared against irrational emotions, such as the fear of death, and why the Stoic path to pleasure was to follow reason, because a watchful application of reason protects humans against external threats.

Aelius Galen (September 129 AD, Pergamon, Turkey), a Greek philosopher, on the other hand, praised Hippocrates for associating fear with sadness and for recognising chronic fear and sadness as common markers of various varieties of melancholy (Ahonen, 2014). According to Galen, men who are fearful and depressed possess certain characteristics (Kagan, et al., 2018). They dislike one another and abhor their own existence. Some of them yearn for death, while others are terrified of it. Galen connected emotions like fear to fever. In his writings, he developed a complex theory of fevers, which he categorised as temporary, recurrent, or chronic, with the latter category often resulting in death. According to Galen, transient fevers may have medical or psychological causes;

they are often triggered by psychological conditions such as insomnia, wrath, depression, and fear (Kagan, et al., 2018). In each instance of this kind, it is crucial for the physician to identify the emotion that caused the fever, since only then can the fever be prevented from recurring. Galen gives an abundance of semantic information to aid the physician in decision-making. Galen also said that he believed fear to be the source of shaking.

The brief discussions of Aristotle, Epicurus, Stoicism, and Galen above are not meant to be an exegesis of everything the Greek philosophers said about fear. There are many more philosophers that are not widely documented. However, one thing is certain: many factors affected the Greek ancient thinkers in their treatment of the subject of fear. First, they were, in general, animistic; they ascribed all life phenomena to the presence in each individual of some sort of soul. At some point, this dogma affected their perception and solution to the concept of fear. Secondly, they were reductive: they reduced the complexities of the cosmos to a few first principles or to atoms. But there were many varieties of animism and reductivism in Greek thought, and these furnished each thinker with a special matrix, a kind of interpretive grid, within which to develop solutions to particular problems. More so, the Greek philosophers saw fear from a mostly negative perspective. It was only a few decades ago that the systematic philosophy of fear emerged.

In the contemporary era, fearism or fearology as a philosophical movement was kicked started in 1999 by the Nepalese philosopher Desh Subba in an effort to emphasise the good side of fear when he said that ‘life is conducted, directed, and controlled by fear.’ Then, several philosophers of fear contributed to the development of fearism and fearology as academic disciplines. Fearology as a novel method for the philosophical study of fear is popularised in three significant publications by my humble self (Michael Bassey Eneyo) in my works titled: *Philosophy of Fear* (2018), *Philosophy of Unity* (2019), and *The Transhuman World and Its Fears* (2021). The goal of this work is to show the importance of my philosophy on fear to the larger fearological debates and also show its uniqueness.

FEAR IN HUMAN EXISTENTIAL CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Existentialist philosophers over the years have posed questions about the purpose of human existence because they believe that conventional philosophical and other scholarly responses are insufficient for addressing modern reality. Existentialism in-itself, as a field in philosophy was popularised mostly by personalities such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Sren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). And one of the notable themes of discussion among existentialist philosophers—Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Pascal, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Soren Kierkegaard, and Martin Heidegger—was the phenomenon of fear. For these existentialists, loneliness and the various types of Homo Solus (solitary), the lonely person, at various levels of society, demonstrates the complexity of fear phenomenon to humans (Melnik, 2017). From them, fear points to the endless ratio between human experience, objective reality, and science; it also points to the continuous slipperiness of life and its meaning. The personal aspect of the ‘meaning of life and fears’ is intensively developed in modern psychology, but the ontological, metaphysical, and ethical aspects are overlooked by scholars. Herein lies the importance of the emerging field of philosophy of fear. The thinkers who go with the name fearologists or fearists, in about three decades ago were disturbed about the rapid increase of fear in the actual world and decided to interrogate the concept fear to see how mankind can

achieve a goal through fear or derive joy from the act of fear. This desire brought about Fearism Movement.

The recent decade of the 21st century has witnessed enormous existential issues that breed fear. The outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in the year 2019 in Wuhun, China rapidly turned into a global crisis. Psychologically, this process of alteration can lead to feelings of fear, insecurity, and anxiety. This fear and anxiety can be caused by a variety of factors. For instance, a number of studies (Cook et al., 2008; Shirazian et al., 2017; Tucci et al., 2017, Carr, et al., 2021) conclude that epidemics or natural catastrophes raise long-term depression levels in communities and may potentially increase their future suicide rates. In particular, Emery et al. (2021) state that experiencing more distressing events (such as a pandemic) and finding it difficult to deal with them are also predictors of fear, depression, and stress.

