Ecocriticism, Ecophobia and Indigenous Criticism

R. Michael Fisher

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Technical Paper No. 70

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute
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First Edition 2017

Cover and layout by R. Michael Fisher
ISOF Logo (original 1989) designed by RMF

Printed in Canada

The In Search of Fearlessness Institute is dedicated to research and publishing on fear, fearlessness and emotions and motivational forces, in general, as well as critical reviews of such works. Preference is given to works with an integral theoretical perspective.
Ecocriticism, Ecophobia and Indigenous Criticism

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Abstract – The author addresses some of the ways he has come into the field environmental education and the study of perceptions of humans towards nature, noting that fear of Nature is paradoxically situated with love of Nature in most people. He summarizes, using a brief fearanalysis, the Indigenous perspectives on ecocriticism and then proceeds to show the great influence of Four Arrows’ provocative de-hypnotizing method to help us get beyond the worst aspects of “ecophobia” (Estok’s hypothesis). He makes a few cautionary recommendations in the Conclusion as to how we can reclaim “indigeneity” by listening to and studying the more than human being (Nature) as guides to becoming “connoisseurs of Fear.”

Ecophobia and Fear: Perceptions of Nature

Again, I recommend that in this 5th of the five-part series of Technical Papers on ecocriticism that readers take time to study the prior papers as they offer foundations for what is in this paper.

When I was training in environmental education back in the late-1970’s there were several eco-philosophers, theorists and educators in this field concerned about and researching on the ways humans perceive their environment(s), and in particular, Nature herself. They believed that if we could discover the source of “why” humans ‘spoil their own nest’ in a kind of self-abusive outcome, then we would better enable means to solve the eco-problems facing human-planetary relationships. There was an urgency back then to find out the “why.”

Several suggested the despoilation of habitat for wild creatures and ourselves was because of our false or misguided “perceptions” of the environment and, of reality in general. We’d become too detached from nature and this is largely due to agricultural and then urbanization patterns in our history as a species. Others in this eco-movement agreed, but also suggested perceptions are determined by beliefs and values. This is where we should look for the “why,” they argued. And some agreed with that too but they argued beliefs, values and perceptions are shaped by worldview. I’ll return later to the critical discourse emerging of late on worldview analysis.
I tend to agree with the partial truths of all these searches for the “why.” Yet, I have a distinct preference, based on some 50 years in the eco-movement, that worldview analysis may be the most fruitful at really getting to the radical source of our global problems.

I was fascinated and disturbed, though not surprised by what the findings of those psychological perception studies were; many of them showed that (especially) urban kids (and parents, teachers) had a deep fear of Nature, that is, if you asked them cleverly the right questions in the right context. I have not looked at this literature in decades, but I can only imagine that deep fear of Nature and her powerful forces, especially with all the hurricanes and wildfires and global warming and flooding disasters, including earthquakes and tsunami’s—that, has gotten worse.

Interestingly, despite those deep fears, at times, the perception studies back then also showed they had a deep love for Nature and things wild (or wilder—e.g., their pet animals). Despite my own growing critique of such studies, and of the hegemonic discourse of Psychology itself as it dominated the research, it now makes me think of the basic psychoanalytic theorizing, which I still feel is worthy (with due criticism) that humans in the contemporary world (at least) are born with, or acquire very early through learning and socialization, a seemingly paradoxical affective orientation to the world, to the self and all ‘others’)¹—that is, they seem to have a deep

¹ Although this Technical Paper No. 70 is not about psychoanalysis, it is worthy to remind ourselves of some significant findings in the field by astute psychoanalytic and child psychiatrists. Rosseel (1992) summarized a pertinent point of the dilemma and conflict of growing up as a child (at least, in a Western modern world): “Winnicott’s work [in object-relations theory] illustrates that mental activity [cognition] can become an ‘object to itself’ that no longer regulates [i.e., stays connected with] the interaction with the world the interaction with the world [cf. this to Massumi’s (2005) descriptions of “fear” that unhinges from phenomena itself, as in Technical Paper 67, p. 19].” Rosseel also says such an autonomous mental activity can lead to genius, where people (like artists) do not conform their imaginations to the status quo. Yet, “On the other hand, Alice Miller holds that most mothers and parents in general use their young children to satisfy their own needs for warmth, recognition and self-esteem. So, the child learns, by fear of loss of love, to deny and repress (i.e., fails to ‘speak’ and ‘dialogue with’) his or her feelings of anger, anxiety and sadness. His or her intelligence is oriented [therefore] towards the development of a False Self [i.e., what Charles Whitfield and others have called a “fear-based self”] that protects him [her] against his [her] unbearable feelings of love and hate” (italics added) (pp. 239-40). This “False Self” is a construct (and theory) which provides good evidence for explaining the “why” of environmental toxification behaviors by the False Self construction. Rosseel, E. (1992). Writers of the lost I: Second-order self-observation and absolute writership. In G. van de Vijver (Ed.), New perspectives on cybernetics: Self-organization, autonomy and connectionism (pp. 233-45). Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic.
‘love and hate’\(^2\) conflictual (often unconscious) tension with their parents (for starters). And ultimately, that would lead to a similar attitude or value-orientation towards themselves.

