



# *Fearontology Musings:*

*Work in Progress*

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[Editor's Note: The material for this article was originally created from a few blogs Kalu published on the Fearlessness Movement ning in the last year, and from rough notes he had sent to me for a potential article he wished to co-write but wasn't going to get to it for some time, as many other life-priorities took over. I offered to put some 'musings' together playfully, and at times slightly edit things for him. He had final edit of the excerpts below, and submitted them to *IJFS*]

musing

noun

mus·ing | \ 'myü-zin \

**Definition of *musings***

MEDITATION, "My *musings* and writings on this issue do not come from the groves of academe." — Herbert S. White

## **BEING OR REALITY OF FEAR**

Is fear a noun or a verb?

When this question is asked most people tend towards their dictionary for meaning. But that does not settle it. The fearologist goes beyond the dictionary or lexicon meaning to answering this question. This doesn't mean the dictionary stand is wrong but only suffices for grammar or etymological sake.

In fearological inquiry as has been on the traditional metaphysical understanding of being, since fear is a “being”, it is both a noun and a verb. When you use it as a noun it is SUBSTANTIV, but when you use it as a verb it is AKTIV. When it is a noun we are talking about ‘ontology’ (SUBSTANTIV). When it is a verb AKTIV it is ‘knowledge’.

### Two Primary Categories of Being

1. Potency- it is possible being (fear). Imagined fear or fear thought of. It can be remote or proximate.
2. Act – A developed reality. Fear present.

WITH THIS, WE HAVE FINALLY DISCOVERED FEARONTOLOGY.

## FEARONTOLOGY

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### SEARCH FOR THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF FEAR

#### Abstract

No matter where one looks at the vast literature on fear, there is often some effort by authors to clearly understand what fear is all about. However, their definitions typically lack the depth of philosophical rigor required to truly understand fear. This initiative generally seems not to be isolated to a particular subject or field of inquiry. However, the ontological foundation of fear seems to remain hazy or somewhat difficult for many to understand. Many writing, even the most serious authors on fear, have often not looked at or reflected in this ontological direction. Through a new fearological inquiry, we suggest (as co-authors) that one would realize that since fear is a being and it exists, that knowing its ontological foundation will help in crafting a better understanding of what fear is. And, as such, this ought to foster a more rigorous, accurate and healthier teaching, analysis, facilitation and management of fear. Indicators in many domains of contemporary human existence point to the need for better ways of fear management/education. The ontological ground of fear is what this paper seeks to unravel. We claim the result of such an investigation, uniquely fearological in approach, provides a more sufficient way to know the ground of the being fear and the dynamics of how it relates to humans and/or how humans relate to being fear.

WIKIPEDIA: In philosophical ontology, **ontic** (from the Greek *ὄν*, genitive *ὄντος*: "of that which is") is physical, real, or factual existence.

The ontological refers to the Being of a particular being.<sup>1</sup> To understand the ontological nature of fear requires knowing its ontic (what it can or does) ground. What makes fear different from other emotions is its ontic nature. To do this, one needs to understand what emotion is and then simply decides which type of emotion it is and how it operates in reality.

The emotions are the paradigmatic example of an affective dimension in our lives.<sup>2</sup> Another word for emotions is *passions*. This word derives from the Greek *pathos*, via the Latin *passio*, which means to be suffering. This suffering does not primarily designate pain but passivity, that there is something to which one is exposed, something that happens to one. Aristotle distinguishes between *praxis* and *pathos*, that is, between influencing and being influenced,<sup>3</sup> respectively. The emotions, in this use, are not considered as being self-initiated but as something one, in a sense, receives.<sup>4</sup>

One cannot choose an emotion just like that. If one is sad or afraid, one cannot simply choose to have a different emotion that one is more comfortable with. We can influence our emotions in a more indirect way, for example, by placing ourselves in a situation where a certain emotion normally arises. We also possess a certain ability to get rid of an emotion or to suppress it. And we can certainly work on our own emotional life

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<sup>1</sup> "Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology", <https://grattoncourses.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/ontological-vs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Lars Svendsen *Philosophy of fear*, p.40

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Princeton, nj, 1985, 323b1ff. See also *Metafysikken*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1002b15

<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Solomon, 'On the Passivity of the Passions', in *Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice*, Oxford, 2003

and shape our emotional dispositions. It is clear, however, that our emotions will not necessarily conform to our will.<sup>1</sup>

“Heidegger also seems to be of the opinion that fear is an emotion that will be concealing...”.

