

Fear
by
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It is often said that heroes are not the ones who feel no fear, but those who overcome their fear to accomplish great things. I find it more than ironic that some people are afraid to talk about their fear. I am not a big fan of the word *empowerment*; it implies a two sided coin--those who empower you have the power to take it away again. To me, the only real power you can ever have is the power over your fear. If you are not afraid, no one can control you. Fear of losing your job; fear of failure; fear of destitution; fear of abandonment; fear of injury and death; these are all fears that people in your life use to try to manipulate you. We even have an organized political network that plays upon your fears to enlist you in their fight to maintain status quo; that is, to maintain the current distribution of wealth and power. Operatives in this network are well-known for their hypocrisy and their self-contradiction. But if they can make you afraid, you will not notice that they do not care about your well-being.

I assume most of you reading this are motivated to study paranormal phenomena in part because of your fear of death. If we can find evidence of an afterlife, then death is not so frightening. I did not have much time to develop a refined fear of death before I was introduced to paranormal study. I had my moments of panic during my teens, but mostly I was afraid of dying prematurely and missing out on life. I pretty much lost my fear of death altogether from experiences I had in June of 1968. I'm 62 and an American male; you do the math. Since then, I savor every moment of life, don't take anything too seriously; don't waste a minute of my time, and don't sweat the small stuff. I do not let others define or control me, which is probably why I've been fired seven or eight times in my career (I lose count). Managers and coworkers are never comfortable with those who feel a strong sense of personal integrity, and are not afraid of them. Fortunately, I have lived the sort of life such that I do not need validation from others. To many, my disinterest in their opinions of me makes me an a**hole. So be it! Besides being unafraid, I am always happy to irritate those who would regulate me. [FYI, I have been very happily married for over 23 years, so those of you making certain extrapolations are wrong--go figure! BTW, Barbara, is no shrinking violet.]

I have not seen anyone with whom I have investigated become dysfunctional through fear. If they have undergone our training program, they have considered that if there is an afterlife, it will be something like this life. If you are unafraid, then nothing can hurt you--there are no theories that suggest that one can die after one is dead. If you are afraid of pain and suffering in the afterlife, then that is an artifact of fear in this life, and I suspect that you will indeed experience pain and suffering. We always get what we ask for.

Fear of dying is one thing; fear of evil is another. Most clients who are afraid are afraid of evil. Your beliefs about the nature and existence of evil will depend in large part upon the religious tradition in which you have been raised. Often, the client can be reassured that his or her experiences are not the result of evil. Investigators are strongly advised to do some serious reflecting on their beliefs about the nature, existence, and sources of evil. Our

certified investigators have all done so, though it takes more than an hour. The secret to understanding evil is sorting out the truly evil from what those who want to control you would have you believe is evil. I believe that evil comes from those who want to control you for their own personal gain--living or dead.

Personally, my scariest investigation was the first and last time I allowed untrained individuals to participate in the investigation. It was a circus. Recently, a theater group asked me to lead an investigation of their theater. Fine! If our team does it, there is no charge. If the group wants to participate, there will be a two hour training course for a fee; participants must take the course. Have not heard from them since. I find that requiring others to commit to actual learning eliminates my worst fears.

About Demons and Demonology

Virtually all societies can point to supernatural “things” that they can identify as demons. For many, this is evidence that demons actually exist, but it could also mean simply that the brains of our species are all wired the same and that we are all products of our collective experience in the world. Even though we are living a shared experience, that does not mean that we all interpret what we experience in the same way. Just what a demon is or what it means is defined quite differently between groups, usually as a function of their religious traditions. Besides, referring to demons as “things” does not necessarily give them ontological standing.

Eastern religious thought often defines a demon as something internal that is projected into the outside world. One must deal with one's personal demons, and this is often accomplished through ceremony and ritual. The rituals are intended to cleanse the mind and to strengthen the internal spirit.

Christianity, as one example of Western tradition, tends to view demons as real entities situated in a cosmic bureaucracy that occupy particular organizational positions. This view is encouraged by the desire of church officials to control social behavior. These demons are generally defined as having an assigned role in a hierarchical division of labor either with expectations for the accomplishment of goals and objectives, or with an assigned function in the cosmic order of things. In certain Christian traditions, demons can be the rejected souls of those who commit suicide, or other heinous crimes. Or, they can be the minions of the Devil sent to collect souls or to fulfill some other assigned task like deliver messages.

Demons are often thought to report to Satan or to one of his subordinates. This "boss" gives them instructions and assignments, sets boundaries on their activities, and essentially supervises and evaluates their work. The same is true for angels and lesser gods, except that they report to God or to one of God's subordinates. God and the Devil are understood as competing corporate executives. For those of you who have not given this much thought, your religion tends to mimic the world you experience. A demonologist is usually someone well versed in the cosmic bureaucracy and its rules.

People are quick to attribute paranormal activity to demons simply because that is what they see on television. As a result, demons are supposed to follow rules--they cannot enter a church (sacred ground), they are impervious to lead and steel but not to silver, they are allergic to crosses or to other religious symbols, they can be thwarted by prayer (sometimes it has to be in Latin), they can only appear under certain weather conditions or phases of the moon, they must consume the blood of a virgin, they cannot act before midnight (time zone is usually unspecified), they cannot act after midnight, etc., etc. These are literary devices created by storytellers primarily to make the demon scary and to give the hero some way to defeat an otherwise undefeatable foe--force the demon to miss a midnight deadline and it is drawn back into hell by its boss and punished for failure; the problem is solved. I once actually heard a demon character in a movie say to another actor in the movie who was holding up a cross "that only works in the movies; this is real life." It made me sad for the fate of the nation, and it explained the teabaggers.

The mind is a powerful thing. Being educated does not refer to knowing things as much as it refers to a strength of understanding and a clarity of thought. The most powerful person in the world is not the one with the most money and influence or who knows the most trivial information, it is the one who is least afraid. The mind, unfettered by fear, can overcome anything. The fearful mind is likely to be battered around by every breeze that blows. Ironically, the "weak" mind is just as powerful as the "strong" mind when it comes to creating conditions for life. The "weak" mind is capable of creating the strongest and most horrible demons.

Those who are tortured by demons often find comfort in the blessings of their religious traditions. The "truth" of the religion is found in the faith of its followers--if you believe you are haunted by a demon, you are; if you believe that religious rituals will save you, they probably will.

BMGHA does not use demonologists on investigations.