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This page was added by the journal. The article begins on the next page.

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Towards a General Fear Theory (GFT)

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Abstract

A rationale is given for a General Fear Theory (GFT) which the author believes has not been given enough attention in his work and/or in the philosophies and theories of fearists and fearologists in general. He has written this paper for technically sophisticated readers and writers on fear, not for a general audience. He points to several directions, including Integral (Wilber), Consciousness (Freire) and Conflict (Collins) as foundations for "orienting generalisations" and means of building a GFT. A brief history of the good-side and bad-side of generalising theories (e.g. Theories of Everything) in contemporary academic work were discussed. He offers a small number of base premises as examples of what a GFT would look like. There is no point in merely fearing generalisations and grand meta-theories and narratives, as so many do today, especially in a postmodern, postcolonial climate of analysis. There is a good-side worth pursuing, and GFT is one (not the only) example possible to resolve the Fear Problem. The author suggests that TFDs project of Kalu which is recently a form of Fear Talks, validates the importance of generalisation and transdisciplinarity in the pursuit of knowing the truth and reality in general and in relation to fear itself.

Keywords: Fear, Theories of Everything, Fearist, Fearology, Integral

General Fear Theory (GFT)

One may ask why there is a need for a theory of fear, never mind a general theory of fear? Indeed, for most people and even practitioners and teachers who deal with people's fears, that is fear management, often the focus of attention is on concrete "fears" not on the theory or theories behind the practice or intervention as management. I began in 1989 to study fear as my focus. This was motivated by many factors, not the least of which I felt the world had not yet caught up to fear itself. It seemed fear had us in its grip, not the other way around, and the situation of a Fear Problem seemed to be growing. My analysis, based on my prior studies in ecology and environmental sciences led me to take a "systems perspective"—based on general systems theory (theories). This systems approach is more holistic, based on a philosophy of holism, in which it is recognised that 'everything impacts on everything.' The universe of reality is a web of relationships, all linked and intimately exchanging

information, communicating, be it gross level or subtle, micro level or macro level. My earliest assessment of the various disciplines that study fear, and those that teach about fear, typically lack this systems-thinking sensibility. This I believe will not lead to a deeper and more encompassing understanding of the nature and role of fear. It has taken three decades to come to the point of actually naming something called a "General Fear Theory" (GFT). Albeit, I am still working on this and will for some time, but I invite others to join in a systems-thinking modality towards the topic of fear and focus less on "fears" and their control, management, and/or elimination.

Purpose

This paper is intended to posit the initial basis for a rationale of a General Fear Theory (GFT). Although some aspects that make up a GFT are offered, this is not a work that fully articulates GFT because the latter work would take a much longer paper (or book) and still requires more development. Thus, consider this paper on GFT a work in progress with claims that promote an agenda of research, thinking and writing which at best can be pointing to—a move towards—a GFT.

Note, I am writing this paper, in an unusual style for me—that is, without referencing everything. Somewhere in the literature on the topic, you'll be able to find reference sources for everything I claim here. It is a paper written for already technically sophisticated, seeking, and/or established colleagues in the Fearlessness Movement and/or Philosophy of Fearism Movement. However, it also may be somewhat useful for others less specialised in their interests.

Why Do We Need a GFT?

There are many whys behind this question, not just one. No doubt, some of these many whys will be missed in this short paper. I began thinking along this line and labelling GFT recently because of the specific initiation of the project called Transdisciplinary Fear Discussions (TFDs), initiated by Osinakachi Akuma Kalu, a budding young fearologist/fearist from Nigeria. His invitation to me and some colleagues writing about fear today, reminded me of the kind of passion I had going back to late 1989 when I started the In Search of Fearlessness Project (ISOF) as an invitation for humanity to join in a new revision of its knowledge, knowing and understanding about Fear and Fearlessness. ISOF was (still is) a global transdisciplinary general movement (recently called Fearlessness Movement), which I

imagined would contradict the oppressive ideology and pathology of the ‘Fear' Project that had over-dominated much of recent human history going back to 5000+ years.

I argued, in general, that a ‘Fear' Matrix operated in "design" and "architecture" underneath (often unconsciously) in the way contemporary societies function—and, it wasn't overall a good thing. Even though I have kept an open mind that "fear is natural" and has a healthy, good side/function, I'm highly sceptical of such claims if they aren't nuanced with critical thinking. My projects continued pursuing means to "wake up" humanity and academia. In 2000, I called for a new discipline of Fearology, and in 2006 I called for a new ‘Fear' Studies with the desire to gather more people and resources to work on the Fear Problem.

