

Dwelling Space: Between Home and Strangeness.¹

Andrés M. Osswald

Abstract

This investigation could be framed within the interdisciplinary field of the phenomenology of dwelling. In particular, this paper deals with three essential concepts that define the dwelling space: “home,” “strangeness” and an ambivalent space, “in-between.” The categories of home and strangeness define, according to the phenomenological tradition, the poles of dwelling space. My contribution consists of presenting some key psychoanalytic concepts to describe the paradoxical space that extends between home and strangeness. The argument is structured as follows: Firstly, I discuss the opposition between “place” and “space”. Secondly, I present the main aspects of the Husserlian distinction between “home world” and “alien world” in order to show how horizons reveal a dimension of dwelling space that cannot be identified with place. Then I set out Heidegger’s appraisal of the distinction between home and strangeness both in his later work and in *Being and Time*. Following on from that, I discuss the identification between dwelling and being-at-home, after which I attempt to outline the ambiguous space between home and strangeness on the basis of the contributions made by Freud’s analysis of the uncanny (*Unheimlich*) and Winnicott’s concept of “transitional space.”

Key words: Home, Strangeness, Ambivalent Space, Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis

The philosophical inquiry into the spatiality of dwelling has already been included within the scope of phenomenology in the analyses of, among others, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. However, a significant part of the phenomenological discussion of dwelling has been defined by the opposition between place and space (Casey 1993, Seamon & Mugerauer 1985). While the concept of space is associated, in these interpretations, with the abstract spatiality of physics and geometry, the notion of place refers to the lived experience of space, where dwelling takes place. In this light, the expression “dwelling space” could be considered contradictory. Nevertheless, that conclusion can only be drawn if the opposition between place and space is maintained. Thus, I propose to question the unrestricted identification between “space” and “objective space”.

Another common assumption, intrinsically related to the preeminence of place, consists in the definition of dwelling exclusively in terms of the experience of being-at-home (Norberg-Schulz, 1985). Both discussions are important for our topic because the study of lived space undertaken by Husserl and Heidegger reveals that the space where we dwell is defined not only by the familiarity of the home-world but also by a strange sphere that extends beyond the limits of the familiar world. However, strangeness as an essential dimension of dwelling has mostly been ignored in the analyses which focus exclusively on place.

Home and strangeness are, so to speak, the poles of dwelling space and in the classical phenomenological approach, they are presented as well-defined spheres that do not collapse into or become confused with each other. In this context, I would like to introduce the contributions made by psychoanalytic theory. Freud's analysis of the uncanny exhibits the terrifying experience of the process of becoming strange of what is usually taken as the safest and most familiar place in the world: home. Winnicott's notion of transitional space, for its part, presents a positive appraisal of the ambiguity between home and strangeness by revealing its genetic role in the development of human experience. Such a paradoxical place, finally, is where Hans Rainer Sepp locates phenomenological reflection. In general terms, in the following pages I seek not only to revisit the classical phenomenological approach to dwelling but also to offer a comparative study of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, in order to characterize the three ontological dimensions that constitute our dwelling space: home, strangeness and the ambivalent space in-between.

1. Place and Space

Heidegger asserts that dwelling is the relationship between human beings and space (2001, 155) but we can also affirm that it is necessary "to take place" in order to dwell. In *Getting Back into Place*, Edward S. Casey offers an in-depth description of place in relation to dwelling. First and foremost, he distinguishes between the spatiality in which dwelling takes place and an abstract form of space, such as the one developed by physics and geometry. In this context, he affirms that a dwelling place must not to be reduced to a mere position in space, where "position" implies an arbitrary location in "the Cartesian notion of a pure extensional space at once three-dimensional, infinite in extent and identical with

the totalities of the material bodies that occupy it” (Casey 1993, 141). This modernist conception of space –still prevalent in contemporary philosophy, physics and psychology (1993, xiii)– is what Casey calls a “site”. In his view, the concept of space as a whole is almost completely identified with abstract space and, as a consequence, the notion of space is presented in opposition to the notion of place. He writes: “‘We do not live in «space»’. Instead, we *live in places*” (Casey 1993, xiii, emphasis in original). Furthermore, time is also confronted with a proper appraisal of place: “The dual dominance of Space and Time is an expression, as well as an original continuing cause, of the neglect of Place in human experience” (Casey 1993, 288).²

Nevertheless, such a confrontation between place and space can only be maintained by ignoring the phenomenological distinction –already present in Husserl and Heidegger and in other theorists of dwelling such as Christian Norberg-Schulz– between “objective” space and “lived” or “existential” space (Norberg-Schulz 1983, 223; 1985, 25). As Husserl shows in §9 of *Crisis*, the space of modern physics results from the application of pure mathematics to an intuitively given nature. However, mathematical idealization is indifferent to the qualitative properties of things although it leaves intact their spatial shape and, with it, their extensional character (Husserl 1970, 38). As a result of the idealization of concrete spatiality, space becomes not only abstract but also homogeneous and measurable. A space is homogeneous when any of its points is interchangeable with any other of its points. Such interchangeability depends on the fact that objective space is not oriented, i.e. there is no privileged point around which an orientation can be established. And since it is homogeneous, objective space can be measured (33). In short, the abstract space of the modern sciences is founded on concrete space, where dwelling takes place, and both are dimensions of the wider phenomenological concept of space.³

