

# John Hollander

## Fear Itself

AS A PRELIMINARY TO FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF FEAR, PARTICULARLY in a political context, I would like to comment on the language by which we have traditionally designated fear of various kinds: for example, acute (such as fright) and chronic (such as dread), personal and collective. I shall discuss one celebrated pronouncement about fear in a political context at the beginning; it is only toward the end of my remarks that I shall return to the political agenda of the Fear conference for which this paper was prepared.

We might start by acknowledging both acute and chronic kinds of fear—as we might do with rage (the chronic modes of which are certain forms of hatred and resentment). William James wrote of “grief, fear, rage, love, in which everyone recognizes strong organic reverberation” as “*coarser* emotions” that he opposed to “*subtler* emotions . . . whose organic reverberation is less obvious and strong” (James, 1983: 1063).<sup>1</sup> But it may be that the coarser emotions have subtler counterparts, often unacknowledged in discourse about them. Darwin on fear (quoted by James at length [1983: 1062-3]) speaks of a very coarse fear, what I will call *acute* fear. I think a lot of what was discussed at the Fear conference was, in James’ terms, a subtler emotion, which I will classify as *chronic* fear. And we could also recognize metaphorical “fear,” as we do when we use figurative “hunger,” a metonymy for all desires, and—most particularly in the twentieth century—metaphorical “pain.” The word “fear” can figure in public discourse, even on political matters, in just such figurative senses, even as literal fear, acute and chronic, can be instilled and controlled with brutal delicacy for political purposes, tactical and strategic, as well. Acute fear is usually experienced more

intensely, and for much shorter periods, than chronic fear. But it does not necessarily follow that (again, when speaking of political purposes) it may be produced tactically, as opposed to chronic fear's being instilled strategically.

If acute fear was studied by Darwin and his followers as an emotion, it may be more useful to consider chronic fear as a condition, but a condition whose character can itself vary along many axes, such as, for example, from apprehension pointed and specified—which may sharpen and focus other aspects of awareness—to vaporous and generalized, which may dull and depress other aspects of consciousness. But before confronting either of these terms and what they may imply, or the relations of fear to other feelings, I will consider for a moment how fear has been assigned a preeminence in the past.

“There is no other [passion] whatever,” wrote Montaigne, “which carries our judgment away sooner from its proper seat” (*qu'il n'en est aucune, qui emporte plustost nostre jugement hors de sa deuë assiete*) (Montaigne, 1958: 52).<sup>2</sup> He explains that sometimes [fear] gives “wings to our heels . . . sometimes it nails down and fetters our feet,” calling attention to how acute fear can produce either the hyperactivity of panic or the momentary catatonia of astonishment. It is only the circumstances of each particular case, with chance always playing a part, that determine whether heels in flight or rooted to the ground will turn out to have been prudent or foolish. But in neither case could a successful outcome have been other than inadvertently arrived at—one cannot be said to have been wise by accident. This argument suggests that both running and being unable to run could be considered equally an obvious, or a counterintuitive, default. And when reflexive, as in panic, it is in no way the result of proper judgment. In any event, behind all this seems to be the view that what is wrong with human fear is that it is human and not animal. (And, <sup>3</sup>with some circularity, that what is wrong with humans is that this fear is the fundamental emotion, driving other drives.) Such a deeply chronic fear is itself to be feared—not, as with Montaigne, in its acute attacks, but rather as a distrust of the human condition itself.

The text that will leap most to mind on the topic of the acute distrust—indeed, the fear—of fear is more recently modern, and more overtly political:

This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance (Roosevelt, 1938: II, 11).

This famous formulation—from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first inaugural address of 1933—was the introductory theme of an effective song of reassurance for millions of troubled children. (I would not call it a “lullaby,” as the great cartoonist Saul Steinberg characterized the presidential speeches of Ronald Reagan.) The rhetorical hyperbole of “the only thing” instead of the more plausible (“at the moment, the chief [thing we must fear]”) goes back to Montaigne in the essay just quoted (“The thing I fear most is fear”; he goes on to add that “it exceeds all other disorders in intensity”) (Montaigne, 1958: 53), and to Francis Bacon’s *nil terribile nisi ipse timor* (Bacon, 1872: I.697),<sup>2</sup> and—perhaps most directly—to Henry David Thoreau’s probable quotation of it in his observation that “Nothing is so much to be feared as fear” (Thoreau, 1906: VIII, 468).<sup>4</sup> But leaving this aside, we might still find some deep problems with the notion of the fear of fear. If the second *fear* is capitalized we have a personification, as in the allegorically framed language of poetry, where the noun might be embodied in an acutely frightened personage named *Fear*—such is the case in Edmund Spenser’s 1590 *The Faerie Queene* (II.vii.221) where at one point we are told how “trembling Feare still to and fro did fly / And found no place wher safe he shroud him might” (Spenser, 1908: 274). Here we are presented not only with a frightened personification, but, more interestingly, with the notion that fear can find no hiding place (although Freud a few centuries later will suggest that the Cave of Repression is a capacious safe-house). Spenser

