

**The Familiar and Unfamiliar: An Examination of Home and Anxiety**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

### THE FAMILIAR AND UNFAMILIAR: AN EXAMINATION OF HOME AND ANXIETY

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This thesis investigates the phenomenon of being "at home" and considers anxiety's relation to it. While the project first correlates being "at home" to having familiarity with the world, it then explores the absence of this familiarity in the experience of anxiety, a phenomenon Martin Heidegger argues is one of being "not-at-home." By addressing the "not-at-home" of anxiety, the project determines the malleability inherent to one's home by analyzing anxiety's capacity to render one's homelike familiarity with the world insignificant, something which is shown to reveal the primacy of home's elasticity over its rigidity. The thesis concludes by investigating Merleau-Ponty's account of the body, and shows how one's body can engage with the malleability of home through its habitual contact made with the world. This engagement is shown, finally, to have repercussions for one's agency and identity: that the home created determines what one can do, and who one is.

*For my family.*

*This is my contribution to our ever growing curiosity regarding the question of what makes the Barry clan tick. This is not the whole picture, but it is some of it.*

*I hope the ideas contained within this document find you well.*

## Acknowledgements

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## *Introduction*

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### **0.1: The Project**

What could be more *familiar* than the experience of going home after a long day of work, or after traveling the world for some time? Why is home something that we turn to, and something that we so naturally revere?

What could be more *unfamiliar* than the way the world feels to us when we are *within* an anxious mindset, when we are suffused with insecurity and are struggling to get our bearings? Why can anxiety lead us to feel lost in this way, and what could our ability to experience such a thing tell us about our lives?

This project seeks to clarify and explore these two themes within human experience: that of the experience of home and that of the experience of anxiety. It is my intent to seek an understanding of each of these themes and to explore, in particular, the ways in which anxiety can reveal the nature of home to be a source of familiarity that is inherently malleable. While this

project will dedicate most of its pages to addressing the interplay between home and anxiety, it will also consider the way in which one's home in the world has an internal connection to one's agency and to one's identity as a human being. I wish to show, through the course of what follows, that one's home in the world helps determine what one is capable of doing in one's life, and that one is able to discover who one is by determining what one's home has made possible.

### **0.2: *Dasein*: Acquiring Entry Through Phenomenology**

To examine home and anxiety I will begin by offering a preliminary account of that which has the experience of home and anxiety, namely, us — the "human being." Though we ourselves must be analyzed, we must dig deep in our exploration to uncover the *being* of our humanity. This is because, as we will see, the conclusions developed through the course of this project will depend upon acquiring a recognition that home and anxiety are phenomena that affect humanity's *being* itself, which is to say, this project will depend upon acquiring a recognition that home and anxiety are not simple superficial features of our lives, but are rather integral to understanding what it means for us to *exist* as human beings in the first place. To do this, I will draw from 20th century philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose work on the *being* of the human being, or what he calls "*Dasein*," will offer insight into this further dimension of humanity. To properly analyze and make use of Heidegger's insight regarding *Dasein* we must first, however, capture the unique sense of what *Dasein* truly represents, and explore how such a phenomenon can be analyzed. From there we will have the tools necessary to launch the first chapter of this project regarding home, as we will have a preliminary insight into the "who" that experiences home in the first place.

Within *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks to study the *being* of the human being rather than the *humanity* of the human being because his task within this work is ontological, rather than anthropological or biological. This means that the aspect of humanity that is under his consideration throughout *Being and Time* is not concerned with anything physical that can be laid under a microscope, but, rather, with the aspect of humanity that "*exists*," which is to say, it's "*being*."<sup>1</sup> Heidegger writes, "When we designate this entity with the term '*Dasein*', we are expressing not its "what" (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its being."<sup>2</sup> Humanity's being, which is to say, *our being*, is essentially different from the "what" of a table, house, or tree, or the "what" of our biological or anthropological specificities. This is because our being — the being of the human being — concerns something further in the depths of who we are than our physical designations. This further reach into ourselves is none other than the fact of our own existence *as such*, not our tangible human specificities that arise *out of* this existence, but the very fact that *we are beings in the world in the first place*. Such depth represents *Dasein*, as the being of the human being, the being that is "there" in the world most essentially.<sup>3</sup>

Given that Heidegger's task in *Being and Time* is ontological, he must reveal the being of the human being, but since this being is not physical, he requires a specialized point of entry to begin revealing it. This entry point is made available through the phenomenological study of *Dasein's* "everydayness," where the specificity of humanity's being emerges saliently through its

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<sup>1</sup> See Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 29: Michael Gelven highlights this distinction in Heidegger's analysis by suggesting that there is a difference in describing (1) what a human *is* and (2) what it means for a human *to be*. A biological or anthropological specification of a human could indeed describe what a human *is* by explaining its circulatory system, or its bone structure, etc., but none of these explanations of what a human *is* would address what it means for a human *to be*. This has been called "the ontological difference" by Heidegger and others. See Nicholson (1996) for a discussion of the difference between "what there is" and the "being of what there is."

