

FEAR & IDENTITY

Are you who you think you are?

Many of us have spent decades in this lifetime. Yet I wonder how much time we have spent reflecting on the question, “who am I?” A fairly fundamental question which millions of us never address.

Each one of us started out as a fertilized egg and we spent approximately 40 weeks in utero. One of the facts of science is that after between 12 and 14 weeks in utero, we have something called a neural tube. Once that closes, we live off the same electromagnetic field as our mother. Essentially, every human being is its own electromagnetic field. So if our mother is depressed, that’s what we feel. If she is happy, so are we. If she witnesses a bad car accident, we witness the impact too. Even prior to conception, we inherit two ancestral lines. The maternal and paternal ancestral line. Scientists got excited in 2003 because they demonstrated that each one of us is affected by seven generations.

So we are influenced by our ancestral lines. For some people it’s much more controversial but you could also say that we have many past lives that influence and affect us in our current lifetime.

It used to be the case that experts maintained that when we were born we were a tabular rasar, a blank slate. They thought that each baby had it’s innocence but I hope you can see that there’s actually quite a lot happening before we come out of the womb.

The Swiss psychologist, Piaget, has had an influential impact on child development theory. He examined 4 or 5 different stages of development and it’s really the first stage that I’m most interested in discussing. He called the first stage sensorimotor. This occurs between the age of 0 and 2, when a child learns to differentiate between me and not me. Previously, a child has no sense of separation between themselves and their mother. They exist in a symbiotic union. At some point in the first two years, a child develops a sense of me and not me. Whenever it occurs for the first time in that human life there is the phenomena of separation; there’s me and there’s not me.



ALL OF US ARE ON AN EVOLUTIONARY JOURNEY BACK TO ONENESS SO THAT'S ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

I feel a strong resonance with the creation story in the Judeo Christian tradition where we start out in the Garden of Eden – a euphemism for oneness. There's no separation. Everyone walks around naked because there's no need to cover up – a great metaphor for openness. Then there's a decisive event when there is expulsion from the Garden of Eden and again, that is the creation of separateness – we are separated from oneness or we are separated from God. And in many ways, every lifetime, all of us are on an evolutionary journey back to oneness so that's one possible explanation for the purpose of life.

It's important to remember that oneness is not sameness – it doesn't mean that we all have to be the same. For me, what is happening in the world right now, which is creating fear and panic is a wake up call to recognise our deep inter-connectedness with everything. We are not separate.



IF YOU TRY TO FIND YOUR IDENTITY, YOU WILL NEVER FIND IT BECAUSE IT DOESN'T REALLY EXIST.

Separateness is really an illusion that all of us are conditioned into from about 18 months. Although we live in many different cultures that are radically different, from Africa to Afghanistan, Turkey to Tahiti, they all have one thing in common: conditioning from an early age that we are separate.

Separateness is the amphitheatre of ego. There are various terminologies that people use; ego, identity, personality, little me, for example but above all, it refers to our sense of identity. This was originally formed and created in the first two years of life. All of us have spent decades crafting our identity through primary school, secondary school, puberty, university, the workplace, relationships and we are still constantly shaping our identity, our personality, so we think we have an idea of who we are.

The word personality comes from the Greek word persona, which means mask. And our personality or identity is the mask with which we meet the world. And of course, we all know that there's a lot more going on within us than the persona that we introduce to the world. On occasions, we share a bit more of what's behind the mask with selected people. But the major problem of our times is that we've become identified with our personality. Most people truly believe that this is who they are. It's really one of life's big illusions. This is what I refer to as "little me". It's the little me who gets slighted, who gets hurt.