also invites us to wonder what it is that Fear is afraid of, or, indeed, if it is itself fearful at all, but rather, perhaps, guilty or ashamed. Another kind of personification of fear might be, say, a mythical beast of some acutely menacing sort—something frightening rather than someone frightened. Or, in a more complex mode, a figure of Anger might be imagined, which can kill fear or, in other situations, proliferate it, but may not feed on it, fear giving anger indigestion.

There is, of course, more to Roosevelt's phrase than a trivial paradox or a possibly fruitful poetic conceit. After all, what we fear from fear itself is the consequent behavior of the fearful ones. If these be others, then the fear may be prudent. If it is our own fear we fear, the matter may be more complex. Modern discourse shuns allegorical thinking, and analyzing out of the interpretation of the phrase a mythical beast named "fear" at least leaves us with some plain questions. Do we all have to be afraid of (a) frightened people? Or of (b) what frightens such people (for fear of infection?) Is it the private fears of the frightened about which we might be apprehensive? There does not seem to be an element of prudence in this case. Do we distinguish between the direct object of the fear and the effects of being frightened by it? Can we generally be said to be *afraid* of being *frightened*, that is, being in chronic fear of suffering the acute condition? Would we be afraid of how we might ourselves behave?

We might want to inquire about what personal or political circumstances we might have apprehensions concerning fear itself.<sup>4</sup> Roosevelt's assertion—and I call it that, although the phrase was apparently added to Roosevelt's draft of the speech by Louis McHenry Howe (1871-1936)—was of course a device of political rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> We might remind ourselves here what logicians call the difference between use and mention, in this case, between using and perhaps further deploying fear itself to repress or otherwise control, and using discourse about fear—however crude or subtle—to perform more delicate rhetorical operations—to "spin," in recent terminology, for example. It is clear enough from Roosevelt's speech that he seems to be referring more to acute *fright* than to gnawing, lingering, modulating *apprehensiveness*,

to “nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance” One aspect of Montaigne’s fear—the usurper of reason and fetterer of our feet, but not the stimulus to flight—was the kind at issue here.<sup>6</sup> While some part of the political strategy shaping the rhetoric may very well have been to deal with its other aspect—the wings at the heels heading the fearsome toward some kind of Marxism-Leninism—a major part of it was undoubtedly to create some trust for an administration smart enough to know that simply saying “trust me” would be taken by a desperate nation as one more flag of inauthenticity.

I note that I have momentarily referred to kinds, aspects, and modes of fear without any systematic taxonomy. It is easy to list some of these fears; among them would be

- Fear of one’s own death. There must be many kinds of this fear, including fear of experiencing the precise moment of one’s own dying; of the consequences of dying: of something in an afterlife (versus fear that there is no afterlife), so that a larger issue, usually called “fear of the Unknown” (I will speak of it shortly) is engaged by this, as well as fear of something personally imagined, in the absence of any data but hearsay. Francis Bacon, in his essay “Of Death,” is memorable on this matter: “Men fear Death, as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other” (Bacon, 1937: 6).<sup>7</sup>
- Fear of the death of another (*timor mortis conturbat me*)
- Fear of pain and other bodily suffering (do we call this “fear of loss”?)
- Fear of loss of liberty, in confinement or otherwise
- Fear of punishment involving either of the above and other impositions