Fear of the COVID-19 epidemic drove several nations to enact stringent regulations to prevent its spread and limit people's mobility. The governments of the worst-affected nations, as measured by the number of infections, patients, and fatality rates, including China, Italy, Spain, and Ecuador, have mandated lengthy periods of self-isolation and/or lockdown, during which individuals are required to stay indoors. This fear has had a significant impact on people's living situations, particularly in nations with limited resources, such as those in the African, Latin American, and Asian regions. On an individual level, people were afraid of the virus because they didn't know enough about how it spreads, how it changes (there are multiple types of variants), or if the available vaccine would serve as a viable preventive measure. In earlier outbreaks, such as those caused by SARS or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), the perception of dangerous stimuli has induced similar fears. Given the severe worldwide threats and effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on several elements of human life, health, and development, Ahorsu et al. (2020) developed a scale to evaluate the fear of this infection based on the current scientific literature (FCV-19S). The study shows that fear of COVID-19 was associated with anxiety and, to a lesser degree, depression, as measured by the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and the Depression and Anxiety Stress Scale.

Tsur and Abu-Raiya (2020) also found that fear of COVID-19 is more closely linked with fear and stress than with depression. The high daily rates of new cases and fatalities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the barrage of information that several countries' citizens are given through the media, contributed greatly to the development of mood disorders and fear. At the start of the pandemic, Chinese researchers (Huang and Zhao, 2020) found that some people were suffering from moderate to severe fear, stress, and depression.

Another example of fear influence in the 21st century is seen in the Russian-Ukraine war. The Russo-Ukrainian War broke out as a result of the Russian military buildup encircling Ukrainian territory in 2021, and on February 24, 2022, the war saw a significant escalation when Russia invaded Ukraine (Hardi et al., 2022). Many commentators feel that 'fear' has been Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's most effective weapon against Ukraine and the West. For instance, Putin, for instance, has threatened to halt energy exports to certain European nations in retaliation for a European Union proposal to cap Russian oil and natural gas prices as a punishment for the invasion of Ukraine, while the energy crisis in Europe has already pushed many nations to the verge of recession (Novianto, 2022). Even though the United States, in the meantime, has

significantly increased its natural gas exports to Europe since the beginning of the invasion. However, the United States government faces domestic political pressure to keep a significant portion of this supply as winter approaches in late 2022. As for Vladimir Putin, he can make up for the cash lost by shutting off supply to Europe by selling to other nations. As long as he can get the oil out, even if he has to sell it at a discount, he will keep getting money from countries outside of Europe.

In addition, when the Russian army encounters stiff opposition from Ukrainian troops bolstered by significant infusions of Western military hardware, both Ukraine and the West are concerned that Russia may contemplate using so-called tactical nuclear weapons to get the upper hand on the battlefield. It is important to note that Putin has often threatened to use nuclear weapons if Russia's objectives in Ukraine continue to be frustrated by the West. Putin's annexation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson takes the deployment of a nuclear bomb even one step closer by providing him with a plausible excuse that 'the territorial integrity of our nation is endangered.' By the number of nuclear weapons, Russia is the world's greatest nuclear power (Kristensen & Korda, 2022).

RECENT RESEARCH IN FEAR STUDIES

As indicated above, horrific circumstances such as pandemic and Ukraine-Russian war will continue to impact all areas of human society. Thus, fear studies should be treated more seriously than ever before. It is untenable for people to live in fear of war, terrorism, earthquakes, diseases, bomb blasts, abductions, assassinations, and the continuous murdering of innocent and law-abiding people in many areas of the globe. Numerous more frightening events around the globe have left the planet in an almost traumatised condition. Again, a deep look at the idea of fear will show us that it has both good and bad sides, and it's up to us to find ways to avoid the bad and embrace the good. Recent philosophers of fear, including Desh Subba, R. Michael Fisher, Osinakachi Kalu, and myself (Michael Eneyo), agree that fear has both positive and negative aspects. Fear, as demonstrated in the Greek Era, was defined negatively; thus, viewing fear from a positive perspective is essential.

