

Fear – Protector and destroyer

Understanding and overcoming fear with Psychophonetics

By Yehuda Tagar ¹

Amongst the multitude of human emotions fear is one of the most common and powerful. From babyhood to our last day - fear is our constant companion. We could not survive without this protector. But fear is also our prison, our distortion of reality, a trigger for our aggression, a killer of trust, love and friendship.

Is fear a protection, a necessary basic equipment for survival and life – or a destroyer of peace and human community? In this article I will try to show that it is both: protector AND destroyer, and that with Psychophonetics² it is possible to distinguish between the two. I will also try to show that the conscious process of exploring and overcoming fear is an essential component of soul maturity and personal growth, and, on a higher level, a threshold of personal initiation.

There can be no doubt that fear is an essential equipment for life and survival. Babies seem to be born with it. It is being activated with any threat to life's essentials. It is a constant warning that our existence is not secured without being taken care of. It is our constant alarm.

On the other hand fear is deadly. When the witches of Shakespeare's Macbeth are being told off by Hecate, their ruler, that they are not fast enough in destroying him - she advises them how to speed it up: work on his security fear, she says, because security is 'man's chiefest enemy'. It worked.

When tyrants the world over get the fear/security inflammation activated – they start to destroy their own people systematically, and inevitably themselves in the end. From Ivan the Terrible in Russia to Bloody Mary in England, from Robespierre in France to the British concentration camps in South Africa, to Franco, Musolini, Stalin, Hitler and Pol Pot. The inborn instinctive fear of survival becomes inflamed, takes over, and acts as political paranoia. They control and destroy their own people through heightening the fear instinct.

But when the people lose their fear – tyrants cannot control them any more. This is how revolutions erupt, regimes change, empires fall, nations wake up to themselves and reclaim their human rights. When President Roosevelt acted decidedly to turn America around from the great depression in the 30's his key motto was: "We have nothing to fear – but fear itself". It worked, just in time to prepare the American response to Hitler. From the Winter Palace march in St Petersburg to the desperate rebels of the Warsaw Ghetto, from the Arab Spring of late to the Democracy protesters in the streets of Hong Kong – when people overcome their fear - governments cannot control them. Fear paralyses. Overcoming fear mobilises new energies.

What is the basis of this polar nature of fear, between the protector and the destroyer?

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² Psychophonetics is a modality of psychotherapy and psycho-development based on Rudolf Steiner's Psychoscopy, combining Methodical empathy and non verbal modes of communication for the exploration and transformation of human experience.

In trying to explain this strange phenomena I classified four sources of human fear; two of them are essential and useful; two of them are fundamentally destructive. Only in overcoming them – health can be restored.

- 1) The first source of fear in the instinct for survival.** We share it with all the animal kingdom. Earthly life is short and we are anxious not to die before our time and to function well while we live. Every mouse, cat, dog, lion and human being share it. It operates on the individual as well as the levels: bees, birds, wolves and people are prepared to fight bravely and to die for the protection of their families and tribes. No one can and no one should get rid of the basic, existential instinct of survival. We need that fear to survive.

The first fear is essentially a protector. But it can become inflamed, manipulated, neurotic and psychotic to various degrees, morphed into anxiety, panic and paranoia, becoming a source for sickness, becoming the destroyer.

- 2) The second source of fear is the defence against emotional pain.** It is the most common one after the fear of survival. It is 'normal' to fear rejection, abandonment, failure, loss, separation, loneliness, betrayal, fear of being blamed, of being hated, being ridiculed, being unloved. It is essential for the baby and the child. For them the basic ingredients of human love and care are mean survival: if my mother loves, cares and understands me – I will survive. If not – I will not. I need to belong to a family and a group in order to survive and grow.