Feminist critics have also researched and theorized this conflictual love-hate relationship with the body and there’s an old philosophical tradition of mind vs. body discourse that is anything but resolved. And ecophi- losophers and others have likewise suggested the same ‘love and hate’ of Nature and anything called “natural” or “wild.” Estok’s ecocriticism, for example, his “Ecophobia Hypothesis”\(^3\) (or Fear Hypothesis) presupposes this deep fear/hate of Nature and that it has been existent and pernicious for a very long time in human history a major motivator of our relations with Nature as so-called “civilized” societies. Estok juxtaposed that hypothesis re: fear with the counter and prior “Biophilia Hypothesis”\(^4\) (or Love Hypothesis) found in the early sociobiology literature—thus, the Love vs. Fear (“Hate”) hypotheses is again evident within ecocriticism debates and the battle over what are the major forces motivating and characteristic our species (e.g., our human nature).

The search is to define (hypothesize) “human nature” of course, but also unfortunately this is conflated with the articulation of the “human condition.” The end result of critical inquiry is to allow us to speculate on how much do we think humans can change—for the better—even, transform completely at some basic levels of perceptions, beliefs, values and worldviews. The potential of all this philosophical thought and ecocriticism is to more or less advance critiques of our normal ways of socializing and “educating” our children and ourselves as adults. Is there new “human potential” that is untapped? So, if we diagnose the why behind our self-abusive ways can a new and healthier society be created—one, that I have gone so far as to speculate could be a “Fearless Society.”\(^5\)

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\(^2\) Believe it or not, the very first rock band I played in I named Love n’ Hate. Note: this notion of conflicting affective, emotional tensions and conflict can easily be translated, if I was to make the argument, into Love vs. Fear. Many bright critics (e.g., Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) saw “fear” underneath “hate.”

\(^3\) See prior Technical Papers in this series for discussion of the Estokian perspective in ecocriticism.


It would take a book to unfold all the above conflicting and yet similar patterns of fascinating and disturbing critiques. In Technical Paper No. 70 I’ll focus, in part, on this same conflictual dynamic (also, called the “Love” vs. “Fear” pattern\(^6\)) from the perspective of what Four Arrows (aka Don Trent Jacobs\(^7\)) has identified as a rather universal “Indigenous worldview.” He and I have been working on a few collaborative publishing projects over the last 10 years. I am most interested in the postcolonial and postmodern problem I would label the *Indigenous-Western Conflict*. I’ll return to that later. And, to note, *Love and Fear* are wide-open terms, conceptualized dynamically and dialectically and creatively beyond what most of us can imagine—beyond what even I can imagine. I sometimes designate such deconstructive and reconstructive meaning through adding (’) to each: ‘Love’ and ‘Fear.’ But that would distract too far from the purpose of this paper. That said, I advise readers to come to these concepts in a transdisciplinary fashion as much as possible. And, if one is pre-inclined to hold these concepts as “emotions” (which I think is okay, but dubious) then I at least ask such a reader take a biological-systems perspective on these “emotions” as more than an ‘added-on’ component of living but as Humberto Maturana has reframed them, as the very “stepping stones” (foundational platforms for human (or more than human) interactions in living biological-systems.\(^8\)


\(^{7}\) Four Arrows has written 20 books and is a professor in the School of Leadership Studies (the last 15 years), Fielding Graduate University, California; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Arrows

