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On the essence of home. An attempt to analyze selected philosophical findings

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Abstrakt

O istocie domu. Próba analizy wybranych ustaleń filozoficznych

Artykuł podejmuje rozważania z obszaru antropologii filozoficznej i jest próbą odpowiedzi na pytanie, czym jest dom człowieka (w sensie ang. „home”, nie „house”). Choć pytanie to ma wielką doniosłość, rzadko było sytuowane w centrum filozoficznych rozważań. W celu odpowiedzi na to pytanie przywołane zostają analizy dokonane przez takich autorów, jak U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, E. Lévinas, J. Tischner, M. Buber. Dom okazuje się trwałą formą współżycia ludzi i wspólnotą duchową, w której tworzeniu zasadnicza rola przynależy do kobiety. Miejsce, jakim jest dom, stanowi dla jego mieszkańców oswojoną przestrzeń oraz przyjazną niszę, z której czerpią oni siły żywotne i poczucie tożsamości. Artykuł analizuje także kategorie zadowolenia i bezdomności, które stanowią „modi” ludzkiej egzystencji w jej uwikłaniu w czas i dzieje. Staram się pokazać, że nie wszystkie epoki historii z ich myślowymi założeniami sprzyjały ludzkiemu zadowoleniu w świecie. Te jednak epoki, w których ludzie nie czuli się zadowoleni, wydawały głęboką refleksję ujmującą specyfikę bytu ludzkiego oraz subtelne koncepcje antropologiczne i egologiczne. Również współcześnie istnieje pewna liczba ludzi wybierających kondycję bezdomności oraz takich, którzy eksperymentują z alternatywnymi względem społecznie dominujących rodzajami zamieszkiwania.

Słowa kluczowe: dom, rzeczy, zamieszkanie, wyobcowanie

Abstract

On the essence of home. An attempt to analyze selected philosophical findings

The article takes up considerations in the field of philosophical anthropology and is an attempt to answer the question what the human home is (not in the sense of house). While this question is of great importance, it has seldom been placed at the centre of philosophical deliberations. In order to answer this question, the analyses made by such authors as U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, E. Lévinas, J. Tischner and M. Buber are referred to. The home turns out to be a permanent form of human coexistence and a spiritual community, in whose creation the fundamental role belongs to the woman. The place that is home is for its inhabitants a tamed space and a friendly niche from which they derive their vital forces and a sense of identity. The article also analyses the categories of habitation and homelessness, which are the modes of human existence in its entanglement in time and history. In the article, I am attempting to show that not all epochs of history with their mental assumptions were conducive to human habitation in the world. However, the epochs in which people did not feel at home in the world seemed to produce deep reflection on the specificity of human existence as well as subtle anthropological and egological concepts. Also today, there are a number of people who choose the condition of homelessness as well as those who experiment with alternatives to the socially dominant types of habitation.

Keywords: home, things, habitation, alienation

When we conceive ourselves as beings who left the underground, maternal or Platonic cave in ancient times, we can — depending on the spirit of the times and mood — understand ourselves as creatures that are liberated or rejected, enlightened or blinded, open to the world or threatened on all sides.¹

The opening quotation from the work of Manfred Sommer shows the ambivalence of the human attitude towards nature and the “natural state.” This ambivalence is well known from the interpretation made by Sigmund Freud in his influential dissertation *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930). In an innovative way, Freud presented there the multitude and variety of ills brought about by the development of civilisation, but at the same time he showed the naivety of longing for the natural state as a salvation from these misfortunes. In Freud’s interpretation, neither civilisation with cities is a completely safe home for man, nor is nature one, because it does not free us not only from disease, ageing and death, but even from what civilised life protects us from with great effectiveness: namely, from the threat of direct physical attack.² Moreover, as research and observations of people in cultures show, human nature is closely tied to aggression and cruelty; in this context, the myth of a noble savage must be regarded as obviously false.³

Phenomenology of the home

It is not easy to answer the question what a home — home, not a house — is.⁴ Most of us, however, will find this question significant. It is therefore surprising

1 M. Sommer, *Zbieranie. Próba filozoficznego ujęcia*, transl. J. Merecki, Warszawa 2003, p. 364.

2 Cf. P. Burkett, *Marx and nature. A red and green perspective*, Chicago–Illinois 2014.

3 See: T. Ellingson, *The myth of the noble savage*, Berkeley 2001. Aggression and numerous aversive emotions permeate the life of animals to a great extent. Therefore, the post-humanist idea of returning to nature as a desired state for humanity is naive and leads civilisation to regress. See e.g. the views of R. Braidotti, *Po człowieku*, transl. J. Bednarek, A. Kowalczyk, Warszawa 2014.

