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COGNITIVE AND HEIDEGGERIAN APPROACHES TO THE QUESTION: WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF OBJECTLESS FEAR?

KEVIN SLUDDS
Institute of Technology Sligo

ABSTRACT

In this article I will detail the short-comings that exist in the cognitive account of the emotion objectless fear, principally, though not exclusively, as it is presented in the work of William Lyons. I will use my critique of Lyons's causal-evaluative theory to act as a point of transition or pathway towards Heidegger's description of Angst as it is detailed in Being and Time. I argue that objectless fear cannot simply be dismissed as a mislabelled mood, as claimed by Martha Nussbaum or, as Lyons suggests, that its object is merely vague or imponderable. Rather, it is my contention that genuine objectless fear (or Angst) is best understood as an ontologically important means of revealing our authentic and inauthentic possibilities.

Keywords: emotion/mood analysis, objectless fear, *Angst*, cognition, causal-evaluative theory, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ontology

1. Introduction

The generic term 'cognitive theory,' when considered in relation to emotion/mood analysis, covers a number of approaches, from strong cognitivism such as that espoused by Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum to the weaker hybrid theories of William Lyons and Justin Oakley. In Part 1 of this article I use the cognitive analysis of objectless fear as a stalking horse, so to speak, to pin-point firstly, the short-comings of this theory and, secondly, to provide a description of Heideggerian *Angst*, an approach that offers a depth and coherence which is not to be found in cognitive accounts when attempting to tackle the question. What is the object of objectless fear?

I argue that cognitivists are seriously in error when they confuse nescience and near nescience in their discussion of objectless fear and, though they do not recognise it, I explain how their considerations come closer to Heidegger's pre-cognitive examination of *Angst* which I develop in Part 2. Throughout I will leave un-translated the German term *Angst* in an effort to reinforce my move away from the

cognitive notion of 'objectless fear', a term which is itself often used as an equivalent for the English term 'anxiety' (a common translation of *Angst*). I go on to explore how *Angst*, according to Heidegger, acts as a conduit for singular *Dasein* to overcome its quotidian inauthentic mode of Being-in-the-world and how that *Angst*, at its core, stems from the fact that "the world and *Dasein* are one ... *Dasein's* Being-in-the-world is … both an in, and a constitution of, the world as such". (Kelly 1994, 34)

From my description of how primordial, pre-cognitive mood (or attunement/ *Befindlichkeit*) differs from cognitive awareness, I move on to note how *Angst* is not merely an emotion "aimed out at the world" (Lyons 1980, 104), but rather stems from the fact "that in the face of which one has *Angst* is Being-in-the-world as such" (Heidegger 1992, 230), something which reveals its authentic and inauthentic choices. I suggest that the fear spoken of by Lyons (and cognitivists more generally), when attempting to get to grips with this unique mood is nothing less than the fear of not grasping, not being able to grasp the meaning of fear, an ontological fear of having forgotten what it is 'to be' (*Seinsvergessenheit)*. I reiterate in Part 2 the key point that fear was for Heidegger a mood, and moods (as I highlight) are complex affectual phenomena in a way that emotions are not, supplying us with a sense of our total ontological orientation.

2. Part 1

2.1. Objectless fear and the crucial distinction between nescience and near nescience

Thirty years ago the philosopher William Lyons published his book *Emotion*, a work which is credited as having "genuinely broke[n] new ground" (Malpas and Wrathall 2000, 248). In it, Lyons contends that objectless fear is often used as an:

> … exception to the claim that an emotion is based on knowledge or belief about properties … Fear and cognate emotions such as fright are usually described as evaluating their object, at least in part, as dangerous to the person concerned. Now, if this is correct, it would not seem strange for there to be a fear which might evaluate one's very ignorance of the situation, one's lack of knowledge, *one's not knowing anything* about the object, as dangerous. Thus fear of the dark may not be fear of the absence of light but fear of the *absence of knowledge* or, to put it more exactly, fear arising because one does not know what might be out there in the dark and because *one thinks* that there might be something to injure or startle one. My *imagination* might suggest holes or pits to fall into, things to attack or startle, or more ethereal enemies. (Lyons, 1980, 75, italics mine)

There is a significant and immediate objection which should be raised at this point; "[To] not know what might be out there in the dark" is not fear of *"one's not knowing*

anything about the object". On the contrary, it is fear stemming from knowledge, the elementary knowledge that the dark may hide a foe, as yet undetected, but no less threatening, in fact, more threatening perhaps because of that. If one were not to know anything whatsoever about an object one would clearly be in a state of nescience and, thus, not in a position to appraise one's knowing nothing as dangerous. Even if one allows for mere descriptions of objects, and not objects proper, to be the basis for Lyons's evaluation of danger, one would be faced with the same difficulty. For on what would this description be based? Such a descriptive account must be founded on something and so cannot be nescient.

