

Revisiting the Dimensions of the Dwelling Space.
A Comparative Study between Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis.

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This essay is a transdisciplinary study on the dimensions of the dwelling space –namely, the home, the strangeness and the ambiguous space in between– and pursues a twofold objective. First, I propose to revisit Husserl's and Heidegger's contributions to the phenomenology of dwelling in order to discuss two highly influential theses that are present in a relevant part of the phenomenological studies on this matter –especially in the contributions written in the English language. On the one hand, I discuss the opposition between "space" and "place", which is sustained under the assumption that the very notion of space is an objectivization of space taken in its original and lived sense (as "place"). On the other hand, I critically address the tendency to identify the concept of dwelling with the experience of "being-at-home"–an interpretation that recognizes its antecedents in Heidegger's late philosophy. Secondly, I seek to complement the phenomenological considerations on dwelling space with the contribution of the psychoanalytic theory. In particular, I attempt to question the sharp separation between the home-world and the alien-world, showing that certain phenomena cannot be fully located in either the home or the strange world but in a mixture of both poles. In this sense, I will attempt to positively characterize the ambiguous space between the home and the strangeness by taking as case studies the experience of the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) and some creative activities (in particular, childhood playing and philosophical practice in adult life). In all these phenomena, I am interested in underlining that the strangeness does not appear simply as something threatening and from which, consequently, it is necessary to defend oneself - as a reading too centered on the home might lead one to think - but that the estrangement from the familiar world is a condition for creative activity in general and for philosophical reflection in particular.

Although the differences in the level of analysis of Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis must be recognized (in one case, a transcendental philosophy and in the other, an empirical science), it is also important to consider the centrality that both perspectives give to the rigorous and exhaustive description of experience as the guiding thread of their respective fields of research. On this common ground, I would like to emphasize the relevance that the strangeness possesses in our experience of the world. In this sense, the contribution of this study should be the broadening of the concept of dwelling –avoiding its overlapping with the experience of being-at-home– by relating it to the to the other dimensions of the dwelling space.

1. PLACE AND SPACE

Heidegger asserts that dwelling is the relationship between human beings and space¹ but one can also affirm that it is necessary “to take place” in order to dwell. In his influential book *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

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated from the German by Albert Hofstadter. (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), p. 155.

material bodies that occupy it.”² This modernist conception of space –still prevalent in contemporary philosophy, physics and psychology³– is what the North American philosopher 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*.”⁴ 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.”⁵

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.⁶ As Husserl shows in §9 of *Krisis*, 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.⁷ As a result of the idealization of concrete spatiality, space becomes not only abstract but also homogeneous and measurable.⁸ 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, which included, in my understanding, the concept of place. As opposed to abstract space, a place consists in a “concrete” form of spatiality.⁹ 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.¹⁰ As a result, dwelling places possess a certain familiarity¹¹ and offer, thus, psychological security.¹² In topological terms, dwelling places become a center –a point zero for orientation–, to which a repeated return is possible.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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

² Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 141.

³ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xiii.

⁴ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xiii.

⁵ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 288. 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” (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), p. 1.

⁶ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Meaning in Western Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1983), p. 223. See also: Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling. On the Way to Figurative Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1985), p. 25.

⁷ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 37. (hereinafter referred to as “Hua VI”).

⁸ Hua VI, p. 33.

⁹ Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 75. See also: Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xv.

¹⁰ Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 17

¹¹ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 116.

¹² Norberg-Schulz, *Meaning in Western Architecture*, p. 224.

¹³ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 115.