Kalu is calling for a global movement of TFDs. This is certainly in line with my recent teaching videos where I am more or less asking humanity to enter into good quality Fear Talks, just like we needed good Sex Talks, which specifically began nearly 100 years ago in the West (e.g., Freud), in order to overcome the prohibitive individual and collective fears and taboos around these powerful human aspects of fearuality and sexuality.

To reach our highest human potential, we need more than food, clothing and shelter—we need to come to terms with fear(uality) and fear(ism) in all its aspects—because, it is arguable that fear influences everything in powerful ways. As the philosopher, Desh Subba wrote, in his classic text on the *Philosophy of Fearism*, "life is conducted, directed and controlled by the fear." This means, what is required is direct, critical and progressive thinking (philosophising) and theorising about what our relationship with fear is now, what it has been, and also what it ought to be. We require a new Fear Imaginary, is something I often argue, and suggest is foundational to a good fearological education (e.g., training at The Fearology Institute).

“There is something ‘wrong’ in the field of fear management,” I once wrote in *The World’s Fearlessness* Teachings (Fisher, 2010), and my point, like Subba's and other fearists today, is that inadequate knowledge and approach to the study of fear exists all over the world. We are on catch-up trying to improve our relationship to fear while it seems excess and toxic fear (‘fear') production has

overwhelmed much of human behaviour individually and collectively. The Fear Problem is growing rapidly and threatening life on this planet.

As a start, a general discussion in private and public locations seems an essential way towards a good Fear Education—that is, a good Fear Management/Education (FME). At least, if you review these terms above and notice the generality of the claims together, it points to a hypothetical positioning which centralizes the study of fear through a *fearist lens*, as Subba and myself (*via* a philosophy of fearlessness) have and continue to argue for—that is, a re-visioning of the very ways we know fear (and 'fear')—which ultimately is a way of understanding ourselves (our beingness). One new dictum of the good educational curriculum today ought to be (adapting from Socrates): *Know Thy Fearful Self.*

What TFDs raises again, is not only that *fearology* is the transdisciplinary study of the relationship of fear to life, but that transdisciplinarity as a generic ethical and epistemological attitude for a set of methodologies—which are crucial to coming to a more holistic-integral understanding of fear relations and ecologies (e.g., self-fear-Other nexus). "Fear is complex" is a point I make in all my teaching for the past 30 years on this topic. Thus, we cannot use only one philosophy or psychology—or discipline, for example, to understand what we need to understand about fear ('fear'). Unfortunately, too often the fear managers and educators of the day try to make fear simple, which has a long history in the past as well, especially in major religions and cultural practices. This long legacy may be useful to a new body of knowledge on fear (and FME), but it is in itself reductionistic and out-of-date. Again, these are some claims that I and colleagues of fearism and fearology tend to make, or at least we use them as operational assumptions—even theories.

What is not clear (or discussed enough) is a thorough and explicit articulation in writing of these assumptions or theories by any of us. We have written parts of the GFT I have in mind, but not the whole GFT. It is good we have a rich diversity of views and unique styles to writing and teaching about fear, yet, I think many directions are pointing for us to unifying somewhat a GFT. At least, that is the position I take in this paper.

Kalu's call for a project of TFDs foregrounds that transdisciplinarity is a synthesis of disciplines (disciplinarity), and it includes a discussion of those not even associated with disciplines of thought. The populus has always been included in my own ISOF Project and Subba's Fearism Study Centers, etc. There is no need for intellectual elitist approaches to this topic. Transdisciplinarity is an approach of holistic-integral synthesis, and thus, in less technical terms it is a generalisation approach to fear. The rest of this initial paper will focus on this concept of *generalization*, and what it means under the holistic-integral lens I bring to all my studies of fear ('fear'). I trust a General Fear Theory may be a whole lot easier and more effective than terms like transdisciplinary, for other people we speak to about our work.

What is the Brief History of Generalizing Theories?