David Pugmire's account of objectless fear mirrors Lyons's position when it comes to the notion of 'ignorance,' but is distinct in respect of 'thought' or 'imagination.' He puts forward the idea that the mere "not know[ing]" (i.e. Lyons's "one's very ignorance") is what is frightening, rather than one having the thought, or imagining, that there might be "something to injure or startle one". "Looming, strangeness, darkness and so on, must be able to frighten *autonomously*, that is, without being construed as portents of danger". (Pugmire 1998, 39, italics mine) But surely the very reason 'strangeness' is strange, and 'looming' is fear inducing, and the 'darkness' scary, is because each potentially instil in us a feeling of threat. In other words, "portents of danger" are an essential component in these concepts. This point might be made more concrete if one considers the example of a grief-stricken person. When Ann dies we do not expect to find Alan, her husband, laughing uproariously at a Keystone Cops film, precisely because the emotion so construed is of having experienced a profound and irretrievable loss, an evaluation that prohibits its opposite, uproarious frivolity or amusement, from being felt.[1] To say that grief without this cornerstone could still be grief, that is, to say one must be able to grieve autonomously, without it being construed as a profound and irretrievable loss, seems to be to offer a description of grief that bears no resemblance to how we usually/normally understand grief and, thus, for it to be such a unique case that it could hardly be said to be grief at all. And in the same way, one might ask, just what type of fear or fright is it that Pugmire is describing without it being "construed as [a] portent of danger"? In fact, it is my claim, such a description is not fear at all.

In detailing apparent objectless fear it seems fair to say that both Pugmire and Lyons's accounts might more accurately be said to be a description of anxiety, that is, a profound sense of unease about something uncertain rather than fear. If one takes Lyons's "fear of the dark" notion and applies it to adults, it raises obvious difficulties. Is it really a case of genuine fear for a reasonable adult person to say he or she is afraid without knowing *anything* whatsoever about that which they claim to be afraid of? Or that the imagined "holes or pits" or "ethereal enemies" into which they might fall, or by which they might be injured, are rational?

Peter Goldie talks of objectless fear in the following way:

1 Of course, we recognise that different people may express grief in different ways, however, it seems fair to suggest that Alan's behaviour indicates that he has not, in fact, evaluated his wife's death as a profound and irretrievable loss and, as a consequence, his behaviour might well raise questions concerning the sincerity of his proclamation of grief.

> Your fear on waking may have no very specific object – the dark, the shape of the curtains, the strange noise which woke you – but it is still an emotional experience and not a mood. And the next morning, when your fear is gone but you remain anxious, it is natural to say you are anxious about everything this morning, or about nothing in particular, or that you are anxious about everything and nothing. (Goldie 2000, 17-8)

However, the sources of fear Goldie describes in this passage are not, in fact, objectless. For although the examples of being afraid of "the dark" or "strange noises" or "the shape of the curtains" may not be particularly well-founded they are, nonetheless, sufficiently concrete for us to trace, in a cognitive way, from whence they came. But this is not the case for the imaginings described by Lyons; for such a notion to be genuine, one's imagination has to be built on something, yet nescience means to be absolutely ignorant, so from where does the object that is evaluated as dangerous appear?

It cannot just be nothing, for what I know nothing about is nothing, not the something that fills this nothing gap. *"Not knowing anything* about the object" does not lead to imagined objects but imagined objects may very well fill the gap of my not knowing. Yet, such imagined objects must be based on something, for example, childhood fantasies or past experiences or knowledge that such things (e.g. "holes or pits") can exist. If, let's say, I know absolutely nothing about astronomy, let alone black holes, I cannot then be afraid of them, rationally, irrationally or any other way. Therefore, to literally *"not know anything"* about something cannot create an evaluation that this very state of nescience is dangerous. If it were true that fear of the "absence of light" is really fear of the *"absence of knowledge"*, then, it is not a giant step to suggest that such epistemological fear would be my constant occurrent companion. Could not my ignorance of great swathes of knowledge produce all manner of objectless fears?