4 “Unlike the word *house*, the word *home* expresses a much broader connotation than *physical dwelling*. It evokes emotion and often refers to a place where one grew up, matured, or lived — a place that brings back fond positive memories or feelings” (D.A. Thadani, *The language of towns and cities*, New York 2010, p. 331). Therefore, it is not surprising that a home understood in this way

how rarely philosophers have addressed it: among the few who did are Johann Gottfried Herder, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Lévinas, Józef Tischner, Bogusław Wolniewicz, Emanuele Coccia.⁵

Generally speaking, home is an institution. It is a custom-supported, stable form of human coexistence. However, a home is first and foremost its own space, in which outsiders can appear as guests, and whose owner acts as the host who welcomes them. In this sense, the home is a condition of hospitality.⁶

In an article from the area of practical philosophy devoted to phenomenology of the home, Bogusław Wolniewicz, Ulrich Schrade and Jan Zubelewicz define home as follows: “home is a place of permanent residence (a burrow, quarters, a lair) into which the soul has been infused.”⁷ According to this definition, the home is a spiritual creation, a superstructure built over its material foundation. It is a spiritual aura that permeates the material household or dwelling.

The dwelling is a spatial creation that constitutes for the residents a separate territory and a shelter: “our own,” that is, separated from others and unavailable

evokes a feeling of longing for it, nostalgia and homesickness. In turn, the Latin word *domus* means both a home as a house and a homeland.

- 5 In view of the so far modest achievements of philosophy in this regard, it is worth referring to fiction literature, which has home and habitation among its most important topics. See e.g. M. Paryż, *Literatura zakorzenienia, literatura ucieczki. Szkice o prozie amerykańskiej po 2000 roku*, Warszawa 2018.
- 6 In philosophy, the issue of hospitality was raised, among others, by Cezary Wodziński. See C. Wodziński, *Odys gość. Esej o gościnności*, Gdańsk 2013, passim. This author emphasised the Polish word for hospitality, *gościnność*, as a compound *gość-inność* — guest-otherness. Among newer publications, see D. Kot, *Tratwa Odysa. Esej o uchodźcach*, Gdańsk 2020, passim.
- 7 U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, in: B. Wolniewicz, *Filozofia i wartości*, t. 2, Warszawa 1998, p. 164. Note that a material house does not have to be built, but can use existing natural structures for living purposes, such as a cave shelter. In such conditions, creating a home immediately consists in saturating the place of refuge with the human element. See: T. Ingold, *Budować, mieszkać, żyć. Jak zwierzęta i ludzie zadamawiają się w świecie. O budowaniu domu*, in: T. Ingold, *Splatać otwarty świat. Architektura, antropologia, design*, ed. E. Klekot, Kraków 2018, pp. 35–69 and 97–121. Ingold admits he was inspired by the views of Martin Heidegger. See also: E. Coccia, *Filosofia della casa. Lo spazio domestico e la felicità*, Torino 2021, passim.

to them as strangers. In this separated area of space, we are “at home”: we are sovereign there, that is, subject only to the rules and norms we have established.⁸

Whether a given dwelling is a home is determined by the spiritual aura infused into it. Therefore: “a dwelling may be rich and exquisite, like a villa or a palace, but not be a home; and it can be poor and primitive, like a hut or a shack, and be one.”⁹

It is not easy to say what the conditions are for recognising whether a given dwelling is a home: is this recognition infallible or prone to errors? Can therefore a dwelling be an incomplete, initial home? Do we only recognise our own home? And finally: what happens to a home with the death of the household members, and also with death occurring often in that very home? It is not difficult to see that these are questions that concern almost every person very deeply, questions that intensify in certain periods of life. A home is a spiritual and therefore a high value, not exchangeable for lower values. At the same time, the difficulties encountered when trying to answer the above questions are related to the logic of the argumentation of Polish authors, which, according to Peter Pels’ concept, should be described as animistic. It assumes that things are — in their own way — alive, because they are animated by something separate or alien, some “soul” or “spirit” that lives within them. Whatever the source of this animating principle is believed to be, it is understood as an addition to the material object, which in this case is the home.¹⁰ And what the ontological status is of the spiritual breath that Polish philosophers write about and how it permeates material objects, we must find out for ourselves. The concept of expression is definitely helpful here: home is an expression of the personality of the household members; from the arrangement of objects, decorations, selected colours etc. — and all this seems to arise spontaneously from people — we are able to deduce a lot about their inner selves. What is

8 U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 164.

9 U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 164. See the description of the essence of the family home in the essay by H. Havrilesky, *My mother’s house*, in: H. Havrilesky, *What if this were enough? Essays*, New York 2018, pp. 201–204.

10 See: P. Pels, *The spirit of matter. On fetish, rarity, fact, and fancy*, in: *Borderfetishisms. Material objects in unstable spaces*, ed. P. Spyer, London 1998, p. 94.

characteristic for home is the atmosphere of hospitality, warmth and security. Only those who possess such features can create a home.