I am attempting a two-edge task, along with a two-edge sword, in putting out my desire (call) for a GFT. It sounds like a singularity doesn't it? A (or *the*) General Fear Theory, as if there is only one and it ought to rule all other theories or other attempts of constructing a GFT. My intention and vision is for a GFT, but like all generalised accounts, be it philosophy or theory, is always only a view—one view, and not the only view acceptable in the discussion. TDFs is immediately plural because of the interest of Kalu, myself and others to open the TDFs (i.e., Fear Talks) to the many diverse voices on this planet and across disciplines. At this point, neither Kalu nor myself have written enough about what "transdisciplinary" means and how it is distinct from interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches. That's another project and ought to be part of the TDFs. But I won't focus here on that issue. Rather, my interest is to articulate more clarity on the notion of synthesis of knowledge, knowing and understanding (each, themselves unique epistemic entities)—and, I will approach this by talking about the importance of *generalizing* (on one edge of the sword) and the problematics of generalizing (the other edge of the sword) about Truth/Reality.

One cannot approach the study of fear (ism, ology) without approaching questions about Reality (ontology) and Truth (epistemology) related to knowledge constructions and our ways of seeing ourselves in the cosmos (or, simply in our daily lives). It is a philosophical venture to be a genuinely alive and seeking, growing human being—that is, beyond only a search for basic needs. The self-actualising and transcendent existential needs (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy evolutionary model) are part

of the ‘knowing of the self' call for in the general dictum of both East and West philosophies and calls from the mystics around the world. There is a "spiritual" and/or "sacred" sense that being human is about Being itself, and not merely what tribes, cultures, families and society's powers tell us we are and should be. The cusp of fearology and fearism is a location of an investigation into the nature of Truth and Reality as well as small truth and reality as we experience it, theorise about it and debate it philosophically.

TDFs is open to the most basic and most deep conversations on the topic of fear and our being in the world and Being beyond the world. At least, that's my vision for TDFs—because it is transdisciplinary—meaning, it includes and transcends the information from core sciences to the social sciences to the humanities and arts and morals and religions. Nothing is left out of a holistic-integral (i.e., transdisciplinary approach). At least, the ideal is that nothing is left out, but in reality, most of us cannot embrace all disciplines in what they teach about fear. We do our best and try to keep a balance of perspectives and draw from disciplines. Fearology also says that the study of fear ought not to be restricted by the ways other disciplines think (imagine) about fear. Fearology ought to be free to re-imagine, deconstruct and reconstruct other imaginings, and invent its language and questions—that other disciplines would not entertain. That's what makes fearology so exciting to me as a researcher. It is the most creative ways to study fear, and it doesn't rely on other disciplines to tell it what to do and how to think and how to teach about fear. Fearology theoretically is free from disciplinarity in its worst side. Fearology can make vast generalisations, as does the philosophy of fearism when you read Subba's opening "definition" of fear. It is expansive, transdisciplinary and it is creative and flowing. I believe it is fear-free as a way to generalise about fear (and ‘fear').

Subba and I thus have led a generalising notion of fear (and/or ‘fear') from the start of our projects and philosophies. Generalising on the good-side gives knowing great scope and depth to explore. Transdisciplinarity does the same thing. *Generalising* is more about synthesis not *specialisation*. The unique nature of Subba's and my work is that it also calls for a specialisation—the study of fear as central in human behaviour. Just studying fear as so central is a specialist movement; yet, almost paradoxically, we call for generalising, transdisciplinarity and synthesis—even unifying knowledge,

knowing and understanding of generalities around the global "Fear Problem" (the latter, in my case, of a synthetic conceptualisation). When other thinkers, like Svendsen and Eneyo, attempt to label and develop a "philosophy of fear" they too are specialising the field of philosophy down to one topic, albeit, at the same time their philosophising is grand and generalising. It seems fear cannot be focused on without it including just about everything.

Do we need a grand, unifying, universal generalising theory of fear (?) is something we ought to keep asking. I would argue, as I have indicated above, it seems there is something in the topic and phenomena of fear itself that makes it inevitable that we have to expand generalisations continually. If we only focused on one discipline for sources of our knowledge, e.g., the psychology or biology of fear (e.g., hard and soft sciences), then it intuitively seems too limiting—because fear (‘fear') is so beyond anyone field having all the answers—same, as if we were to rely on one religion or one philosophy system to get all the knowledge and answers and solutions. FME is way more complicated and spills out over, and beyond all fields and disciplines, even it spills out over and beyond fearism and fearology. I wish to emphasise this last point.