- Fear of “change”—a feeling, say, that one’s general perceptions and maintained values were becoming merely idiosyncratic
- Fear of heights or extreme enclosure or extreme openness or of whatever is in one’s personal Room 101—as the chamber of horrors in Orwell’s *1984* was called, particularly designed for each person’s configuration of personal fears. But here we might wonder whether the dreadful anticipation of Room 101 is a fear of experiencing a specific *fright*? Would this be then a sort of meta-fear?
- Fear of something in a dream: The content and indeed, even something about the narrative structure of nightmares can be alarming, terrifying, horrifying, or acutely revolting in abundant ways. Is it that only the awakening/awakened person feels the physical effects of fright? But one can also *dream of* being in a state of chronic fear, as opposed to the acute fright just mentioned.
- Fear not “of the Unknown” but of what has been called in literature a “nameless fear,” fear induced by some unknown object. And this perhaps compounded by a meta-fear of disorientation in not knowing specifically what one was feeling frightened of. And is it useful to differentiate between “fear of (x)” and “being afraid *that* (x might happen, or turn out to be y, etc.)?”

And—as we have noted, whatever might or might not be meant by the fear of fear itself.

Even this brief list calls for a number of different words for different fears. Perhaps right at the beginning, we might rule out of consideration here the use of the verb “to fear” designated in the Oxford English Dictionary sense 2c, and indicating at most an awareness of some unpleasant probability, and more likely with no sense of fear or acknowledged danger or alarm at all, but merely—as the OED puts it, “I regret to say; I regretfully or apologetically admit, report, etc.; I suspect; I am inclined to think.” Such evasion of a truthful statement of one’s

own fear often moves into a complex figurative use of the verb in which it is apparent that it is a lie as well: “I’m afraid that you’ll have to look for work elsewhere” is more like a lie than “I fear that [or, more colloquially, I’m afraid that] I must ask you to look for work elsewhere.” This last truthfully addresses the unpleasantness of the confrontation, rather than the pleasure at the departure of the undesirable subordinate.<sup>8</sup>

Various sorts of fear may or may not be invoked in the array of terms such as *fright*, *dread*, *terror*, *horror*, *panic*, *alarm*, *dismay*, *dread*, *consternation*, *trepidation*, *apprehension*, *anxiety*, and *timidity*. In the names of these states or conditions something other than the acute vs. the chronic, the imminent vs. the immanent, may be variously connoted.<sup>9</sup> *Apprehensiveness*—predicted bad outcomes of anything involving oneself, or people or institutions one cares about—may be so strong as to be thought of as dread (Kierkegaardian and otherwise). *Apprehension*—from *apprehend* = to seize or “grasp”—designates a conceptual or even intellectual act, rather than an emotional passion, and implies a sense of (grasp of) adverse future events. The noun *panic*—in whose first syllable lurks the name of the Greek god—was at first adjectival, used to modify nouns like *fear* or *terror* to indicate that they were the sorts of condition resulting from the powers of Pan, perhaps because, as Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon has it, “Sounds heard by night on mountains and in vallies were attributed to Pan, and hence he was reputed to be the cause of any sudden and groundless fear.”<sup>10</sup>

*Fright* suggests a pointed fear, a sharp penetrating instrument, *dread*, a more general condition, a cloud of apprehension. *Terror* derives from the Latin *terrere* = to tremble. Its sense clearly arises from neurophysiology—the “bodily changes” as the physiologist Cannon called them—long identifiable in a frightened person.<sup>11</sup> *Terror* may relate to both acute fright and prolonged dread, but—and this is crucial for the matter of political fear, which I shall get to shortly—as an inner state, it results from hostile intentions by a human agent or agents. One cannot say that one has been *terrorized* by a virus, or even by what people may do out of fear themselves that might maximize its virulence: *terrified* is the proper word here. As opposed to *terrify*, the more modern

verb *terrorize* (nineteenth and twentieth centuries)—to coerce or deter by threatening to further terrify—was formed on the analogy of the older term *tyrannize* and seems to inherit from it a political agenda. (For an institution or even an individual to terrorize someone else is to become thereby the tyrant, and that someone else, the subject, of an ad hoc absolutist regime.) And the purely political term *terrorist* dates only from 1795 in England and has a limited local reference to the French revolutionary Jacobins as agents of *la terreur*. The use broadened in the nineteenth century to cover other revolutionary agents, and the implicit grammatical construction shifted to imply *terrorizers*—coercive intimidators who sought to instill a state of terror in others.