To propose ignorance as the evaluative component of such an emotion is to open a door to myriad objectless fears that do not make any sense. The problem here is that neither Lyons or Pugmire recognise the importance of distinguishing between nescience, that is, literally not knowing anything about something and near nescience, that is, knowing only the bare bones or elementary facts about something, on the one hand, and irrational fears and genuine, though as yet unexplained, rational objectless fear on the other.[2]

Of course, if children were to report such cases of fear our concerns would be raised but not in the manner outlined. We recognise that children are often, for instance, irrationally fearful of the dark, imagining all sorts of despicable terrors waiting to attack them once asleep. We placate their fears by explaining that the bogeyman does not exist in reality or that the likelihood of a black hole gobbling them up is implausible.

2 Lyons basis his causal-evaluative theory on a fundamentally rational analysis of affective responses, despite the obvious limitations and short-comings this creates. To highlight the insights which can be garnered from a concrete examination of some irrational emotional reactions see my 2008.

In other words, we explain how things really are, their "ignorance of the situation", their "lack of knowledge" is not the foremost source of their emotional state, rather it is their imaginations and gullible natures in accepting too earnestly fairytales and fantasies. What is crucial here is that one would no more regard an adult's imagined fear of "ethereal enemies" or claims of fear arising from states of nescience as genuinely objectless than one would a child's fear of the bogeyman. Lyons goes on to say:

> Because such a fear is not directed at an object, *one will not have made any judgment* explicitly or implicitly about the properties of an object. But equally, perhaps, one could say that the fear in such cases is about being totally in the dark literally or epistemologically. In consequence, one could say that what one fears is the situation of being in *no position to cope* because one does not know what is happening or liable to happen. From here one might be able to make out a case that such fear is based on judgments about properties of one's *situation*, for example that the *situation is describable* as one which *I do not know anything about* or with which I believe *I am unable to cope*. (Lyons 1980, 75, italics mine)

The idea that this type of fear is about being "totally in the dark literally or epistemologically", or that this situation is *"describable* as one which *I do not know anything about,* or with which I believe *I am unable to cope"*, raises the question: 'What is it one is not coping with when one does *"not know anything about"* one's situation?' It appears that what Lyons is hinting at is, in fact, more in line with an emotion such as objectless anxiety, and a description more akin to an example cited by William James:

> I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight … when suddenly there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, *a horrible fear of my own existence* … I became a mass of quivering fear. After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a *horrible dread* at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before. (James 1929, 157, italics mine)

Perhaps recognising an uncomfortable degree of commonality between James's description and his own, Lyons quickly allows for another option:

> Alternatively what are often described as cases of objectless fear might be better described as cases in which the object is not properly formulable or expressible … so-called objectless fears might be cases where one has a *vague* sense of foreboding, a *vague* feeling that some doom is about to befall one. Here the object is *just vague* rather than absent but it is still an object. (Lyons 1980, 75-6, italics mine)

Hanging onto his causal-evaluative theory he finishes:

> But even in such cases one presumably has beliefs and makes judgments such as 'There are things out there which make me feel that I'm in danger but *I cannot adequately describe them*', and these beliefs and judgments are the basis of one's emotions. (Lyons 1980, 76, italics mine)

We have seen that Lyons wishes to draw our attention to a case of fear where no judgements (explicitly or implicitly) are made about the properties of an object, yet one is overcome with fear. He offers the possibility that in such a case one is "totally in the dark literally or epistemologically" and, thus, what one fears is being in no position to cope "because one does not know what is happening or liable to happen". (Lyons 1980, 75, italics mine) This suggestion allows him to say that, "such fear is based on judgments about properties of one's situation [not of an object *per se*], for example that the *situation* is … one which I *do not know anything about* or with which I believe *I am unable to cope*". (Lyons 1980, 75, italics mine) But how do we reach the position that this situation is one that I fear? In fact, the situation would never become one of objectlessness, apart from the earlier example given of irrational childhood fears, if it were to be understood in purely cognitive terms.[3]