The history of knowledge (I'm focusing on the Western world), is rife with philosophising about the very nature of "generalisation" (or generalising) as an approach to knowing and understanding. The application of understanding is often made via generalisations, which is especially true in earlier civilisations where generalisations were practical and applied to survival. I won't go into this long history of our species and why generalisation is evolutionarily adaptive overall (e.g., our genes are intelligence coded for general application). So, let me turn to my favourite theorist, and philosopher, Ken Wilber, as he has for years been working on a "Theory of Everything" (TOE) (of which many other synthesisers have also been doing, often TOE is associated with Albert Einstein's "general theory of relativity"). Searching for a general theory to explain everything is not new. Fearism is just like that, in a certain way—as it is claiming everything can be understood (explained) by fear—and, concomitantly the study of fear—and, concomitantly a theory of fear.

Wilber argues, we need to develop a balance: not just generalities but also specificities. Our knowledge systems and ways of living that depend on that knowledge ought to be integrated—integrating—and holistic-integral. They ought to care about both specifics (details on the ground) and generalisations (more abstract patterns of synthesis). I agree with the balance. The problem is, that over-generalisations have accompanied most of the modernity (and colonisation of knowledge). The destructive legacy of say W. Enlightenment generalizations (e.g., of progress, and evolution of races, etc.) has been recognized in much of the contemporary world (e.g., postmodern critique) and now in the academy there is a strong political correctness to be only interested in the local and specific knowledge of people, things, places—and, generalizations (e.g., grand narratives about reality) are to be shunned as oppressive. That's the down-side of generalisations and synthesis. It has motivations historically that have been dominating and colonising and with a tendency to wipe-out other forms of different pieces of knowledge (and peoples who hold them). Universalising is one form of generalising that is now very unpopular and criticised severely in postmodernism and postcolonialism philosophies.

However, arguably, even that postmodern and postcolonial philosophy of critique is based on generalising assumptions and premises—perhaps, it is filled with its contradictions, as Wilber suggests. Wilber, then argues in his work that "orienting generalisations" is the best way to go when one is "integral" and/or holistic and interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary—that is, when one is searching for meta-theories to explain the world (e.g., TOE). "Meta" theories, meta-data, and meta-analysis are now coming back into popular and technical languages if you haven't noticed. Part of the reason, Wilber argues, is because the world is so information/data-saturated and complex, that we have to make generalisations using meta-analysis techniques and methodologies. It is a whole new field and problem for humanity. How to create patterns and uses of massive amounts of data is critical to our species survival.

So, a general theory of fear (i.e., GFT) seems appropriate to pursue in light of the above and in terms of the need for a synthesis of massive complexity of knowledge that is now being collected by people like myself (fearologists). As I have argued in my recent videos, there simply has not been a systematic study of fear that is all-encompassing on this planet—that is, that is transdisciplinary. So, up to now, a

GFT was not only not possible; it was of no interest. I think that is unfortunate historically, but so be it. Now, is when we can turn this around and give fear its due as central in human history and affairs today. I am suggesting, in Wilberian fashion, that orienting generalisations can be constructed about fear (and 'fear')—and, I have been doing this for some time. These are only meant to orient us in our relationship to fear and not meant to dictate to us about fear (and, about FME). Once dictating generalisations are in place then we reduce knowledge to rules, regulations, regimes of truth at the expense of other truths, and we create an Absolute or totalizing hegemony—that is, an ideology of the worst kind. Universal truths and generalisations have been problematic as I said throughout history, and have attempted to control people and all knowledge and truths. The down-side of generalisations have a shadowy history, and they still exist.

The challenge for fearism and fearology is to use orienting generalisations, realising that many people (especially postmodern academics) will fight against any such attempts. We have to be empathetic and understand why they will resist with vehemence. We have to learn to talk with our 'enemies' in other words. How to have Fear Talks that even our enemies can feel they are invited and have a voice. TFDs ought to be so inviting. Let's be honest when we get afraid of our enemies, of those with different views. And, at the same time, I like how Wilber describes the power of integral theory because it also discriminates in rational and arational ways that all knowledge and all views are not all of the equal value for all problems to be solved. There is where the controversy will come in big time. We have to be prepared for it. I suggest there is a long history of 'good' applications to generalising. Things like "General Semantics" theory, "General Systems Theory" etc. can be studied to learn lessons of the good-side and bad-side.

Then I turn also for guidance to develop specifics (and generalisations) of GFT to the field of sociology especially. I have found the philosophy, theories and critical thinking in sociology, particularly informing of my ways and critiques re understanding fear in societies not just in individuals. Sociology of fear body of knowledge is a great domain (base) for all fearism and fearologist folks. It is suitable for all FME, to put it bluntly. However, there are lots I also find reductionistic in that discipline of sociology. One promising potential, I believe, within sociology is the distinction of the four or five significant

theories that articulate the discipline of sociology (again, I'm focusing on the West)—these are outlined in an excellent book by Randall Collins (1994 ed.) *"Four Sociological Traditions"* (even if it may be a little out of date now).

