



(Senior) Editorial: Path of Many Twists

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Canada

“Fear is the path to the dark side.” -Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan in *Star Wars I*

Thanks to Jim Hanson (poet), who sent me this quote from popular film culture references. *Star Wars* is a great 20th teaching film about the path... from Fear to Fearlessness. Yet, that path has many twists and turns and is by no means linear in time. I actually prefer to call it the *path of fearlessness* (Fisher, 2010) and have us look closely at the life we live each and every day—and ask ourselves: Is what I am choosing to do now serving the Master of Fear or the Master of Love—is the way I live truly contributing to the liberation of humanity—is the way I live the same as the way I say I live? Ultimately, the nuanced understanding is a mixed-up and near-chaotic path, as far as I know it, and yes, it is on the dark side most of the time. It is about learning to negotiate, by our everyday moves, our values, and worldviews. Negotiate what? Negotiate the ways “In and Out of the ‘Fear’ Matrix (Fisher, 2003).

It is certainly the case in all my years of researching, writing and teaching about *fear*, that whether I like it or not, the topic is still ‘too dark’ for most people to engage. It remains, unfortunately, only a subject matter for those more who sincerely like to explore the dark side of life. Buddha called it the “suffering” side of existence for All sentient beings. Today, we could call it the “traumatic” side of existence or simply as the existentialists have well known, like the psychoanalysts, that there is a repressed and hidden curriculum in Life, and that is that we are learning, so often the hard way. We’re learning (slowly) that Death is the accompanying dialectic reality, the unconscious, that makes Life and life what it is—complete and seemingly quite brutal. The “shadow” side. How will we walk this path that Obi-Wan wants us to so as to be complete human beings? Do we want to be Sacred Warriors of that calling to the dark side? Do we want to be Artists of that calling to the dark side? We can make *fear* study a beautiful and inspiring thing, as the various writers, poets (Hanson, Kumar) and visual artist (Morrison) contribute to this issue of *IJFS*.

To study *fear* in its natural and cultural and spiritual understandings is the way to the dark side and that way is the way to the light side, you could say. Many want to just travel to the light side and forget about or try to ignore the darker side. One cannot specialize in fearology, fearism or fearlessness without feeling this abject side to what we do. The popularity of our work is so extremely minimal that it is hard to bear at times. But we persist, a lot of us doing this work on fear as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice just because we are willing to be marginalized and often rejected. No use making a bit deal about this, but I also believe it ought to be made public knowledge. Fear Studies is a tough thing to get support around.

I recently wrote that it is especially hard to ‘take off’ and have real impact in the world because of the “culture of positivity”—that is, the light-side hegemonic discourses that control the very study

and knowledge about fear and its management/education (Fisher, 2019). The culture of positivity debilitates Fear Studies and I want that to also be public knowledge. As the world grows darker in its toxic forms of violence, chaos, and suffering with terror everywhere due to crises of massive traumatic scale, someday humanity may ‘wake up’ and see that one just cannot be positive all the time and think that will get you through these crises. We have to stop using the positive to escape the negative. Just the other day I was riding my bike past the public science center in the city I live in and two massive banners were hung around the facility saying: “THINK LIKE A PROTON; ALWAYS BE POSITIVE.” This was supposed to be a cute, educational slogan the center staff wanted to promote, and yet it is totally ridiculous scientifically, and worse, it is philosophically lop-sided because the very nature of an atom is both positive (protons) and negative (electrons). This, I thought is just another example of the dominating culture of positivity skewing reality for young people today.

I see great ‘imbalances’—and, that’s all I’m saying as I introduce this 2nd issue of Volume 1 of the *International Journal of Fear Studies*. I also know that ‘waking up’ is inherently not easy. No one is too blame for not waking up or causing imbalances—yet we can do better in becoming fully conscious of the life we live in the 21st century and what our responsibility is with the coming near-future of near-collapse of all living systems on the planet. I lament at times, though not as victim, but I want to be as authentic as possible in my leading Fear Studies in the ways that I do. Excess positivity and other imbalances are due to fear of the opposite. I like Hallie Morrison’s cover art piece in this issue, in particular because as she said, fear is still there in the unfinished piece as she left negative spaces for the flowers that she has yet felt capable to fill—but she will someday. At least, she is conscious of her fear of completion and accomplishment.

Fearlessness is a path of such self-transparency, vulnerability and challenge in a precarious existence. I feel the same way about the *IJFS* because on the day the submissions were due, I waited with great anticipation for the articles to pour in. Guess what? Nothing came in, not even a peep from anyone that they were still planning to submit. The other day I began to have that queasy feeling inside that this journal could fail to produce a cadre and growth of authors, and I’d end up writing most of the material for issues. This latter scenario, albeit premature, is not one that appeals to me. I really want a diverse input from international players. But I sometimes wonder where they have gone? Do they just forget? Or are they so caught up in the ‘Fear’ Matrix and busy-ness that distracts them from sharing their important work in this journal? It’s likely best I don’t ask more, and think more about this because in the end all I can do is put out ‘the Call’ and people will respond or not. The evolution of consciousness on earth and in this Kosmos is still a big mystery to me!