Why, for instance, would not knowing something instil such fear, unless there was some reason to think that being literally in the dark was dangerous, that is, unless there was *something* we feel endangered by? And if that was the case, such feelings of danger must then be object-directed; for example, there must (however paradoxical it may sound) be an actual 'ethereal' or more tangible enemy such as a night prowler, and such a person must be conceived as being possibly outside in the dark waiting to break in to my home. Therefore, to be afraid of the dark literally, without an object, would be considered irrational while regarding epistemological darkness or nescience as the evaluative component of such fear would be equally irrational. Genuine objectless fear, I suggest, only becomes meaningful when viewed as an existential or ontological concern. Something that fits Henry James Senior's description more accurately:

> One day towards the close of May, having eaten a comfortable dinner … thinking of nothing and feeling only the exhilaration incident to a good digestion, when suddenly – in a lightening flash, as it were – *fear came upon me*, and trembling made all my bones shake.' To all appearances it was a perfectly insane and *abject terror without ostensible cause*. (Dupee, 1951, 71, italics mine)

3 The essential point here is that both strong cognitivism (and the hybrid theories) which tend towards an over-reliance on 'belief' or the idea of 'vagueness', are mistaken. I suggest that a widening of the cognitive theory beyond beliefs may allow for such cases where X is afraid of Y despite not believing Y to be dangerous (e.g. being afraid of Dracula while I watch a horror movie). That is, an emotional response might involve what Pugmire has called, "non-essential kinds of thought, such as picturing [we might also include imagining and construals], that do not amount to belief, [and] may supervene on outright belief" (1998, 16), as they do, I claim, in examples of emotional responses to fictional characters.

2.2. The causal-evaluative[4] Cul-de-sac

Lyons himself hints at something similar to the description offered by Henry James Senior when he writes:

> For there do seem to be well attested cases of people being afraid or depressed but also being unable to pick out anything, real or illusionary, as the particular object of the fear or depression. That is, there are cases of emotional states which appear to have no focus or target of any sort and so certainly nothing which could be called a particular object or target. They are, so to speak, *emotions aimed out at the world* but ones that do not come to rest in any one spot or on any one thing (Lyons 1980, 104, italics mine).

To extricate himself from the possibility of contradiction however, Lyons quickly reverts to his previous position: "The term ['particular object'] merely implies that the emotional state is about something rather than nothing, though this something might be *vague*, *inexpressible, imponderable* and the content of a false belief". (Lyons 1980, 105, italics mine), and, "A particular object is not merely just not nothing, it is something which can be focussed on *sufficiently for one to evaluate it* as, say, dangerous or futile". (Lyons 1980, 105, italics mine) By claiming that objectless emotions are really just emotions that have vague objects,[5] Lyons simply muddies the waters. For as I have shown, on the one hand, he asserts that the emotional state is about something, though it may be vague or inexpressible or imponderable, while on the other, he contends that a particular object is something that "can be focussed on *sufficiently for one to evaluate it"*. (Lyons 1980, 105, italics mine)

But how can something that is imponderable also be focussed on? For imponderable surely means incalculable, unthinkable or not capable of being estimated or valued. So the 'something' that Lyons's 'particular object' is about is incalculable and unthinkable, yet it is also something that can be focussed on, and focussed on sufficiently, to be evaluated. But how is this possible? The tension is obvious; if something is incalculable and unthinkable it cannot also be evaluated, sufficiently or otherwise. Lyons needs a foundation on which to build the emotion objectless fear, something that can be evaluated but vague and imponderable objects don't fit the bill and his ambivalent comment. "Whether one is to say that there are cases of objectless emotions or merely that the object is rather strange, such as one's ignorance in a given situation, may be undecidable". (Lyons 1980, 76) This reinforces the concerns I have outlined with regard to his causal-evaluative theory's inaccuracy in describing these emotions.

Paul E. Griffiths mistakenly attributes to Lyons the claim that "clinical depression requires the judgement that things are pretty bad. The object of this state is things generally". (Griffiths 1997, 28) But as has been noted, Lyons does not, in fact, go this far, saying only that the object is 'vague' or 'inexpressible' or 'strange' which is quite different from saying the object is "things generally". For when something is vague it is

4 For a more sustained critique of this theory see Sludds 2009.

5 Comparable positions are taken by Goldie 2000, 17-8, and Nussbaum 2001, 69.

still an object, even if that object is immaterial, "one's very ignorance of the situation". (Lyons 1980, 76) But when something is "things generally", it cannot be an object in the causal-evaluative sense, for "things generally" is nothing in particular and so can be no "particular object". Of course, if existential-ontological[6] anxiety were admitted, then, William James's "horrible fear" or Henry James Senior's "abject fear" might begin to make more sense.