The second fear is a protector in childhood but it is most definitely a **destroyer for adult relationship and development.** Emotional pain in adulthood needs to be acknowledged, explored, re-experienced and healed. Allowing fear of emotional pain to control adults' behaviour forms a block for personal and social development and a destroyer for self and for relationship. All helpful forms of psychotherapy aim at the raising of awareness, healing and integration of the fear of emotional pain. Defence mechanisms of avoiding emotional pain at all cost are the major sources of psychopathology. Healing the source of emotional pain *is* psychotherapy and personal development. In Psychophonetics we coach people to acknowledge, explore, directly experience and express fear of emotional pain, overcoming the resistance to feel it, and feel it fully in order to heal it. We do it through Methodical Empathic conversation combined with body awareness, gesture, visualisation and sounds. In this process the emotional pain becomes as available for care and healing as a physical one.

- 3) The third source of fear is the fear of *not* fulfilling one's human potential in this life.** Much less conscious than all the other fears - I believe it to be the deepest. It is the fear of failing the major tasks and responsibilities of one's life: to be true to oneself, to express one's true being in one's life, to find and fulfil one's life task, not to waste one's life, to discover, cultivate, express and offer one's true gift, whatever that is.

Underneath all the presenting issues that people have ever presented to me in 25 years of working as a psychotherapist there lives this fundamental wish: 'I wish to become who I truly am, to do what I came here to do, to discover and to express fully my true human potential'. It does not always come in these words but in different forms – that is the essential request. It seems that all of us came to our lives with a specific potential and with a serious intention to fulfil it. Deep down we know that it is up to us individually to fulfil our potential and task - or not. We know this fulfilment is not guaranteed to happen. We know that time is limited and life is short, that it takes preparation, focused work and a lot of time and energy to manifest our true potential in this life.

There is a healthy fear that it might not happen, that life will come to its inevitable end and we have not done what we came to do. This, in my view, is a healthy, necessary fear. It can be mobilised easily by a skilled counsellor, psychotherapist or friend who is awake to the urgency of it. Don't relax about it, don't medicate it, don't put it to sleep or suppress it. Use it. **This fear is your friend, a reminder, a necessary alarm, not your enemy.**

4) And then there is the fourth source of fear – the fear of death. We all share it. Very few of us consciously prepare for our inevitable death and even fewer arrive at this threshold ready. We fear the end of all that we know as our identity - before we have an identity that cannot die. We fear the total annihilation of our soul – before we discover in our soul something indestructible. We fear the great unknown across the threshold of our bodily death – before we touch in ourselves something that lives across that threshold. Socrates, the founder of Western philosophy, said that the purpose of all philosophy is to be prepared for our death. The Philo-Sophia worked for him, he was indeed prepared for his death when the moment came. He knew in himself that which cannot die. But we modern western people – how many of us are going to be ready to die? Most of us live in the shadow of the fear of death all our lives, hiding behind the thin veil of our little securities.

The fear of death must be overcome for a human being to be at peace. For it is madness for the soul to believe that it will disappear into nothingness. No one is truly prepared for that scenario, even if we claim it philosophically. We are inwardly prepared for the body to die, not for the soul to die. The fear of death must die in us or we will through the development of a free, inner identity, freeing us from the frightened identification with that which must die. That is the only healing from the destructive fear of death.

These are the four major sources of fear. Two of them are primarily protectors and the other two are primarily destroyers which must be overcome if we are to continue growing as adults.

Because fear can be at the same time protector or a destroyer - conscious exploration of it is necessary in order to see the difference. Acknowledged fear can be encountered, explored, overcome and be replaced by courage. Un-acknowledged fear sinks into the helpless body where it becomes organ-anxiety, panic, stress and physical illness. It is an individual choice.

Those who choose to come to know their fear will find a practical process to do it. One of such processes is Psychophonetics. There are many good others. But intellectual reflection alone and endless verbal conversation, speculation, analysis and interpretation - is not a match for the reality of fear. Fear is real, in order to know it we must use a deeper kind of intelligence than reflection can offer. Fear must be made known and overcome. The life of our soul depends on it.