



(Senior) Editorial:

Introducing IJFS, a New Journal

- R. Michael Fisher
Canada

At age 67 in April, I am a legal senior officially, in Canada that is. Welcome to the inaugural issue of *International Journal of Fear Studies*:

Its purpose is to promote the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study of fear. It is the first journal of its kind with a concentrated focus on the nature and role of fear and on innovations in worldviews, methodologies, pedagogies and research inquiries that expand the fear imaginary beyond what is commonly assumed as how best to know and manage fear.

Any research on the term “*fear studies*” in a university library will turn up a few uses of this term as mostly a loose aggregate term to identify more than one fear study (e.g., Mechias, Etkin & Kalisch, 2010). The studies listed by those using the term are all disciplinary, meaning, psychological- and/or biological-based with a strong emphasis on positivism and traditional views of empiricism (e.g., quantitative measurement as ‘truth’). In this disciplinary regime, *fear* is treated (and imagined) as a *feeling and/or emotion*. Dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as common everyday speech reinforces this meaning of (definition) of fear. At least, in the English version of translation of “fear,” of which I can only claim to have access to understanding because of my own limited views as an English-speaker. *IJFS* is beginning with that linguistic (and cultural) limitation as well.

I have long been critical of fear studies because of this disciplinary usage. I name this all as harmful, as a barrier, to humanity becoming to truly understand the nature and role of fear. The fear studies bias and hegemony of knowledge and its narrow focus of legitimation is overly attached to and controlled by the Biomedical perspective/paradigm, Science and a *Psychology of fear*. I’m not alone in this critique of a modernist-reductionistic approach to the topic of fear. Indeed, voices of critique, like my own, are characteristically marginalized if not denied access to mainstream knowledge production platforms and power of influence overall.

It is not that I see this generic common emphasis as ‘wrong’ but rather I have critiqued it over the decades as being too partial and distortive of the larger “truths” about fear (and ‘fear’). Thus, I have long advocated for the necessity for new approaches, new imaginaries and journals to publish new studies on fear. I have used terms like critical, holistic-integral, Indigenous, transpersonal and so on for categorizing my fearwork and interests. I support a generic philosophical critical analysis as an aid to better knowing fear and assessing fear knowledges that exist. As I learned of others attempting to stretch beyond the bias of the psychology of fear, I could see that the best (all-

encompassing) direction to go was an overall *interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach* and thus that became the subtitle of *IJFS*.

Fearwork is the term I prefer for anyone doing inquiry into the importance of fear. I thank the many explorers of fear and fearlessness in human history, and especially those who, over the past few years especially, have encouraged me to start a new journal where there can be a holding container for exciting fearwork shared with the public and beyond. In particular, Desh Subba, a native of Nepal (now living in Hong Kong), the founder of the *philosophy of fearism* (1999), has advocated in the most helpful ways for my cause; and there have been some others. Subba deserves credit for drawing attention to fearwork because of his commitment, as an ambassador, to travel the world and give lectures on fear and its importance.

My vision was not to be overly concerned that this journal (*IJFS*) had to be mainstream scholarly, academic and rigidly enforced to standards that I don't always agree with in the academe and world of academic publishing. I believe there can be flexible fluidity for embracing all kinds of research and inquiries by scholars, professionals, activists and merely people who want to think seriously about the nature and role of fear in the broadest and deepest ways. Fearwork ought not have any boundaries of exclusion of means of knowing fear. There also has to be an openness, in my view, to develop a healthy journal culture for fearwork. I am seeking out a Board of Advisors for this journal, which I founded in principle in late 2018. These will be diverse individuals, some academics, and some not. Currently, my honorary advisors (Four Arrows, Barbara Bickel, B. Maria Kumar, Madelaine K. Joss) are serving also as *IJFS*'s main peer-reviewers for articles. Overtime, I'll attract a number of people to do all the jobs of a good quality journal. I am currently the Senior Editor, and doing all the design work and layout and final editing and some reviewing. I look forward to finding the right persons to share in this work. Let me know if you are interested (r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com) and if you would like to help fund the costs of such a production and support me financially and/or by other gifts. That would be appreciated. I am an independent scholar and senior citizen on a fixed government Old Age pension of base economic survival.