¹⁴ Norberg-Schulz, *Meaning in Western Architecture*, p. 224.

matter of fact, this “somewhere” is commonly a home.¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ The prototypical case of dwelling-as-wandering is the journey, in the course of which a subject 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”).¹⁷

The emphasize 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. DWELLING 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.¹⁸ In this context, the concept of lifeworld will be reduced to two main meanings: As soil and as horizon. That is, we will consider the world not as an objective phenomenon but as a constitutive element of experience.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ By contrast, since all movement and rest make 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.²¹ In other words, the Earth constitutes a condition of possibility for spatiality as such. 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.²² Objective space, by contrast, is homogeneous: It is not centered and hence it lacks orientation.²³ From a phenomenological perspective, therefore, the Earth is not primarily one heavenly

¹⁵ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 121.

¹⁶ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 132.

¹⁷ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 290.

¹⁸ On the manifold sense of the concept of “lifeworld”, see Klaus Held, “Einleitung,” in Edmund Husserl, *Die phänomenologische Methode* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985), pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), p. 98.

²⁰ Edmund Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 309.

²¹ Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” pp. 313-314.

²² Roberto Walton, *Intencionalidad y horizonticidad* (Cali: Aula de Humanidades, 2015), p. 344.

²³ Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” p. 320.

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.²⁴ Because of its uniqueness, Husserl asserts that the Earth is the “originary home place” (*Urheimat*) of humankind as a whole.²⁵

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” which is thematized by genetic phenomenology for an individual subjectivity, becomes an “heritage of sense” in the context of “generative intersubjectivity,”²⁶ a term that refers to the bound that links human communities through time.²⁷ From a generative perspective, thus, meaning is pre-given as a consequence of community practices that embrace many generations and together form a history.²⁸ Taken as a whole, the history of the Earth as universal soil constitutes an “originary history” (*Urbistorie*), such that each human community can be conceived as a partial development of the universal history of the Earth.²⁹ 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.”³⁰ 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.³¹ The world, accordingly, gains “typicity” as a consequence of the intersubjective sedimentation process, through which it becomes familiar and the norm for a certain community life. This closest world, defined by its familiarity, typicity and normality, is called by Husserl the “home-world” (*Heimwelt*).

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.³² The starting point of the analysis is the “most immediate near world” where the living body is the absolute point of reference.³³ Thus, the objects and subjectivities that integrate this “private environment” could always be perceived in strict correlation with the movement of the living body.³⁴ It follows from this that the first others are the closest people (*Nächsten*): mothers, fathers and brothers.³⁵ In other words, home, as the place

²⁴ Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” p. 314.

²⁵ Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” p. 319.

²⁶ Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Dritter Teil. 1929-35* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 199 (hereinafter referred to as “Hua XV”).

²⁷ Hua XV, p. 609.

²⁸ Roberto Walton, *Horizonticidad e historicidad* (Cali: Aula de Humanidades, 2019), p. 19.

²⁹ Husserl, “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre,” p. 319.

³⁰ Walton, *Horizonticidad e historicidad*, p. 36. In this context, Klaus Held underlines the relationship between generative self-preservation and the cyclic character of domestic time. See: Klaus Held, “Generative Experience of Time,” in *The Many Faces of Time. Contribution to Phenomenology*, ed. John Brough and Lester Embree, Lester (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 167-186.

³¹ Husserl, *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916-1937)* (New York: Springer, 2008), p. 527 (hereinafter referred to as “Hua XXXIX”).

³² Hua XV, p. 429.

³³ Hua XV, p. 428.

³⁴ Hua XV, 219.

³⁵ Hua XV, 429.

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,”³⁶ as a consequence of an instinctive “originary form of love for your neighbor.”³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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. Husserl writes: “The contrast between homely or familiar and strange belongs to the permanent structure of each world, and in a permanent relativity.”³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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” becomes simply a part of the enlarged near world. On the other hand, the encounter with another community –involved in a different generative history–, 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, only pre-given as soil before the factual encounter with others strangers. As a consequence, home-world and alien-world are co-constituted as representations of the world.⁴¹

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 both Norberg-Schulz’s⁴² and Casey’s⁴³ analyses of the subject. Since the full implications of Heidegger’s appraisal of

³⁶ Hua XXXIX, p. 155.