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 67

<sup>3</sup> "Being-there" is a common English translation of "*Dasein*."



common tasks, emotions, and social involvements — the stuff of its everyday life. Heidegger interprets the everydayness of *Dasein* as capable of issuing this crucial insight into humanity's being because, as he notes (and as we will see within Chapter One), it is within *Dasein's* everydayness that casual, intelligent behaviour takes place, where humanity's being is found to be already intelligently comporting itself towards the world in various ways and, as such, already making its presence known.<sup>4</sup> The everydayness of humankind, when men and women are casually involved in a game of golf, or enjoying a leisurely stroll through a park, is not an inconsequential aspect of his or her existence then, but is rather an example of its function. This is because it is humankind's everyday activity which provides phenomenal access into the existential resources *Dasein* contains within itself that render this casual and intelligent absorption into its tasks possible. As a result, it is by attending to this everyday activity that one can obtain a view of our being because *Dasein's* everyday activities in the world carry within them the traces of being and thus render it visible and capable of study.<sup>5</sup>

Deploying the phenomenological method is crucial if one is to understand humanity's being, because, while it is true that everydayness renders this being visible and capable of study, it still requires of someone to carefully attend to the form through which this everydayness shows itself in human experience to understand humanity's being. Phenomenology, as a method, does just this. It attends to the form that human experience takes, which in turn produces descriptions of the phenomena that comprise that form necessarily. As such, if one performs a phenomenology of everydayness, as Heidegger does in *Being and Time*, one yields insight into

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<sup>4</sup> See Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 48: As William Richardson notes, it is in the "everyday" that *Dasein* can be seen to be in "commerce" with things, where it itself has already transcended itself and has already become *involved in the world* in various ways.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 69: "out of this kind of Being [everydayness] - and back into it again - is all existing, such as it is."

how everydayness presents itself within human experience, which, in turn, reveals insight into how everydayness itself operates by isolating the phenomena contained within it that have necessarily lead to its appearing the way it has in human experience. By using the phenomenological method to describe how *Dasein's* everydayness appears, then, one can accordingly reveal insight into the existential resources that thus render this everydayness possible, and, by doing this, one can describe the being of the human being — the being that has already drawn from its existential resources and has already understood how to behave in the world in an everyday way. Though phenomenology can provide access to understanding humanity's being by explicitly focusing on how its everydayness reveals insight into it, the phenomenological method can only reveal this insight if it is brought about through a careful, and measured attention to detail to capture what is actually happening in this everydayness. This measured attention to detail is required because, everydayness, in its own right, may contain features within it that may initially reside outside of one's typical reflective notice. As such, a proper use of the phenomenological method will be sensitive to this fact, and attempt to be as charitable to the form of human experience as possible *by capturing it as it itself presents itself*, so as to include a depiction of it in its fullness and thus capture *Dasein* in an accurate light.<sup>6</sup>

This idea of capturing what resides "outside" of our reflective awareness will become a recurring theme in what follows, as it is through the phenomenological analysis of everydayness that we become intimately aware of the reality that what we reflectively think and see, and what

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<sup>6</sup> Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*. p. 30: Gelven suggests that Heidegger utilized the phenomenological method in *Being and Time* because he wanted to avoid the insertion of "dogmatic statements" that would illuminate *Dasein* erroneously before its everydayness could reveal the character of its own being. By using the phenomenological method, then, Heidegger wanted the "phenomena to speak for themselves," and, by way of that, he wanted *Dasein* to reveal its own specific texture, its own depth, as it itself reveals itself to the world through its everydayness.

we existentially do and achieve are diverse things in human experience. This is because the phenomenological analysis of everydayness reveals the nature of human existence to be an *intelligent existence*, one that has the implicit capacity to "cope," as Hubert Dreyfus says, with the demands of its everyday life, though in a way that it does not depend on the intellectual contribution of a mind strategizing and thinking its way through the world.<sup>7</sup> Indeed this intelligent existence will often be juxtaposed with "mind" in what follows. Though one's "mind," as that which houses one's thoughts and beliefs about the world, will be differentiated from the capabilities of one's existence, it will still essentially *belong* to one's existence. The two will be differentiated because the phenomenology of everydayness will reveal that humans have two distinct points of contact to the world: one that touches upon the world through its mind and one that touches upon the world through the intelligent comportment of its existence itself. It is this intelligent existential point of contact that will be crucial to see and understand in what follows, as the experience of home and anxiety will depend on recognizing this contact if they are to be understood fully since these are experiences that are first and foremost existential, which means that they affect individuals in the depths of their being, rather than experiences that affect their minds primarily.

From here, we now turn to Chapter One which will explore in further detail the constitution of *Dasein* and which will particularly stress Heidegger's conviction that to understand *Dasein* (and, to understand its "home") is to understand the relation it shares with the world through which it lives. In particular, we will see that *Dasein's* relation to the world is one of literal unity, with no "space" between them. We will see that it is because of this unity that Heidegger conceptualizes the being of *Dasein* as "being-in-the-world," which he takes to be the

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<sup>7</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. p. 185

most basic and essential state of *Dasein*, a state which enables the familiarity of its everydayness, and thus enables the possibility of its having a home in the world.<sup>8</sup> From there we will turn to Chapter Two, which will explore the nature of *Dasein's* anxiety. We will see within this chapter that anxiety can emerge within human experience by challenging, and indeed *halting*, the familiarity that one feels when they are at home in the world. This observation will be provided to show the malleability and dynamism inherent to one's established home in the world by showing that home has a basic, and implicit sensitivity to alteration given that human beings are open to the experience of anxiety, and are open to experiencing the "not-at-home" that Heidegger illuminates. Having established an understanding of home's malleability, the thesis will conclude with Chapter Three, which will consider the way in which the malleability of one's home can be engaged with and developed by considering Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of home, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body. Though the concluding chapter will focus primarily on how one can engage with, and construct one's home in the world, it will also consider the ways in which one's home can support the flourishing of one's agency, and the instantiation of one's identity. This will be achieved by showing, ultimately, that the home we make in this world helps shape what we are capable of doing in this life, and by helping to shape what we are capable of doing, it helps shape who we are.