At one more benign extreme of any spectrum of terms for fear would be the word *awe*. Although deriving from an Indo-European base meaning to be frightened or afraid, the admixture of wonder, reverence, terror and admiration. In its distant relation to an intense fear, it is implicitly construed as ultimately enabling, rather than petrifying or driving to panic. Its subjects do not suffer, but instead prize their experience of it. Its objects were traditionally divine or otherwise transcendent; and by the eighteenth century a mode of purely secular awe became adapted to the notion of the Sublime, which in some English art theory rose above the Picturesque and the Beautiful in intensity and importance. What is important here about the way sublimity was construed in pre-romantic and romantic thought was its crucial touch of terror—in, say, the more than beautiful prospect of alpine heights—or (and this particularly in the nineteenth century) of the power and depth of the ocean. Edmund Burke, the great theorist of the Sublime, uses just this example:

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to

look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous . . . to things of great dimensions, if we annex an adventitious idea of terror, they become without comparison greater. A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean: but can it ever fill the mind with anything so great as the ocean itself? This is owing to several causes; but it is owing to none more than this, that the ocean is an object of no small terror. Indeed, terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime (Burke, 1968: 57-8).<sup>12</sup>

Also to be considered is a kind of near pornography of fright and acute apprehension—not of other kinds of fear—that has been aesthetically cultivated in narrative throughout history. It even extends to play fright in childhood amusements and scary stories that produce wonder—itself pleasurable—and sometimes laughter. These aestheticized fears and mild frights are indeed framed in the certainty that they are fictions, and the feelings of *frisson* they induce are rooted in the security coming from that certainty. (But this is already close to Aristotle's observation cited earlier.) It might also be asked how close an aesthetically pleasant feeling of suspense comes to one of acute apprehension. And do we assume that it is *ceteris paribus* a bad thing in itself to frighten other people? And not for profit or gain, but as in enjoying making other people laugh by telling jokes, in some pure way? Could one be an artist of fright without being a sadist? Or is that, by definition, logically impossible?

What might more directly concern us today is a question of how much the aesthetic sublime itself is engaged by the rhetoric of rulers and ruling institutions. Propaganda in the service of strengthening authority will dispense falsehoods and other sorts of fictions, but it has another component of grandeur and trust.<sup>14</sup> Compelling spectacle used for such purposes must often be more than attractive—it could only be with bitter condescending wit that one would call a Nuremberg rally

“picturesque.” Indeed, a thought experiment might try to imagine Leni Riefenstahl’s *Der Triumph des Willens* as if it were purely fictional—that Hitler and Nazism never existed, and that this was a sci-fi or dystopic vision. Would it not then be sublime in the eighteenth-century sense? But in that strict sense, it may not have been for the film’s audience, but rather something else. And for the members of the all-too-small portion of it that had already been wishing they were living somewhere else, the fears it enhanced were chronic as well as possibly acute.

Other moderated forms of fear have been traditionally adduced in relation to other feelings or beliefs. The Hebrew Bible speaks of the fear of God and of the heavens (*yirat elohim* and *yirat shamayim*), but this fear is construed as a positive state, neither enervating nor panicking, and seems a mixture of awe and apprehension, with a particular focus on attentiveness. The fear and the love (*ahavah*) of God are paired, and the *ahavah* seems to have affected various rabbinic interpretations of the nature of the *yirat*, even identifying them at some points. But from another point of view—that of the entity or person feared—we might note Machiavelli’s famous observation:

Upon this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life and children, as is said above, when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you (Machiavelli, 1908: 134).

We often deal with someone else’s fears (and note how the English phrase “the fears of another” could cast “another” as source or locus of the fears in question), and in so doing might distinguish between

rational fears and irrational ones. To the child, all fears are rational, and yet many children's fears are irrational for us: the child may even have learned the grammar of cause and effect, but not the empirical substance. We generally think of apprehensiveness as being more rational perhaps based on knowledge and reasonable inference, rather than a more irrational an extended form of fright. What, then, of "irrational fears"? Policy questions seem unconcerned with them, save that people who have them may be possessed of other internal disruptions that may cause them to act in ways that society claims—often legitimately, perhaps—needs to notice and deal with.<sup>5</sup> But these questions of objects of fear, individually constructed or construed (in French, the verb is the same) are nonetheless interesting. Someone's unconscious or otherwise unacknowledged fears of some  $x$ —perhaps even rational ones—can be projected onto an irrationally feared  $y$ . The direction of such projections can be a device of the rhetoric of social control (a fear of Al Qaeda blatantly directed toward Iraq by the contrivances of the present administration, for example). Or, more generally, the state governing by fear can appeal to a general and even reasonable fear of chaos.