The triad of the concepts of family-dwelling-home homologously corresponds to the triad of nation-state-homeland. Insofar as the state is the dwelling of the nation, the homeland is its home. Individual members of the first triad have their counterparts in the members of the second triad belonging to the same ontological category. This correspondence runs deep, for example: "Like the homeland, the home is also something mysterious, heaved out of non-existence by the effort of a better part of human nature. And like the homeland, it is a symbol one feels attachment to and reverence for."¹¹

The home is therefore a form of life and a spiritual community. We do not even realise its presence in life — like air — as long as it lasts. It combines spiritual values (it is a support in life) with utilitarian ones (it ensures security). Like the homeland, the home evokes a feeling of nostalgia (Greek *nostos algos*, German *Heimweh*, English *homesickness*) and a tendency to idealise it. In reality, it is a place of quarrels, inevitable in the face of this feature of human nature which Immanuel Kant called unsocial sociability (*ungesellige Gesselligkeit*) and which consists in the fact that people cannot put up with each other and, at the same time, cannot do without each other.¹² Moreover, internal conflicts are manifestations of the struggle for integration of the home. It is also worth noting that a house does not have to be tidy to be a home.

As a community of goals, home consists in its members being in solidarity outside. Inside, home is usually filled with quarrels that are an outlet for emotional tensions. The important thing is that building a home is an ongoing, never-ending process.

Home is a place — one of the few on earth, perhaps even the only one — where man is truly valued by others as an intrinsic and non-exchangeable value; for which, then, one is ready to sacrifice everything. When it ceases to be so, the home falls apart spiritually. [...] A community of a home where people treat

¹¹ U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 165.

¹² Regarding Kant's views on sociability and human coexistence, see: I. Kant, *Antropologia w ujęciu pragmatycznym*, transl. E. Drzazgowska, P. Sosnowska, introduction A. Bobko, Warszawa 2005, p. 231ff.

each other in a purely utilitarian way may have the appearance of a home for outsiders, but it is not one.¹³

The prototype of the above-described appreciation of man for himself is the attitude of a mother to her children.

This last remark leads us to the next thesis of Schrader, Wolniewicz and Zubelewicz. Phenomenological research reveals who makes a home and who can make it. This person is a woman, not a man: *men make houses, women make homes*. This fact may be astonishing, and yet it is irrefutable: “If for some reasons — whether internal, such as character traits, or external, such as dislike of a given man — a woman does not strive to create a home, it will not be created.”¹⁴

Making a home is a woman’s domain. It is she who creates a certain external harmony around herself, which is a balance of material and spiritual values — and this balance is the essence of home. It would be wrong to recognise — as it is present for example in the thought of Henryk Elzenberg — that creativity of this kind is situated outside of culture, only in the order of nature.

Culture is made up of many arts, and one of the most important — if not the most important — is the art of making a home. To make a real home is an art no less — though different — than to build a cathedral or compose a symphony. The value of this work by a woman is completely non-utilitarian — even in the simplest sense that it cannot be sold or bought. Home has no market value.¹⁵

The means by which a woman creates a home by integrating family members are many and varied. These include eating meals together, shopping together, celebrating holidays together, and talking about everything that concerns the family. By discussing plans for the future, the woman reveals her forethought. These seemingly down-to-earth discussions are, in fact, a strong bond for the home; they create its spiritual atmosphere and sustain it

¹³ U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 169.

¹⁴ U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 171. See also: J. Rose, *Mothers. An essay on love and cruelty*, New York 2018.

¹⁵ U. Schrader, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 175.

in existence. This already shows how great the educational role of the home is; school education is only an addition to it. If the home fails to socialise the child, no one can remedy this deficiency.

Schrade, Wolniewicz and Zubelewicz claim that a woman creates a home “for a man,” but also “with man”: “A man is a material here that is transformed by a woman into a structural element of the house.”¹⁶ A woman’s talent consists, among other things, in choosing the right man-material. “By creating a home, a woman domesticates a man who is by his nature not very inclined to domestication.”¹⁷ However, what is new on a social scale is the constantly growing number of matriarchal houses in which single mothers raise their children. It turns out that the answer to the question why an economically self-sufficient woman would need a permanent relationship with a man is not clear. The answer of Schrade, Wolniewicz and Zubelewicz indicates complementarity, which is the goal here. A woman can create a home without a man, but it will be incomplete. There are social and moral considerations here, since the presence of a man legitimises the woman’s children. What is more important and what already belongs to the group of anthropological invariants is that a woman needs a man to defend and protect her home. In times of peace, this role of man is overlooked, but it is well known how quickly civilised circumstances turn into uncivilised and how great the protective role of men is then.

To all this we must add the important role of the man in raising children and the fact that his presence protects the children from orphanhood should something bad happen to the mother. In the spiritual layer, the need for and the idea of complementarity of both sexes come to the fore, which the authors find in Elzenberg and, of course, in Plato. “A complete home is the best approximation of such a creature that is possible. It is spiritually full and self-sufficient — that is its perfect value.”¹⁸ Moreover, the home is one of the institutions of life, and institutions, as Arnold Gehlen showed in his studies, support our decisions and create for them a kind of framework and armour

16 U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 178.

17 U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 178.

18 U. Schrade, B. Wolniewicz, J. Zubelewicz, *Dom jako wartość duchowa*, p. 182.

protecting people from the instability of feelings. Women are more aware than men of this need to institutionalise relationships, which makes home feminocentric in all cultures.