A place consists in a “concrete” form of spatiality (Norberg-Schulz 1985, 75; Casey 1993, xv). Dwelling, in turn, involves some kind of appropriation of place that allows us to interpret the meaning gathered in the things present in our surrounding world (Norberg-Schulz 1985, 17). As a result, dwelling places possess a certain familiarity (Casey 1993, 116) and offer, thus, psychological security (Norberg-Schulz 1983, 224). In topological terms, dwelling places become a center –a point zero for orientation–, to which a repeated return is possible (Casey 1993,

115). Places are experienced as an inside, defined by the familiarity of what is known, in contrast to the surrounding outside, or what is unknown and frightening (Norberg-Schulz 1983, 224). Nevertheless, Casey points out that dwelling places are neither necessarily related to buildings specifically designed to be resided in nor to a stable “implacement”. In this context, Casey differentiates between two essential ways of dwelling. On the one hand, dwelling-as-residing describes the settled state in which we are “somewhere in particular”. As a matter of fact, this “somewhere” is commonly a home (Casey 1993, 121). On the other hand, dwelling-as-wandering describes a way of dwelling in “an unsettled sense in which displacement is much more evident than implacement, homelessness than habitation” (132). The prototypical case of dwelling-as-wandering is the journey, in the course of which a human being is between places rather than in a particular, stable place. However, Casey points out that journeys end in a home-place, either the same place as the starting point of the journey (“homesteading”), or a new place that it will become a future home-place (“homecoming”) (1993, 290). The emphasis on place that characterizes this analysis, at the crossroads between phenomenology and architecture, tends to define dwelling in terms of an opposition to abstract space (which is uninhabitable by definition) and in close relation to the experience of being-at-home or the wandering between homes (an in-between space, where one can also feel at-home). In one way or another, dwelling space seems overdetermined by the notion of place. Now then, is the space in which we dwell made up only of “places”? Moreover, do we dwell only when we are at home? If we consider strangeness as an essential dimension of dwelling space, we should respond negatively to these questions.

2. Beyond place

Husserl’s approach to the topic of dwelling appears in the context of his inquiry into the lifeworld. Since “lifeworld” is a manifold concept and encompasses very different levels of analysis in Husserl’s late work, I propose here to narrow my exposition to those aspects that are concerned exclusively with the description of the dwelling space.⁴ In this context, the concept of lifeworld will be reduced to two main meanings: As soil (*Boden*) and as horizon (*Horizont*). That is, we will consider the world not as an objective phenomenon but as a constitutive element of experience (Steinbock 1995, 98). These senses are, in turn, closely related.

The world as soil is always pre-given for a concomitant-consciousness and, as such, it constitutes the frame of reference for the movement and repose of the bodies that lie on the Earth. Therefore, the world as absolute soil is identified with the Earth. Husserl also affirms that it is not adequate *in strictu sensu* to claim that the Earth moves or rests, because it establishes the condition of possibility of movement and rest in general (Husserl 1940, 309). By contrast, since all movement and rest makes sense in relation to the Earth as an absolute soil, Husserl thinks that the Earth is a transcendental structure of space. Due to its character as soil, the Earth does not occupy a place in space as a body would (Husserl 1940, 313-314). In other words, the Earth constitutes a condition of possibility for spatiality as such. However, the Earth can be fragmented into pieces, each of which, taken by themselves, is properly a body. That is, the Earth is composed of bodily parts but as a whole (*Ganze*) is not a body (Husserl 1940, 313). In other words, the Earth is a particular kind of whole that differs ontologically from its parts: The fragmented parts of the Earth are no longer a soil but bodies that lie on the Earth taken as a whole.⁵ For that reason, the physicalist interpretation that conceives the Earth as one celestial body among others disregards its primary character of soil and, by so doing, the centrality that the Earth possesses for human experience. Since the living body is anchored to the Earth, the latter also provides a universal frame for the movement and rest of the living body itself (Walton 2015, 344). Objective space, by contrast, is homogeneous: It is not centered and hence it lacks orientation (Husserl 1940, 320). From a phenomenological perspective, therefore, the Earth is not primarily one heavenly body among others but is “unique” (*einzig*) in the precise sense that it remains beyond the distinction between the singularity and the plurality of worlds (Husserl 1940, 314). Because of its uniqueness, Husserl asserts that the Earth is the “originary home place” (*Urheimat*) of humankind (Husserl 1940, 319).

Besides its spatial determination, the world as soil is also pre-given in a temporal sense. In this context, soil means a permanent and living acquisition that pre-delineates future experiences founded in the past. That is, past experience settles into acquisitions that constitute a horizon of acquaintedness, which brings familiarity to the world. Since the past taken into account here corresponds to an intersubjective level, the “meaning transference” (*Sinnübertragung*), which is thematized by genetic phenomenology for an individual subjectivity, becomes an