IT IS THIS GENERAL RUBRIC OF FEAR AND POWER THAT HAS BEEN THE concern of political thought. I have considered so far the power over its subjects of Fear as personified or objectified. A familiar topic is that a certain amount of fear breeds respect for a ruler. Machiavelli is clear on this matter. A more modern qualification of this notion—based on the contemplation of domination, from whole colonial populaces to individual members and victims of street gangs or corporations—would add that fear may only breed the false show of respect to hide a loathing felt to be too dangerous to exhibit. An object of fear might be the ruler (whether individual, or a group or class of any kind), or some entity facilitated or even manipulated by the ruler in order to gain "love" and respect and trust. Again, Machiavelli is exemplary in this matter:

Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred; because he

can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated, which will always be as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for manifest cause, but above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony (Machiavelli, 1908: 135).<sup>15</sup>

It would take a modern Machiavelli to plot out the effectiveness of various kinds and degrees of acute and chronic fears, and which of them can get what kinds of people what to do or not to do what under which circumstances. (Elias Canetti's massive *Crowds and Power* goes into these matters in some detail). I should imagine that a manual of such matters would have to contain a good bit not only about the methods of instilling the fear, but of the fine-tuning of what kind, how much, where, and when. Yet being more in the position of subjects of political fears than of objects of them, we should want to sketch the territory of what I have loosely called "political fear" in a very different way.

Among various "political fears"—acute and chronic, emotional and speculative— would be (1) the apprehensions, of inhabitants of democracies in times of crisis, for the fragility of the *quos* of their social contract even as the *quids* become harder to pay; (2) fears of being insufficiently protected both *by* the agents of social order from hostile individuals and organizations and *from* those very agents themselves. But these are complex matters.

To know with certainty that one will die, or die soon is by no means the same as fearing death. To know with reasonable certainty that if one waltzes onto the freeway, one will be probably be killed or injured, does not necessarily mean that one lives in constant fear of vehicles on the freeway. To know that if one assaults a police officer in full public view, one will go unpleasantly to the slammer, is by no means to be living in fear of the police.<sup>16</sup> And yet one might wonder:

Are there people living in totalitarian societies who can be said not to live in fear, but in an honest and rational appraisal of their situation? In the way that we “respect” the sea (perhaps, as in the example of what we have come to call the police state), so that in fact we need not fear it? In other words, where is the boundary between being in fear and being prudent? And when do people in any society start lying to themselves when too much unacknowledged fear is felt to be part of a rational process? Ultimately, would we not ourselves fear having to be that prudent? Under ordinary circumstances, considering what may have to be reasonable choices between freedom and safety, we may indeed fear being in fear of the state, rather than being in fear of the enemies of the state (and to a good degree, of ourselves as individuals?). Are the police powers we dread simply like a weapon, dangerous to all of us when inappropriately used, but well used, helping to keep us unafraid?<sup>17</sup> Is it then better to keep someone in constant fear of “the law” when, free of fear and unconfined by conscience, acknowledgment of the rights of others, the person would do great harm? And if conscience doth make cowards of us all, is it acting benignly? Or is conscience a terrorist itself?

I SHOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE BY RETURNING NOW TO FRANKLIN DELANO Roosevelt’s other famous pronouncement about fear, from his January 6, 1941, address to Congress, in which he propounded the notion of “four freedoms”:

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world (Roosevelt, [YEAR]: [PAGE]).<sup>6</sup>

Some of what I have been considering may lead us to ask what kinds of fear were being invoked here. From what kinds of fear might

a presumably benevolent state contract to free its citizens? The fear of Death? No, religions are in business to do that for most people, and perhaps philosophy for a fortunate few. Fear of accidental disaster? Of incapacitating illness? Fear of the consequences of the malice of others? (Such fears might be minimized, but never totally dissipated.) Fear of betrayal by a friend or lover? (Certainly not.) And perhaps more interestingly—given that this was a political speech in a particular context—what kinds of fear might *not* have been palpably meant to be understood? First, it was clearly acute fear of imminent defensive war, as well, perhaps, as chronic fear of the immanent threat, the Damocles' sword. But consider the circumstances: this very speech is urging the American public, through Congress, toward greater participation in a war, thus making more imminent, what was—he implicitly argues—immanent for the United States in any case. By following “want” with “fear” in his catalogue, Roosevelt implied a connection like that between pain and fear drawn by Burke, as if the supplement to each were something that a state should supply. One might argue that the point of the sentence was perhaps implicitly to instill in its listeners a local and immediate type of fear—in this case, a reasoned apprehension of the long-term effects upon the United States of unchecked German aggression in Europe. And, given the functions of the Lend-Lease agreement Roosevelt had proclaimed a few days previously, it was defending not a reduction, but a transfer of armaments.<sup>18</sup>