Emmanuel Lévinas

Lévinas, an author extremely important to our topic, also referred to the issue of the feminocentric nature of the home. The very fact that he was a philosopher of dialogue allows one to expect that the issue of home, its creation and sustenance will be important for this thinker. Indeed, in *Totalité et infini* (1961), Lévinas extensively considers the issue of home. He presents it in a strongly metaphorised language that often contradicts the language of the philosophical tradition. The novelty of Lévinas's conception lies in highlighting two aspects of home and habitation: home as a condition of knowing and home as a place to enjoy life.

For Lévinas, the home is an economic institution in the sense in which it was understood by the Greeks (Greek: *oikos* — house, *nomos* — law). “The home that founds possession is not a possession in the same sense as the movable goods it can collect and keep. It is possessed because it already and henceforth is hospitable for its proprietor.”¹⁹ Lévinas recognises as the proper source of this hospitality the essential interiority of the home resulting from the fact that the home is inhabited by a being who is welcoming and hospitality in itself — a woman.²⁰ “The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation.”²¹

The philosopher writes:

The primordial function of the home does not consist in orienting being by the architecture of the building and in discovering a site, but in breaking the plenum of the element, in opening in it the utopia in which the ‘I’ recollects itself in

19 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*, transl. A. Lingis, the Hague 1979, p. 157.

20 The Other “welcomes me in the Home, the discreet presence of the Feminine” (E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 170).

21 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 155.

dwelling at home with itself. But separation does not isolate me, as though I were simply extracted from these elements. It makes labour and property possible.²²

We notice the familiarity and intimacy of the home as a kind of sweetness that envelops domestic things.

When we consider the home's relationship to the world, the home reveals its fundamentally economic character. The home recollects — this recollection is a work of separation — and existence in a dwelling is economic existence. The world must be conquered, acquired, internalised. This is done through labour: it is labour that draws things from the element and thus discovers the world. In other words, nature is transformed into the world in the course of labour. Only property establishes things as things. It is born when the human hand captures and tears something out of the environment. "Things refer to possession, can be carried off, are furnishings; the medium from which they come to me lies escheat, a common fund or terrain, essentially non-possessable, 'nobody's': earth, sea, light, city."²³ Any relation of possession, says Lévinas, is situated within something that cannot be possessed but that embraces us — the element. It is from it that the human hand draws things out, and thus makes them possible at all.

Proceeding from the dwelling, possession, accomplished by the quasi-miraculous grasp of a thing in the night, in the *apeiron* of prime matter, discovers a world. The grasp of a thing illuminates the very night of the *apeiron*; it is not the world that makes things possible.²⁴

Man is surrounded by the vastness of the formless element. The element is the environment; we bask or immerse ourselves in it; we are always interior in relation to it. Building a home by a man is an inaugurative act. With it, the opposition to the element takes place, as well as the overcoming of the element, that interiority without exit. Home is the first concretisation: home is

²² E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 156.

²³ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 131.

²⁴ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 163.

the I that takes up its position before a Nature.²⁵ The dwelling provides people with extraterritoriality in relation to the element and its rights. More specifically: “[Man] gets a foothold in the elemental by a side already appropriated: a field cultivated by me, the sea in which I fish and moor my boats, the forest in which I cut wood; and all these acts, all this labour, refer to the domicile.”²⁶ From the establishment of the home, to exist is to dwell, to inhabit. What is it to dwell? “...it is a recollection, a coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge, which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome.”²⁷

Home is the first human property, a place carved out of the infinity of the element, or rather, given that thought does not recognise the element as an object at all, or that it exists beyond the distinction between the finite and the infinite — in its vastness. Since the home is internal in relation to everything it has, it can be said that the dwelling — the condition of all property — is what makes interior life possible.²⁸

Lévinas especially emphasises the life-founding role of the home:

The privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement. The recollection necessary for nature to be able to be represented and worked over, for it to first take form as a world, is accomplished as the home.²⁹

The home is the basis of my self-determination because I stand in the world as someone who comes into this world from some abode. In this abode, I am “at home,” I can take refuge. In other words, we go out into the world from the interiority of home. Although the home as a building belongs to the world of

25 See E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 169.

26 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 131.

27 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 156.

28 Let us note that just as the home is a place carved out of the infinity of the element, also within the home itself a person carves out new spaces-places in which they develop or nurture their inner life. The drawing-room — the later living room — was created as a place of this kind, a room to which a person can withdraw without offending other inhabitants of the house. See: M. Praz, *La filosofia dell'arredamento. I mutamenti del gusto nella decorazione interna attraverso i secoli*, Milano 2018.