“heritage of sense” (*Sinnerbschaft*) in the context of “generative intersubjectivity” (Husserl 1973, 199), a term that refers to the bond that links human communities through time (Husserl 1973, 609). From a generative perspective, meaning is always pre-given as a consequence of community practices that embrace many generations and thus form a history (Walton 2019, 19). Taken as a whole, the history of the Earth as universal soil constitutes an “originary history” (*Urhistorie*), such that each human community can be conceived as a partial development of the universal history of the Earth (Husserl 1940, 319). Within each community, in turn, the originary history manifests itself in the form of traditions (as a set of generic ways of behavior and value) inherited passively from the former members of the community. Through its traditions, a community survives the death of its members over time. In this sense, Husserl holds that a community is a permanent unity of “self-preservation” (*Selbsterhaltung*) (Husserl Ms. A v 24, 23 quoted by Walton 2019, 36).⁶ The closeness that Husserl emphasizes between the community’s traditions and the habits of the individual subject should not surprise us because both phenomena involve a common sedimentation process when viewed from either an individual or a collective perspective (Husserl 2008, 527). The world, accordingly, gains “typicity” as a consequence of the intersubjective sedimentation process, through which it becomes familiar (*vertraut*) and the norm for a certain community life.⁷ This closest world, defined by its familiarity, typicity and normality, is called by Husserl the “home-world” (*Heimwelt*). Orientation and temporal density define in Husserlian terms a “territory”, the spatial dimension involved in dwelling in a home-world. Insofar as each territory is intrinsically temporal, it cannot be identified simply with a plot of land in objective space. Husserl observes that a territory is not merely a “fixed piece of land” and he illustrates this idea with the condition of nomadic people (Husserl 2008, 394-5). In such a case, displacement from one point to another in objective space does not imply a change in the dwelling place (*Wohnort*) of the community insofar they remain integrated by their traditions. That is, the dwelling place of a nomadic people lies rather in its generative time than in a certain piece of land. The particular case of a nomadic people shows that it is not enough to move from one place to another to leave one's own territory or, in other terms, to leave one's home behind. On the contrary, the territory remains not only in the intersubjective traditions but also in the bodies of every singular subject that is part of the

community; this happens to the extent that the living body constitutes itself as a substrate of the habitualities in relation to a specific environment defined by the particularities of the territory. From this perspective, the territory is not only considered in its spiritual dimension but also in terms of its natural aspect. A territory comprises a certain kind of climate, a topography and a biome: a specific environment inhabited by plants and animals (Steinbock 1995, 164).

The home-world, for its part, admits an inner gradualness of horizons that Husserl describes as a set of concentric circles structured one-inside-the-other (*ineinander*) (Husserl 1973, 429). The starting point of the analysis is the “most immediate near world” (*unmittelbarsten Nahwelt*), where the living body is the absolute point of reference (Husserl 1973, 428). Thus, the objects and subjectivities that integrate this “private environment” could always be perceived in strict correlation with the movement of the living body (Husserl 1973, 219). It follows from this that the first others are the closest people (*Nächsten*): mothers, fathers and brothers (Husserl 1973, 429). In other words, home, as the place where the family dwells, is the center of the nearest world. However, the privilege of home is not merely a matter of facts. By contrast, Husserl holds that every human being, as a part of a generative intersubjectivity, is characterized by their “belonging to their home” (*Zugehörigkeit zu seinem Heim*) (Husserl 2008, 155), as a consequence of an instinctive “originary form of love for your neighbor” (*Urform der Nächstenliebe*) (Husserl 2013, 108). Such an originary tendency of caring for others –oriented, in the first place, towards the family members– is closely related to the intersubjective self-preservation of the community (Walton 2019, 34-5). From there on, the external circles of the home-world extend to the limits of what is known and familiar.

Beyond the borders of the home-world, an unknown world is intentioned as an empty horizon: the strangeness that surrounds home. Husserl writes: “The contrast between homely or familiar and strange belongs to the permanent structure of each world, and in a permanent relativity” (Husserl 1973, 431).⁸ Although home and strangeness are both necessary dimensions of dwelling space, the home-world keeps its centrality as long as it acts as a general measure for the determination of the empty horizon. Correspondingly, the enlargement of the home-world over the strange world can occur in two ways (Husserl 1973, 431). On the one hand, the unknown world is determined according to the general style of the home-world. In

such a case, “the far away” (*die Ferne*) becomes simply a part of the enlarged near world. On the other hand, the encounter with another community –involved in a different generative history and, as a consequence, with dwellers in a strange territory–, not only entails the determination of the empty horizon as an alien-world (*Fremdwelt*), but also brings to the fore thematically one's own home-world –pre-given as soil before the factual encounter with others. As a consequence, home-world and alien-world are co-constituted as representation of the world (Walton 2019, 33).⁹

The structure of the surrounding world implies for Husserl an essential distinction between the close sphere of the familiar and known world and a strange, unknown outside world, intended as the external horizon that surrounds the inner circle of life. The distant world can be, eventually, identified as an alien-world, but this cannot be taken to mean that the external horizon is completely determined. On the contrary, there will always be an empty and undetermined horizon beyond the borders of both home- and alien-worlds. Now then, if we analyze these Husserlian distinctions in the light of the difference between place and space, we can conceive both home- and alien-worlds as dwelling places –whether for our own community or the stranger ones–, although the external horizon itself, essentially undetermined and empty, can never be a place. Moreover, if strangeness is a horizon and, therefore, a constitutive dimension of experience, it can be said that our experience of dwelling stays always between home and strangeness.

3. Dwelling out of home

The assumption that dwelling in a proper sense means being at home can be traced to Heidegger's late work, which is the key reference for Norberg-Schulz's¹⁰ and Casey's¹¹ analyses of the subject. Since the full implications of Heidegger's appraisal of dwelling are beyond the scope of this article, I will restrict my exposition to the distinction between the “unhomely” (*unheimisch*) that results from the dominance of technical and calculative thinking (*rechnende Denken*) –deeply influential on the aforementioned description of “abstract space”– and the notion of “dwelling” (*wohnen*), which is closely linked to Heidegger's late ontology.