\(^{8}\) For Maturana’s *new biology* theorizing, “His introduction of the notion of biology at this point of the third-order cybernetics becomes significant for he argues that love [could also be fear] is a biological dynamic which has deep roots in humans. It is an emotion that defines in the organism a dynamic structural pattern, a stepping stone to interactions that leads to the operational coherences of social life. Therefore, *every* emotion[al] [meta-motivational pattern] (fear, anger, sadness, etc.) is a biological dynamic which defines structural patterns, which act as ‘stepping stones’ to interactions that can lead to different domains of operational coherence such as fleeing, fighting, withdrawing and so forth (Maturana and Varela 1987: 248)” (Nabudere, 2012, pp. 67-68). It is also worthwhile to note that Nabudere, interpreting Lacan, suggests these emotional ‘stepping stones’ and their negotiation in subjectivity formation and beyond that are fundamental to a notion of being-in-the-world (becoming) and “being” itself as an “ethics of being” (p. 68). Nabudere, D. W. (2012). *Afrikology and transdisciplinarity: A restorative epistemology*. African Collective Books. This under-
We’re a very conflicted species! That’s what I would put on a t-shirt. My focus as a fearologist, fearanalyst and ecocritic (see Technical Paper No. 69) is to stay with the conflict that involves “fear” (and/or ‘fear’) at its core. Oh, on a sidebar: I know some very astute Indigenous scholars (at least), who would want me to make the distinction in the “we” as I use it to generalize as I write. The latter critics would want to suggest there are “Indigenous” Peoples (still living the ‘old ways’) and there are the rest of humanity not doing so; the latter, who are choosing (due to many complex reasons, not all their own responsibility) not to live the Indigenous ‘old ways’ are out-and-out destroying and compromising resilience in global ecosystems. I’ll return to this all later but suffice it to say (being dramatic) the latter Indigenous-based critics would print the t-shirts with a slight variation, as they would more likely want to say, “Modern humans are very ‘sick’!”

Ecocriticism, Ecophobia and an Indigenous Critique

In the Anthropocene era, especially with global warming crises being felt everywhere on the planet, Nature herself is more and more easily ‘fear’-projected upon as the ‘enemy’ of human civilization (e.g., “Ecophobia Hypothesis”). Is this something new or ancient? Is it qualitatively distinct from the past or has it always been part of human nature? Or, is any such “fear” of Nature (as ‘enemy’) really a modern Western construction (i.e., learned human condition exacerbated in a mass-mediated reality promoted within a “culture of fear”)—go back, as part of some 5000 years of patriarchy and the domination of the phallic sphere? How is our society’s rela-

9 I use this ‘fear’-projected notion very consciously, but unfortunately, due to limited space here I cannot unpack the long journey of my investigation into this and what philosopher Ken Wilber has variously called “Dualism-Repression-Projection,” “Atman Project” (e.g., see Wilber, 1981); I have variously called my adaptation of the Wilberian ontological hypothesis the “Fear Project” (see Fisher, 1997) and/or ‘Fear’ Project (see Fisher, 2010). Wilber, K. (1981). *Up from Eden: A transpersonal view of human evolution*. Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday; Fisher, R. M. (1997). A guide to Wilberland: Some common misunderstandings of the critics of Ken Wilber and his work on transpersonal theory prior to 1995. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 37, 47-54.

tionship with dying/death (e.g., the “fear of death” as emphasized as so important by existentialists, and thanatologists) related to this all?

I’ll not be trying to answer these questions per se in this brief paper but they are beneath everything I am interested in via ecocriticism and especially in regard to Simon Estok’s provocative assertion of the “Ecophobia Hypothesis.” A recent ecocriticism conference focused on new materialism and put out a ‘Call for Papers,’ with the introduction (below) by Iovino and Opperman:

In regard to a highly technologized post human world, this [material approach to ecocriticism] also implies re-discussing the boundaries between the human and the more than human world [e.g., see David Abram11]. Ecocriticism, in such a [post humanism, transhumanism] context, can also enable us to formulate effective responses to the vexing question of ecophobia in all its forms: the irrational fear of the natural world and its entities, and groundless hatred for the unpredictable climactic and natural patterns around us (for instance, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, flooding, hurricanes), as well as anxiety [fear] produced by [eco] doomsday scenarios.12

‘Man against Nature’ returns with a vengeance in this new eco-narrative and ecomedia casting of the global and environmental and social problems. Technology against Nature and many other versions of this battle for final survival ensue. My good friend and colleague Four Arrows, an Indigenous-based ecophilosopher and educator-activist wrote, “Our worldview, not our technologies, can save us.”13 He would be the first to support the quote above in the sense of framing our analysis and solutions today as having to involve not only human interests but the interests of all beings (i.e., the “more than human”). From an Indigenous worldview and despite all the so-called technological advances keeping humans alive longer and longer, the paradox is that such innovations are also destroying the sustainable resources for long-life for our species and many other species that are dying off and going extinct. The causes are anthropogenic for the most part,

equally is the case with global warming. We (at least most humanity) is killing itself off both directly through wars and industrial pollution, and through destroying the environmental quality and natural habitats that keep healthy ecosystems intact. Humans depend on ecology for life. The foundations of these basic macrosystem claims, well supported by diverse ecocritics (and Indigenous activists and scholars) for a long time, have to be taken into account in any developments of ecocriticism.