29 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 152.

objects, the dwelling does not lie in the objective world. Rather, it is the world of objects that is defined in relation to the dwelling. Inhabitation is not a relationship between the human body and the building, but an intimate bond with the place. The home is possessed in a different sense than the things-furniture placed within it and protected: it “is possessed because it already and henceforth is hospitable for its proprietor.”³⁰

Hence, there is a close relationship between home and knowledge. Thought—metaphysical thought—is hospitality and not thematization.³¹ The dwelling is a condition of knowledge. Human consciousness “pours” into things, does not consist in presenting things, but in the intentionality of concretisation: “the consciousness of a world is already consciousness *through* that world. Something of that world seen is an organ or an essential means of vision: the head, the eye, the eyeglasses, the light, the lamps, the books, the school.”³² The features of consciousness are its incarnation and inhabitation. Existence dwells in the intimacy of the home; it is not an idealistic subject that constitutes its object *a priori*. “the dwelling cannot be forgotten among the conditions for representation, even if representation is a privileged conditioned, absorbing its condition.”³³ However, such absorption takes place *post factum*. “Hence the subject contemplating a world presupposes the event of dwelling, the withdrawal from the elements (that is, from immediate enjoyment, already uneasy about the morrow), recollection in the intimacy of the home.”³⁴

The home, however, has not only the character of an economic institution and is not only the birthplace of the world that makes it possible to learn. It is also — this is the second novelty of Lévinas’ concept — the area of sensuality, savouring life, enjoyment. The things in it are not only tools with the inherent handiness that Heidegger emphasised. We live from these things as we live from meals eaten together or an opera performance. They are not basic necessities, but objects of autotelic delight. To a certain extent, such delight

³⁰ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 157.

³¹ See E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 299.

³² E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 153.

³³ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 153.

³⁴ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 153.

also applies to the tools the home is equipped with. Their existence is also not exhausted in the utilitarian scheme: "They are always in a certain measure and even the hammers, needles, and machines are objects of enjoyment, presenting themselves to 'taste,' already adorned, embellished."³⁵

Bringing out this aspect of interacting with tools which is enjoyment is a very original motif of Lévinas' thought, polemical in relation to Heidegger. Let us take a closer look at it. Enjoyment is "way the act nourishes itself with its own activity."³⁶ Any object, even a tool-item, can be used for enjoyment, even when I grab it as a *Zeug*. Tools also provide an opportunity for enjoyment, including the enjoyment of their use. Basically, things allow us to savour life: "As material or gear the objects of everyday use are subordinated to enjoyment — the lighter to the cigarette one smokes, the fork to the food, the cup to the lips."³⁷

Thus, unlike Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Lévinas emphasises that "furnishings, the home, food, clothing are not *Zeuge* in the proper sense of the term: clothing serves to protect the body or to adorn it, the home to shelter it, food to restore it, but we enjoy them or suffer from them."³⁸ Only in enjoyment can things return to their elemental qualities.

Enjoying is a fundamental human characteristic. Saying, for example, that someone lives by working belittles the fact that we live from work. We live from it as we live from entertainment, meals, spending time with other people. There is no naked will to be, Heidegger's ontological *Sorge*, from which we would move on to particular activities. Acts of life are not simple acts at all and are not acts aimed directly at their goals. "Life's relation with the very conditions of its life becomes the nourishment and content of that life. Life is love of life, a relation with contents that are not my being but more dear than

35 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 110.

36 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 111.

37 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 133.

38 E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 133. Apropos Heidegger's concept, Lévinas notes that "In *Being and Time* the home does not appear apart from the system of implements" (E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 170).

my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun.”³⁹

Enjoyment is living from something (*vivre de...*), it is the way in which life relates to its contents. “What I do and what I am is at the same time that *from which* I live. We relate ourselves to it with a relation that is neither theoretical nor practical. Behind theory and practice there is enjoyment of theory and of practice: the egoism of life. The final relation is enjoyment, *happiness*.”⁴⁰ Enjoyment, let us add, is characterised by a specific “realism”. The intentionality of enjoyment, says Lévinas, is the opposite of Husserl’s intentionality of representation. The intentionality of enjoyment clings to externality — that externality that is suspended by the transcendental method proper to representation.

Summing up, it should be said that for Lévinas all life is enjoyment and a desire that the enjoyment may continue: “God always calls us to Himself too soon; we want the here below.”⁴¹ And yet the Other to which death leads us and which we fear because it is radically unknown should not inspire fear. The Other has the characteristics of a home: “The alterity of a world refused is not the alterity of the Stranger but that of the fatherland which welcomes and protects. Metaphysics does not coincide with negativity.”⁴² Thinking about home brings the thinker to eschatology.

Tischner’s phenomenology of the home

Tischner’s reflection on home, expressed in a strongly metaphorised language, draws a lot from the works of Heidegger and Lévinas. Tischner starts from defining the basic human relation to the world. The world, the earth is a scene of human drama, that is, experiencing time. “Man comes into the world, looks

³⁹ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 113. Moreover: “The life that is life from something is happiness. [...] to live is to enjoy life. To despair of life makes sense only because originally life is happiness. [...] Happiness is made up not of an absence of needs, whose tyranny and imposed character one denounces, but of the satisfaction of all needs” (E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 115).

⁴¹ E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 41.