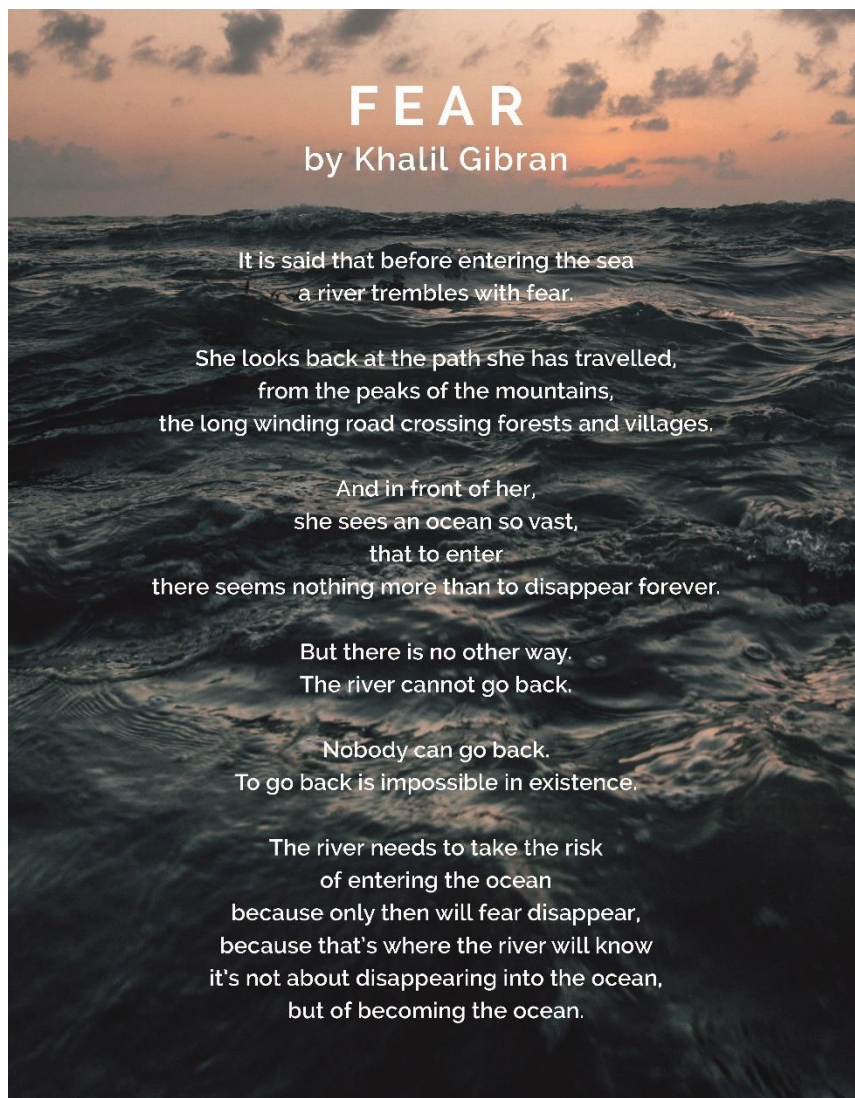
Identity – when I say it's an illusion – if you imagine a fan with four blades whirring round, you see it's like a circle. But when the fan stops, the circle doesn't exist. It's exactly the same with identity. If you try to find your identity or go home and say I'm going to locate my ego, you will never find it because it doesn't really exist. It's the perception of it that creates the problem.



AS WE GROW BEYOND IDENTITY, WE REALISE THAT IF SOMEBODY BEHAVES BADLY TOWARDS US, IT'S MORE ABOUT THEM THAN IT IS ABOUT US.

So let's just turn to the idea of fear for a moment because this talk is all about the relationship between identity and fear. All fear originates from the identity. So you can have a fear of not being successful enough, thin enough, clever enough, a fear of rejection or abandonment, a fear of dying – the list is endless. Regardless of what the fear is, it originates from the identity or little me. The deeper reality for all of us is that you cannot be rejected. We all know what it's like to feel rejection, to feel exclusion, but what feels rejected and what feels excluded is our sense of identity. So the more attached we are to the identity, the bigger the hurt. As we grow beyond identity, which is a lifetime process, actually we realise that if somebody behaves badly towards us, or seeks to reject us, it's more about them than it is about us.

I want to read to you, the poem that gave rise to this evening. The poem is called 'Fear' by Khalil Gibran.



If we imagine ourselves as a droplet of rain flowing into the ocean, when we become the ocean there's the possibility of becoming love, of becoming life itself. The possibility of becoming totally expansive. But this requires us to give up little me. To give up the identity we've been crafting and attaching to for so many decades. That's why it's so difficult.

The challenge for each one of us right now is to stand at the precipice and say: are we willing to give up little me? Are we ready to let go of defending who it is we think we are? If we truly understood the notion of interconnectedness it would be impossible to harm each other, impossible to harm the planet. Imagine for a moment that you are the ocean. Would you pour a jug of toxic chemicals into yourself? Of course not. So each time we harm or hurt anyone else with a word, with an insult or a rejection, we're really only harming ourselves.

The challenge right now is to conquer the massive epidemic of fear which all originates from little me. What will happen to me? But little me doesn't exist. It's an artificial construct that we've been creating and other people have been reinforcing, for a long time.

We don't need to jump off the precipice in one go. This is an iterative process that many of us have been moving towards in this evolutionary shift. Whatever is happening now; whether it's the virus or a strategy to manipulate and control, is designed to wake us up to a point where we say: "I've had enough of that little petty me that's causing me and others so much suffering and misery." I don't think any of us are fully there yet but every single one of us has experienced fleeting moments of this expansive expression and have a desire for more of it.

Q & A

Q: As you say, probably everyone has dipped in and out of this feeling, of understanding this concept of little me and how fed up we are of this little me causing so much suffering. What I find difficult is to keep coming back to this because the more you feel you dip into this, the more lonely you can feel. I feel very lonely and a lack of hope that people will be open to understanding this concept.