But the formulation is nonetheless a telling one. There seems to be an implicit ulterior sense that hope dispels fear. Indeed, the very utterance of the phrase “freedom from fear” purports to offer hope—even if only in the public and official acknowledgment of a pandemic fear. But underneath that, there may always be the reminder that perhaps utter despair—hopelessness—may itself render one fearless, as with Milton's Satan, trying to take more than mere comfort from his condition: “So farewell, hope and, with hope, farewell fear” (Milton, 1968: 614, l.108). We feel fear, but not its absence; so that “freedom from fear” is something we can only *acutely* experience in a moment of relief when a fear is dispersed. And yet chronic freedom from fear is taken for granted.<sup>19</sup>

But then, again: do we all have a *right* not to be afraid? Yes, perhaps—of some things, although surely not of others. We surely do not feel a right not to have to be cautious, or even apprehensive, for example, nor to abandon whatever motivates the eternal vigilance that we have been wisely told is the price of freedom.

Roosevelt's words directed attention to fear of an enemy, but without any specific regard to fear of any sort of enemy within. The state, acting to allay some fear, may employ fearsome means. Many of the concerns of the Fear conference involve expressions of rational alarm about the manipulation of our fellow citizens by the deployment of irrational fears, fears serving to misdirect much of the populace from what it should indeed, again, quite reasonably, dread. One might personally confess to feeling more and more afraid that more people are not afraid that they are being kept in ignorance by a government that rejoices in, and employs, engines of ignorance. Those engines have developed in this country through the decline of our educational system of intelligent literacy. And while fewer and fewer people have any grasp of what knowledge is or could be, more and more are being encouraged to articulate their ignorance. And yet, for example, while I would like this nation to exhibit the rate of literacy that Cubans are said to enjoy, I fear the consequences of the means by which this has been achieved, and can only hope that those consequences are not inevitable for any such forceful means. Such a fear is neither panic nor caution, but somewhere in between.

Thus it could be found somewhat frightening that more people are not a bit frightened of what this administration seems to be doing. It has plotted and launched a counterproductive war that implicitly aids and abets the terrorist forces that indeed menace our lives. And then it has used an inauthentic agenda of national security that undermines a legitimate one in order to undo rights and liberties. And it does so in a way that makes one almost believe that such an undoing was the primary focus, and the war a bit of mechanism.

What is the word for that alarming lack of alarm? The term “unafraid” is usually reserved for exemplary or “heroic” figures (and

was it after World War One that they began gradually to be replaced by the modernized heroic figure who is wise enough and humane enough to be afraid and yet can act as if he were not?). On the other hand, those whom we think should feel some fear in order to be prudent on everyone's behalf, and who nonetheless are not, do not seem "unafraid" but merely "foolish." In other words, we should still fear panic—whether we consider it to be more or less dangerous, by way of collateral damage, than popular rage. But again, perhaps we should fear a lack of apprehension, a recklessness of passivity, which is only foolhardy. In short we may feel ourselves to be in want of appropriate and sufficient fear itself.

## NOTES

1. Professor LeDoux's paper in this issue provides an impressive neurophysiological basis for James's "coarse" category as well as for the informal term "visceral" as applied to the deepest emotions (a term obsolete after the later seventeenth century and only revived again in the 1930s). Professor LeDoux's results suggest that we might substitute the term "amygdalic" for "visceral" or "coarse."
2. Francis Bacon, Montaigne's follower, in considering Fortitude with paired propositions pro and con, echoes Montaigne's sentiment (*De Augmentis Scientiarum* VI.21):

Pro	Con
Nil terribile nisi ipse timor. (Nothing is to be feared except fear itself)	Praeclara virtus, velle perire ut perdas. (A noble virtue, to be willing to die yourself in order to kill another!)

—although the retort "con" responds not to the observation about fear directly, but speaks with contempt for all warfare.