In fact, it is worth drawing attention to the point that the objectless emotion spoken of by Griffiths ("things generally") is more in line with how the cognitivist Martha Nussbaum describes the type of grief she felt when:

> … moving from Brown University to the University of Chicago … there was a good possibility that the object of the grief was a much more vague and elusive object, such as "my past" or "the years of my youth", since I had spent twenty-five years living in Cambridge, Massachusetts … This highly general object was definitely not in my power to regain … I decided that the past was probably the real object of the grief. (Nussbaum 2001, 69)

But no matter how woolly Nussbaum's object might be, she, like Lyons, Pugmire and Goldie tries to force through a contradictory account of objectless emotions, one that is, absurdly, object-focused: "emotions always have an object", she writes, "even if it is a vague object; they always invest the object with value, and involve the acceptance of beliefs about the object". (Nussbaum 2001, 133)

Yet, Nussbaum herself appears to recognise that such a stance has problems and quickly moves to try to re-label such emotions as moods:

> It is very difficult to distinguish an emotion with a vague or highly general object from a mood: one may feel generally fearful, and that will be an emotion with a vague object, if its content is that some (vague) danger is viewed as impending. It will be a mood to the extent that even that type of highly general or vague object is absent. (Nussbaum 2001, 133)

This attempt to re-label objectless fear as a mood is a common manoeuvre made by cognitivists and one Deigh spots:

6 I use the hyphenated construction 'existential-ontological' in order to emphasise that Heidegger was not, though often mistakenly labelled as one, an existentialist philosopher. He insisted on understanding *Dasein* not as it had been historically considered as merely 'existence', but, rather, the "entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term *'Dasein'*". (Heidegger 1992, 27) *Dasein* thus draws immediate attention to its location (Being-there or to-be-there) as an entity that finds itself in a particular place and not everywhere, not infinite but as a point of reference, 'there,' for itself. However, the *Da* of *Dasein* is not to be understood as designating a simple spatial location, for "*Dasein* brings its 'there' along with it". (Heidegger 1992, 171) *Dasein's* fundamental and distinctive characteristic is that it has the ability to find Being as an issue for itself, the *"Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of* Dasein's *Being*. *Dasein* is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological". (Heidegger 1992, 32)

> The usual replies from cognitivists … consist in either excluding experiences of objectless emotions from the class of emotions proper and placing them in some distinct class of mental states, such as moods, or attributing to them a subtle or suppressed intentionality, which then explains away their apparent objectlessness. (Deigh 1994, 826)

However, apart from the concerns regarding re-labelling affective states, Nussbaum's description of an objectless state is as flawed as the earlier descriptions offered by Pugmire and Lyons. For though she speaks of joy, for instance, as being an emotion when it is about "how the *world* is" (Nussbaum 2001, 133, italics mine) she also contends it is a mood when it "doesn't focus on anything" (Nussbaum 2001, 133). But objects that are so "highly general" and "vague" such that they are about "how the world is" can hardly be said to do anything other than focus on absolutely everything, that is, on absolutely nothing in particular. And so we can ask, just what type of fearful emotion is it that Nussbaum is writing of that has such an utterly vague sense of danger? If the notion of danger is diluted to the point where it is so "highly general" that nothing can be named or even hinted at as its object, then, fear seems a rather arbitrary designation. Calling it objectless, existential-ontological *Angst* would, I believe, be more appropriate, for such "highly general or vague objects", such as, "how the world is" or *"emotions aimed out at the world"* are really cases of not knowing anything about the world or what is fearful in this most general sort of way. But this "not knowing" is conceptually the very same as the nescience I discussed earlier. Being afraid or joyful about everything in general is really being afraid or joyful about nothing, for absolutely everything *is* nothing in particular.

As we have seen, the "highly general" object spoken of by Nussbaum is quickly re-labelled by her a mood when it does not fit the cognitivists' template. Lyons's description of these emotions being "aimed out at the world" and incorporating everything is akin to my discussion of nescience, for absolutely everything is nothing in particular, and so cannot be an object in cognitive terms.

