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Pandemic, Fearless, and an Indigenous Perspective: A Dialogue

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Before the dialogue *per se* between Michael and Four Arrows,¹ a few relevant ideas and experiences are shared:

As the distress over COVID-19 grows we are hearing and reading more narratives that perpetuate scaremongering. One recent headline reads: “Coronavirus is Just the Start. Something Far Worse is Coming.” The online piece has over 2 million views on Earthlink Ed’s website. Such media represents a sort of secondary virus that adds to the spread of fear/terror. In this piece, we hope to offer more productive, and educative perspectives. We promote a fearlessness paradigm over a fear paradigm approach.

We start with proposing that we consider COVID-19 as a relatively gentle warning, even as a gift. We do not mean to minimize the tragedy, but considering how many people have been dying from air pollution prior to the Coronavirus in contrast, “relatively gentle” seems sufficiently true. Thinking of it in this way might allow people to move from *biophobia* and subsequent over-reactions to learning to embrace, even love, that is *biophilia*. This can help us move beyond our habitual ways and the destructive tendencies of the Dominant worldview that created this disease in the first place. We can see this as a time to heal and to ask ourselves, “What is this “virus” asking of me?”—and what is Mother Nature asking of all of us?

A True Story on “*Biophilia*” (in contrast to “*Biophobia*”) that comes from experiences of Four Arrows:

“One day in the *initi* purification lodge [ceremony], I felt a strong message from the spirits to take action about the diminishing life in the oceans. The spirit of a huge dorado [fish] came into the lodge and its presence conveyed an urgent call for help. I had caught a dorado a few weeks earlier. Perhaps what I felt and saw in the darkness [of the lodge] was its spirit...the mandate was clear....[like the original ways of Indigenous peoples] I believe in spiritual energies moving with and in and through me—when I activate CAT [Concentrated Action Transformation—as a light trance experience brought on by some mystery, some song, image or even some fear] and when I attune in trance-based learning mode....Magic happens. I connect

¹ The authors here met in 2007 through an academic writing project on alternative dissertations, and since then have stayed in touch, co-written articles, and are interested to combine their work on the nature and role of fear, from multiple perspectives, including the Indigenous worldview.

with the landscapes, seascapes and mindscapes you could say---the entire field of living and non-living beings, the many “peoples” that are both human and other-than-human—there is in this—Fearlessness already inherent—the opening to communicate telepathically with All. Some who do not understand the ‘old ways’ of the ancient ancestors—the All, do not get what I am saying. I understand that. I don’t try to push this way that I work for inspiration, help, and knowledge on others....Yet, I’d be lying to not say that Creation [even a virus] seems designed for mutual helping. The ebullience of courage as generosity and then Fearlessness is profoundly moving to me. I feel it in my bones. It is like a texture you touch with your finger tips when you are blind in the dark and feeling is the only way to navigate...”²

Four Arrows: To begin in general with critical assessment, a speaking the truth to the powers of the controlling Dominant worldview (or, W. worldview), I have stated there needs to be a “self-triage in a catastrophic world” based within the corrective of a decolonizing perspective—and, which can be called an Indigenous worldview. I’ve argued you can take one road or the other—the worldview that has been relatively in harmony with the earth’s systems for 99% of human history or you can draw your guidance and live by the worldview that’s been around only 1% and is proving to be catastrophic. I teach this pan-Indian Indigenous worldview as most reliable and wise for where we humans are going next. Yes, I am rather blunt at age of 74; I’m convinced, as are many Indigenous brothers and sisters, that “the colonized mind cannot save itself” and that today, especially for those who have turned away from the 99% history of the Indigenous worldview, “most of our thinking, feeling and actions stem from trance-based learning, either intentional or otherwise.”³ It is the non-intentional trance and inevitable mass hypnotic effects of the *culture of fear* which is at the base of what is killing us....

RMF: And a whole lot of other species with us.

Four Arrows: Michael, I have thought about this a lot over the decades, as you can imagine. I am ever in search of the deepest causes of the worst human behaviors, and I have settled on an analysis of worldview, and the mass hypnosis syndrome that I now call Trance-based Learning gone awry; there just seems no better explanation to make sense of how modern educated societies have rationalized their technologies of domination, their polluting their own nest, their addictions to ways of life that paradoxically destroy Life. The insights I have gained in my own transformation, near-death experience, my training and learning with wild horses, and work as a hypnotherapist and educator, all have shown me people’s minds can be colonized by

² Four Arrow’s excerpts from Fisher (2018), pp. 138, 140; I have also called this field-attuning and courageous inspiration Four Arrows describes as “Lunar Fearlessness” based on biophilia, gifting, and the feminine reconstruction (p. 141). Fisher, R. M. (2018). *Fearless engagement of Four Arrows: The true story of an Indigenous-based social transformer*. Peter Lang.