³⁷ Husserl, *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie. Analysen des Unbewusstseins und der Instinkte. Metaphysik. Späte Ethik. Texte aus dem Nachlass 1908-1937* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer, 2013), p. 108.

³⁸ Walton, *Horizonticidad e historicidad*, p. 34-35.

³⁹ Hua XV, p. 431.

⁴⁰ Hua XV, 431.

⁴¹ Walton, *Horizonticidad e historicidad*, p. 33. The co-constitutive process between home-world and alien-world is also emphasized by Steinbock’s *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*, pp. 80-85.

⁴² See, among other references: Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, pp. 17, 117, 133.

⁴³ Cf. Edward S. Casey. “Heidegger In and Out of Place,” in *Heidegger: A Centenary Appraisal*, (Pittsburgh: Silverman Phenomenology Center, 1990), pp. 62-98.

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 and the notion of “dwelling” (*wobnen*), which is closely linked to Heidegger’s late ontology.

Heidegger finds close links between the development of modern technology and the estrangement from the world we originally dwelled in. In his view, technology 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.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, technical developments, such as the airplane,⁴⁵ the television, the radio or the weekly visit to the cinema,⁴⁶ 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*). That is, 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. 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.⁴⁷ (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” of the regions of the world.⁴⁸ Such nearness possesses a metaphysical meaning and refers to the gathering of earth, sky, mortals and divines that constitute the fourfold (*Geviert*): the structure of things that allows them to be opened to the world.⁴⁹ 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. In opposition to this, 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.⁵⁰ In other words, things manifest themselves by virtue of their relations with the basic

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, *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, 1969), p. 46.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), p. 44-45.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges (1910-1976)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), p. 575.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Translated from the German by Joan Stambaugh. (New York: Suny Press, 1996), p. 99.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Unternwegs zur Sprache (1950-1959)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 200.

⁴⁹ Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold. Reading the Late Heidegger* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Mitchell, *The Fourfold. Reading the Late Heidegger*, p. 12.

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 provides an influential answer to this question:

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.⁵¹

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.⁵² 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.⁵³ In short, by virtue of the presence of time in things, the world becomes meaningful and familiar. When this occurs, Norberg-Schulz claims that we dwell in the “proper sense of the word.”⁵⁴ On this regard, 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.”⁵⁵ 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,”⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ However, the assimilation between the concept of dwelling and the empirical place of our home-world ignores the questioning character that dwelling entails for Heidegger. In *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* it can be read:

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?⁵⁸

In other words, the homelessness of dwelling in a world defined by technique is not only a matter of fact but entails for Heidegger a metaphysical character. Thus, the homesickness (*Heimweh*) in contemporary times ought not to be merely taken as an empirical nostalgia for an idealized past or place.⁵⁹ In this regard, 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.”⁶⁰ 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. According to this, it is possible to state that in his

⁵¹ Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 17.

⁵² Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 133.

⁵³ Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 133-134.

⁵⁴ Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p. 135.

⁵⁵ Jeff Malpas, “Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place”, *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology* 25 (1) (2014): 15-23 (p. 15-16).

⁵⁶ Malpas, “Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place,” p. 17.

⁵⁷ Malpas, “Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place,” p. 20.

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated from the German by Albert Hofstadter. (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), p. 57.

⁵⁹ Alfredo Rocha de la Torre, “Tierra natal: entre agonía y afirmación de la diferencia,” *Revista de Filosofía* 37 (1) (2012): pp. 37-55.