I first encountered Collins' meta-synthesis of sociological theories (or standpoints, or lenses) when I was studying 'conflict' from a holistic-integral perspective in my master's degree. What I found in the sociological literature was a huge battle going on (still is) between a generalising functionalist model of reality and truth compared to a generalising (far less dominant) conflict model of reality and truth. I spent years studying these two major lenses (theories, standpoints). I found that they both had some truth, but I mostly thought that the best truth, the most "fearless" of the two approaches was the conflict approach—which Collin's said comes from the Conflict Tradition (of many philosophies and theories over history). This Conflict Tradition emphasised "conflict" itself in human social reality (e.g., Marx) and also in individual reality and psychology (e.g., Freud). The conflict was the phenomena at the centre of explaining everything (nearly) for the conflictologists. Indeed, people were using that term, and yet it never becomes popular as conflictology. The analogy with fearologists and fearology could not be ignored, and I always thought there was a Fear Tradition too in history that was buried because people and the academy didn't want to focus on fear, just like they, in general, didn't want to focus on conflict. The functionalists especially downplayed conflict, even if they admitted it in their forms of sociology. Any sociologists did not highly acknowledge fear until the mid-1980s. That was an exciting discovery itself.

So, it occurs to me that when I look at how Collin's classifies thinkers, philosophies, and theories into a meta-category of "Conflict Tradition" maybe there is a "Fear Tradition" (?) This is an idea to pursue in the future. What I did do, instead, is to argue there is a Fearlessness Tradition eventually, and in many ways, it focuses on both fear and fearlessness. The Fearlessness Movement ning, e.g., is my way to coordinate the Fear Tradition of theorising. That aside, Collins' offers structures for thinking how to articulate the Conflict Tradition and what inevitably is a tradition dedicated to a general conflict theory (GCT). Alright, that now leads me to think if a Fear Tradition can be articulated, which includes the Fearlessness Tradition/Movement, then a GFT is inevitably going to come out of that pursuit.

Another track, beyond Wilber's and Collins' work, is the work of Paulo Freire's generalising way of bringing about liberation. Note, Wilber's and Collin's "conflict perspective" or tradition is also an emancipatory framing and philosophy, of which the functionalist meta-view is not interested in. Friere, the Latin American critical pedagogy developed (with others) a general theory of conscientization or critical consciousness. This I believe is significant work to be integrated into fearwork (and/or conflictwork). Freire's 1973 book *Education for Critical Consciousness* outlines on the ground practical approaches to getting people to "wake up" to how they are oppressed by the consciousness (and structures) of the dominant elite in the world and their villages. I see his general theory of oppression and liberation as completely about the problem of fear that goes with oppression. And, he describes theoretically (and practically) how the pursuit of liberation for the oppressed is always a conflict of interests and a path of great fear—because to not conform to the oppressors and internalised oppression of one's oppressed peers, is to face "rejection" on both sides. Thus, "fear of freedom" is a concern of Freire and Erich Fromm, the great psychoanalyst. That's another topic for another time.

What I am merely pointing to in this paper is possibilities for drawing upon to create a good GFT. The Integral, Conflict and Consciousness approaches I have mentioned are all part of a meta-theory called "Critical Theory" (it is a debate which is the largest umbrella term for these all). Critical philosophy and theory has a long tradition and carries various lenses, but they all come down to a "conflict lens" that is brought on to reality and truth—especially sociologically speaking but it goes beyond that domain as well. I am a critical theorist and pedagogue, and philosopher. I put Conflict and Fear at the centre of all human activity, and I could just as quickly put them at the centre of all living organisms. But, for purposes of TFDs and advancement of fearology and fearism, I focus on Fear (and 'fear'), but I do so within the critical theory tradition of emancipatory schools of thought. I embrace the functionalist perspective only to a point, as any good holistic-integral theory must, but a GFT that I am going to be interested in is going to be an emancipatory GFT; otherwise, I find it will not likely be an ethical path or fearlessness path that is being promoted. Functionalism is not interested much in oppression-liberation dynamics nor Love-Fear dynamics, as you'll notice I give a lot of attention in my fearwork.