³ Four Arrows’ excerpts from Four Arrows (2020). Self-triage in a catastrophic world (a decolonizing perspective). Retrieved from <https://www.opednews.com/articles/Self-Triage-in-a-Catastroph-by-Four-Arrows-Corona-Virus-Covid-19-Relief-Funding-Race-Native-American-First-Nation-Worldview-World-View-200420-916.html>

Fear, Authority, Words and an irrational *biophobia* towards Nature. Yet, people's minds can be changed, de-hypnotized, e.g., by re-evaluation of one's relationship to these phenomenon I have labeled CAT-FAWN as a meta-cognitive tool.⁴

Few think this deep, of course. In a recent talk I gave on a panel of faculty from Fielding Graduate University, where I teach, several gave their thoughts on the times of Coronavirus. I took quite a different turn than most, and started with "I don't have any fear but I see it everywhere." I basically, was pushing forward a declaration of interior self-awareness as a speaker-teacher and letting people both hear 'I am not afraid to die' and they are also as a community welcome to challenge me on that. I then asked: "What is it that is allowing us to focus on this [COVID-19] with such passion all over the world? And yet, not these other things"⁵—of which I listed many global problems from poverty to species extinctions, climate change. And I basically said, because we're fear-based peoples for the most part living under the Dominant worldview, most of which we don't acknowledge, nor admit how it breeds an irrational fear of death for the most part that keeps us trying to dissociate from or destroy the very sources of Life that include the reality of Death.⁶ We want one without the other, and that was my point of raising the interior questioning that must go on—rather than focus on the externals of what the coronavirus and everyone else is doing—missing the deeper problem—a worldview problem that is killing us. We need to be talking about many truly ecocidal realities, including what colonization and anti-Indianism are still doing to our Indigenous peoples and the natural lands that they are still fighting to preserve.

RMF: We have, in many regards, been trapped in what I call a *near-psychotic experience* in COVID-19 panic and "lockdown" and a focus of attention on parts of the triage of the rational which quickly turns to irrational, and deceit, lies and manipulation—as *faux* rationales based on fear-mongering quickly take over. My point is, the very origins of the great crises we face on the planet now, are mostly near-psychotic in formation because of the normalized dissociated state of the psyche and worldview, you have called Dominant worldview. And you and I have both come to see it is "fear-based."⁷ Now, such a chronic fear-based, death-phobic, near-psychotic defense system is bound to create its own social fictions—a prison—its own poisons—its own blueprint for extinction. It is unmoored from truth and reality of Nature's ways, and the wisdom of our ancestors, who have learned those ways without trying to continually dismiss them.

Commented [MOU1]: Do you want so say "Few think this deeply" referring to previous discussion? Or are you referring to my ideas? I suggest making it more clear.

⁴ For a most complete description of the five precepts of this de-hypnotizing technology see Four Arrows (2016). *Point of departure: Returning to a more authentic worldview for education and survival*. Information Age Publishing.

⁵ Excerpt from Four Arrows (2020). Thoughts in the Time of Corona—Voices from Fielding Graduate University, April 14 [transcript].

⁶ The "fear of death" and "fear of life" (*a la* Ernest Becker) and terror management theory are showing empirical evidence of how irrational defense of worldviews prevents empathy for "the Other." And when under perceived threat of one's worldview there is a decided turn against Nature overall (e.g., see van Kessel, C. (2020). Teaching the climate crisis: Existential considerations. *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research*, 2(1), 129-45.).

⁷ Four Arrows (Jacobs, D. T.), & Fisher, R. M. (Eds.) (2020). Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Introduction. In S. Steinberg & B. Down (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Critical Pedagogies (Vol.2)* (pp. 547-49). SAGE, p. 549.

Four Arrows: The Dominant worldview, near-psychotic or whatever the case, has this odd passion for being “*fearless*” against Nature and acting as if it is not responsible for Nature—and, boy we are now feeling those impacts of our bravado arrogance. Clearly, the Dominant worldview of fearless isn’t working and will kill us. Very different is an Indigenous fearless sensibility, something I have learned experientially from animals, from my extreme experiences in Nature, and from my Indigenous ‘family’ of many great teachers along my life journey.