Heidegger takes Max Planck's statement, “only what can be measured is real” (Heidegger 2000, 748), as an outstanding summary of the calculative thinking involved in scientific research, economic enterprise or, more generally, every form of

planning that takes as its point of departure some given circumstances and calculates probabilities from there on to obtain certain results (Heidegger 1969, 46). In ontological terms, this entails that everything that exists must be available to the point of replaceability insofar as what exists shows itself only in the form of resources or commodities for calculative thinking, as elements of a “standing reserve” (*Bestand*) (Mitchell 2015, 24). The universal commodification of things occurs as a consequence of “machination” (*Machenschaft*): a systematic tendency towards objectivization in all areas of life, which constitutes the culmination of modern philosophical thinking on objectivity and representation. Technology, in turn, contributes to the metaphysical process of machination by means of the reduction of temporal and spatial distances. On the one hand, the permanent anticipation (*Vorgriff*) of the future that defines calculative thinking implies an increasing acceleration (*Beschleunigung*), which prevents thought from remaining quiet and meditates (*besinnen*) on the meaning which reigns over everything that is (Heidegger 1969, 46). On the other hand, technical developments, such as the airplane (Heidegger 1994, 44-45), the television, the radio or the weekly visit to the cinema (Heidegger 2000, 575), are all signs of the overcoming of spatial distance through the calculative homogenization of the world. However, technology only reinforces Dasein’s inherent tendency to de-distancing (*Ent-fernung*). Heidegger already asserts in *Being and Time*: “With the ‘radio’, for example, Da-sein is bringing about today de-distancing of the ‘world’ which is unforeseeable in its meaning for Da-sein, by way of expanding and destroying the everyday surrounding world” (Heidegger 1996, 96). The loss of the surrounding world depends on the fact that the circumspective looking of everyday praxis brings beings to the nearness of Dasein. Nevertheless, this does not imply that distances in the surrounding world must be considered in relation to the living body but rather only in relation to the orientation of praxis. In opposition to Husserl, Heidegger dismisses the living aspect of the body or, conversely, he considers the body only in an objective manner (Heidegger 1996, 100). Therefore, if the body is just one thing amongst others, it cannot count as the bearer of the “zero point” of orientation: Dasein is never “here” but rather “there”, with what it is taking care of. In this sense, Heidegger’s lack of interest in the living body turns on the Husserlian relationship of foundation between “here” and “there” since Dasein understands its “here” in terms of the “over there” of the surrounding world (Heidegger 1996, 99). As a consequence, the surrounding world can no longer be identified without restriction with the beings

that are immediately perceived, since such an interpretation would suggest an unacceptable objectivization of the originary spaciality.

Although technique makes it possible to overcome distances from an objective point of view, it disrupts in an “unhomely manner” (*unheimliche Weise*) the “nearness” (*Nahnis*) of the regions of the world (Heidegger 1985, 200). Such nearness possesses a metaphysical meaning and refers to the gathering of earth, sky, mortals and divines that constitute the fourfold (*Geviert*):¹² the structure of things that allows them to be opened to the world (Mitchell 2015, 7). In this context, the loss of the surrounding world implies the closure to the originary ontological structure of things. Thus, the supremacy of technique that defines our contemporary age pushes humanity into an essential homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*) in a world where things are disguised behind the representational mask of calculative thinking. By contrast, Heidegger’s late ontology seeks to describe things in a desubstantialized and relational manner: things are the “gathering” of the fourfold and the fourfold gathers into things (Mitchell 2015, 12). In other words, things manifest themselves by virtue of their relations with the basic structure of the world –they “are” this relationality– and conversely the regions of the world make themselves present in the things. Now then, what is the relationship between things and dwelling? Norberg-Schulz answers:

Dwelling primarily consists in the appropriation of a world of things, not in a material sense, but as an ability to interpret the meaning the things gather. 'Things visit mortals with a world', Heidegger says, and when we understand their message we gain the existential foothold which is dwelling. (Norberg-Schulz 1985, 17)

Norberg-Schulz also affirms that things must be bearers of time in order to be meaningful, because meaning in things depends on the fact that they remind us of the past (1985, 133). If the question of meaning is intrinsically related to the question of memory and if dwelling can only provide an existential foothold insofar as it takes place in a meaningful world, so dwelling depends ultimately on the identification of traditional meanings gathered in things (1985, 133-4). In short, by virtue of the presence of time in things, the world becomes meaningful and familiar. When this occurs, we dwell in the proper sense of the word (1985, 135). On this question, Jeff Malpas points out that Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of Heidegger has been highly influential on subsequent discussions of dwelling –particularly among architects–,

giving rise to a reading tradition that tends to identify dwelling with the ideas of “belonging”, “identity” and “authentic existence” (Malpas 2014, 15-6). Moreover, and given that the concept of dwelling appears to depend on the concept of place, and place is an essentially “deterministic, exclusionary and nostalgic concept” (17) in the sense that we are always rooted to a certain and determine place, so the notion of dwelling seems to be closely tied to a “sedentary, secure and familiar” mode of being (20). Nevertheless, the association between dwelling and the empirical place of our home-world ignores the questioning character that dwelling entails for Heidegger. In *Building Dwelling Thinking* he writes:

The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man’s homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight?
(Heidegger 2001, 57)

The homelessness concomitant with a world defined by technique possesses a metaphysical character, given by the fact that it occurs due to the disruption of the nearness to the ontological foundations of the world that calculative thinking entails. That is, homesickness (*Heimweh*) in contemporary times ought not to be misinterpreted as an empirical nostalgia for an idealized past or place (Rocha de la Torre 2012). By contrast, the inquiry into the essence of dwelling will not receive an appropriate answer as long as it remains subordinated to calculative thinking. In fact, calculative thinking itself must to be suspended if reflection on dwelling is to be posed appropriately. In so doing, another kind of thought would be possible, one that instead of running away towards the future, stays in the present, allowing meditation on the meaning of dwelling. In this regard, Jeff Malpas asserts: “To dwell is to remain in a state in which what it is to dwell – and what it is to dwell here, in this place – is a question constantly put anew” (2014, 20). In this sense, to pose again the question of the sense of dwelling, to ask anew about the meaning of being, constitutes for humanity a way of returning home.