3. The more direct notion that there is something essential—and essentially corrupting—about human fear was famously put forward by the Earl of Rochester in 1675. Speaking of the animals and the purity of their motives, he concludes

For Hunger or for Love *They* bite or tear,  
Whilst wretched Man is still in Arms for Fear:  
For Fear he arms, and is of Arms afraid;  
From Fear, to Fear, successively betray'd.  
Base Fear, the Source whence his best Passions came . . .  
The Good he acts, the Ill he does endure,  
'Tis all from Fear, to make himself secure (139-44; 155-6)  
(Rochester, 1932: 188-89).

7TEXT OF FOOTNOTE THREE IS MISSING

4. The specific context of the remark, however, indicates that it is not a visceral fear, nor the product of aggressive intimidation, but an intellectual one, born of bad faith: "Miss Martineau's book is not so bad as the timidity which fears its influence. As if the popularity of this or that book would be fatal, and man would still not be man in the world. Nothing is so much to be feared as fear. Atheism may comparatively be popular with God himself."<sup>8</sup>
5. I am indebted to Raymond Teichman, supervisory archivist at the Roosevelt Library, for this. In a December 8, 2003, letter to me he observed that

Howe claimed to have picked it up in an advertisement appearing early in January in a New York newspaper. Raymond Moley, Roosevelt's chief brain truster, remembered that the phrase appeared in a department store's newspaper advertisement some time earlier in February. He assumed that Howe saw it too. Later researchers have been unable to verify this fact. Furthermore, the draft with Howe's addition of the phrase is not to be found in any known collection. Samuel I. Rosenman, Roosevelt's chief White House speechwriter, remembered that Mrs. Roosevelt suggested that Roosevelt added it to the speech as a modification of Henry David Thoreau's "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear." Raymond Moley disputed this,

stating that neither Howe nor Roosevelt was familiar with Thoreau's passage.

6. It might be observed that the distinction might be tripartite. Consider, for example, the three stories of fear in modern warfare: paralyzing, propelling into active avoidance that is officially called cowardly, propelling into valorous acts. Might one want to distinguish between species of fear producing these different effects? Or merely three different operations of the same agent?
7. Schopenhauer writes most interestingly on the fear of death generally (1958: II. 463-510). Colin McGinn (1999: 171-3) points out that the fear of death has no clear object and that it fuels other sorts of fear of "the unknown." Nietzsche denounces what he calls "fear of oneself" in *The Gay Science*, no. 294.
8. In the first instance, that angered individual might snarl on his or her way out, "You're not afraid at all, you [whatever]"; in the second, "I'll bet you are!" would be appropriate telling. Both the semantically related words *horror* and *fright* have developed extended, almost comic uses—as in "He/She looked a fright in that awful hat".
9. The English word *fear* comes from the same old Germanic vocabulary stock that gives us *fright*, *scared*, and *dread* as well. *Fear* derives from the Old English word for "danger" or "a sudden calamity," and comes from the same Indo-European base as (the French and ultimately Latin) *peril*—notions we tend more to associate with the acute condition designated by *fright*. The verbal form—to *frighten* (or the older to *affright*)—has a parallel in *fear* that is grammatically active but instrumentally quite different. Because of Y's nature and relation to him, X may experience both fright and fear, be *frightened* or *afraid* (that word deriving from the Old French term for a brawl or public quarrel—English *affray*—and a sense of having been assaulted and injured as a bystander may still lurk in it). But he will *fear* Y, while Y *frightens* him. *Dread* operates as a verb the way *fear* does. It may be of interest that of the adjectival forms, *fearful* applies to the subject of the feeling or condition, and *fearsome* or *feared* to the object producing or eliciting it,