So, how have the Indigenous scholars and others contributed to ecocriticism? Have they addressed “fear” (and/or ecophobia) at all or perhaps uniquely? A very preliminary investigation retrieved a 2017 academic edited book entitled: *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies*. I quickly searched the text for some key terms: (a) “Ecophobia Hypothesis” – 0 hits, (b) “Age of Terror” – 0 hits, (c) Simon Estok – 0 hits, (d) “terror” – 0 hits, (e) “fear” – 8 hits. The book is interesting in that it features Indigenous artists working with others: “It illuminates the multi-layered, polyvocal ways in which artistic expressions render ecological connections.” I was not pleased the writing on “fear” was very minimal, yet clearly all the authors are attempting to get to the cause and why of environmental mass destruction around the planet. To date, as Indigenous perspectives, they are typically very critical of non-Indigenous views dominating ecocriticism and an American-centric (Northern) plethora of ecocriticism that goes with it. More representation from the poor and marginalized (e.g., the South) is called for in the book.

And of all the “fear” citations most all are about “fears” in a concrete sense—as talking about rational fears that Indigenous people have re: the ever-dominating development/industrial mania around the planet. No discussion on the nature and role of fear itself; no discussion of ecophobia as cause (as the why) for the mania of destruction. I found the very brief mention of banyon trees in the Amazonian rainforest intriguing in one essay, where the “spirits” of these trees, that typically line the rivers in the region with great protruding roots, are said by the Indigenous people to “cause fear since they are known to become angry towards any humans who might damage the critical habitats [along rivers] that shelter young fish or birds.”

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15 Excerpt from the Routledge book description online.

16 Adamson and Galeano (2016, p. 233) are describing “Renacos” as a species of Amazonian ficus or banyon tree and their attendant spirits (or “persons”). Adamson, J., Galeano, J.
“Nature” (“spirits”) causing humans to fear so that humans will behave more morally and treat other creatures and the environment better, is a long tradition of religious and spiritual discourse, taking forms like “fear of God” in the Abrahamic streams of monotheism. Of course, if this is an accurate example of the general discourse which promotes humans (especially, if their are ‘bad’) to fear Nature (aka Gods/Spirits and Environment) then perhaps it could lead to ecophobia over enough accumulated time(?). I am not qualified to comment further on this. But the more important issue at hand is that the “Ecophobia Hypothesis” (Estok) is apparently “up” and being debated by some and “down” in other camps—that is, being ignored (and/or dismissed) by some in the field of ecocriticism. I am really curious if all the Indigenous-based ecocritics tend not to pick-up on the Estokian explanation (theory, hypothesis). Do the Indigenous ecocritics shy away from talking about fear-itself as central and causal to what I have now labeled the global Eco-Fear Problem?

What I do know at this time is that the book *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies* was disappointing from the perspective I take as a fearologist coming to eco-issues. Upon this disappointment is the entry into the work of Four Arrows—because he takes a very strong stand on how important “Fear” (and “Fearlessness”) are, and argues that they are (more or less) core to the Indigenous worldview and all that follows from it.

**Four Arrows’ Indigenous-based Eco-View on Fear**

In defining and comparing the Indigenous (original) worldview and the “Dominant” (post-point of departure) worldview17 (e.g., typically European, Western, Modern, Patriarchal), Four Arrows wrote, “Such a worldview [i.e., Indigenous] offers a different orientation to concepts of Fear, Authority, Words, and Nature, emphasizing abiding by the laws of Nature”18 (italics added). And, any deviance from those laws will skew the human-Nature relationship and create major eco-problems (what I would add: create major Eco-Fear-Problems). In his dissertation cultural research with the Rarámuri shamans and peoples of remote Mexico, Four Arrows found fas-

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17 He argues 9-10,000 years ago this happened as part of cultural evolution; see his “point of departure theory” (Four Arrows, 2016, pp. 5-8).
18 Ibid., p. 20.
cinating ways they turned “Fear” into “courage” and beyond to “Fearlessness.”

He used capital letters for Fear and Fearlessness in his 1998 book on this because he was using a very deep and broad conceptualization of them, not limited to only the Dominant worldview and the discipline of psychology and (W. common sense) that flows from it. I suggest you read his justification of “worldview” analysis as better than other forms in terms of getting to the roots of the eco-problems plaguing the planet. He has become a total believer that if Westerners (for e.g.) could better understand their own (largely unconscious) worldview and all that comes from it right down to shaping behaviors, then another (alternative) worldview could replace and/or correct the post-point of departure worldview that is damaging ecosystems so horridly for thousands of years.