Nevertheless, and despite the necessary questioning of the assumption that dwelling takes place only in relation to an appropriated empirical place, it remains that in his later works Heidegger tends to conceive dwelling in relation to home or homecoming.¹³ Malpas even suggests that the concept of dwelling requires a

rethinking of some Heidegger's early concepts such as the notion of "authentic existence" (2014, 16). If we follow this suggestion, we will find that there are elements in *Being and Time* that make it possible to discuss the very idea that in Heidegger's work dwelling only occurs in relation to home. In particular, the attunement of angst reveals a positive appraisal of the *Unheimliche* insofar it constitutes a condition of possibility for authentic existence.

The relevance of angst lies in the fact that this attunement is characterized by the lack of interest in innerworldly beings. Or, expressed differently, angst reveals the Nothing (*das Nichts*) in the world. In this sense, angst cancels the taking-care that determines Dasein's everyday life and, thus, confronts Dasein with the open possibility that defines its existence in every case, whether it is aware of it or not. That is to say, angst constitutes an ontic experience that allows the revelation of an ontological structure by means of the interruption of the ordinary absorption in beings. As a consequence, angst exposes the structure of being-in-the-world in itself (Heidegger 1996, 175). But given that the surrounding world is inherently intersubjective, this particular attunement is accompanied by the isolation of Dasein, severing the ties that join it to others and things. In Heidegger's words: "In *Angst* one has an 'uncanny' [*unheimlich*] feeling [...] But uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] means at the same time not-being-at-home" (Heidegger 1996, 176). Since the surrounding and familiar world is always exposed to falling prey (*Verfallen*) to the public mode of interpretation, Heidegger thinks that the possibility of an authentic existence implies some kind of isolation. In this context, Dasein's freedom of choice to choose itself as an open possibility means abandoning others and the familiarity of the house. In short, to be free—that is, to exist authentically—supposes not to-be-at-home. The philosopher writes:

Angst (...) fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the 'world'.
Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individuated, but *as* being-in-the-world.
Being-in enters the existential 'mode' of *not-being-at-home*. The talk about
'uncanniness' [*Unheimlichkeit*] means nothing other than this. (Heidegger 1996, 176)

In summary, in the late Heidegger, *unheimisch* refers to the alienation in a world where humankind fails to recognize its co-belonging with the gathering of mortals, earth, sky and divines. Human beings are thus not initially at home but rather in strangeness. In this context, coming to be at home entails a passage through strangeness. In *Being and Time*, by contrast, being-at-home is associated with the

falling prey, a familiar and public mode of interpretation that it has to be abandoned in order to disclose the ontological condition of Dasein as being-in-the-world. In this regard, the estrangement of the *Unheimlichkeit* gains a positive but also distressing character, which will be analyzed in the next section.

4. The ambivalent space between home and strangeness

4.1 The experience of the uncanny

In his 1919 study, *The Uncanny* [*Das Unheimliche*], Freud tracks down the multiple meanings of the German term “*unheimlich*”, not only in his own and other languages but also in literary references. He shows particular interest in the following assertion by Schelling: “*Unheimlich* is the name for everything that ought to have remained hidden and secret and has become visible” (Freud 1955, 223). Freud holds that the relevance of this statement lies in the fact that here the “intimate” (*heimlich*) is not only associated with what is familiar but, more precisely, with what must be kept from the look of others. He observes that, in such a context, *unheimlich* is opposed to *heimlich* not only in its acceptance of “familiar” but also in its meaning of “intimate.” The latter meaning is strengthened by the lexical closeness between the German terms *heimlich* and *Geheim* (secret). Freud writes:

Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*. Let us retain this discovery, which we do not yet properly understand, alongside of Schelling’s definition of the ‘uncanny.’ (Freud 1955, 225)

From there on, the Freudian analysis tries to develop the essential ambivalence that characterizes the experience of the uncanny. In this conceptual context, the uncanny does not threaten the familiarity of the home from the outside, as if it were the result of a disruption in the familiar world caused by the encounter with an alien world –as we saw in Husserl– or produced by the emergence of the Nothing –as Heidegger claims–. By contrast, it haunts the house from within.

The ambiguity of the uncanny shapes an ambivalent space that is inhabited by several figures that, as already mentioned, Freud finds primarily in literary examples. In this context, the analysis of Hoffman’s *Der Sandmann* (1895) is of prime importance. Freud recognizes in this drama a general trace of the experience of the uncanny: the repetition of the same. This kind of repetition, in turn, appears in other phenomena

like animism, the double (*Doppelgänger*) or the return of the repressed infantile complexes. Following Otto Rank, Freud links the experience of the double to a primitive, infantile fear of death. To struggle against it, the infantile subject has to develop an indestructible self-representation: “probably –he asserts– the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body’” (Freud 1955, 234). But once primitive narcissism has been surpassed, the double remains as a separate psychic dimension associated with the functions of self-criticism and censorship and later on with the moral conscience of the adult super-ego. Nevertheless, he claims that the terrifying aspect of the uncanny does not proceed from the operation of the super-ego but from the return of the primitive double, now dissociated from its former defensive character. The double, thus, returns as a phenomenon of the uncanny. Paraphrasing Heine, Freud concludes: “The ‘double’ has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons” (Freud 1955, 235).