Fear from positive perspective impart have been seen in the growth of science and technology over the years. This fear has driven modern man to industrial, technological, and information growth, which has brought mankind the advantages of nuclear power, mobile phones, the internet, biotechnology, and transnational travel, among other things. In several respects, these advancements have made the world, or at least the industrialised world, safer and healthier. Consider statistics from the United States, which mirror comparable global patterns among affluent countries. For instance, in 1900, the average lifespan was around 45 years. In the contemporary era, it is approaching 80 (Harman, 1991). In the last four decades, infant mortality has decreased from 26 per 1,000 live births to fewer than seven (Chumakov et al., 2021). Vaccination has brought under control severe illnesses such as polio and smallpox. It is safer to consume water than air. By these metrics, the world is far safer and healthier than it has ever been. Yet, due to the uneven distribution of income and technology, many of these advances have yet to reach underdeveloped countries and the majority of living people. Thus, the benefits of scientific invention are majorly due to fear of the unknown, and death will continue to be of immediate benefit to mankind in the future.

In addition, fear of death and illness has motivated and continues to motivate scientists to enhance contemporary medicine and public health measures that have expanded human lifespans and life expectancy. Improvements in agriculture have made this a planet with a lot of food that can be grown quickly. In addition to our industrial and technical prowess, we live in an age of unparalleled information accessibility and promptness. Due to satellite communications and the broad availability of the internet, we not only get information instantly, but an unprecedented number of us also have the ability to distribute it. When anything that may pose a threat is detected, it is reported globally within hours.

Negative fear, on the other hand, is seen as a strong sensation of danger that makes one feel uncomfortable or uneasy. Negative fears are also known as illogical fears. Negative worries may impair an individual's immune system and lead to cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal issues such as ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome, and diminished fertility. It may cause rapid ageing and perhaps death before its time. Negative fears may hinder the creation of long-term memories and harm some regions of the brain, such as the hippocampus. This might make it more difficult to control fear and leave a person feeling nervous the majority of the time. The world seems terrifying to a person with chronic fear, and their memories support this. Negative fear disrupts the mechanisms in our brains that enable us to manage our emotions, interpret nonverbal signals and other information offered to us, contemplate before taking action, and behave ethically. This negatively affects our thinking and decision-making, leaving us vulnerable to powerful emotions and impulsive responses. All of these impacts may render us incapable of proper action. Negative fears may also result in mental conditions like exhaustion, severe depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

OVERCOMING NEGATIVE FEARS

Fear is an inherent aspect of the human experience; everyone gets to experience fear. For example, hearing footsteps inside your home while you are alone is a legitimate reason to be fearful. Fear might be improper as well. However, the problem with fear is its negative strand. There are mainly four sources of fear: natural sources, abstract sources, cultural sources, and spiritual/religious sources. Apart from natural sources, the other three are often culturally based fears. A "culture of fear" is a pattern, attitude, or approach of using fear as a threat to appeal to people's emotions for decision making. These are fears derived from the cultures, beliefs, traditions, ideologies, political policies, customs, and world views that can be eliminated through awareness, education, understanding, acquaintance, and love. The majority of these fear cultures have a negative impact. This is not to say that a fear-based culture cannot be positive at times. In this work, I will propose two principles to solve the problem of negative fears:

Acquaintance Method (familiar things attract less fear than unfamiliar ones)

In his 1910 writings, 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description' and chapter five of 'The Problems of Philosophy' (1912), Russell introduced the notion of acquaintance to modern philosophical literature. Russell (1910) states that a person has a 'direct cognitive relation to the object, *i.e.*, when [the subject is] directly aware of the object itself' (p. 108). In another work, he adds, 'we are acquainted with all of which we are immediately conscious, without the mediation of any conclusion or understanding of facts' (Russell, 1912, p. 46). According to Russell, acquaintance knowledge arises when

the individual has direct or unmediated awareness of a propositional fact. In contrast, descriptive knowledge is inferential, mediated, or indirect propositional knowledge.

However, in this work, I refer to the two strands. It should be noted that Russell's "Knowledge by Acquaintance" only gives justification to my adopted "acquaintance method" and not necessarily the same thing. Again, that acquaintance knowledge that something is the case is more than direct knowledge. In the end, acquaintance knowledge is a kind of knowledge that needs the individual to hold a belief under the appropriate circumstances. A subject is not required to believe anything just because they have firsthand knowledge of it. From the aspect of Acquaintance method – this work argues that familiar things attract less fear than unfamiliar ones. Thus, every person is to make endeavor to be familiar with their fears. The application of this method is related but not the same with Russell'.