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With time and expertise help, the journal can take on more professional looking qualities and formats but that's not my main concern right now in the first year or two. I want good quality articles that spur our creative imaginations, expand our imaginaries, and offer humanity a new way to think, research, talk about and understand fear, from a holistic perspective. The key words that represent my total advocacy and editorial policy are: “*expand our imaginaries*.” Imaginary is different than imagination. *Imaginary* refers to what is possible to imagine. I recommend readers of this first issue investigate further what I mean by this notion of expanding one's imaginary on fear (and fearlessness) by studying my article in this journal issue: “‘Fear’ as Critique...”. Next, the first course (TFI 118) at The Fearology Institute (2018-), which I founded, direct and teach, is “Expanding the Fear Imaginary,” of which the second objective is “draw from arational processes to enter the theory of fearology. Therefore, learners may bring forward and nurture their creativity to expand their imaginaries” (from course handbook, Fisher, 2018, p. 6). The arational, in contrast to rational and irrational, offers alternative ways to understand fear and communicate about fear,

and that is why you'll see art images in *IJFS* as one way to keep the arational modality operating and we don't overly focus on only cognitive-logical-linear-rational ways of conceiving and talking about fear.

Fear Studies (via *IJFS*) is my latest version of declaring for the first time in human history a distinct field of studies on *fear* (i.e., beyond the aggregate common "fear studies" use of the term). A capitalized version called Fear Studies deserves the dignity of such a field and this is linked with my own earlier work on bringing together some of the components of a curriculum called '*Fear*' *Studies* (Fisher, 2001, 2005, 2006, 2012, 2018). My first version focused on a transdisciplinary approach and was highly influenced by my own emerging *philosophy of fearlessness* (e.g., Fisher, 2010) and *fearology* (e.g., Fisher, 2001a). But over time, I realized for this field of studies to grow, attract and include more diverse thinking and work there was going to have to be a loosening of my own biases; and thus, I have opened this journal to Fear Studies, more generically and included interdisciplinary works. It will take a number of years for everyone involved in this movement of new studies on fear to come to define the parameters of what Fear Studies may look like.

“... there will likely be some resistance to the approach and technical language used by myself and several (not all) authors.”

Someday, I envision (somewhere) a post-secondary institution be it private or public that opens its doors to students to get a degree in Fear Studies, much like students now can get a degree in Cultural Studies, African American Studies, Religious Studies, Educational Studies, Women's Studies, Conflict Studies and so on. The use of "studies" in all these examples is part of the postmodern movement of hybridization and interdisciplinary emphasis in post-secondary education. I think that is a good thing and I'd like to see it go further than that with expanding to transdisciplinary approaches. Defining "transdisciplinary" is not always agreed upon by scholars and there is lots of literature on it, and controversy; and, I have made my own distinctions around this term relative to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in a recent teaching video if you are interested (Fisher, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcNte9VjZB8>). *IJFS* is based on the assumption that the world's worst problems are complex and require more than narrow disciplinary approaches (and imaginaries) to solve them. Watkins & Wilber (2015) wrote of such "wicked problems":

There is also absolutely no way to definitively formulate the problem or the solution because the answer, as typically [narrowly] given, is probably only going to address a quite small number of favoured dimensions with little regard to the repercussions of that solution in other areas or other dimensions....one thing is certain [re: wicked problems]: the more perspectives you take into account...the better...because it gives you access to different views, different truths, different values, and different motivations that all need to be fully addressed. (p. 28)

Fear itself is proving (i.e., the wicked "Fear Problem") to be one of the more complex and demanding problems to solve globally. Which is not to make everything about "fear" as something negative and horrible. Which is not to make fear only a "problem" and that it should be removed from the planet. I have argued that "*fearuality*" (analogous to say, sexuality) is not always best situated as *a problem*. Yet, the Fear Problem seems a useful label for recognizing the macro-scale of it. However, this will always be open for creative dialogues, and debates in Fear Studies. I also

want to mention, that for some readers who come to *IJFS* there will likely be some resistance to the approach and technical language used by myself and several (not all) authors. This is inevitable with a new field of studies, because interdisciplinarity (and transdisciplinary even more so) is complex and creates hybridizing of ideas and theories, so there's no "just one right" definition for fear, or anything else really. There are multiple perspectives—albeit, some perspectives may be more useful than others, or some combination of perspectives in a particular configuration (e.g., holistic-integral) may be better than other combinations; but context, and purpose and means by which perspectives are utilized is all important rather than some fixed rules or regimes of 'truth' about perspectives.