The original Indigenous worldview can be universally summarized in a Pan-Indian way, as he does in his latest book. And in that book of the 12 compared qualities/characteristics of each worldview (Indigenous vs. Dominant), he identified a few that directly involve “Fear”:

5. Nature is law, teacher, and the primary relationship [Indigenous]... not that which is only a complex of utilitarian resources for the use of humans or a series of forces to fear and avoid) [Dominant]

7. A fearless trust in the universe comes from a continual cultivation of courage and generosity [as virtues, morality] and is grounded in present experience [not abstract authoritative doctrines] and a continual quest for promoting reciprocity, respect and responsibility in all relations [Indigenous]... [not based on] fear avoidance and a focus on materialistic gain [which] largely defines the underlying motivations [Dominant]....

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20 For e.g., see Four Arrows (2016, pp. 4-11).

21 Ibid., p. 3. And, for a description of Four Arrows own Indigenous-blood and philosophy about “indigeneity” and the terms he uses re: Native, Indian, Aboriginal, First Nations, etc. are found in Four Arrows (2016) and I am following his approach, which has been expedient as his biographer.

22 Ibid., p. 7.
Besides the binary juxtaposition of Four Arrows’ theory of worldviews, there is a good case to be made, from an Indigenous perspective, that basically there is no genetic, no inherent, not inevitable, “need” to fear Nature—and, thus, to hate Nature, according to the Indigenous old ways. Ideally, the two quotes above show in principle why Indigeneity (and the Indigenous worldview) could be overall claimed to be a form of “Fearlessness” ontologically, epistemologically and axiologically—which, I could not say is the case for the Dominant worldview. Some might argue the Indigenous worldview is “Love-based” and the Dominant worldview is “Fear-based.” I myself would generally agree. But both Four Arrows and myself would argue there is some ‘good’ stuff in the Dominant worldview worth complementing the Indigenous worldview and visa versa. But that’s a much too complex discussion to enter here. I am offering above the first-order of ecophilosophy and ecocriticism that Four Arrows brings to the table of ecocriticism as a field in general. And, yes, he would agree, I’m quite sure, that the Estokian ecophobia imperative in ecocriticism (and beyond) is a good place to critique the Dominant worldview (especially). Four Arrows would argue that the Indigenous worldview is not one of promoting fear/hatred of Nature (or, anything else for that matter). Only a fear-based worldview in the first place could breed such fear/hatred upon the planet and including the self-fear/hatred within each human being that lives out the Dominant worldview. The meaning of “fearless” in Four Arrows passage above is beyond the scope of this Technical Paper but suffice it to say you ought to read any of his books23 or articles and in particular the book I am now waiting to get published on his life and work, entitled Fearless Engagement of Four Arrows: A True Story of an Indigenous Social Transformer.24

23 Four Arrows (2016) wrote Chapter Two on “Courage and Fearlessness” which is an excellent overview of much of his latest thinking on this topic. He pointed out “In the dominant worldview cultures, courage is theoretically honored [even idolized in heroes], but feared as a mainstay of life. People avoid it...” (p. 18). I agree with this assessment overall. One reason is that the capitalistic elite powers of the world, and most of the authorities that socialize us are themselves very fear-based, but only look courageous, or “fearless” (really ‘bravado’)—yet, closer examination shows otherwise. They are also mostly ecophobic. They are also unreflective upon their fear management/education practices and worldview that supports them. They are, more or less, in fear-based hypnotic trance under the regimes of the elites and systems and state of CAT-Fear in its most destructive pathological forms (see later).

24 My intellectual biography (to be published by Peter Lang, 2018) is a critical fearanalysis approach to his life and work—especially, his ideas and theories (e.g., CAT-FAWN).
Indeed, like so many ecophilosohers and ecocritics, Four Arrows makes great sacrifices in his life to figure out the why of human-based planetary eco-destruction—and, generally, likewise the root causes of life-styles and thoughts and values that are “insanity,” as he wrote.²⁵ In my working on the book, I asked him what would explain “why” the human species (e.g., the Dominant) is so self-destructive? He responded at length, of which I’ll share only a brief paraphrasing here:

As far as I can figure it out, and I’ve spent over 40 years working on this figuring, the vast majority of humans are caught in a “mass hypnosis syndrome, I now call Trance-based Learning gone awry.” There’s no other explanation that is satisfying to me, but maybe that’s because I am a hypnotherapist professionally? People en masse are rationalizing why they live the ways they do that are so destructive and near impossible to get them to really change significantly—they have got to be addicted, is the way I make sense of it. They are hypnotized via media especially, which is now so completely controlled by power-elites in every sector of our world. I offer a way to help people figure out why they continue doing things they do, even if they intuit there is something wrong with them—that is, I offer a de-hypnotizing process. But even then, we cannot be sure they will use my de-hypnotizing CAT-FAWN theory and praxis to transform and liberate—they are so “fear-conditioned, which has unfortunately become ‘normal’ socialization—a ‘culture of fear.’”²⁶