⁴² E. Lévinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 41.

for a home in the world, erects temples to God here, builds roads, has a workshop; here he finds cemeteries of his ancestors, among whom he himself will rest one day.”⁴³ The earth is given to man to be understood and tamed, therefore — to be cultivated. Cultivation must recognise the nature of the earth, every thing and element, the nature of man and woman. “Things — house, dish, fire, food — should be handled according to nature. Anyone who ignores nature can cause a rebellion on the scene.”⁴⁴ Tischner considers the birth of a place to be the main fruit of cultivation. There are four main places, namely home, workshop, temple and cemetery. They determine the order of the human world. It is enough to think about home: whoever does not have one lives in a deplorable way. Homelessness means living without protection and lacking a strong source of life motivation and joy.

Home is the closest human space. “All human paths through the world are measured by the distance from home.”⁴⁵ It is a man’s nest; after all, when asked where we come from, we point to our home. At home, we recognise the basic order of the world and the mystery-nature of each thing: a window, door, lamp, table, spoon... Children are born at home; a deceased person is taken from home to the cemetery.⁴⁶ Whoever has a home has a pleasant area of primal familiarity around them. In other words, the home is the most primal tamed space. As such, the home is both a refuge from the elements and from human hostility.

To build a home is to settle in. Like other philosophers of dialogue, Tischner emphasises that habitation does not take place in solitude: “The lonely

43 J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu. Wprowadzenie*, Kraków 1998, p. 220.

44 J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 221. It is very problematic to define the non-human world as a scene on which what is really important takes place, i.e. the drama of human life in time. It means recognising a strong hierarchy without explaining its basis sufficiently: “Human life is more valuable than the life of grass, the life of a tree, the life of animals. For man is in the world, and the world-scene is below man” (J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu. Wprowadzenie*, p. 221).

45 J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 228.

46 Major changes took place in these matters, namely the clinicisation of birth and death, which was already diagnosed by Rainer Maria Rilke in his novel *Malte* (1910). On the consequences of the clinicisation of these life events, see: G. Böhme, *Antropologia filozoficzna. Ujęcie pragmatyczne*, transl. P. Domański, ed. S. Czerniak, Warszawa 1998, pp. 34–47.

raise cells, others build hiding places.”⁴⁷ The home assumes, as nature, gender; a man and a woman, and then a child who completes the meaning of home. “Man becomes attached to his home. Attachment to the home is so deep and so all-encompassing that it surpasses human consciousness. When a man loses his home, when he drifts away from home, he feels the strength of habitation in the pain of loss. The fate of home is part of his fate.”⁴⁸

Tischner believes it is appropriate to consider the home and the possibility of human habitation in the world in the context of the question: is the earth a promised land for man, or a denied land? The home provides us with the knowledge of who we are, protects us and gives us the strength to live. At the same time, the home is a place of drama and even tragedy. It is fragile: from the side of the stage, it is threatened with material destruction due to fire, flood or confiscation, and from the side of the other person, it is threatened with the sometimes unexpected refusal of reciprocity in creating a home. However, the home is essentially threatened with the passage of time itself, as it results in the children leaving to build their own homes and the death of inhabitants. The logic of life condemns every home to abandonment.⁴⁹

The phenomenology of the home and reflection on it must therefore lead us to the question: is the human home a reliable home or only a promise of a home? Is man able to build a permanent home and settle down on earth? It is a fundamental question and it is inevitable in the face of experiencing the drama of life. Tischner writes:

By losing a home, a person enters a borderline situation in which a new sense of the home that is becoming empty is crystallised: a presumption arises that the home was only a promise of the home. Something started in this home, something echoed, some light flashed, but that was still not what it is really about.

47 J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 228.

48 J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 229.

49 See a volume of reportage: D. Brauntsch, *Domy bezdomne*, Warszawa 2019. The problem of orphaned things and homes is analysed by Remo Bodei. See R. Bodei, *O życiu rzeczy*, transl. A. Bielak, corr. M. Salwa, K. Skórska, Łódź 2016, pp. 37–43.

Habitation seems to be measured by a greater measure than the dimensions of a real house.⁵⁰

One should agree with Tischner that a deserted or destroyed house opens the horizon of transcendence and awakens in the human soul the idea of another, truly indestructible home, the home of truth. It is an idea known from many religions, emphasised in Christianity by the trope of life in the body as pilgrimage and a journey (*homo viator*) and people as pilgrims and strangers, guests (*peregrini et hospites*) on earth (2 Cor 5: 6–9), but at the same time the idea to which the most direct human experience leads us.

Habitation and homelessness

The need for habitation, that is, the need to have a home as a tamed space in the world that is a place to return to, is a condition of a human being. Its fulfilment, however, is not universally possible; it is disturbed both by historical circumstances and the properties of the very places where people live and dwell.⁵¹ In the philosophical reflection on the history of human self-un-

⁵⁰ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 230.