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<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 65

## ***Chapter 1: Being-in-the-World and the Possibility of Home***

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*Even before we begin to philosophize, the question of reality seems to already be answered in every moment of our life. We deal with things, and obey the modes of reality as they have been handed down to us... In this unquestioning attitude we achieve a seemingly adequate view of the presence of reality.*

— Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter will explore *Dasein's* "being-in-the-world" and will show how this phenomenon in particular renders the experience of home possible by rendering "everydayness" possible for *Dasein*. Accordingly, the chapter will begin by illuminating the everyday act of writing to explore the form through which humanity's everydayness takes place in human experience. By doing this we will see that humanity's everydayness is unique in that one's reflective attention regarding one's everyday tasks can be supported and enabled by the existential comportment of one's being itself. From there, the chapter will explore the unity of *Dasein* and world to offer an account of how the existential comportment of one's being is made possible through *Dasein's* being-in-the-world, the way in which *Dasein* is that allows for its everydayness. Finally, the chapter will conclude by connecting *Dasein's* everyday being-in-the-world with the experience of being-at-home as it will be shown that it is through one's being-in-the-world, and the

everydayness that it bequeaths to *Dasein*, that the possibility of having a home in the world arises at all.

### **1.1: The Everyday Act of Writing**

When we are involved in situations where we want to do something we can spend a great deal of time considering *how* we are to achieve these things. For example, in the case of wanting to write something, we might consider where a pen is in our house that is available to write with, or, if we have found our pen, we might consider the specific way in which we have to hold that pen to bring about the act of writing. While it is true that we humans do spend a great deal of time mentally considering the location of things, and the specific usability of other things when we want to do something, we also importantly do not operate in this way. For example, the desire to write does not have to be taken up as the impetus to begin a "hunt" in one's house for an available pen, nor does it have to spark a questioning attitude of how to hold the pen once it has been found to bring about the actual act of writing. Rather, one's desire to write can find a hasty resolution through the simple event of grasping a pen that is nearby, a situation in which one does not have to intellectually consider the pen as something to be located, but rather sees the pen as something that is immediately required and available to one's free hand to grasp and with which to begin writing. Similarly, one does not generally have to consider *how* to write with the pen that has finally made its way into one's grip; rather, one can simply hold one's pen with confidence and begin writing in such a way that one's explicit thought can be directed toward the words that are being written rather than the complexity found within one's grip of the pen. It is here that we can notice two drastically different ways that we engage with our surroundings to accomplish tasks: In one way of engaging, we spend time strategizing and planning the

deployment of our agency, and in the other we find ourselves unreflectively engaged with the things of our world.

In the second way that we engage with our surroundings we do so in such a way that we are not reliant on our capacity to "think things through." It is in this second way that we exceed our reflective powers and unreflectively perform behaviours, where, for example, we can knowingly hold and write with a pen while our reflective efforts are elsewhere, like the specific words that we would like to communicate on the paper that is before us. As a result, we can see that human beings are not bound to contact their environment exclusively through the application of their intellectual capabilities, but rather have a second point of contact with the very things of the world that is not reliant on the strategic or intellectual benefit of the mind. By having this second, unreflective point of contact with the world, humanity has an opening on the basis of which it can cease considering "how" and begin operating unimpeded.

It is this unreflective contact that comprises the general nature of *Dasein's* "everydayness," in which *Dasein* is able to move in the world intelligently without reflectively considering the minutiae that allow for it. This is precisely what characterizes our everydayness because it is in our everyday nature that we are able to get along and use the world without donning a reflective attitude to appreciate the workings of our meaningful contact with it. Writers, in their everyday act of writing, do not pay attention to their hand that holds the pen, or to the chair that supports their body, or to the table that supports their arm — rather, they simply use these things and *write*.<sup>9</sup> What makes this an everyday act, and what makes this worthy of our notice, is that the writer's efficacy is deployed in the world in an effortless way that does not ask

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<sup>9</sup> See Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. pp. 184-185: This is the type of "coping" that was alluded to in the Introduction.

of them to question it, but to rather *live it*, and it is in this unquestioning attitude that human beings live out their everyday existence.

The writer is capable of acting unreflectively because they are *being-in-the-world*, which is to say that the writer, as *Dasein*, is not separate from the world of its concern, but is actually united with it. It is this unity shared between *Dasein* and the world to which we will now turn to, as it is here that we will see how the writer is capable of this unreflective movement with their pen. From there, we will see one of the constitutive existential resources *Dasein* relies on to be what it is, in this case, the "world," and from that, we will have a sharper understanding of human existence as "being-in-the-world."

### **1.2: Being-in-the-world: *Dasein's* Unity with the World**

Heidegger writes that human beings are "thrown into the world," which is to say that at any time, whether one is very young, or very old, one is non-optionally *in the world*.<sup>10</sup> It is in this world where humans carry out their everyday living: where they write, where they cook or read, where they drive, or where they converse with a loved one. While the particular everyday task with which humans involve themselves may vary greatly between individuals, what does not vary is the fact that these individuals are *in the world* as a non-optional fact of their existence and that it is through this connectedness to the world that they bring about their everyday activities.

We often like to think that the world is actually quite separate from us, and is something that we can "keep at a distance." We often think, for example, that we *enter* the world when we leave our homes and go shopping for groceries, or that we can *hide* from the world after an embarrassing moment in our lives. In either of these cases, we like to think that the world can be

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<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 236



kept separate from us, as an independent sphere that we may, or may not enter. However, it is this commonplace understanding of the world that misrepresents the special sense of the term as Heidegger understands it, as he believes that the world is not something that we have the choice to enter or leave, but is rather something that human existence is always "in."

From what we have been saying, it follows that Being-in is not a 'property' which *Dasein* sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it would *be* just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world' - a world with which he provides himself occasionally. *Dasein* is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some other entity is present-at-hand outside of *Dasein* and meets up with it. Such an entity can 'meet up with' *Dasein* only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a world.<sup>11</sup>

One is always in the world, and one's incorporation into the world is something that occurs with a primacy over instances where one can be said to be "inside" something else. For example, one could be inside or outside of a house, but in either of these cases, this individual has never left being *in* the world because the inside and outside of the house both take place within it. While the factual circumstances of an individual's surroundings may or may not contain him, this will only ever occur while being fundamentally (and permanently) contained in a world.