3. Part 2

3.1. *Angst* as *Dasein's* basic attunement/situatedness[7]

William Lyons's insistence that the objects of objectless emotions are really only vague, rather than non-existent, raises the question why he (and theorists like him) do not simply reject the notion of objectlessness altogether. It is my claim that genuine objectless fear only becomes meaningful when viewed as an existential-ontological concern, and it is by looking at Heidegger's unique interpretation of *Angst* in *Being and Time* that one can begin to make some significant inroads into acquiring a greater

7 This is Charles Guignon's translation of the German word *Befindlichkeit,* a more successful rending than Macquarrie and Robinson's "state of mind" (Heidegger 1992, 172), which implies a privately accessed mental state, and also the very awkward contemporary suggestion of John Haugeland, 'sofindingness'. (Malpas and Warthall 2000, 51; Dreyfus and Hall 1992, 36)

understanding this enigmatic mood.

For Heidegger, *Angst* is not fear, not even the vague objectless fear described by cognitivists, for unlike fear *Angst* has no distinct object whatsoever within-the-world that is the source of its anxiousness. *Angst* is not simply an emotion/mood 'aimed out at the world'. Rather it stems from the fact that the "world and *Dasein* are one … *Dasein's* Being-in-the world is … both an absorption in, and a constitution of, the world as such". (Kelly 1994, 34) *Angst* stems from Being-in-the-world as it has already been disclosed, *"the world as such is that in the face of which one has* Angst*"*. (Heidegger 1992, 231)

Angst is a threat to everyday familiarity and comes from *Dasein's* projecting ahead into possibilities, and the overriding possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein* (or death) from which it arises. *Angst* is "characterized by the fact that what threatens is *nowhere*" but this 'nowhere' does "not signify nothing" – the threat "is already 'there'". (Heidegger 1992, 321) *Dasein* is anxious for itself, and as its everyday existentiell concerns and worries dissipate, it is brought to face itself. *Dasein* is left with something essential to consider, for:

> *Angst* individualizes *Dasein* and thus discloses it as *'solus ipse'*. But this existential 'solipsism' is so far from the displacement of putting an isolated subject-Thing into the innocuous emptiness of a worldless occurring, that in an extreme sense what it does is precisely to bring *Dasein* face to face with its world as world, and thus bring it face to face with itself as Being-in-the-world. (Heidegger 1992, 233)

Angst reveals the groundlessness of *Dasein's* Being-in-the-world, *"That in the face of which one has Angst [das Wovor der Angst] is Being-in-the-world as such"*. (Heidegger 1992, 230) In other words, *Angst*-ridden *Dasein* has an opportunity to 'see' itself (how it is), feels unsettled and turns for refuge in the '*they*'. But "when *Dasein* 'understands' unsettledness … it does so by turning away from it in falling; in this turning-away, the 'not-at-home' gets 'dimmed down'". (Heidegger 1992, 234) *Dasein* is made aware of its (ownmost) potentiality-for-Being and its being free to choose itself authentically; in such freedom it is given over to itself and is responsible for making something of itself. Freedom though is only recognisable because *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world has been delivered over to its potentiality-for-Being in the first place. The very indefinite sense which *Dasein* experiences in *Angst* brings it closer to the nowhere in not-being-at-home (*Nicht-zuhause-sein*). Its focus is, consequently, not out in-the-world or world itself but Being-in-the-world as oneself. *Dasein* is brought back in *Angst* from its falling and absorption in the *'they'*, in its among others conformity, to *Dasein* as thrown individualized Being-in-the-world with an abundance of possibilities or choices and, equally, to an awareness of its limited power to fulfil them. *Angst* is then not felt as a response to the end of life but to the true constitution of *Dasein's* nullity-ridden Being.

The fundamental mood of *Angst* makes clear that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of *Dasein's* Being. Such possibilities reveal themselves as they are and not as camouflaged by entities within-the-world of the everyday (*Dasein's* usual mode of being). *Angst* discloses and individualises *Dasein*, revealing the deracinated state of human existence, the point at which singular *Dasein* must address itself authentically if it is to find meaning for itself. The sense of unease one experiences Being-in-the-world (as thrown Being – with the disclosedness of its 'there') and, for oneself, is the groundless sense of meaninglessness which, in turn, allows for its opposite, the clearing to authentic meaning for the first time. If we can overcome our disquiet at feeling anxious, we can grasp our mortal existence and take responsibility for ourselves genuinely. Being anxious *Dasein* recognises its alienation in the *'they'*, the upshot of which is that it "takes away from *Dasein* the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted". (Heidegger 1992, 232)