My take is that we are so fear-based via oppression-repression dynamics today in a “culture of fear” context²⁷, that we cannot even find a reference point for where to turn and imagine Fearlessness, or Love in the largest senses I mean, and Four Arrows means. And, likewise, for the non-Indigenous persons it is very difficult to imagine an Indigenous worldview that would be valuable to them as they are just mostly trying to survive and fit-in (economically, socially) to the status-power that accrues from conformity in a culture of fear, mistrust, intimidation and injustice. All which creates an organism and institutions that are disconnected from the Laws of Nature (as Four Arrows put it above)—

²⁵ Ibid., p. 20.
²⁶ Because his original response is copyright protected by the contract I signed with Peter Lang Publishing, I had to modify it substantially here but it is accurate to the essence of his letter to me with some quotes directly from his letter.
²⁷ See especially Technical Paper No. 67.
that is, are disconnected from Sanity. The root cause “Fear.” At least that’s where Four Arrows (and I, and some others) are carrying forth our ecocritiques, and Estok’s is very similar with his “Ecophobia Hypothesis.”

**Four Arrows “De-hypnotizing” Process/Technology**

I recently had a newspaper article come across my desk on “Using Self-Hypnosis to Control Chronic Pain.” No doubt just about any popular magazine or news outlet more or less will run a few of these kinds of stories. People tend to be fascinated (if not freaked out) with hypnosis and the power it has to tap into the unconscious. And, I am not, like the author of this article (a hypnotherapist, and psychiatrist), talking about “entertaining” hypnosis in theatrical productions but the clinical sense and use of hypnotherapy as “therapy.” Dr. Ennis wrote, “The biggest problem in North America is that we [as a society, culture] teach people to be passive. The easiest thing you can do is take a pill—and the easiest thing for a doctor to do is prescribe one [for pain, or fear or so many things].”

Fisher & Subba (2016) argued for a new critical literacy on the planet re: Fear and Fearlessness—we offered a philosophy of fearism critique. Fisher (and Four Arrows) also offer ways to move from Fear to Fearlessness. The five Technical Papers in this series all more or less touch on these. Estok (via, the “Ecophobia Hypothesis”) provides his own rehabilitation project through his ecocriticism and especially with his calling out for critics to examine “fear” (especially, the “irrational fear” that leads to hatred of Nature). Four Arrows is offering “Trance-based Learning” via CAT-FAWN—(arguably) his model and practice that best resists the worst impacts of fear. He suggests that all humans, when they can, ought to aim toward what he called “becoming a connoisseur of fear.”

All along, the above critical thinkers are telling a story about the nature and role of fear today that is very unlike the common status quo versions. They suggest that fear is not merely an emotion, feeling—it can be more an ideology itself. Without going into all that complexity, I

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wish to offer Four Arrows amazing and provocative Indigenous-based
theory called CAT-FAW/N (as I prefer to write it). This will be the
shortest description of his work ever. For longer versions you will have
to read elsewhere. You need to know it took 15 years of research to
come up with the theory itself and more years to hone the practices
based on the theory. Several of his books, cited in this Technical Paper
especially, teach about CAT-FAW/N—the do-it-yourself de-
hypnotizing technology process that is practical for most anyone to use
to avoid being sucked into the vortex—that is, to resist, the Dominant
worldview’s hegemony and pathological drives toward extinction (e.g.,
like Freud’s “death drive” thanatos).

So, let me give you a quick sense of CAT-FAWN, without all the details of
his original vision. I preface this explanation as not the exact way Four
Arrows may describe it, and I am an admitted total amateur in CAT-
FAWN practice and/or in hypnotherapy overall. However, he has en-
dorsement my interpretation. I do have a cognitive and intuitive under-
standing of it and I expect many of us readers will intuitively use CAT-
FAWN technology more or less (usually, only in part) without even know-
ing it.

According to Four Arrows, CAT-FAWN is a metaphor, "a new theory of
mind" and metacognitive mnemonic that tells of a predator (CAT) and its
potential prey (FAWN) operating with the joint (dialectic) bonding of a
hyphenated form; this indicates a basic integration of opposites in
a complementarity—the latter, being a foundational principle of the Indig-
neous worldview (and harmony) as he has written about. The CAT portion
stands literally for Concentration Activated Transformation. This refers to
a heightened state of consciousness/awareness, which can be induced by
many stimuli (situations), for e.g., meditation, dreaming, art-making,
and/or a shock, etc.