⁶⁰ Malpas, “Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place,” p. 20.

later works Heidegger tends to conceive dwelling in relation to home or homecoming.⁶¹ Malpas even suggests that the concept of dwelling requires a rethinking of some Heidegger's early concepts such as the notion of "authentic existence."⁶² If we follow this suggestion, we will find that there are also elements in *Sein und Zeit* that call into question the very idea that the concept of dwelling is intrinsically connected to home. In particular, the analysis of angst undertaken in the seminal work of 1927 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 the innerworldly beings. Or, expressed differently, angst reveals the Nothing 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. 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 *Angst* one has an 'uncanny' [*unheimlich*] feeling [...] But uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] means at the same time not-being-at-home."⁶³ Since the surrounding and familiar world is always exposed to falling prey 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 home-world. 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.⁶⁴

In summary, in the late Heidegger, *unheimisch* refers to the alienation in a world where human beings are paradoxically distanced from the surrounding world by the very technological means that seek to shorten time and distances. Human beings are thus not initially at home but rather in strangeness. Consequently, coming to-be-at-home entails a passage through strangeness. In *Sein und Zeit*, 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 *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:

⁶¹ For a systematic study of the relevance of the concept of "home" in Heidegger's late work, see: Robert Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

⁶² Malpas, "Rethink Dwelling. Heidegger and the Question of Place," p. 16.

⁶³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176.

“*Unheimlich* is the name for everything that ought to have remained hidden and secret and has become visible.”⁶⁵ 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).⁶⁶ 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 Freudian analysis binds the uncanny together with the repetition of a previous and repressed psychic phase, which ultimately involves the threat of the return of the primary indifference that defines the origin of life. According to the main thesis of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) this repetition seeks to reduce the tension that characterizes life to a minimum, which is equivalent to the regression of life to an inanimate state. In this context, 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. Therefore, the conviction that the pleasure principle is governed by the death drive constitutes an essential characteristic of the redefinition of the theory of drives that Freud undertook in the 1920s. 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.⁶⁷

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.⁶⁸ 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. 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.⁶⁹ Hence, the repetition that lies in the genesis of the

⁶⁵ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XVII (1917-1919)* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1955), p. 223.

⁶⁶ Freud, “The Uncanny,” p. 225.

⁶⁷ Cf. Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” in *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* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1955), pp. 109-140.

⁶⁸ The circularity of domestic time could also be traced in Heidegger’s appraisal of celestial cardinal points (*Himmelsgegenden*) that structure the everyday praxis. See: *Being and Time*, p. 96.

⁶⁹ Freud asserts in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*: “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.” See: Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XVIII (1920-1922)* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1955), pp. 7-64.

uncanny unsettles the familiarity of home by calling into question the more rooted convictions about reality.⁷⁰ First and foremost, the conviction that to-be-at-home is consistent with self-preservation. 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 and between psychic and objective reality –as Freud puts it: the *unheimlich* is a sub-species of *heimlich*–, but also shows up the need to leave home and embrace strangeness.

4.2 *Playing as transitional phenomenon*

The uncanny presents a distressed and involuntary mode of dwelling in the ambivalent space between home and strangeness. However, in the 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* (1971). In that work, the British Psychoanalyst 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.”⁷¹

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.⁷² 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.⁷³ 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.”⁷⁴

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.⁷⁵ 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.”⁷⁶ 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

⁷⁰ Freud, “The Uncanny,” p. 249.

⁷¹ Donald Woods Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London & New York: Routledge, 1971), p. 3

⁷² Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 15.

⁷³ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 18.

⁷⁵ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 55.

therefore serves as a defense against anxiety. Transitional phenomena, thus, extend the boundaries of the home by means of the symbolic presence of the Other.⁷⁷

In general terms, transitional space is always intersubjective 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 this sense, culture is not just a passively inherited tradition but a “potential space” to which everyone should be able to contribute actively.⁷⁸ Winnicott 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.*”⁷⁹ 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. 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 between the poles of dwelling space could involve a pathological loss of contact with reality. But 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.⁸⁰ According to Winnicott, all these phenomena, which involve creativity in one way or another, should be located in the paradoxical space between home and strangeness. This is because they cannot be completely defined by the familiar world, since creativity implies overcoming the firmly established meanings of the family world –which defines the normality of the home-world–, but neither they can be completely strange if they aim to be a contribution to common culture.