The Freudian thesis that binds the uncanny together with the repetition of a previous and subsequently repressed psychic phase involves, ultimately, the threat of the return of the primary indifference that defines the origin of life: the return to the inanimate state. Hence, the repetition compulsion involves a death drive. In this light, the “pleasure principle”, which expresses the tendency to reduce to a minimum the tension in the psychic apparatus, is intrinsically connected to the return to the inanimate state, where a total lack of tension ideally reigns. That is, the pleasure principle depends on the death drive. This discovery constitutes the main thesis of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), published a year after *The Uncanny*. In Freud’s early theory of drives, by contrast, the pleasure principle operates jointly with the self-preservation instinct, which describes the fundamental tendency to behave so as to avoid injury and maximize chances of survival.¹⁴ According to this schema, the rising of psychic tension is associated with the sexual instinct insofar as it disrupts the normal functioning of organs or bodily parts –necessary for self-preservation–, by means of eroticizing them. That is, the sexual drives seek the repetition of a mythical experience of satisfaction which Freud relates archetypically to the first encounter with the maternal breast. Since this experience is unrepeatable in principle, the sexual drives not only explain the repetition in psychic life but, in so doing, they also increase psychic tension. However, in his late theory, the tendency to relaxation that characterizes the self-preservation instinct paradoxically expresses a death drive.

In the context of his late work, the close bond that Freud finds between the homely experience, death tendencies and the experience of the uncanny is not surprising. There is a typical repetition of the familiar world ruled by the cycles of day and night, the hours of wakefulness and rest, the regularity of meals, the timetable of work and leisure, etc.¹⁵ It is within this familiar repetition that the seed of the uncanny –which turns the strange into the familiar– grows. In other words, the uncanny is not provoked by the irruption of strangeness into the house but by the very nature of repetition in the familiar world. That is, the search for safety and certainty that characterizes the homely experience implies an attempt to reduce the unforeseeable and to control, as much as possible, the disruptions that threaten the home-world.¹⁶ As we have seen, the search for self-preservation pursues a reduction of the tension in the psychic apparatus. But given that absolute distention coincides with the return to the inanimate state, life looking to preserve itself creates the condition for its own annihilation.¹⁷ Hence, the repetition that lies in the genesis of the uncanny unsettles the familiarity of home by calling into question the more rooted convictions about reality (Freud 1955, 249). First and foremost amongst these is the basic idea that to be at home is consistent with self-preservation. In short, the disclosure of the presence of the death drive in the intimacy of home not only reveals an ambivalent space between home and strangeness, between a repressed past and present life, between psychic and objective reality (as Freud puts it: the *unheimlich* is a sub-species of *heimlich*), but also shows up in an experience of home as abnormal, the need to leave home and embrace strangeness.

4.2 Transitional space

The uncanny presents a distressed and involuntary mode of dwelling in the ambivalent space between home and strangeness. However, in psychoanalytic literature it is possible to find other perspectives on this paradoxical space. Particularly relevant is the attempt to overcome the rigid opposition between inner and outer reality made by D.W. Winnicott in *Playing and Reality*. Winnicott proposes that a human being's life also takes place in a third field, which defines "an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contributed" (Winnicott 1971, 3). This intermediate space must not be reduced to the poles of the distinction if one seeks to describe it positively. In Winnicott's terms that implies accepting the paradox that defines the transitional space: "My contribution is

to ask for a paradox to be accepted and tolerated and respected, and for it not to be solved” (xvi).

Although the transitional space constitutes an actual dimension of experience in adult life, it plays a major role in the genetic constitution of the world. Following Freud, Winnicott asserts that the originary disposition of the infantile subject towards the world is defined by omnipotence: the subject does not perceive that the object that meets its needs possesses an independent existence. In other words, the baby lives the illusion that its mother’s breast is part of itself (15). This illusion, correspondingly, has to be encouraged in the first place by the mother, in order to allow her child to deal with the problem of the relationship between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived. But at a certain point, if the mother is “good enough”, she has to disillusion her child (16). Only then can the “reality principle” start to operate and the object, in consequence, appear external to the subject. Nevertheless, primary subjectivism is not replaced by pure realism. The disillusionment that concerns the loss of the immanent character of the primary object opens the possibility of establishing a relationship not only with what stands beyond the subjective boundaries but also with the diversification of the objects that make up the baby’s world. This process, which ultimately involves the never completed task of reality-acceptance, begins with the replacement of the mother’s breast by a unique object which Winnicott calls “transitional object” (18).

The transitional object involves a relationship of affection and it must therefore survive instinctual loving and hating insofar as it must remain the same. This object lies at the border –not completely inside or outside– because it has to be recognized as something “not-me” and, at the same time, it has to be perceived as if it were something created by the subject (2). This ambivalent position between external reality and inner creativity sets the condition for playing. In this context, playing acquires a genetic role in the constitution of the world, insofar it makes it possible to experience strangeness in a safe and controlled manner. Winnicott states: “To control what is outside one has to do things, not simply to think or to wish, and doing things takes time. Playing is doing” (55). The transitional object, for its part, is the material support of playing. But it is not a merely material thing. It also possesses a symbolic meaning: it represents the mother and therefore serves as a defense against anxiety (5). Transitional phenomena, thus, extend the boundaries of the home by means of the symbolic presence of the Other: “Confidence in the mother makes an intermediate

playground here, where the idea of magic originates, since the baby does to some extent experience omnipotence” (63).