Fear (and/or trauma) is a big cause of CAT as well. Because of his long
training as a hypnotherapist, Four Arrows (like the Indigenous Peoples of
the 'old ways' in pre-point of departure times, especially) knows that when

30 For e.g., see Fisher, R. M., and Four Arrows (Jacobs, D. T.) (2019). Indigenizing conscien-
tization and critical pedagogy: Nature, spirit and Fearlessness as foundational concepts.
In S. Steinberg, B. Down and D. Nix-Stevenson (Eds.), Sage Handbook of Critical Peda-

31 Throughout this series of Technical Papers, I often refer to and cite my own work on the
'Fear' Matrix (and/or 'Fear' Project).
people are in CAT they are in a light-to-heavy "trance." At this time, the human brain (which includes more-than-humans as well) is hard-wired to attend with extra-sensory awareness to the subtle and gestalt realities of one's self and surroundings and does so initially, virtually unconsciously. It's a healthy preparatory state of action, for e.g., fight-flight reaction among others—all intended for good Defense Intelligence operations and ultimately survival strategies if needed. Instinct and primal awareness are core to CAT and so is hypnosis and/or "trance-based learning" (Four Arrows' latest label for this phenomena). We are heightened for (transformative) learning in CAT.

The problem, Four Arrows notes, is when we enter a CAT state without noticing or knowing we are so, and what is causing it. Thus, if largely unconscious to CAT we are highly susceptible to "inputs" from the environment that may condition us, that is hypnotize us and implant "messages" that are harmful to us. These trance-based learned messages, even if unconscious and subliminal, are deeply memorized and held in the nervous system, so goes the theory of hypnosis. The quick example, is when a parent first scares a child, say by yelling at them unexpectedly with anger, creating a CAT in the child, and then tells the child they are stupid. It is unfortunately so common. We also have the equivalent of this fear-based conditioned (trance-based) learning happening in societies as a whole, e.g., the media showing images of the 9/11 towers being on fire and collapsing and so on. Then media and presidents give "messages" (e.g., propaganda) when we are in shock state—this is now a collective cultural trance.

Messages driven into our systems by these means are very difficult to change and worse yet, the 'bad' messages continue to influence our mood and behavior for a life-time in some cases. There has to be a rehabilitation "program" of conscious de-hypnotizing going on, which involves first better managing the hypnotic messages implanted and, second, learning a de-hypnotizing technology (e.g., CAT-FAWN) that would offer a way to re-circuit the early learned messages. Also, new positive messages can be put in place when in a state of CAT. So, you would learn how to bring about CAT and/or how to recognize it when it occurs spontaneously in daily life. Remember, in this teaching by Four Arrows' on CAT-FAWN, there is both new scientific information, clinical knowledge and ancient Indigenous wisdom combined. Again, with limited space in this brief summary, let's move on to the other half of the "formula"--FAWN. Literally, F = Fear, A = Authority, W = Word(s) (and music) and N = Nature. This stands for what Indigenous Peoples of the 'old ways' always knew were "four major forces" that shape our lives, for good or ill (depending on our awareness
and management of them). Fear is taken as very primal in both inducing CAT and joining with CAT (e.g., CAT-Fear) as a powerful two-some able to bring about "courage" as a virtue (for e.g.) or to bring about "panic" and "irrationality" as a vice (for e.g.). Great character/values are built on the former, and shabby destructive values built on the latter.

To reach our highest human potential(s) one has to learn to manage CAT-Fear well for without doing so this can undermine all the good ways of the other three major forces. Authority is very powerful because it can use Words (for e.g.) to hypnotize. Humans, as a social species, are particularly hard-wired through evolution to "follow" Authority (i.e., dominant) individuals (leaders), groups, organizations, nations, ideologies. So, one has to be very aware when in CAT of their relationships going on via CAT-Authority and CAT-Word.

The last of the major forces of the de-hypnotizing technology is most foundational to the entire CAT-FAW complex, and I prefer to write this formula (theory) as CAT-FAW/N. Which is saying that the common denominator and most influential factor is N = Nature. It is the most benign\(^{32}\) of the forces. I won't go into all those reasons but many of us know how powerful it can be to connect with Nature when we are "off-center" or "hurting" and or "terrified" by the human world. The Natural world, in general, is our "Mother" (Source) for earthlings. Today some groups of modern people know this, as well as the Indigenous Peoples of this planet that have lived in relative harmony with Nature for 99% of human evolution, which is the basic premise of Four Arrows' theory and work overall.