- whereas *dreadful* and *dreaded* both apply to the object.
10. Stories more or less elaborated, accounting for the origin of the expression, are found in Plutarch's *Lives* (Langhorne's translation [1879: II. 701/2]), Polyænus's *Stratagems* (written ca. 160 AD; cf. Potter Greece III. ix.).<sup>9</sup> The OED on *panic* also touches on the matter of unfounded fear in its elegantly formulated "A sudden and excessive feeling of alarm or fear, usually affecting a body of persons, originating in some real or supposed danger vaguely apprehended, and leading to extravagant or injudicious efforts to secure safety." Andrea Alicato's Emblem (No. 123)—"Sudden Fear"—shows Pan blowing his horn, watching two horsemen flee (in various vernacular versions it is made clear that it was only the sudden noise that scared them off). The emblem's motto could be revised as "The Startling." (Alciato, 1621: 123).
11. A line from Psalm 56 has become allusively resonant: "Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." It is St. Paul's quotation of this (Philippians 2.12: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling") to which Kierkegaard's famous title refers. Paul's words here are identical with those of the Psalm in the Greek text of the Septuagint, *phobos kai tromos*. Some of the same regard for physical expressions of the feeling of sudden fear marks the line from Virgil's *Aeneid* (II.774) that Montaigne uses as the epigraph to his essay: Aeneas reports upon the ghost of his wife, Creusa, killed in the fall of Troy: "*obstipui, steterunq̄ue comae et vox faucibus haesit*" ("I was astonished, my hair stood up and my voice stuck in my throat"). And our words *horror*, *horrid* originate in the Latin *horrere*: to cause to stand on end (as hair), to bristle, to be rough; to shake, tremble, shiver, shudder.
12. In the remainder of this passage, Burke considers the terminology of fear in Greek, parallel to the observations I have been making about English: *thambos* is in Greek, either fear or wonder; *deimos* is terrible or respectable; *aideô*, to reverence or to fear. *Vereor* in Latin is what *aideô* is in Greek. The Romans used the verb *stupeo*, a term that strongly marks the state of an astonished mind, to express the effect of either of simple fear or of astonishment; *attonitus* (thunderstruck) is equally expressive of the alliance of these ideas; and do not the French

*étonnement*, and the English “astonishment” and “amazement,” point out as clearly the kindred emotions that attend fear and wonder?

13. Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (1850) lists the “the impressive discipline of fear”—the terror essential to the Sublime—first among the inner processes that preserve the power and vividness of remembered scenes:

—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight  
Wearied itself out of the memory,  
The scenes which were a witness of that joy  
Remained in their substantial lineaments  
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye  
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus  
By the impressive discipline of fear,  
By pleasure and repeated happiness,  
So frequently repeated, and by force  
Of obscure feelings representative  
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,  
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,  
Though yet the day was distant, did become  
Habitually dear, and all their forms  
And changeful colours by invisible links  
Were fastened to the affections (Wordsworth, 1959: 37-38).

14. See Stephen Orgel (1975) on these questions as they relate to the Stuart court in England.
15. But note Nietzsche (1974: 242) in *The Gay Science*, no. 379: “[I]n hatred there is honor; finally, in hatred there is *fear*, a good and ample element of fear.”
16. But to certain views of the world (for example, the pure anarchist) these are all fear, unacknowledged but fear nonetheless. This is not my view of things.
17. Fears, for example,

- (1a) of not being protected from individual hostile agents, unsanctioned by the state;
- (1b) of not being protected from the worst consequences of natural disasters, such as earthquake, volcanic eruption tempest, fire and flood and pestilence;
- (1c) of not being proactive, rather than reactive, with regard to such disasters (is this criminal negligence, “malign neglect,” etc.);
- (2) of not being protected from pseudo-agents—individuals acting as implements of some attacking other state;<sup>10</sup>
- (3) of fear of the pseudo-agents of one’s own state: “fear” of detection and punishment for some criminal act, or of “false accusations,” either resulting from error or individual malice, or as a willing device of fraudulent justice. (But for anyone—a career criminal or a psychopath, for whom the idea of a social contract is meaningless—must such a person consider him/herself to be the oppressed inhabitant of a “police state” (meaning, for most of us, a well-policed one?))

18. This speech went through seven drafts; the sentences on the four freedoms were written in the third of these. See Laura Crowell “The Building of the ‘Four Freedoms’ Speech” (1955: 266-83).

19. On this see Schopenhauer (1958: II.575).

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#### AUTHOR QUERIES

- 1 Please provide full citation information in References for James
- 2 please provide full citation information in References
- 3 deleted "perhaps" here and elsewhere; word was overused in the article.
- 4 sentence is unclear; please review and recast
- 5 Please review this sentence; something is missing
- 6 please provide missing information here and full citation in References
- 7 Text for footnote three is missing; please provide
- 8 not clear who the quote is from; please review the footnotes up to this point and renumber, etc., as necessary to correct. Also, please add

citation to quote here and to full References.

9 unclear what Potter Greece is; Potter's *Greece*? Please clarify

10 change to: individuals acting as the implements of another attacking state? Original is unclear