In general terms, transitional space is always intersubjective. Its extension can be minimal or maximal, according to the summation of experiences (144), and it constitutes, in the beginning, a minimal shaping of the world: it has got one object, one ego and one other. Gradually, transitional phenomena tend to collapse into the broad field of culture. In temporal terms, Winnicott defines “culture” as inherited tradition but this vague concept also comprises a spatial dimension. In this sense, culture is not just a passively inherited tradition but a “potential space” to which everyone should be able to contribute actively (69). He writes: “I am thinking of something that is in the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw if we *have somewhere to put what we find*” (133). Thus, the relationship with external reality is not just one of compliance, where the world and its details are something to be fitted in with or which demand adaptation (87). If that were the case, the resolution of the inner tension of the transitional space in favor of objective reality could lead to a sense of futility and, ultimately, to the idea that life is not worth living. Correspondingly, the absolutizing of the subjective aspect of the relationship could involve a pathological loss of contact with reality.

If playing defines the transitional space at the beginning of life, later on its intermediary function is replaced by other transitional activities such as artistic productions, religion, imaginative living and creative scientific work (19). According to Winnicott, all these phenomena, which involve creativity in one way or another, should be located in the paradoxical space. This is because they cannot be completely defined by the familiar world, since creativity implies surpassing the cyclic repetition that defines the normality of the home-world, but neither they can be completely strange if they aim to be a contribution to culture.

5. Conclusion

My critical approach to the theories of dwelling that emphasize the privilege of place over space and, at the same time, define dwelling in terms of the experience of being at home, aims to widen the concept of dwelling by means of the recognition of other modes of dwelling than being at home. In so doing, the space where we dwell becomes enlarged as well. In this sense, considering strangeness as an originary

dimension of dwelling space makes it possible to conceptualise experiences –such as those involved in creativity– that cannot be encompassed in their complexity if the analysis is limited to only one aspect of the relationship between home and strangeness. As I tried to show in my discussion of the analyses of the *Unheimlich* carried out by Heidegger and Freud, in some cases we just need to leave home, either because it presents as an obstacle to achieving an authentic existence, or because home reveals the deadly side of the self-preservation instincts. Such a positive view of strangeness is particularly emphasised in Hans Rainer Sepp’s “oikological philosophy”. In a working version of an upcoming book, he says: “The world itself becomes more and more labyrinthine, and the only true wish was and is the call for escape – get out of here! – but without any guarantee of success” (Sepp 2014a, 67). However, recognizing the relevance of strangeness as a dimension of dwelling space does not imply, by any means, dismissing the relevance of home in our experience of the world. As a matter of fact, we come into existence within a home-world, which not only links us to former generations but also constitutes our living body in relationship to a certain territory. In other words, we are always anchored in a home-world and, because of this, our home becomes a privileged perspective from which to understand both familiar and strange worlds. In this sense, Husserl asserts that what is completely strange is however known, at least, as a modification of the home-world (Husserl 1973, 430). Now then, some Husserlian statements of this sort, together with other assertions, such as the passages of §6 of *Crisis* in which the philosopher strongly links scientific and philosophical reason to Europe taken as generative tradition, could be interpreted as if the relationship with strangeness entails always a subjugation of the strange by the familiar.¹⁸

The uncertain place of philosophy and, particularly, of phenomenology, has been also taken into account in the oikological reflection. In this sense, Sepp holds that the phenomenological perspective occupies intrinsically a paradoxical place: On the one hand, it “has a place” (*orthaft*), insofar as it is always anchored in a familiar world, but, on the other hand, it is “placeless” (*ortlos*) because its method consists precisely in bracketing such anchoring (*Verankerung*) (Sepp 2014b, 67). As long as it is anchored, phenomenology expresses a home-world and a tradition –Europe in a broad sense–, but its aims do not consist in establishing itself as an empirical point of view, settled down in a place, but in exceeding (*übersteigen*) its own place in order to disclose the essential structure of place in itself, and thereby the difference between

home and strangeness.¹⁹ Like Winnicott before him, Sepp states that if paradox defines the way we dwell in the world, we must not try to solve it but rather “to live the paradox” (Sepp 2014a, 60). Such a paradoxical “place” is where the philosopher should stay in a “stable imbalance” (Sepp 2014a, 69) between place and placelessness, between home and strangeness. That is, phenomenology must leave home in order to receive strangeness on its own terms, but it must also remain not completely away from home if any intelligibility of strangeness is intended.

Works cited

Casey, Edward S. 1993. *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Freud, Sigmund. 1955. “The Uncanny” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XVII (1917-1919)*, ed. James, Strachey. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 217-252.

Freud, Sigmund. 1955. “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XVIII (1920-1922)*, ed. James, Strachey. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 7-64.

Heidegger, Martin. 1959. *Gelassenheit*. Pfullingen: Neske.

----- . 1969. *Discourse on Thinking*. Translated from German by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund with an Introduction by John M. Anderson. New York: Harper Torchbooks.

----- . 1985. *Unterwegs zur Sprache (1950-1959)*, ed. F.W. von Herrmann. Frankfurt on the Main: Vittorio Klostermann.

----- . 1994. *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. Petra Jaeger. Frankfurt on the Main: Vittorio Klostermann.

----- . 1996. *Being and Time*. Translated from the German by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Suny Press.

----- . 2000. *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebenswege (1910-1976)*, ed. Hermann, Heidegger. Frankfurt on the Main: Vittorio Klostermann.

----- . 2001. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated from the German by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row.