To experience a given emotion is to experience being in a particular situation to which one has been abandoned. All human perception is conditioned by the situation in which perception takes place, and this situation, quite fundamentally, has an emotional dimension. We can say that the emotion is a condition for something being able to convey meaning in a situation. For an object to be able to appear as frightening, amusing or boring, the situation where the object is encountered must be one with a corresponding emotional potential. Heidegger's used the term *Befindlichkeit* to explain how fear demonstrates human life.<sup>2</sup> This describes how it is to *find oneself* in this world. To find oneself in the world is to be exposed in the world, to experience the world as a place that contains meaningful and indifferent objects. This 'being in the world' has a basically emotional nature; it is the emotions that enable certain objects to be perceived as meaningful and that, strictly speaking, make participation in the world possible.

For Heidegger, we primarily regard objects around us as things to be used, although at times we are notified that these things are “unusable, contradictory or threatening.”<sup>3</sup> This is only possible because our being-in-the-world is constituted in such a manner that things

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<sup>1</sup>Lars Svendsen *Philosophy of fear*, p.41

<sup>2</sup>Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 141

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p.137

can affect us in such a way. It is this being-in-the-world that enables anything to be experienced at all as threatening. For Heidegger, emotions are not purely subjective but rather “the fundamental way in which we are outside ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> In explaining this he asserted

An emotion is the way we find ourselves in our relation to beings and thus at the same time in our relation to ourselves; the way we are attuned in relation to beings that we are not and to beings that we are. In the emotion the state opens and holds itself open, in which we have dealings with objects, ourselves and human beings. The emotion is itself this open state . . . Here it is important to realise that the emotion has the nature of opening and holding open, and that it therefore can be concealing<sup>2</sup>.

An emotion gives you access to yourself and to the outside world, but precisely because emotions are able to open up these subjects in such a way, they can also conceal, and thus give you an inadequate view of both yourself and the world. Heidegger also seems to be of the opinion that fear is an emotion that will be concealing:

We become afraid in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect. Fear in the face of something is also in each case a fear for something in particular. Because fear possesses this trait of being ‘fear in the face of’ and ‘fear for’, he who fears and is afraid is captive to the mood in which he finds himself. Striving to rescue himself from this particular thing, he becomes unsure of everything else and completely ‘loses his head’<sup>3</sup>.

For Heidegger, that which is feared is something that has not yet been realized, something that exists as a menacing possibility that is drawing closer. The feared object “radiates harmfulness.”<sup>4</sup> The crucial thing is that this harmfulness has not yet been realized,

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Erster Band*, Pfullingen, 1989, p. 119

<sup>2</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Erster Band*, p.62

<sup>3</sup>Martin Heidegger, ‘Was ist Metaphysik?’, in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe Bd. ix* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976), p. 111, and [evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/heidegger5a.htm](http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/heidegger5a.htm).

<sup>4</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 140

and that there is a possibility that it will not do so. Fear is thus closely associated with uncertainty. This uncertainty can be described as a basic feature of human existence. In fear, a fundamental determination of my being is revealed, that is, the fact that I am exposed.<sup>1</sup> At the same time as fear uncovers something about me, it also conceals me from myself.

Heidegger also stressed on the *nowness* of fear – that one is locked in a situation and thereby loses something of one's freedom. He writes: "The temporality of fear is an expectant, present-making forgetting."<sup>2</sup> That which is forgotten is "one's self", or rather, "one's own options."

The point is that the future, as a field of possibilities, is restricted since one directs one's attention solely at the present threat. One loses oneself since one's attention is concentrated on what is threatening. Fear is a kind of emotion, but not all emotions that brings tenseness, are fear. Svendsen influenced by Heidegger believed that, an emotion such as fear is a way of being present in the world. On the other hand, a world you fear is a place where you can never feel completely at home.<sup>3</sup>

*"Fear is not self-aware."*

According to Heidegger, one loses sight of one's possibilities in fear. Jean-Paul Sartre, for his part, stressed that "It is by throwing myself at my own possibilities that I escape fear."<sup>4</sup> Sartre has an understanding of emotions in general and of fear in particular

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 141

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, on *Sein und Zeit*, p. 342 asserDie Zeitlichkeit der Furchtsteingewärtigendgegenwärtigendes Vergessen'.

<sup>3</sup> Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, p.43

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *Erfaringer med de Andre*, trans. DagØsterberg and Halvor Roll, Oslo, 1980, p. 146