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<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 84

This understanding of the unity of *Dasein* and world strikes us as odd initially because we typically regard the world as something that we have to consider entering intellectually rather than something that we are already in. One of the most powerful pieces of insight from Heidegger's philosophy is his claim that one's intellectual considerations for how to engage oneself with the world are a subordinate consideration that belongs to a more original, or "primordial" connection with one's world, one that has to first be in place for the possibility to think about the world to arise at all. This primordial connection is "being-in-the-world," which is an ontological term that points to the way in which *Dasein* is incorporated into the world as *already* alongside it in a knowing way, rather than isolated from it and charged with the task of figuring out how to enter it. As Heidegger says, "In directing-itself-toward and apprehending, *Dasein* does not first get out of itself, out of its inner sphere in which it is encapsulated. Rather, its very sense is to be *always already* 'outside' in the world, in the rightly understood sense of 'outside' as in-being and dwelling with the world, which in each instance is already uncovered in some way."<sup>12</sup>

We can see how *Dasein* is already involved in the world prior to its intellectual considerations if we consider an example of how the world works for *Dasein* in its relation to sound. In *Being and Time* Heidegger argues that when we are exposed to various sounds in our everyday experience that we do not hear isolated units of noise that call on us to consider which specific entity each belongs to.<sup>13</sup> Rather than intellectually processing the sounds we hear, the sounds of our world immediately take on the form of "people talking," "the gate opening," "the car starting," etc. We hear these specificities with an immediacy of recognition because we are in a world as alongside that world and as already involved with it, as already "taking it up" so to

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<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. p. 164

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 207

speak prior to our thinking about it. What this means is that our environments are able to come to life with a sense of meaning for us without our intellectually inputting this meaning or explicitly conjuring it up, precisely because we tacitly understand our world through our connections with it.<sup>14</sup> While it is true that we initially have to learn what each sound belongs to which entity, it is also true that, after this understanding is acquired, we can quite literally live our lives from these acquisitions in a knowing, pre-reflective way, where we register the "gate opening," or "the car starting" without reflectively studying the source of the noise and piecing it together.<sup>15</sup> We are able to immediately recognize sounds as "the clap of thunder" or "the screeching of tires" because we are not separated or cut off from the world, but are rather *of* the world as *already* in it, as tacitly understanding of our connection to the things of our environment at a level that does not rely on the reflective attention of our minds but rather the connection that the world has to our own existence itself.<sup>16</sup>

From these considerations we can see more clearly the specific meaning that the word "world" has in the compound term "being-in-the-world." The "world" for a human being is not a container that is separate from it, where entities exist "at a distance," nor does the world serve as something it has to figure out a way "into." Rather, the world for a human being is something that it is already *in* where it lives out the connections it has forged between it and its

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 207: "The fact that motorcycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case *Dasein*, as being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world. It certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a 'world'. *Dasein*, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood."

<sup>15</sup> More on these "acquisitions" is offered in Chapter Three of the present study.

<sup>16</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. pp. 185-186: Dreyfus captures the power of *Dasein's* worldly understanding well: "This fundamental understanding is the intelligibility provided by our *familiarity with significance*." It is this understanding where we have, as he says, "know-how," where things are revealed to *Dasein* as "making sense" or as "doable" but in a way that is "more basic than the distinction between thought and action."

environment.<sup>17</sup> The world is where its tacit relation to things comes to pass, where it can understand its environment in a way that is not reliant upon the effort of its intellect.<sup>18</sup> In this way the world cannot be an exterior or separate thing from a human being, rather, it must be a piece of humanity's existence itself because humanity's relation to it is one of *already* being incorporated into it, and as already understanding it. This is why Heidegger stresses the inseparability of human and world, because the world is effectively ready for human beings, and understandingly "in-use" contemporaneously with humanity's existence.<sup>19</sup> As Heidegger writes, "If we inquire ontologically about the 'world', we by no means abandon the analytic of *Dasein* as a field for thematic study. Ontologically, 'world' is not a way of characterizing those entities which *Dasein* is *not*; it is rather a characteristic of *Dasein* itself."<sup>20</sup> As a result, the world is *of Dasein*, and it is not a separate container for *Dasein's* existence that *Dasein* must learn how to enter because it is already "in" it as already alongside it, as already understanding it, and as already comported towards it. We are able immediately to intuit sounds as meaningful precisely because we are already in the world and have a tacit understanding of the meanings of these sounds, an understanding that we rely upon to fill-in the meaningfulness of our environments without our explicitly realizing this reliance.

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<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. p 160: "When this relationship of being between subject and object is reflected upon, for ordinary observation there is an entity called nature *already given in the widest sense*, which becomes known; this entity is also always found first, *cultivated and cared for by Dasein precisely because it is Being-in-the-world.*"

<sup>18</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. p. 90: Dreyfus calls this tacit relation a "constellation of equipment, practices and concerns" that *Dasein* can engage with intelligently.

<sup>19</sup> Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 37: Richardson captures this sentiment well by offering the following: "There-Being [*Dasein*] is not the source of its own Being but rather finds itself as an already existing fact, sc. immersed in its original situation as a comprehension of the Being of beings." Therefore, *Dasein* discovers itself wrapped up with an understanding of its own situation in the world, which means that the world is "working" for *Dasein* even if *Dasein* is intellectually unaware of it.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 92

We can see how this reliance affects not just the recognition of sounds in our environments but also the intelligent comportment of our bodies if we turn our attention back to the previous case of the writer who is able to squarely focus on the words she writes rather than focus on the grip of her pen. The writer exists in the world as meaningfully engaged with it, and she exudes an *understanding* of it that grants her the capacity to intelligently, and unreflectively act within her surroundings. Rather than being isolated, and essentially *separate* from the world, and, rather than existing as the sum of her intellectual activity, she is rather united with the world and so her understanding is in fact spread throughout her room and touches upon the items that populate it in a way that her intellect misses appreciating, much in the same way that one's understanding can touch upon sounds without first reflectively piecing together bits of "noise." This is possible because she is being-in-the-world and is capable of engaging with her room in a way that bypasses her mind's capacity to think about how she is to make use of it. She is only capable of doing this because for her the world is not something that she has to learn how to enter and make use of, but, rather, is something that she is already in, and is something that she is already utilizing to contextualize her immediate experience.