For example, it is common for children to have particular fears at some point throughout their childhood. Sometimes, even the most courageous minds beat right up against their limits. As a child gets a deeper understanding of the world, some things will become more perplexing and un-terrifying. As the child gets older and more familiar with the object or the situation of the perceived fear, the more the fear fades away. Unconsciously, humans give preference to familiar objects and people. This also suggest that we ought not to run away from things that cause us fear, rather, we should get close to them, study them, understand them, and then neutralize the fears in them by this familiarity. It is in this sense that I said that fear is not to be feared. Psychologists have shown that the more often you encounter someone, the more prone you are to develop romantic feelings for them. Even if the stimulus is unfavourable (such as an abusive relationship), people will unconsciously take comfort in its familiarity. Even from an evolutionary standpoint, it seems logical that familiarity leads to comfort (Monin, 2003). Thus, something or a situation with which you are acquainted with is less likely to cause you to be afraid. Humans' natural instinct is that they do not want to take risks with the unknown. Psychologists have found that the number of things we are acquainted with (like types of music, foods, activities, and places) is directly related to how happy we are.

In psychology, this is called the Mere-exposure effect. The mere exposure effect is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals tend to acquire a preference for familiar items or individuals (Zajonc, 2001). Exposure several times builds familiarity. In 1876, Gustav Fechner performed the first documented investigation into the effect. Several other scientists, like Robert Zajonc, proceeded to investigate this phenomenon. For instance, Zajonc (2001) hypothesised that the more often individuals are exposed to a certain stimulus, the more likely they are to recognise it and create their own opinion about it through reflection. In his investigations, Zajonc (2001) specifically revealed that respondents evaluated provided stimuli more favourably than equivalent stimuli that were not shown.

In relation to fear, neuroscience has shown that in the human brain, uncertainty feelings are identical to failure (Singer et al., 2009). As a result of how unsettling the sensations linked with change may be, many individuals would want to avoid it. People can train their brains to pursue a route of positive feedback rather than a negative feedback loop, similar to an athlete's muscle memory. They must continually embrace change and remind themselves of all the instances in which they have made a change for the better. So, you may teach your brain to welcome rather than fear change.

Love-Fear Method

Many people adopt fear-based appeals or approaches that are selfishly applied, perhaps for personal gain. Negative fears are majorly cultivated by some individuals and groups as a method to influence people's emotions and decisions. Such a method of fear approach is what I tagged as the "Hate-Fear approach or method." When people act in order to instill fear in people as a means to achieve their goals, such an approach is said to have emanated from the background of hate. The Love-Fear approach or method is when a fear approach or method is used for the good of the person the approach is directed at. In other words, the approach is directed toward helping the person make the right decision. When a fear approach is applied from a love motive, it reduces the rate of fear. In this approach, positive words and actions are used to reinforce the message or action that creates fear. Negative fear can be overcome when we approach a fear problem with love.

In the Tao Te Ching, the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu declared, 'Through love, one has no fear' (Anatole, 2009). Saint John the Apostle also expressed the same sentiment, 'There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears being made perfect in love' (Jeffery, et al., 2007, p. 319). The argument from the two authors shows that love dispels fear; thus, love is the antidote to fear.

To emphasise this argument further, I will refer to the local knowledge available in the Hebrew tradition. Specifically, a prayer line composed in the early 1800s by Rabbi Nachman (1772–1810) of Breslov. The prayer was broadcast as a song to Ariel Sharon's forces during the Yom Kippur battle in 1973. Since then, the song has become an integral part of Israeli society, with hundreds of variations available in several styles, many of which are profoundly felt and touching. A particular line of the prayer states:

וְהַעֲיֵ מֵאֵד צַר וְשָׂרָה בְּלֹן הָעֲנָלִים כָּל ל

The world is but a narrow bridge, the important thing is to not be afraid.

The phrase captured above from Rabbi Nachman's prayer line stated that being humans should make us understand that the world is dangerous, but it is not to be fearful. It is important to state that the composer Rabbi Nachman endured intense fear and personal suffering during a period of profound transformation for the Jewish people. For instance, during his life time, in certain regions of Europe, violent anti-Semitism coexisted with Jews obtaining access to more possibilities. However, neither he nor any of his contemporaries could have foreseen the acceptance they would have had in the next century. They maintained trust and optimism. They overcame their fears with constant reminders.

The prayer line above reminds mankind that overcoming their fear is the most significant achievement they can accomplish in life. Even in the most difficult situations, fear may be redirected toward acceptable and possibly even good reactions, which may seem implausible to some individuals.