Thus, one has to keep an open-mind (perspective) and not try to prematurely foreclose on what is the 'right' and 'wrong' way to understand things and to research them. Co-authoring with Luke Barnesmoore, for this issue of *IJFS* really pushed my metaphysical boundaries as he uses a nomadic and philosophical methodology orientation. Another problem when one goes into a transdisciplinary mode of analysis is that the analyses tend to get very complex, creative, unexpected, and speculative. They can be highly philosophical and theoretical—with people creating all kinds of neologisms (making up new words) and new conceptualizations (e.g., when fear becomes 'fear' becomes equivalent to critical and critique itself; a view I have been playing with). This exploratory nature to fearwork can feel for some a bit destabilizing. At some level (conscious or unconscious) it is working with fear (almost) intended, in part, to discomfort the comfortable *fear imaginary* and the habitual conditioned supporting vocabularies that keep us thinking in (only) traditional, disciplinary and/or reductionistic ways—the latter characteristically not very creative ways. So, Fear Studies pushes these comfort zones. At times, fearwork may feel too "theoretical" and "impractical" as well. And thus, I will always attempt, as Senior Editor to include some articles more practical and with less of the complicating jargon of some authors. And, be prepared, not all authors in *IJFS* will define every new term on *fear* but sometimes they will do so for certain terms.

On that point of new vocabulary, I would recommend some Glossaries that are available on new fear-terms, especially as influenced by the philosophy of fearism (Desh Subba as founder) (e.g., see Fisher & Subba, 2016, pp. 155-159 and/or Fisher, Subba & Kumar, 2018, pp. 177-87). Overall, I have tagged this pursuit and inquiry of a radical fearworking with transdisciplinarity as essential to a critical literacy of fear (and fearlessness). Over the years, with lots of practice, these fear-term configurations are not only weird or different on paper when written, or spoken... there is actually a re-wiring (real and/or metaphorically) that goes on in my consciousness (brain and/or mind)—and, it feels like I enter a different *fear territory*. I know for some, this may not register at this point, and seem esoteric.

Kumar (2018), has at times been also impressed by this expansive vocabulary in Fear Studies, for example, his review of Eneyo (2018) left him remarking on Eneyo's text: "While journeying by the train of his thoughts, the author [i.e., Eneyo] finds himself in a never ending 'fear territory' where he exhibits his unique knack of rhetoric with scintillating coinage like 'fear conflict', 'fear territory', 'fear dilemma', 'fear climax', etc. These new vocabularies expand the human mind to understand fear more insightfully as Lera Boroditsky, a cognitive scientist, infers from her research that the new words and new dialects do shape the way we think" (p. xvi). Indeed, although I refer to *fear territory* as well (and, overlap with Eneyo's fearwork to some degree), his definition of fear

territory is not mine *per se*; my words fail to describe the shift of consciousness, of level, of register, that I experience at times thanks to this freedom to experiment with words and concepts in Fear Studies.

Summary of Contents in this issue of *IJFS*:

As an artist myself, there can never be enough art in a journal on a serious topic. This *arational* imaginative modality of expression can offer, I believe, lots of insight to work from when it comes to the topic of fear and fearlessness. Interestingly, there's a whole lot in this issue on myth(ology) which just spontaneously came together, without my knowing that would be so prominent. Yantra De Vilder, music composer and artist from Australia, who has kindly let me play with an excerpt from her image of Innana's journey to the "Underworld." It was fun to see what I could create to bring mystery and subtle aesthetic connections from the underworld, unconscious, and wherever else these 'beings' come from that make up an art image. It's all about reflecting on these, like mirrors, as a process of bringing the unconscious (more fearful-side of the Shadow) to light and consciousness, that can be therapeutic. Equally, I am pleased to have the naive art of a father and child in spontaneous play without all the fears that can so cramp the style and flow that naturally evolves from the soul when we let it. Luke and Athena in a dance of color and gesture is a nice touch of spice and aliveness for the first *IJFS* cover.

"... the centrality of the dragon myth in my own life has been in no small part brought on by a vision I had while living in Ontario. Two heads (one red, one blue) with a body formed by pearly white clouds."

-Luke Barnesmoore

Luke's own long emotional and academic interest in myth(ology) and his visionary (mystical) experiences, sometimes while in emotional and spiritual crisis and processing, involves a particular vulnerability of the quality I would suggest *is fearlessness* in one of its many forms. His rendering of "Red & Blue Dragon" image (below), where serpent/dragon is often a symbol of destruction and fear/terror (in the West)—the ego is being threatened, is by contrast a symbol of regeneration and wisdom (in the East). Luke wrote in his description to me of this crisis time and his vision:



Red & Blue Dragon – drawing by Luke Barnesmoore,
with permission Luke Barnesmoore ©2015

I was having very hard time coping with the white Christian madness of rural Ontario. The first three days of the week in question I felt like I was dying (body, mind, heart and soul). On the fourth day a number of things happened. First, I got out of the shower and looked in the mirror—as I breathed in my face became white, as I breathed out it became black, on my forehead there was a pulsating point of light, around me was an aura, violet near the body, a deep ocean blue surrounding the violet. I closed my eyes. First I saw the Dragon of Destruction (the dragon twins depicted above). Next I saw the ocean, with the sun beginning to set in the distance. As the sun set its light poured into my vessel. I returned to this world with a heightened state of consciousness; bliss, remarkable and marvelous after the previous three days of emptiness, an expanded sense of self, something as new to my experience in this life as it was old beyond time. (personal comm. Jan. 19/19)