Because the woman is united with her world, she has a meaningful bond with the things of her room and so she has access to the things located there in a way that is outside of her mind's grasp. This means that while she considers her writing at her desk, her body can be involved in a number of different ways that supersede her reflective notice. For example, her feet may brace the ground as she sits, her back might adjust its alignment to her chair, and her grip on her pen might loosen or tighten depending on the particular demands of what she is writing. Though her mental attention is focused squarely upon the words that she writes down, her body is enveloped in a meaningful performance that drops from her view and effectively supports, and

enables, her task of writing. This is possible because the woman is being-in-the-world, and because the very things of her environment have intimate bonds and meanings for her *existence* rather than just her mind. It is because her existence has these bonds, and because these bonds can be operational outside of the purview of her mind that she can non-thematically accomplish the everyday task of writing. As a result, while the woman attends to her writing, she can effectively exist all around her writing by understanding how she can put to use the pieces of her environment — her chair, her pen, her table.

For a human being, who has being-in-the-world as the expression of the way in which it *is*, the things of the world can become available for non-thematic intelligent use because those things can exist as tacitly related to it, and, therefore, available to it to be used. Heidegger brands this availability "readiness-at-hand," which accounts for the way in which the writer engages with her surroundings to accomplish the task of her writing: The pen that is in her grip, the chair that she sits on, and the desk that supports her arm as she writes are all "ready-at-hand," which is to say that they are effectively capable of disappearing as explicit objects of reflection precisely because the woman's relation to them is one where they can be rested upon and utilized rather than intellectually *considered*.<sup>21</sup> They are ready to be used, or, as Heidegger says, they are "equipment" that one can utilize for the non-thematic accomplishment of goals, but they can only be used in this way because one has developed a relationship with them, and because one has

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<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 99: "The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work - that which is to be produced at the time." This quotation from Heidegger shows why the writer can focus on her writing rather than her hand. She is able to do this because her work (her writing) primarily holds her attention, while her pen (her means to work) is ready-to-hand in invisible support of her task.

acquired an understanding of their usefulness and has incorporated this understanding in their being-in-the-world, or their very existence itself.<sup>22</sup>

Though Heidegger identifies readiness-at-hand as the availability of equipment in the world for *Dasein* to become involved with, he also distinguishes this from "presence-at-hand." Whereas readiness-at-hand points to the way in which items of the world can be put to use in a non-thematic way, presence-at-hand points to the way in which items of the world can stand out and become thematically noticeable to *Dasein*.<sup>23</sup> As John Sallis writes of the present-at-hand, "When something gives itself to one's sheer gaze, when it is simply there for one's looking, displaying itself before and for apprehension, then it has the character of being present-at-hand."<sup>24</sup> As a result, the very things of the world have the possibility of being present and ready for *Dasein* depending on how they have been taken up by *Dasein*: if they are things to be used and relied on, they are ready, and if they are things to be looked at and reflected upon, they are present.

We can see the richness of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world if we leave for a moment this sustained reflection regarding the act of writing and consider instead one's experience of the environment at large. When one is walking around their city, for example, one walks as being-in-the-world. This means that when one walks one is not lost in an array of

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<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 98: Heidegger speaks of the "in-order-to" structure of equipment (that a piece of equipment, like a hammer, is utilized "in-order-to" strike nails, for example), which is something that can be retained and understood by *Dasein* once it has grasped the potential use of a piece of equipment. If the "in-order-to" structure of a hammer is acquired one can utilize a hammer in a ready-at-hand way because one's being-in-the-world now incorporates and understands this assignment associated with hammers. With the assignment acquired, hammers are then picked up within the context of the assignment that has specified that object's use and, as a result, hammers are then ready and available to be deployed in a non-thematic way.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 103, p. 147

<sup>24</sup> Sallis, *Delimitations*, p. 142.

unknown sights, sounds, and smells, but is rather incorporated in a milieu that has a *sense* to it, one that has a certain shape and meaningfulness that one tacitly recognizes and utilizes to allow for one's way. As one walks around their city, one immediately sees buildings, cars, and people, rather than pieces of visual data that have to be arranged and figured out. One smells flowers, pollution, and fresh food rather than the vacillation of unknowable odours. Each of these things is so because individuals *are* being-in-the-world, and are already caught in a fabric of symbols and sense that has been forged through their exposure to things — a sense that retains itself in one's being-in-the-world as a familiar expectation of the pieces of reality. As being-in-the-world, one walks through their city as "already alongside" it as the extension of a forged familiarity with it, as someone who meaningfully populates that world as tacitly understood, and as someone who can (and does) utilize the internal direction provided by their being-in-the-world that ensures a recognizable environment that can be depended on.

If we lacked being-in-the-world, we would lack a sense of continuity in our experience for we would have experiences of various things in the world that could not be retained in us. We would, for example, have to continually figure out what pens are for or what trees are, or, even how to walk around. Being-in-the-world allows for these things to be retained in us because being-in-the-world accounts for the way in which our lives are passively *contextualized* by what we have acquired through our experiences, a contextualization that allows for a certain style of living where one can acquire a specific identity as a writer, or as a doctor for example due to the type of passive sense-making that it renders possible. In either of these identities these are people with different styles of being-in-the-world, which is to say, differences in their retained understanding of what is significant in the world. By retaining these differences in understanding these individuals experience the world differently, as it takes on a specific shape and appearance



to them that is in keeping with their acquired understanding. If they lacked being-in-the-world they would lack the means of having these shapes that they could depend on, and, as such, the very notion of having a sustained identity would become an impossibility outright. Since we *do* have being-in-the-world as an expression of *Dasein's* being, identities *are possible* because people are capable of accumulating an understanding of their comportment towards the world, where references can be built up and depended on. As such, we can have something like a doctor that exists in the world as readily capable of saving lives with shock paddles, needles, and bandages. Since the doctor is being-in-the-world, these life-saving tools are known and reached for if the need arises, and since the doctor is able to retain what these bits of equipment are *for* he is able to live out a seamless identity as a doctor who is involved with such things. Such an identity could only take place if one had being-in-the-world as an expression of one's being.