3.2. The ontological insights revealed by *Angst*

It is my assertion that the fear spoken of as objectless by cognitivists is, in fact, a fear of not grasping, the meaning of fear, that is, an existential-ontological fear of having rejected or forgotten what it is 'to be'. Fear that should be remembered was, for Heidegger, a mood, and moods, as we have seen, are more all-embracing than emotions and supply us with our total orientation, "Moods reveal the co-presence of all things in a way more comprehensive than any comprehension, more immediate than any perception". (Dreyfus and Hall 1992, 159) The key point which Haar is directing us towards here is that moods are one of our most basic constituent traits, allowing us to appreciate our ontological orientation in the world. Along with discourse and understanding, moods make up the fundamental *existentialia* that lie at the heart of all *Dasein's* other structures. Heidegger's interest is with those moods that encompass our total perspective and not simply our transient passions (i.e. our emotions, our "fleeting Experiences" [Heidegger 1992, 390] as he calls them in *Being and Time*). An effective way to view this is to note that for Heidegger attitudes and feelings are the building blocks for mood, and emotions are "the precipitating particle[s] that crystallises mood". (Solomon 1977, 130) Though our Being may undergo changes relating to our interests and experiences, our mood will not be lost, in fact, if we were ever to be completely mood-free, we would also be un-tuned and orientation-less to the world, which would make us there-less and, thus, not there-being (*Da-sein*).

Angst or objectless fear is a mood not simply "aimed out at the world" (Lyons 1980, 104) or about "how the world is" (Nussbaum 2001, 133) rather, it is the world, it is being-there in the face of its own thrownness and situatedness that one experiences *Angst*. It is a threat to everyday familiarity and comes from our projecting ourselves ahead into possibilities and the overriding possibility of death from which it stems. Death as a constant threat is indefinite and can occur whenever and from wherever, from nowhere. *Angst* is characterized by the fact that what threatens is nowhere. But this 'nowhere' does not signify nothing, for the threatening is already there, yet

nowhere. We are made uneasy not by the ready-to-hand objects in-the-world or by others within-the-world; it is these things we retreat to for succour and distraction, but by the totality of the no-thing, the something that is the world itself. *Dasein* is the nothingness, the clearing in which things appear, not the things themselves. Others enter the clearing more completely if we see them not just as objects-in-the-world but as authentic beings.

4. Conclusion

The knowledge that my existence will inevitably end is crucially significant to me in my life, yet this significant fact can never be an actuality *in* my life. Wittgenstein reinforces this point when he writes, "Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death" (Wittgenstein 1992, 72). For me living, death can only be a possibility, albeit an ever-present one, and one that overrides all other possibilities. Given the forcefulness of this fact, Heidegger explains that we are left with a choice, to flee from such recognition or stand up to it. By standing up to it we are made to ask a fundamental question:[8] In the face of the fact that death is not just the end of *Dasein*, as the death (or more precisely 'perishing' [*Verenden*]) of a dog is the end of its living, but a possible way to be, that is, the possibility of no longer-being-able-to-be or "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*" how, then, can life be meaningful?

It is important, finally, to note that when Lyons wrote of certain cases of fear being target-less and "aimed out at the world" he was unwittingly drawing attention to something of great importance, *"That in the face of which* we fear, the 'fearsome', is in every case something which we encounter within-the-world". (Heidegger 1992, 179) *Angst* (or objectless fear) discloses "Dasein in the Being of its "there", even if it does so in varying degrees of explicitness". (Heidegger 1992, 180) *Dasein* does not find the object of objectless fear *out* in-the-world but as a possibility of Being-in-the-world through mood that has already disclosed the world. Those so-called "vague" entities *within* the world, those "not properly formulable" objects that cognitivists wish to make explicit and which they attempt to describe as "particular objects" that are the basis for objectless fear are of no interest to Heidegger, for it is these very things *Dasein* flees towards: "[*Dasein* does] not flee *in the face* of entities within-the-world; these are precisely what it flees *towards* – as entities alongside which our concern, lost in the *"they"* can dwell in tranquillized familiarity". (Heidegger 1992, 233-4)

8 Considerations of space mean we cannot, in this article, provide an answer to this question, however, for our purposes it is sufficient to register *Angst's* crucial role in re-orientating *Dasein* towards the essential possibility of its authenticity.

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Institute of Technology, Sligo,
Ballinode, Sligo,
Ireland
kevinsludds@eircom.net
sludds.kevin@itsligo.ie