I would be surprised if everyone here had not experienced the same feeling from time to time. That's one of the reasons why we create these gatherings, to connect with and support each other. My advice to you would be to be creative. If you walk into a new tribe in a new city and everyone's got pink hair, long earrings and three arms, you would feel the odd one out. Most people would set about doing what they need to do to fit in because the desire to fit in and belong is very strong. All of us in our lives have experienced giving up our centre to join the crowd. But it's always a very small number that lead evolutionary change. The herd, the 90%, follow on after and there's no superiority implied in that whatsoever because we are all here to live the life we are living. But right now Lara, you are surrounded by friends, by people who want to connect with you, who feel connected with you. So it's up to you. You can either go into little me and complain that you feel lonely or disconnected or you can drop down and feel the truth, feel the reality of that deep connection with a lot of people – it's there all the time.

Q: I'm not feeling any fear at the moment, I'm loving every moment. I'm happy that the virus has come to give us this message. But I feel in danger of losing friends, family, possibly even clients because I am starting to speak up about a lot of things that I've been wanting to say for a long time. I feel good but then I feel lonely because everyone thinks I'm slightly bonkers so there's this dance going on between finally stepping up and speaking up and moments where I guess little me comes back in and says, you're not making a difference so you just need to be quiet again.

That's beautifully put – that's the challenge for all of us.

Q: Does losing your identity mean that you become extremely vulnerable?

The exact opposite, you become omnipotent. You become so strong because you can't be hurt, rejected or abandoned. Can anybody harm love? Love is love and actually, although it sounds trite, there is no problem so great that love cannot overcome it. The light is always stronger than the darkness. The mind and the ego says, if we give up, we'll become weak, we'll become vulnerable. But it's the opposite. Look at people like Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, Jesus, Bhudda. There's actually a lot of men and women on the planet doing extraordinary things. Look at the people on the front line right now. They're not worried about their identity, they are giving themselves to the collective and there's immense strength in that.

Q: Once this lockdown situation has passed, I worry that I won't want to revert to the old ways. I enjoy solitude and cherish it. I worry, will I become a recluse once this is over?

It's much easier to stay in your centre as a recluse than it is to engage with life and loved ones and family. We're all somewhere different on the spectrum in terms of socialisation and quiet time. Along with a lot of other people, I have welcomed the quiet time for more inner enquiry. If you find yourself continuing with that, so be it. There's no right or wrong. A lot of the socialisation that goes on can be a little bit empty. And it can be fantastic. The key is finding what works for you. The question everyday is: what and who allows me to feel more connected with myself? Have the courage to make conscious decisions not to be around certain people who drain you, to spend time with people who uplift you and invite you into a deeper relationship with yourself.

Q: How do you prevent your internal fears stepping into the character of your child or children?

To some extent, the answer might be that you can't. Another answer would be to be honest about your fear. As parents we tend to conceal certain emotions, thoughts or things that we think our children are not ready to know. Of course, there are some things that are inappropriate to tell your children, but children, like animals, have a better truth recognition programme than adults do. So, if you are saying to a child: "I'm not frightened," the child knows you are lying. It's preferable to share your fear and say: "sometimes Mummy feels frightened, sometimes Daddy feels frightened."

With fear, there are only two options. You either literally drop into the centre of it and allow yourself to connect with the epicentre of the fear. It's counter intuitive and very intense for about 30 seconds and then it's gone. Sometimes when I get onto an aeroplane, I feel this massive amount of fear pass through me because it's a collective fear and also my own individual fear, but then it's gone. So that's one thing to do.

The other option is to create a gap where you can witness the fear, step back from it, don't try to get rid of it, suppress it or deny it. Instead, you look it in the face and say: "hello old friend, I know you like a old jumper but I'm just going to chose something else for the moment." So although the fear is there, you actually make a different choice.

Q: How do we speak our truth if we have people around who are so scared that they will not listen to our truth?

There's not one truth but if somebody was fearful, I would invite them to move beyond the fear. But if they don't want to and that's their dominant way of being, then it's fine. It's really about moving on to somebody who is more open to the truth that you are speaking. You stand up and speak your truth. Some people will move away from you, and some people will move towards you. You can't really ask for anything more. As we all know, it's very satisfying in a family when we suddenly find our voice and say something that we've been putting off. It's liberating and empowering to state: "I'm not saying I'm right, but this is my truth" that's part of the waking up experience.

Here's an example. India was under the dominance of the UK and everyone acquiesced with that and we built railways and various other things. It started with one diminutive little man that stood up to the status quo and said: "no, we want to empower ourselves and control our own destination." He defeated the British army without an army. He had immense power, just by speaking his truth and attracting other people towards him. That's what we need on the planet right now. We need people like Ghandi and people like Nelson Mandela, who came out of 27 years of incarceration and starting talking about forgiveness – extraordinary. And there must have been lots of people who were angry with him, who said, no, we want revenge. So, all you can do is speak your truth and those that want to listen will listen and those that want to shun you, will shun you.

When you are no longer in fear and have let go of your identity, you won't care how others react to you or your truth..."