*Dasein* must be united with the world because, as Heidegger makes clear, it is the world that most basically explains the "how" of *Dasein's* environmental encounters.<sup>25</sup> The world explains the "how" of *Dasein's* environmental encounters because it explains how it populates its environment in an everyday way, where it can become seamlessly (and unreflectively) incorporated into tasks that call for its behaviour, and where it is not "lost" in an alien world but rather wrapped up in one that is tacitly found and understood. From this analysis we will now turn to the experience of home, and specifically relate the experience of home's familiarity to the familiarity that is made possible through everyday being-in-the-world. From this we will see that one's experience of being-at-home in the world is an experience that is only for one because of the everydayness being-in-the-world grants to *Dasein*.

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<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. p. 169: "When we ask about the phenomenal structure of the world, we are asking about the *how* of the being in which the entity we call the world *shows itself of itself as encountered*...To determine the worldhood of the world is to lay open in its structure the *how* of the encounter."

### **1.3: Being-in-the-world and Home**

Being-in-the-world has been depicted as the possibility for "everydayness" which has revealed the human being as something caught within the fabric of well-constituted meaning with things to do — *a world*. It has been argued that when we write things down, or when we go for walks, that our everyday being-in-the-world allows for our bodies to become animated in a number of ways that supersede the reflective attention of the mind. This was made evident through the examples of *Dasein's* understanding of sound, and through its non-thematic ability to use a pen to write things down. These types of extra-mental intelligence were crucial to recognize as features of our everyday being-in-the-world because they showed that our *existence*, and not just our minds, had a connection with the world, one that could be utilized to provide a sense of direction and purpose to our aims while we actively performed tasks. As a result, we can now say that being-in-the-world allows for us to garner a sense of self-assurance in the world, where we can become passively confident in our worldly activity because it allows for us to rest upon our forged connections with the world compellingly enough for our reflective attention to be focused on different matters through our everydayness. Being-in-the-world allows for the genesis of self-assurance and confidence in the human being then, and it is through this self-assurance and confidence that *Dasein* has an everyday comportment towards the world.

Though being-in-the-world allows for this self-assurance and confidence, we all know of situations where we are *not* self-assured, and where we lack the same confidence as when we write or walk for example. Perhaps we are in a job interview, or perhaps we are in a hospital visiting a friend. In either of these examples, we are in situations that are alien to us, in environments that are *foreign* to us where the momentum of our everyday being-in-the-world becomes disrupted by the new context that confronts us. It is in these new, unfamiliar contexts

where our casual absorption into the world — our everydayness — becomes impaired, where we begin to *question* what the things are that surround us. It is here where we question what a doctor is scribbling into his clipboard, or where we study the contents of the interviewer's office that feels curious to our attention.<sup>26</sup> It is in these situations where we are taken from our comfortable sense of familiarity with the world and where the contents of the world saliently jut out and beckon us to notice them, study them, question them, and, to generally be curious of them. Whereas we felt familiarity before our visit to the hospital or the interviewer's office, when we were wrapped up in our everyday tasks like writing into our notepads or casually walking around through our town, we find in the hospital or the interviewer's office that we cannot garner the same sense of familiarity that would allow for us to be casually absorbed into these new places. The context is just too new and too atypical for this type of familiarity to take place.

We can experience this shift between familiarity and unfamiliarity because we are beings-in-the-world that are fundamentally capable of forging intimate connections with our environments and drawing them *close* to us. It is in this closeness where we understand an environment and how it can be used that the possibility of our everydayness transpires, but, it is also in this closeness — and the familiarity it issues us — that we can see a strong connection between the familiarity afforded by our everyday being-in-the-world and the familiarity afforded by what we typically consider to be our "home in the world." This is because our homes are characterized by the same sense of familiarity that allows for us to passively and non-thematically involve ourselves with things in an everyday way. Our homes are where, as Kirsten

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<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 105: Heidegger calls the salience of objects in the world that jut-out in unfamiliar ways "unreadiness-at-hand." It is when the casual everyday absorption into our world becomes disrupted that we can don this questioning attitude and can reflectively consider the environment as something to be engaged with rather than something that we are already absorbed into.

Jacobson argues, "we can relax into our own ways of doing things, and do so without a plan," which is to say that our homes are where we do not have to strategize or reflectively consider the way in which we will become involved in the world specifically, but are rather where we can unreflectively ease into a familiar place that accommodates us and that relieves us of the need to over-think our place in the world.<sup>27</sup> This is importantly true not just of our homes, but of our everyday being-in-the-world, where we are confident enough to become pre-reflectively involved in our tasks without the need to worry about every minute detail that enters into our experience. The familiarity of home, then, is made up of the same phenomenal content of which everydayness is comprised, and so we can rightly describe ourselves as being-at-home not just in our houses, but also outside of them while we are involved with things that are familiar to us.

Thinking of home in this way, as a familiarity extended towards the *things* of the world, opens up a rigorous method for appreciating how familiarity can be experienced differently between individuals who are in the same objective space. For example, though we may feel out of place in a hospital, the doctors and nurses that work in that hospital do not feel out of place there. Rather, much like the individual who feels confident using her pen to write with, these health practitioners move and perform in this environment as confidently as the woman moves with her pen because they *know this place* and exist within it as connected and as close to the things of that place. These doctors and nurses can engage with the hospital in this knowing everyday way because they are "at home" in the hospital, just as the woman is at home with a pen in her hand.