5. FINAL REMARKS

By revisiting the classical contributions of phenomenology on the topic of lived spatiality, we have seen that the space we dwell is a dimension of the lifeworld and as such is temporalized by a communitarian sedimentation process which makes it intrinsically intersubjective and a common ground of pre-given meanings. Unlike the objective spatiality of modern science, dwelling space possesses an intrinsic orientation –associated either with the lived body (Husserl) or with occupation (Heidegger)– and, for this reason, cannot be conceived as homogeneous. In this sense, phenomenological analysis recognizes the contrast between home and strangeness as the main distinction that articulates the space where we dwell. The contribution of psychoanalytic theory allowed us, in this context, to characterize a third ontological dimension of lived space that had not been exhaustively explored by the phenomenological tradition; namely, the ambiguous space that extends between home and strangeness. So that through the comparative study of the contributions of phenomenology and psychoanalysis to the analysis of dwelling space, I tried to characterize the essential dimensions of home, strangeness and the interstitial space between them in a positive way. In this regard, 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 modes of dwelling other than being-at-home. Thus, considering strangeness as positive dimension of dwelling space makes it possible to conceptualize experiences –such as those involved in creativity and playing– that cannot be encompassed in their complexity if the analysis is

⁷⁷ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 63.

⁷⁸ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 69.

⁷⁹ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 133.

⁸⁰ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 19.

limited to the mere opposition between home and strangeness. In this sense, the transitional space seems to be the place where criticism of the normality of the familiar world coexists with the exercise of creativity as a way of going beyond the given, through a controlled and productive estrangement. In addition, as I tried to show in my discussion of the analyses of the *Unheimlich* carried out by Heidegger and Freud, in some cases we need to leave home, either because it presents as an obstacle to achieving an authentic existence, or just because home reveals the deadly side of the self-preservation instincts.

However, recognizing the relevance of strangeness in the experience of dwelling does not imply, by any means, dismissing the relevance of home in our relation to 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 traditions and to the material conditions of the home-world (a certain climate, a particular landscape, etc.). In this sense, Husserl asserts that what is completely strange is however known, at least, as a modification of the home-world.⁸¹ 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. Nevertheless, an ontological approach to the topic of dwelling space must avoid the absolutization of our own place in order to grasp the essential features of the phenomenon in question. This paradoxical place where philosophical reflection in general and phenomenology in particular is located has been addressed by Hans Rainer Sepp's oikological philosophy. In Sepp's terms, phenomenology "has a place" (*orthafit*), 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.⁸² As long as it is anchored, phenomenology expresses a home-world and a tradition, but its aims do not consist in establishing itself as an empirical point of view, settled down in a place, but in exceeding its own place in order to disclose the essential structure of place in itself, and thereby the difference between home and strangeness. 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."⁸³ Such a paradoxical "place" is where the philosopher should stay in a "stable imbalance" between place and placelessness, between home and strangeness.⁸⁴ 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.

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

Abstract

This research could be framed within the field of the phenomenology of dwelling. In particular, this paper deals with three essential concepts that define the ontology of dwelling space: "home," "strangeness" and an ambivalent space "in-between." 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

⁸¹ Hua XV, p. 430

⁸² Hans Rainer Sepp, *Über die Grenze. Prolegomena zu einer Philosophie des Transkulturellen* (Nordhausen: Traugott, 2014), p. 67.

⁸³ Hans Rainer Sepp, *Grundrisse einer oikologischen Philosophie. Arbeitsfassung* (Retrieved from: <https://www.sif-praha.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/HRS-oikologische-Philosophie.pdf>), p. 60.

⁸⁴ Sepp, *Grundrisse einer oikologischen Philosophie. Arbeitsfassung*, p. 69.

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 *Sein und Zeit*. 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*), Winnicott’s concept of “transitional space” and H.R. Sepp’s oikological philosophy.