⁵¹ The works of the French anthropologist Marc Augé prove that modernity means the multiplication of non-places (*non-lieux*), i.e. places and spaces “without properties,” de-idiomatized, standardised by designers and planners. These are chain hotels, supermarkets, underground parking lots, railway stations and airports with their passages and waiting rooms, ATMs in walls and others. Non-places cannot be saturated with the human element and remembered, nor can they be tamed. They have no references to history whatsoever. Living there — and this also includes apartments in many modern facilities — is living “in the nowhere,” which deprives people of their identity. See: M. Augé, *Nie-miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, transl. R. Chymkowski, introduction W. J. Burszta, Warszawa 2010. Let us add that the purpose of these places is to disappear after use, in which they resemble mass-produced, standardised non-things. On the future of ways of habitation, see: A. Twardoch, *System do mieszkania. Perspektywy budownictwa mieszkaniowego*, Warszawa 2019. Contemporary alternative ways of living and mini-house designs are shown in the Swedish documentary *Microtopia* (2013), dir. by J. Wachtmeister. The history of living was marked not only by changes in the structure of mass-designed houses, but also by individual innovative projects, changing our thinking about privacy, the space necessary for the members of the household, or the division of space into individual maps of life. These were variations on the topic of the house. To name a few: the E-1027 house, designed by Eileen Gray, built from 1924 in the south

derstanding, the category of habitation acquires the status of an ontological characteristic of man. Such an interpretation was presented by Martin Buber in the work *What is man?* (1942), where homelessness is the opposite of habitation. Habitation and homelessness are the modes of human existence in its entanglement in time and history, and their dialectics is a permanent feature of this existence. The epochs of habitation and homelessness, the author says, occur alternately in the history of mankind, although not regularly. Their appearance and duration vary, are unpredictable. Both types of epochs generate different types of reflection on man and his position in the world. The epochs of homelessness result in anthropological and egological reflection, which has a subjective, specifically introverted character. The introversion of the epochs of non-habitation means that anthropological questions — who is man? what is human destiny? — are asked in the first person and most deeply experienced. The inquiring person starts from himself and chooses as the research method an analysis of introspective data (*in te ipsum redi*) and everyday life experience. The anthropological idea comes to the fore in these epochs, far ahead of the cosmological idea. In the periods of homelessness, the anthropological idea deepens and even becomes independent. Only then does man gain knowledge about himself, because “so long as you ‘have’ yourself, have yourself as an object, your experience of man is only as of a thing among things.”⁵² In turn, in the periods of habitation, anthropological reflection occurs only within the framework of the cosmological idea. However, in the cosmological approach to man, the totality that should be captured is not yet present.

of France, considered Gray's boldest design (see Z. Dzierżawska, Ch. Malterre-Barthes, *Eileen Gray. Dom pod słońcem*, Warszawa 2020); Fallingwater, a house situated directly above a waterfall in Pennsylvania, designed in 1935 by Frank L. Wright for Edgar J. Kaufmann; Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949) in Connecticut, conceived as the Parthenon standing on a hill, an entirely transparent house (see M. Cassidy-Geiger, *The Philip Johnson Glass House*, New York 2016); or the prototype houses of W. Sobek such as the self-sufficient house R128 (2000) in Stuttgart and the house H16 (2005), as well as a polyurethane-carbon fibre R129 house-project with walls thinner than the eggshell.

52 M. Buber, *Between man and man*, transl. R. G. Smith, New York 1965, pp. 124–125. See also Polish translation: M. Buber, *Problem człowieka*, transl. R. Reszke, Warszawa 1993.

Thus, not every epoch creates spiritual conditions for a comprehensive insight into who man is. Let us proceed to examples. The epoch of habitation in Buber's interpretation was the era of Aristotle. The world of Aristotle is — like the world of Plato — an optical world, that is, the world of visible shapes. The principle of creating this image is visual objectification: the image is created by optical sensory impressions, and the experiences of the other senses are somehow superimposed on it later. It is very important that “it is not before Aristotle that the visual image of the universe is realised in unsurpassable clarity as a universe of things, and now man is a thing among these things of the universe, an objectively comprehensible species beside other species.”⁵³ In this world, man is placed in the middle of the ladder of beings (*positus est in medio homo*), neither at its highest level, nor at the bottom. Man is not a problem for himself here; he has ceased to be one. It can be seen in the way he talks about himself and defines himself, for he does it in the third person. He becomes for himself only a case of what is common and typical for his species. Such a person becomes aware of himself not as “I” but as “he”. He exists in the world, but he does not understand the world within himself.

Seven hundred years after Aristotle, Augustine again raises the anthropological issue, but how differently. Augustine is an analyst of internality; he develops the egological question and establishes its terminology. The context of his reflections is the disintegration of the harmonious world of the Stagirite. He is amazed at man; his amazement, however, is different from that of Aristotle, for which man was just one among many objects, and which turned into methodical philosophising. Augustine is amazed at the human being — at what is in man that cannot be understood as part of the world — for him, it is a great mystery, *grande profundum*. His amazement has the characteristics of an atmosphere of horror, and while it is not itself part of philosophising, it motivated philosophy for centuries.