When one is at home somewhere, one knows what things are for, and knows how to use them, much in the same way that everyday being-in-the-world allows for the same possibility. As

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<sup>27</sup> Jacobson. p. 359

a result, the doctors know all of the wings of their hospital, they know the employees, the different tools, and everything in between. Even the sight of ER patients coming in with critical wounds and ailments are things known and anticipated for them because, as individuals that are at home in the hospital, ER patients are a reality for the doctors, and are something to be expected and dealt with. Though the woman who is confident with her pen may gaze in bewilderment at the sight of wounded men and women rolling into the hospital for treatment, the doctors would be able to bypass this bewilderment and get to work saving lives. They would be able to bypass this bewilderment because they would be at home in the hospital, and would know that these are the terms of that place, that wounds and ailments are possibilities, and that these things are specifically there to be confronted and corrected.

These differences in what is close and what is familiar are due to the specific way in which these individuals have settled themselves in the world — differences in what situations in which they are at home. Though what they find familiar, and what they find worthy of their bewilderment may differ, this difference is attributable to what their existence takes to be possible in an everyday sense, a difference that takes root and finds its possibility in being-in-the-world. As a result, we can see that having a home in the world, that is, having a sense of familiarity in the world, is only possible through being-in-the-world and that if being-in-the-world were not indicative of the way in which humanity *is*, humanity would never have the means of establishing a home in the world.

Having illuminated the workings of being-in-the-world and by having shown its connection to home, we can now turn our attention to the next chapter on anxiety and explore its relation to home. From what follows we will see that *Dasein's* world is something towards which

it can emotionally comport itself, and that this particular comportment can reveal insight into the very foundation and fundamental make up of its home in the world.

## *Chapter 2: Anxiety and the Fragility of Home*

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*Readiness for anxiety is a Yes to assuming a stance that fulfills the highest claim, a claim that is made upon the human essence alone. Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of being, experiences the wonder of all wonders: that beings are.*

— Martin Heidegger, "Postscript to What is Metaphysics?"

### **2. Introduction**

As we have seen, *Dasein* is "being-in-the-world," which is to say that it is within *Dasein's* very being to be able to exist in an "everyday" way, in which it can become non-thematically embedded in the world of its concern, and understandingly comported towards the world in the use of its "ready" character. It is because *Dasein* can exist in this way that it can have a home, and that it can have a casual and everyday absorption in the world. Furthermore, this "everydayness," and this "having a home," is only possible because *Dasein* is capable of establishing relations between itself and the things of its world, a possibility that is only for *Dasein* because it exists as already alongside those things as being-in-the-world.

In this chapter I will analyze anxiety in accordance with Martin Heidegger's work from *Being and Time*, and "What is Metaphysics?" to describe two ways in which it can find its expression in human experience: the first will show that anxiety can disclose the possibility for

one to "choose oneself," and the second will explore the way in which anxiety can disclose the "not-at-home" nature of the world by stripping it of its meaning. The chapter's main goal is to describe this second way in which anxiety appears in human experience, as it will be by studying the "not-at-home" nature of anxiety that we will grasp a richer understanding of home and its willingness to be altered in human experience. This richer understanding of home's willingness to be altered will arise because it will be by exploring the "not-at-home" nature of anxiety that we will see into home's inherent fragility, and, by way of that, see that one's developed home is not a permanent fixture in one's experience, but is actually something impermanent, and open to change.

To begin this chapter on anxiety, I will first describe the phenomenon by offering examples: the first of which will be the experience of waiting for a bus, and second of which will be the experience of "K" from Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. From these examples we will be able to see the first way in which anxiety can emerge in human experience, that is, as the emergence of *Dasein's* opportunity to "choose itself." By granting the opportunity to "choose itself," it will be shown that anxiety offers a instance in *Dasein's* experience for it to acknowledge its own responsibility as a human being to take up its own existence and to recognize that it has a role to play in its formation, a role that cannot be denied nor passed off to someone else. From this, the study will then move on from analyzing anxiety's call to recognize one's responsibility to exist to a description of anxiety's actual disclosure of the world, which is to say, a description of how the world itself can appear to individuals who endure anxiety. The study will progress to this second way in which anxiety can emerge in human experience to show what anxiety can do to the actual *appearance* of the world for *Dasein*, for it is within the alteration of the world's appearance through anxiety that we will see a special instance within *Dasein's* experience in which *Dasein's*



home in the world can break down. As Heidegger argues in *Being and Time*, anxiety is unique in that it is able to *make the world appear utterly insignificant for Dasein* in such a way that, "the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence."<sup>28</sup> We will see this loss of *Dasein's* ready-to-hand and present-at-hand understanding of the world by first recapitulating what it is like to experience home, where these types of understanding are well-constituted. By recapitulating the experience of home we will be able to see what is specifically *lost* in the experience of anxiety, and through this, we will be able to see into the fragility of home, and into the fragility of our familiarity with the world. By studying anxiety, then, we will see that home can lose its significance, but, through this, we will also be able to see into home's willingness to be altered at all. Subsequently, this analysis of anxiety will show that home lacks an everlasting character because home, by its very nature, will be shown to be something open to alteration, rather than something that is closed-off and permanent.

### **2.1: "Choosing Oneself" in the Experience of Anxiety**

A man stands at the corner of a familiar street, one that he has come to know very well. He stands there waiting for a bus, kicking stones, and unable to hold himself still in a controlled or relaxed manner. He knows this place: he knows the length of pavement where the bus will drive, and where it will appear around a specific turn to collect him. He knows the trees that line the road, and each signpost along the way that indicates information about the surrounding area. The man knows these things because this *place* is known to him and it offers him nothing new.