How then, can one move on in the midst of fear? Like love, fear is a powerful motivator. Both fear and love can motivate humans to take the best care of people they can be. For instance, like lessons from the Jewish historical experience, their entire history has been intimately entwined with fear. This narrative is well visible in documents and commentaries revealing systemic oppression in which they experienced, from tyrants and dictators who have struck terror even in the most courageous Jewish hearts on

numerous occasions. Judaic history has taught humanity that, as a people, the only way to survive and cherish the world is to learn how to overcome fear with love. This rationale can be found in the biblical book of 1st John 4:18, which states, ‘There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love’ (New King James Version). Thus, love drives out fear.

Let’s now turn to Mahatma Gandhi’s historical feats to justify the statement above. In ‘All men are brothers: Autobiographical reflection,’ published in 1992, Gandhi was quoted as saying, ‘Having flung aside the sword, there is nothing except the cup of love which I can offer to those who oppose me. It is by offering that cup that I expect to draw them close to me’ (p. 89). Gandhi confronted the largest colonial force in the world. He resisted the United Kingdom and was resolute to liberate India from its chains without the use of weapons or bloodshed, opting instead for peace. He came from a privileged upbringing but committed himself to the poor, the vulnerable, and the defenceless in order to liberate them from colonial servitude. Even the most powerful Britain could not defeat a unified people who were resolved to plan and control their future through nonviolence and love. Mahatma Gandhi was caught more than a dozen times and served seven years in jail altogether. He was identified as a crook. Nevertheless, he persisted despite beatings, maltreatment, and death threats. He is quoted as saying, ‘It is no non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us’ (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p. 312). His weapon of ‘love’ against his oppressors made him become one of the most famous leaders in history. His teachings have penetrated the minds and emotions of billions of people from generation to generation and even to future generations. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described Mahatma Gandhi’s thus;

Gandhi resisted evil with as much vigor and power as the violent resister, but he resisted with love instead of hate. True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love... If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk (Iodici, 2017, n. p).

Importantly, Gandhi’s definition of nonviolence is not predicated on ‘a negative condition of harmlessness.’ Instead, it is founded on a positive mood of love for doing good to everyone, even the evildoer. It is founded on the everlasting rule of love and continues to be the most successful method for resolving personal and international conflicts. On the other hand, violence breeds more violence. Gandhi believed that the best way to end violence was through nonviolence based on trust and compromise. Gandhi associated violence with ‘untruth’ and urged avoiding any type of compulsion since it would only encourage the opposing side to use the same tactic, jeopardising the quest for the truth, which is the ultimate objective of those who desire peace. Gandhi saw nonviolence as the ‘truth’s litmus test.’ Gandhi grounded nonviolence in the desire to nurture and love. Non-violence is built on the inner strength of love, while violence is founded on the desire to employ coercion arising from fear.

It should be noted that critics will argue that Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violence and love principles can only be extended to fellow humans and not phobias. However, it should be noted that it is possible to love even the most difficult situations. Ibrahim & Vidovich (2021) advises, ‘Do one thing every day that scares you.’ To overcome fear, one

must love and enjoy the entire process. Judy Blume is of the opinion that ‘each of us must confront our own fears, must come face to-face with them. How we handle our fears will determine where we go with the rest of our lives. To experience adventure or to be limited by the fear of it’ (Messias et al., 2020., p. 112). John Lennon summarises the positions ‘There are two basic motivating forces: fear and love. When we are afraid, we pull back from life. When we are in love, we open to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance. Evolution and all hopes for a better world rest in the fearlessness and open-hearted vision of people who embrace life’ (Blattner, 2016, p. 261).

Lastly, love is stronger than fear, but if we don’t allow love to inspire selfless action in the world, fear will triumph. Love can overcome fear, but only when people engage in it. Only when we put our confidence in love, only to the extent that we let love feed us in whatever situation. Only when we let love binds us to one another and to actual events. And only when we are prepared to sacrifice everything it takes for love to flourish.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to encourage someone to overcome their fears, particularly if the fears are strong. Fear is a natural component of being alive, and the vast majority of people grow up with at least one irrational phobia. Humans do not like to be harmed, kidnapped, or damaged, yet sometimes the fear of mental agony is greater than the fear of physical wounds. However, it has been shown in this work that negative fears can result in mental conditions like exhaustion, severe depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Thus, there is a need for philosophers to propose solutions to this societal problem.

In this work, I have proposed two principles: the ‘acquaintance method’ and ‘the love-fear approach’ to solve the negative fear problem in human society. Using lessons from Jewish tradition, Gandhi’s position of nonviolence and love, as well as theories from Bertrand Russell and the Mere-exposure effect from psychology, to show that the principles are not only right in theory but also workable in real life.

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