Indeed, at times, it is best for me to reframe the problem of lack of popularity and reward from the external world, and turn this whole project of Fear Studies into one of my ‘art works’ because as Hallie Morrison’s first art poster in this journal issue indicates (in the quote) there are times you just do it because you are an art maker and all the rest of the issues of popularity and reward go by the way side because the world may not be ready for your art.

I so appreciate the few authors who did respond and especially a big thank you to our new Advisory Editorial Board member from Goa, Dr. Rayson Alex and reviewers who read articles and offered helpful comments on them for authors. Thanks to Hallie Morrison for copyediting. And for those

of you who donated small but significant funds to help the journal remain alive, you are the souls this planet needs!

It is good to hear from a scholar in Denmark: “The journal [*IJFS*] and the whole issue of fear is extremely interesting, especially in light of the ongoing climate crisis and our very human reactions towards the consequences, imagined or real” (Dr. Jonas Lysgaard, author of *Dark Pedagogy*, Aarhus University). On that note and interest, there are several people working on *eco-fear* issues and I foresee an entire issue (with Guest Ed.) on this soon. Let me know if you are interested to work on such an issue and/or contribute. Thanks.

Summary of Contents in this issue of *IJFS*:

First, I so appreciate the donation of art images and the work of creating art posters that Hallie Morrison has brought to the audience of *IJFS* in Issue #2. Although many of these art works she provided were done prior, her attention to the powerful unconscious forces of life and death (as dream-vision inspirations) really come through and seemed to me very appropriate for this issue and the times we live in, which are moving rapidly towards the dark side. Thank you, Hallie, for risking to travel there in your art that I find honest and undressing. Also, it is great to hear you are now reading my work and others on the topic of fear as a guide for your own inquiry ‘on the path.’

I’m in love with adult education and critical literacy development for the purpose of liberation. Therefore, it is with delight as first article I present the “New Fear Vocabulary,” a contribution made by six dedicated fear researchers, teachers and writers from around the world. We’ve all taken the risk to follow our intuition that truly there needs to be an expanded vocabulary around fear on this planet for us to ‘grow up’ and ‘wake up’ to the reality of our lives that is intimately related to fear as a medium in shaping forms of existence. There are so many other terms that have also been coined by these folks that are *not* in this list because they are not one-word terms. Someday soon, a more complete book ought to be created to encompass the total use of new fear terms. For now, this list is a good start to those who are serious and or curious about Fear Studies.

The next contribution is by the founder and eminent leader in transdisciplinary fear studies via the philosophy of fearism, Desh Subba, currently living in Hong Kong (originally from Nepal). Subba is continuing his eclectic dephilosophical inquiries (see Subba & Fisher, in press) of the Bible, Marxism, the Sub-Altern, Phenomenology (and essence) and now in this article turns to Derrida’s deconstruction and its limitations. His goal is to show in all these inquiries that *fear* is at the source (genesis) of human life in the physical and metaphysical realms—and, unfortunately, most all other theorists and philosophers in W. history have missed this fact.

As always, I appreciate the poetry of Jim Hanson, sharing a nondual practice of fearlessness with us by his deep listening in the forest grove. This poem leads nicely into the metaphysical romp and frank discussion of a mother and son, grandmother and father (Karen E. Moore and Luke R. Barnesmoore), both academics, are deeply inquiring in their dialogue to various ways to understand the human relationship with worldviews, fear, ghosts, neoliberalism and The Machine. Be prepared for quite an emotional ride. Next, I take on the U.S. Presidential hopeful candidate Marianne Williamson as someone who seems archetypal and yet very human—all as part of my

quest to better understand how to take the fear temperature of a nation—a world in crises. I find there's something therapeutic, a mystery, at the bottom of this well.

Next, Rafiq, a talented writer and nomad, offers a good summary of the nature and role of the Indigenous perspective on fear, fearlessness and transformation in this book review of *Four Arrows*. I have always believed, like *Four Arrows*, that our education on fear has to be made holistic today, and there is no better way than to make that transformation in our learning than by the study of Indigenous people's wisdom and worldview. I then take a 'shot' at trying to clarify my own philosophy of fear(ism) and do so by addressing the critiques that have come to my work and Desh Subba's by the philosopher from Nigeria, Michael B. Eneyo. This follows with Eneyo's response to my response and a short response to that from me. I believe these kinds of critical assessments within the field of Fear Studies are far behind and not yet risked enough by authors. So, this journal is a good place for such respectful communications for the purpose of the healthy growth of our critical thinking and fearwork overall.

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