that differs considerably from that of Heidegger. For Sartre, each emotion has in a certain sense been chosen, and thus it can never eliminate the field of possibilities. Sartre considers emotions as intentional strategies. According to him, emotions are an attempt to change the world *via* a “magical transformation” of it. The analysis of fear is a clear example of this, since fear is claimed to be an intentional strategy where the subject attempts to remove – in a ‘magical’ way – an object. It ought to be fairly obvious that this magic is not very often successful, as an object seldom disappears simply because one fears it. When this magical strategy fails to work, the subject resorts to flight. Fear, then, is not the cause of flight, as is normally asserted, and flight is not the cause of fear either, as the James-Lange theory proposes – flight is rather a substitution for a fear that does not affect the magical transformation intended by the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Emotions are unreflected, according to Sartre, and by that he means that they take place without the objects of awareness.<sup>2</sup> In fear, awareness is directed towards the object of fear and not towards fear as such. Fear is not self-aware. For that reason, emotions are also something that – despite being the intentional products of the subject – partially elude conscious control. We cannot simply transport ourselves into a particular emotion by wanting to have it. On the contrary, the emotions ‘capture’ awareness and make it ‘passive’.<sup>62</sup> And thus we would appear to be in the same situation as that described by Heidegger above, where fear shuts out one’s own possibilities. Sartre, however, seems to believe that the awareness of fear being precisely the own, intentional product of the subject opens up the possibility that one can regain a certain amount of control over it. Because the

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, trans. B.Frechtmann, New York, 1986, p. 63

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, trans. B. Frechtman, New York, 1986, p. 52

feeling of fear has been chosen, it can also be deselected in favour of other possibilities. For Sartre believes that we ourselves decide what meaning we are to ascribe everything that surrounds us in existence and how we are to allow it to influence us. In relation to fear, this means that I myself choose to form an ego that fears various things and events. I could, however, have chosen to form a different ego that would have related to my surroundings in a different way. This is why Fisher believes that when fear comes in, fearlessness also emerges.<sup>1</sup>

It can be useful to describe emotions as habits. By that I do not mean to denaturalize the emotions completely, just to stress that our emotional apparatus is malleable.<sup>2</sup> Emotions are not simply something 'given', but something that can be cultivated and changed.<sup>3</sup> Habits can, generally speaking, be described as acquired responses that people are normally unaware of, but which they can be made aware of. Habits are based on repetition of an ability. Can one then say that fear is a habit and as such a virtuous one? Or a vice? In the light of Dario Composta, Virtue in general and is defined as *habitus operativus bonus simpliciter*.<sup>4</sup> *Habitus* from the "habere" (Greek "hexis" from "echo"), which means something different from being ("esse" Greek "einai"): one has if one is; to have is a possession coming after being. Therefore not given by nature, but which is necessary to acquire. From this point of view of *habitus* meaning an accident, it becomes a *secunda natura*, a second being. From this of view, the *habitus* rest between "nature" *physis*<sup>5</sup> and act. The *habitus* perfects being and inclines it into action. *Operativus, virtue is not a habitus speculativus*

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<sup>1</sup> cf. R. Michael Fisher, *The Worlds Fearlessness Teachings*, 52-55

<sup>2</sup> Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, p.45

<sup>3</sup> Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear*, p.45

<sup>4</sup> Dario Composta, *Moral Philosophy and Social Ethics*, Rome, Urban University Press, 1987, p.53

<sup>5</sup> From the Greek *Phusikos* meaning physical properties in nature or even nature



but a *habitus operativus*. It is not theoretical but that which spur human into action.<sup>1</sup> *Bonus Simpliciter* virtue is that which makes human good unlike other certain capacities that is good in certain ways.<sup>2</sup>

However, as we continue, this ontological discovery, one would understand where *fear* falls; into whether it is a virtuous emotion or an amoral emotion in its nature....

This question forms the basis of the ontological foundation of fear in reality. The question could be rephrase thus, is fear inherent in human? Most people (which I was part of) believe that fear is inherent in human. But that may not be true. The argument is always thus, since fear is a kind of emotion and humans are emotive being, they must possess this emotion fear in them. If that is to be the case, there shouldn't be anything like a *fear factor*. Although it is the mind that dictates fear, some of its postulation may not be true. A practical example is that what A fears is different from what B fears. That is to say that the operation of the mind determines what is fearful. Hence one cannot in a stricter sense say that there are objects of fear. Because what most people call objects of fear or factors of fear in the real sense are not fear related reality. They exist in the way they are supposed to exist. Some of them do not possess the capacity of "intentionality"<sup>3</sup> and as such cannot intend to project fear. It is the human mind that dictates which action is fearful. Hence fear does not have an empirical locus except for consciousness. It is an 'emotion' and as such different from 'feeling'. As an emotion, it is experienced by humans alone. Since the three core ways existential

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<sup>1</sup> Dario Composta, *Moral Philosophy and Social Ethics*, p.54

<sup>2</sup> Dario Composta, *Moral Philosophy and Social Ethics*, p.55

<sup>3</sup> Intentionality refers to the notion that consciousness is consciousness of something (cf. Phenomenology, Existentialism and Some Contemporary Philosophers by Stephen Azubuiké Oguji)

consciousness is being looked at, a) every individual is responsible for his life, b) fulfilling life is possible. Implying that one can live an authentic life and c) life is decimated by human choice. Building on this backdrop, one can say that fearlessness is possible and is a matter of choice. [to be continued... ]

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