Periods of relatively independent reign of the anthropological idea deepening human self-knowledge, Buber notes, were also periods in which people experienced overbearing loneliness. “In the post-Augustinian west it is not the contemplation of nature [...] but faith which builds a new house in the

⁵³ M. Buber, *Between man and man*, p. 127.

cosmos for the solitary soul.”⁵⁴ The Christian cosmos provides a sense of habitation, the more so because it is a closed world, limited both spatially and temporarily. It is a world even more finite than that of Aristotle because it is permeated by biblical finite time. Thomas Aquinas does not recognise the specific problems of the human being, returning after Aristotle to presenting the anthropological idea from the perspective of cosmology. Here too, man speaks of himself in the third person. Everyone will feel at home in the world of Thomas, provided that they are Christians.

In early modern philosophy, a great attempt at creating a concept aimed at making man at home in the world was G. W. F. Hegel's system of secularised messianism. This attempt was unsuccessful because: “An intellectual image of the universe which builds on time can never give the same feeling as one which builds on space.”⁵⁵ It is of course a matter of cosmological time, not anthropological time, a concrete time of man, dependent on his will.

Summing up, Buber's interpretation of the history of humanity shows the ambivalence of human attempts to make the world their home. In the interpretation of Buber — and earlier of Bernard Groethuysen — the habitation of man in the world cannot be considered a desired and beneficial state for his spiritual condition. After all, human habitation results in inadequate self-recognition. The cosmologically onthologised self is treated as *res*, one of many things in the world, which is not the correct method of getting to know it. In contemporary philosophy, such a lack of recognition of the specificity of anthropological issues is characteristic of some naturalistic approaches to man. These have long been the subject of polemics by hermeneutic philosophy.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ M. Buber, *Between man and man*, p. 129.

⁵⁵ M. Buber, *Between man and man*, p. 140.

⁵⁶ Charles Taylor considers the dispute between hermeneutics and naturalists to be one of the axes of the history of philosophy, and naturalism (“hydra of naturalism”) as a constantly returning, self-regenerating position that reduces the specifics of the human being to one of natural beings, and narrows the methods of learning about man to methods of explanation proper to natural sciences. See: Ch. Taylor, *The explanation of behaviour*, New York 1964, pp. 219–227. See also: J. Habermas, *Miedzy naturalizmem a religia. Rozprawy filozoficzne*, transl. M. Pańków, Warszawa 2012.

Conclusions

There have been, and still are, architectural trends that programmatically reject the idea of a home in the traditional sense. The architectural engineering and interior design of modernism — or more precisely, some of its important proponents — conceptualised home as a living machine, losing spatial patterns and departing from the human scale in design (Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer). Such modernism renounced historicising elements that anchor people in a given space, “ornament,” that is, all stylisation (Adolf Loos, the precursor of modernism, expressed this idea in the words: “Ornament is a crime”). The priority values were functionality, comfort and access to space.⁵⁷ The modernist proposals also covered the issue of materials used in construction and interior design, the effects of which we can observe today: “There is no truth in the materials we use today, if only because we cannot think of them in terms of recovery. What will we recover from houses that were built using new technologies? Aerated concrete, plasterboard?”⁵⁸ Just as it would be a mistake to consider a book a kind of a reading machine⁵⁹, it was a mistake to consider a home a living machine, as Breuer did. The home is an intimate place where things become tamed and create a friendly niche for people. It is good when such a niche can serve people from subsequent generations. The need to tame the world is very strong in man and it is connected with the concern for one’s own ontological safety.

However, the diversity of people should be recognised. Some of us consciously choose to be homeless. A certain proportion of people — whose motives are varied, ranging from pro-environmental reasons to reluctance to live in society and anarchist tendencies — choose a nomadic life, essentially similar to

57 See: V. Flusser, *Shape of things: A philosophy of design*, New York 1999.

58 D. Braunsch, *Domy bezdomne*, p. 53. “What initially seemed pragmatic and harmless — Le Corbusier’s *Unite d’Habitation* block — turned out to be a complete radicalisation of the spatial pattern, a caricature of the house” (D. Braunsch, *Domy bezdomne*, p. 56).

59 The book was named the perfect reading machine by Paul Valéry in *Les deux vertus d’un livre* (1926). However, he only referred in this way to its functional aspect, as he considered that the book’s second “virtue” was its being an artistic object-creation. See: R. Reuss, *Perfekcyjna maszyna do czytania. O ergonomii książki*, transl. P. Piszczałowski, Kraków 2017, s. 7ff.

the life of prehistoric nomads who were constantly on the move. They choose alternative lifestyles to those socially dominant. Such choices are made more often by young people, inclined to conduct cognitive experiments, which does not mean that they quickly return to the *status quo ante*. Contemporary nomadism by choice confirms that not everyone needs a relatively permanent home and the sense of security and identity it provides. Some people tolerate existential uncertainty well, and also value an extended, cosmopolitan, hybrid identity. Society for its convenience calls such individuals eccentrics and often disregards them, but in fact owes a great deal to them.⁶⁰

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