



A Philosophy of Fear

Lars Svendsen

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Surveillance cameras. Airport security lines. Barred store windows. We see manifestations of societal fears everyday, and daily news reports on the latest household danger or raised terror threat level continually stoke our sense of impending doom. In *A Philosophy of Fear*, Lars Svendsen now explores the underlying ideas and issues behind this powerful emotion, as he investigates how and why fear has insinuated itself into every aspect of modern life.

Svendsen delves into science, politics, sociology, and literature to explore the nature of fear. He examines the biology behind the emotion, from the neuroscience underlying our “fight or flight” instinct to how fear induces us to take irrational actions in our attempts to minimize risk. The book then turns to the political and social realms, investigating the role of fear in the philosophies of Machiavelli and Hobbes, the rise of the modern “risk society,” and how fear has eroded social trust. Entertainment such as the television show “Fear Factor,” competition in extreme sports, and the political use of fear in the ongoing “War on Terror” all come under Svendsen’s probing gaze, as he investigates whether we can ever disentangle ourselves from the continual state of alarm that defines our age.

Svendsen ultimately argues for the possibility of a brighter, less fearful future that is marked by a triumph of humanist optimism. An incisive and thought-provoking meditation, *A Philosophy of Fear* pulls back the curtain that shrouds dangers imagined and real, forcing us to confront our fears and why we hold to them.

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