RMF: You have recently given a nice example of *fearless* the Indigenous way:

The best way to tell you how life is better when fearless. Imagine you are going to jump off a cliff into a deep river 40 feet below. Not really dangerous, but scary. You don’t have courage, you don’t get to experience the thrill of the experience that causes joy in others. You do get the courage and manage to jump, [but] the stress of the event negates the joy. But if at the edge, after you make the commitment to jump, you let go of fear AND courage and merely trust the universe. Now you feel every beautiful moment of the fall, you see a fish swim by, an eagle flying overhead, you feel the air and then the rush of the cold water....⁸

Four Arrows: During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is more obvious than ever that our Dominant worldview and the cultures it supports are on a suicidal mission. They are not even jumping off the cliff, their trying not to, but they have ruined so much that would give them sustainability, what is left behind is virtually unsustainable and has pushed their existence to the edge of the cliff with no way back. At least, the probability of avoiding the ‘going over’ is slim. I guess, the issue now in relation to our work and the teachings on fear and fearlessness, is an issue of how will we fall, jump, be pushed?

RMF: Will we go over the cliff and feel the joy of a beautiful moment? Fearless, in the Indigenous way is always possible—it is what I call Fear Management System-9 in my theory of fear management systems that have evolved on the planet. The theory says that the highest mature systems are existent in our human evolutionary past—as Defense Intelligences—and, under the right conditions and choices, they can be accessed more or less when the extreme conditions are unrelenting and there’s no escape around it. Like the extreme trance-based learning latency which became actualized potential in your own life Four Arrows; there can be a ‘turn around’ transformation quite un-predictable.⁹

As you say, we face now as humanity a suicidal edge, and that may be just the conditions needed for Indigenous fearless capacities to fire-up. It’s not like Nature or God, or Spirit is ‘saving us’—that’s not what I think you or I are thinking about or teaching about. Many

⁸ Excerpt from Four Arrows (2020a). A more efficient cavalry: Anti-Indianism in America, revisited. Retrieved from <https://www.opednews.com/articles/A-More-Efficient-Cavalry--by-Four-Arrows-Death-Indigenous-Peoples-Race-Native-American-First-Nation-200427-746.html>

⁹ Four Arrows transformative (near death) experience as a ‘turn around’ is discussed in his book: Jacobs, D. T. (1998). *Primal awareness: A true story of survival, transformation, and awakening with the Rarámuri shamans of Mexico*. Inner Traditions.

conservative and religious traditions or even liberal New Age traditions maybe teaching that promise-hope-savior narrative. But they do not, in my view, have a deep understanding of what it means to be a “connoisseur of fear”¹⁰ as you and I promote.

Four Arrows: Yes, Michael it’s an interesting proposition you are articulating but at the same time as educating ourselves about CAT and Fear and trance-based learning, we also need to recognize the real issues of why, for example, the Navajo Nation has more COVID-19 infections than anywhere in the US. We cannot ignore biogeographical, environmental and political realities as well. But I think all you and I are raising in this short dialogue is that everyone has problems and needs solutions, but if we are not thinking well outside of the Dominant worldview—as I have said, “the colonized mind cannot save itself.” That’s the educational activism that needs to get more exposure.

RMF: Indeed, there are grounding truths from COVID-19 to be acknowledged not denied, not escaped from—we can’t put our head in the sand. At the same time, too much information of scaremongering potentials, even when not intended, puts too many people in a stupor trance state—a massive hypnosis—and, my experience shows that in such a retractive state of chronic fear/terror, as Ernest Becker also argued, people will attack “the Other” that is different, that is scapegoat, that is a threat. It will be a war of wars of all kinds without end—IF we don’t have new references for how to be in the times of pandemic and world crises together.

A fearlessness perspective, with the Indigenous worldview is a much better option. I think your simple binary chart (below) is a first way to represent the two worldviews in contrasting juxtaposition—a way to begin to sort through a guidance system, for individuals and organizations, to move, and it is a subtle process, from Dominant worldview to Indigenous worldview (left to right in the chart).

Thanks for this dialogue and your work on this important mission.

- 1 **Untruthfulness → Truthfulness**
- 2 **Fear-Based → Fearlessness-Based**
- 3 Hierarchical → Non-Hierarchical
- 4 Anthropocentric → Non-Anthropocentric
- 5 Low Respect for Women → High Respect for Women
- 6 Fragmented Learning → Holistic Learning
- 7 Non-Spiritual → Spiritual
- 8 Low Regard for Rites and Trance → High Regard for Rites and Trance

¹⁰ See Jacobs (1998), pp. 156-75.

- 9 Emphasis on Rights → Emphasis on Responsibility
- 10 Competition for Winning → Competition for Positive Potentiality
- 11 **Dualistic Thinking → Non-Dualistic Thinking**
- 12 **Detachment → Empathy**
- 13 Materialistic → **Non-Materialistic**
- 14 Low Social Purpose → **High Social Purpose**