The summary is, we are easily hypnotized, and when FAW/N are utilized in 'good' (positive) ways for recovery, healing, transformation, then we grow and mature as healthy and sane humans. When FAW/N are made meaning of and utilized in 'bad' (negative) destructive ways for control, order, manipulation tactics etc., then we shrink and stay immature (fear-based) and very dubious creatures with seemingly only self-centered inter-

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32 I caution use of this term “benign” (in contrast to malign) for Nature in the Indigenous worldview. I haven’t come up yet with a better term. I think there is value in its use here but it would take a long complex argument to first define “Nature” as distinct from “Culture” (at least in my theory) and to then show Nature always keeps intact the principle: “when hurt heal”—the latter, which has been disrespected and replaced with a coping principle. When I asked Four Arrows if he thought the Indigenous worldview casts Nature as benign, he said “no.” Nature can be very destructive and Indigenous Peoples of the ‘old ways’ did not romanticize Nature as some European strains of philosophy have. Four Arrows and I would agree that “benign” is closer to meaning “wise.”
ests and a relative floating and undependable moral compass. Four Arrows knows we can do better than fall "victim" to hypnotic trance-based learning of ill-intent especially. We may get "caught" but then catch ourselves, and use the CAT-FAW/N mnemonic to recall what we need to do to unravel any potential destructive hypnosis going on, consciously or otherwise. It is not paranoid, I don't think, nor does Four Arrows, to assume that most leaders of the Dominant worldview already well-know how to control and manipulate by creating CAT and using FAW/N negatively with it (e.g., propaganda).

We now have the de-hypnotizing technology in CAT-FAW/N to make our own history, to decolonize and de-hypnotize our minds! The first step, is to realize this may be a good thing to try to learn and implement. Believe you me, both Four Arrows and I know, people often "get it" how CAT-FAW/N works more or less, but there are massive programs in place in the mind and culture-at-large (e.g., modern Western societies) that resist learning this technology. Personally, I know how many years I resisted (unconsciously) learning what Four Arrows was teaching in CAT-FAW/N Connection. I mean years, and that's a confession that comes from one who is deeply interested in fear management/education and I knew F stood for Fear in his formula. Let it be a lesson...

Concluding Remarks

Ecocriticism if done well is a part of a larger “cultural therapy” (or therapia33) project. Decades ago I was an individual therapist, then did group and family therapy, then organization therapy. I was not a clinical therapist per se in training and background, but I could do this work well and gained both formal and informal education and experiential validation to proceed. Eventually, I knew I was to be a cultural therapist working on the pathologies of the largely Western (Dominant) “culture of fear,” including working on the “wicked problems” of the Anthropocene era. Four Arrows’ Indigenous-based teachings complemented my work and more than anything he reminded me of the importance of Nature herself in the very ‘formula’ (e.g., CAT-FAW/N) of rehabilitation. If we fear Nature, the body, the feminine, and dying and death in the Dominant worldview—to the point of an individual and collective neurosis (at times psychosis), as many have suggested is the

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33 I borrow this notion from Ken Wilber, as a largely philosophical therapy if you will. I suggest you read Wilber’s work on this or go to my interpretation of it in Fisher (2010, pp. 84, 151, 186).
case, then any treatment re: rehabilitation will have to be based on Fearlessness and a stance that includes the Indigenous worldview juxtaposed and contrasted with the Dominant worldview.

Four Arrows Indigenous-based therapia is both universal and original and yet is grounded on a fundamental teaching, very hard for us Westerners and modern people to grasp. He tells us that in order to become connoisseurs of Fear we’ll have to respect the more than human beings (e.g., animals) to teach us about fear management. I find that both true in my own experience, and an interesting notion to bring into the curricula on Fear and Fearlessness in the 21st century. You may want to try this—try learning from your most ancient ancestors (Nature) what is to be gleaned on how they have had a healthy relationship with Fear for 99% of the history of life on this planet. Human beings will do well to be so humble and respectful of Nature’s wisdom to teach us and to likewise help preserve and learn from the Indigenous worldview that grew along with Nature’s wisdom. I’d like to see how ecocriticism could evolve with such a respect, curricula and pedagogy. Time will tell how best to do this as it is complicated by most ecocriticism coming from non-Indigenous Peoples. However, Four Arrows (and some others) are now taking a position of merit I believe, to reclaim our “indigeneity” that is the birthright and ancestry of all humans no matter what race, religion, color, culture, etc. This holds great promise to working better together overall to analyze and solve our worst eco-problems that are always founded upon other social problems—and, philosophical problems.

Of course, lastly, I caution anyone who is non-Indigenous and unfamiliar with the Indigenous worldview and the way Indigenous Peoples live (the ‘old ways’), not to assume they can merely read my Technical Paper, or cognitively grasp CAT-FAW/N dehypnotizing technology and go around believing they are “indigenous” and “wise” and can resist the ‘Fear’ Matrix. Not likely. One has to practice, practice and practice these things and live the experiences. Then bring theory and bring wise mature Indigenous people to your side and act as mentors. All of this is a relational paradigm of transformative learning, it is not an individual psychological path (the latter, as the Eurocentric Dominant worldview tends to promote).

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