What Are a Few Basics of a Future GFT?

Although I acknowledge that all people reading this paper will not align with the Conflict Tradition (e.g., Critical Theory) or Integral or Fearlessness Movement per se, I will suggest that any systematic study of fear they are undertaking is (even if implicit, even if unconscious) a project motivated by the attempt to manage fear better. I have been making this claim since the beginning of my work. I have co-written about this with others, e.g., Subba, and no one to this point has challenged me on this claim, this assumption, this theory. To state it once more differently: *the interest to know more about fear is a pursuit involving assessment of fear knowledge, which is driven by the deeper motivation to manage one's own (or others') fear better.* That is a generalising theory about fear (management/education or FME). I believe because it is not being challenged (so far) by others, and I have continually found it to be accurate more than false or doubtful, that it is one of the fundamental principle assumptions behind General Fear Theory (GFT). It may turn out to be the most critical foundational principle(?).

Another basic in the GFT emerging is that *fear knowledge is currently inadequate, relative to the important (positive and negative) influences that fear has on human behaviour in all quarters of existence.* Another basic would be around the problematics of defining fear (making meaning of fear) and the complexity of doing so, etc.

The underlying assumption that provides a rationale for GFT (which is part of GFT itself) is that humans deserve a better theory (and theories) on fear than they have had historically and at present—because of an ever-increasing Fear Problem (i.e., in the context of Subba's Extreme Fear Age)—and, such a task of a GFT demands a transdisciplinary approach—that is, a generalizing theory of fear that includes but transcends all other theories of fear (e.g., psychology of fear, sociology of fear). The premise beneath this rationale is that overall, humanity is oppressed by fear ('fear') accumulated in history and it is time to be fully liberated from fear (i.e., its worst-side or pathological-side). Liberation is thus inherently required for any ethically sound GFT.

So, this is a minimalist approach above to show, perhaps how one would go about crafting a GFT. I have not thought enough about it myself. It ought to be a joint effort to construct this GFT, although many of us will want to work on it alone too—that's all fine. A GFT is not a panacea to the Fear Problem;

it is merely one more way to analyse and solve it. I, look forward to the day, in every school room in the world, when children and their parents can have good Fear Talks—and, that such talks can extend to the rest of society. What would a child do with the knowledge of a GFT right from the start of their interest to talk about fear, rather than merely learn about fear in the current haphazard kinds of ways? Humanity has recently, although reluctantly (due to fear itself) been exploring talking about sex, bringing in the curriculum on sex education—and, arguably it has improved the quality of learning and life for many people. Fear education would do the same thing. Thus, kudos to any initiatives, like Kalu's TFDs project and other Fear Talk approaches.

It ought to be clear that I am a 'believer' in theory (i.e., *theoria = a point of view* above the details of experience)—meaning, I believe in generalisations and generalising (i.e., theories, with praxis) as not only negative and with a bad-side. They also can have a good side. We have to make that distinction in our uses. Just because of misuses in history of generalisations, doesn't mean it is wise to flee generalisations in general! We have to all look at our contradictions in thinking and values, and beliefs, beyond fear, beyond walls of protection and ego-defences. That's the path of fearlessness ahead—that's the path to reality and truth—compassion and wisdom. It's a high calling for fearists and fearologists.

Summary

From the start of my research focus, with a transdisciplinary lens/approach, it was clear to me that most of all kinds of literature, across disciplines, tend to reduce the way to study fear. They tend to be driven by a focus on the concrete aspect of fear(s) and the pragmatic interventions of controlling, managing if not eliminating fears. I have looked for contradictions, taken a critical perspective on the formation of the knowledge of fear management/education and have done so by taking a "systems" perspective, tracing that approach back to the early 20th century and "general systems theory" and its role in ecology and environmental management. Now, Fear Studies has to take this on as a formation of systems thinking about fear and after that one can integrate both theory and actions. The whole point of GFT is to ensure we do not narrow our study of fear by convenience, reductionism, and piece-meal approaches.

A transdisciplinary study of fear demands we be systems theorists and thinkers. Of course, not everyone needs to be a scholar in this manner, and some will prefer more pragmatic applications of fear management and prefer simplified fear education processes and curriculum. However, as fearologists and fearists we do not have that luxury. The demand for the deepest and broadest thinking about fear is a demand brought on by the very complexification of the Fear Problem on this planet. The stakes are too high to think; otherwise, that is, to believe in less than a full systems way. GFT begins with naming that task.