Husserl, Edmund. 1940. “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre” in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin, Farber. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- , 1970. *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Translated from the German by David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- , 1973. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Dritter Teil. 1929-35*, ed. Iso, Kern. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- , 2008. *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916-1937)*, ed. Rochus, Sowa. New York: Springer.
- , 2013. *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie. Analysen des Unbewusstseins und der Instinkte. Metaphysik. Späte Ethik. Texte aus dem Nachlass 1908-1937*, eds. Rochus Sowa and Thomas Vonhehr. Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer.
- Malpas, Jeff. 2014. "Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place", *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology* 25 (1): 15-23.
- Mitchell, Andrew J. 2015. *The Fourfold. Reading the Late Heidegger*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. 1983. *Meaning in Western Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.
- , 1985. *The Concept of Dwelling. On the Way to Figurative Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.
- Rocha de la Torre, Alfredo. 2012. "Tierra natal: entre agonía y afirmación de la diferencia", *Revista de Filosofía* 37 (1): 37-55.
- Seamon, David & Murgauer, Robert, Eds. 1985. *Dwelling, Place and Environment*. Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Sepp, Hans Rainer. 2014 a. *Grundrisse einer oikologischen Philosophie. Arbeitfassung*. Retrieved from <https://www.sif-praha.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/HRS-oikologische-Philosophie.pdf>
- , 2014 b. *Über die Grenze. Prolegomena zu einer Philosophie des Transkulturellen*. Nordhausen: Traugott.
- Steinbock, Anthony. 1995. *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Walton, Roberto J. 2015. *Intencionalidad y horizonticidad*. Cali: Aula de Humanidades.
- , 2019. *Horizonticidad e historicidad*. Cali: Aula de Humanidades.

Winnicott, Donald Woods. 1971. *Playing and Reality*. London & New York: Routledge

¹ This article was partially supported by the German Academic Exchange Service under Grant: Research Stays for University Academics and Scientists [number 57378441].

² A similar position can be found in David Seamon's and Robert Mugerauer's *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, where the editors write: "not merely technological construction, but dwelling; not merely homogeneous and mathematized space, but place" (1985, 1).

³ For a positive appraisal of the concept of space in relation to place, see Malpas, Jeff. 2004. *Place and Experience. A philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 44-71

⁴ On the manifold sense of "lifeworld", see Held, Klaus. 1985. "Einleitung" in Husserl, Edmund, *Die phänomenologische Methode*. 1985. Stuttgart: Reclam: 29-30.

⁵ Husserl's part-whole theory is developed in detail in the Third of his *Logical Investigations*.

⁶ In this context, Klaus Held underlines the relationship between generative self-preservation and the cyclic character of domestic time. Cf. Held, Klaus. "Generative Experience of Time" in Brough, John B. and Embree, Lester (ed.). 2000. *The Many Faces of Time. Contribution to Phenomenology*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer: 167-186.

⁷ Traditions and the collective sedimentation process can be conceived as a "secondary passivity" of the generative intersubjectivity. For Husserl's appraisal of passivity, see, for instance, Osswald, A. 2016. *La fundamentación pasiva de la experiencia. Un estudio sobre la fenomenología de Edmund Husserl*, Madrid: Plaza y Valdés: 53-6.

⁸ "Zwar gehört der Kontrast von heimisch oder vertraut und fremd zur beständigen Struktur jeder Welt, und zwar in einer beständigen Relativität." Unless expressly indicated, the translation is mine.

⁹ The co-constitutive process between home-world and alien-world is also emphasised by Steinbock (Cf. Steinbock, Anthony. 1995. *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 180-5).

¹⁰ See, among other references, Christian Norberg-Schulz. 1985. *The Concept of Dwelling. On the way to figurative architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publication: 17, 117, 133.

¹¹ See Edward S. Casey. 1990. "Heidegger In and Out of Place" in *Heidegger: A Centenary Appraisal*. Pittsburgh: Silverman Phenomenology Center: 62-98.

¹² For an in-depth discussion of Heidegger's concept of "fourfold" see Andrew J. Mitchell. 2015. *The Fourfold. Reading the Late Heidegger*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

¹³ For a systematic study of the relevance of the concept of home in Heidegger's late work, see Robert Mugerauer. 2008. *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

¹⁴ See Sigmund Freud. 1915. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 109-140.

¹⁵ The circularity of domestic time could also be traced in the way Heidegger's celestial cardinal (*Himmelsgegenden*) points that structure the everyday praxis. See, *Being and Time*, 96.

¹⁶ For practically identical reasons, Emmanuel Levinas underlines the connection between the economy (*oikos-nomos*) and the house with the minimisation of the uncertainty about the future. See *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, 152-174.

¹⁷ In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud asserts: "We have unwittingly steered our course into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For him death is the true result and to that extent the purpose of life, while the sexual instinct is the embodiment of the will to live" (Freud 1955, 43-44).

¹⁸ Toru Tani, for instance, examines this subject in the light of the problem of the intercultural relationships between communities (Cf. Tani, Toru. 1992. "Heimat und das Fremde", *Husserl Studies* (9): 199-216). For a critical appraisal of Tani's interpretation of Husserl, see Osswald, A. 2019. "Fenomenología y violencia. La condición europea de la razón frente al problema de la alteridad" in *Revista Tábano* (15): 29-47.

¹⁹ On the difficulties of an unmediated relationship to alterity, of principal importance is Jaques Derrida's critical reading of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the Other in "Violence et métaphysique" (1963) (Derrida, Jaques. 1967. *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris: Édition du Seuil). More

recently, Hans Rainer Sepp has stressed this issue in an intercultural context (Sepp, H.R. 2014. *Über die Grenze. Prolegomena zu einer Philosophie des Transkulturellen*. Nordhausen: Traugott.)