BODY, MIND, HEART, SOUL ... this is all part of holistic-integral embracing of *fear* and accessing emergent *fearlessness* and a new consciousness structure/stage/level in our existence that can hold all of our experiences, without making them pathological or abnormal to where we want to distance ourselves from them. Fear Studies, as I envision it (and it's ongoing), will always be interested in integrating the vast diversity of altered states, diverse emotions and affects, the uncanny and the strange, as well as the more rational (and trans-rational) cognitive and moral dimensions of life.

When I first read Mark Eales' submission to this issue, I thought it this was a powerful exploration where he let himself risk to innovate, hypothesize and also become vulnerable (one of the traits of authentic fearlessness): "Fear experience is at the very beginning of a non-academic, scholarly type's thought process when considering submitting to an academic journal [i.e., *IJFS*]." From mythology (as Barnesmoore and Kumar access in this issue) to focusing on intuition, as Eales does, I am delighted to see fearwork expanding its methodological scope into the arational and legitimating the liminal and 'margins' of our experience, or what has been made marginal because of an overly hegemonic rigid W. Enlightenment Age of Reason that is distrustful (typically) of that which is not merely rational and logical. Eales uses an intuitional logic for his arguments and models. He then proposes a way of humble collaboration in Fear Studies *via* his youthful approach, that is, "Propositional Dynamic Collaborative Enquiry," very well suited to a digital globalizing commons of knowledge and research processes. He self-identifies as an *intuit* and argues for their importance outside of traditional academic circles. He then shows readers that all people sincere in intention and commitment can do their own inquiry and produce creative works on the topic of fear and even contribute to a revolution of humanity, which he has in mind. His piece has a lot of heart—not just mind, and that makes it a rich work to behold. On the intellectual-side of his passion, we read about his hypotheses and images for something called *fearotypes*. A controversial topic worth looking at in Fear Studies, and I see it as especially a good addition to applied *Feariatry* and in general to the taxonomic interests of *Fearology*.

Another controversial topic in this issue, and for Fear Studies in general, are the problems and pitfalls around "defining fear," which is part of Barnesmoore's in depth aims—whereby he proposes that utilizing "courage/couragelessness" may be enhancing, alongside the often more common discourses (especially by Fisher) on "fear/fearlessness." I welcome Barnesmoore's lead in this direction and have enjoyed co-authoring this piece that critically assesses the Artificial worldview of the Colonial-Modernist incarnation that create skewed, if not pathological, understandings, and fear-based understandings of fear, courage and so many more phenomena that Fear Studies engages. This article is a brain-swerve and demands a lot from the reader.

Then there is the wonderful poem, simply "Fearlessness," by Jim Hanson with his complex Buddhist discipline and flare—reflecting deep thoughts on existence and dying and death, of which he is working on

a book around this latter topic. Jim is well into his 70s and knows how priorities shift with aging. He is determined to make it a creative process. I encourage more poetics and poetry from all in future issues of *IJFS*. After all, it is not surprising to me that Desh Subba, founder of philosophy of fearism, has been best known for his poetry in the far East for decades, and later turned his thinking and artistic poetic sensibility to the central topic of fear.

Simon Bell's article derives from an innovative, mostly informal, inquiry into the way people think and talk about fear. I like these kinds of studies-in-progress that work with a practical intuitional methodology and sensing of what kind of FearTalks* (my term) are needed today and in the future. Bell's interviews go around the world where he works and travels and has a lot to offer us all. His diverse, creative and erudite references are a treat in themselves—especially as climate change fear(s) are an inevitable face of our precarious future. On the deeply philosophical-side, Osinakachi Kalu, from Nigeria, has sent me over the last year some of his writing sketches on what he calls grounds for a *fearontology*. I'm happy to share some rich gems from his thoughts, not for any purpose *per se* but to let readers know of some of the fresh thinking that is going on behind the scenes, in the minds, passions and solitudes of our youngest fearologists becoming. For readers wishing a 'lighter' read, with the flow of conversational style, you may want to read Kumar and my dialogue piece first, or as interludes... -enjoy, Michael

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[* see Fisher's YouTube channel videos "FearTalks" series:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC01OHEXhSuxnyilmkV0f95A>]

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R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.

Is an artist, fearologist, educator, and founder, director of In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute and The Fearology Institute. His recent communications are online in the FM ning community he co-founded with Barbara Bickel in 2015: <http://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com>
Contact: r.michaelfisher@gmail.com