Though the physical environment features a lack of novelty, so too does the situational context of using public transit: he knows, for example, that he has arrived to the bus-stop with ample time

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<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231

to catch the bus, that if he stands at the appropriate spot, the bus will see him and collect him, and that he has the necessary fare in his pocket to be granted admission to the bus. Despite all of this, however, the man cannot help feeling a discomfort that begins to grip him entirely. Despite all of the familiarity that surrounds him in the roads he has walked for years, and in the bus-stop that he has used and learned the ways of, he trembles and fidgets, for he is anxious as he waits for his bus.

Despite the man's knowledge, and despite his familiarity with the situation, the man exists as though he has neither familiarity nor knowledge as the seconds expire on his watch, and as the sinking feeling from within him grows. It is in this anxious state that the man's knowledge of the transit system does nothing to prevent his discomfort because his anxiety at that moment announces something around the borders of his knowledge of the transit system, and around the borders of his knowledge of the immediate environment: his anxiety announces *uncertainty* around the borders of his knowledge and the guarantee that it will be *he* who will have to enter a futural circumstance that he cannot reasonably predict, one that will be entirely dependent upon him to bring about and not anyone else.

The man's anxiety is a deeply isolating experience precisely because it is through it that he can see his own potential to act in the world and that this potential to act is something that stems from him, *and only him*. In the moments of his anxiety, when he cannot hold still, he feels the weight of this and recognizes that he is the source of his own involvement in the world and that this involvement itself will depend upon his own concerted effort to bring it about. As Heidegger writes, "anxiety makes manifest in *Dasein* its *Being towards* its own potentiality-for-Being—that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of *choosing itself* and taking hold

of itself."<sup>29</sup> In *Dasein's* anxiety, then, *Dasein* is confronted by its own possibility and the awareness that it can take up this possibility on its own.

As we have seen, a major aspect of everyday *Dasein* is its ability to maneuver through the world without adopting a reflective attitude. It is through *Dasein's* anxiety, however, that this everydayness, where *Dasein* deploys its behaviour in the world non-thematically, is challenged.<sup>30</sup> This happens because it is through *Dasein's* anxiety that it can begin considering its own responsibility to determine *how* it will become incorporated into the world. This is something that challenges *Dasein's* everydayness because it pulls *Dasein* out of its absorption in the world and reveals *Dasein's* own unsettled existence to be its primary concern. *Dasein's* existence is an unsettled concern in its anxiety because through its anxiety it can become aware that it, and it alone, has the ability to direct its life if it "chooses itself" by seeking out and seizing hold of its own possibility.<sup>31</sup> Rather than unreflectively manoeuvring through the world, anxious *Dasein* is

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<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 232

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233: "Anxiety brings *Dasein* back from its absorption in the world."

<sup>31</sup> There is an important observation to make here regarding the similarity shared between one's experience of conscience and one's experience of anxiety, as both phenomena speak to *Dasein's indebtedness* to receive insight from sources outside of its own control; something which shows *Dasein* to be not altogether "free." As Heidegger mentions in the second division of *Being and Time*, *Dasein* can be "called" by its conscience to recognize its own individuated being (see pp. 315-316). Such a call, which speaks from within *Dasein* to *Dasein*, speaks in an effort to be heard, as something that beckons *Dasein* to recognize its own self as something that has a unique and authentic perspective of the world. Such a beckoning, or "calling" is not something that arises predictably, but rather emerges according to its own schedule and on its own terms. This is importantly true to recognize of conscience, especially if we consider the fact that we do not know when or where our conscience will activate and ask of us to notice our own individual stance on something. The call of conscience, then, is unpredictable, however, the same can be said for the experience of anxiety, as this also arises in an unpredictable manner, at opportune moments in our lives that call for us to recognize the seriousness of our own existence. This unpredictability is an important insight regarding anxiety just as it is with conscience, as it explains how seemingly benign and harmless situations like waiting for a bus can trigger one's anxiety. In this way, we can think of anxiety as an opportunity that is bequeathed to *Dasein* to

*reflective*, as it is in this state that *Dasein* sees that the way it acts in the world is not an already settled notion, but is rather an open, and free possibility; a possibility that it recognizes to be incumbent upon *it* to realize and take advantage of.<sup>32</sup> This, in itself, pulls the man who waits for his bus out of his everydayness because his anxiety has not disclosed a simple observation about his existence, but rather a complicated observation; one where he knows that he has the ability to determine his own existence.

As Heidegger mentions, one does not have to own up to what anxiety tells one about one's own individual existence — that one is in a position to "choose oneself." Indeed, one often *hides* from the ability to "choose oneself" altogether by immersing oneself within the social conventions of a given society. By immersing oneself in this way, one attempts to push away one's ability to choose by adopting an attitude that treats this option as though it were not a real one, an attitude Heidegger calls "tranquil."<sup>33</sup> One achieves this when one does "as 'they' do" as Heidegger says, so as to absolve oneself of the difficulty of being in a position to "choose oneself."<sup>34</sup> One does what "they" do when one forgoes "choosing oneself" and instead mirrors what has been "publicly done," as so happens when one seeks an education at a university, or when one buys a car, or when one marries. In each of these examples one does these things because they are easy options to adopt from what one's society has offered as available options, and because they spare one from having to authentically approach the world and determine what

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recognize itself, which is something that is not entirely within its own power to bring about in the first place.

<sup>32</sup> See Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*. p. 51: "Anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility"

<sup>33</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 164: "We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back; we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking."

one genuinely, and solely, wants from it.<sup>35</sup> One seeks out what "they" do because through this one desires to free oneself of the responsibility of navigating one's own life.<sup>36</sup> However, in doing this one "flees" from oneself and the possibility that one *could* direct oneself in this way. As Heidegger writes, "*Dasein's* absorption in the 'they' and its absorption in the 'world' of its concern, make manifest something like a *fleeing* of *Dasein* in the face of itself."<sup>37</sup> *Dasein* "flees" because it does not want to recognize that its life and its decisions are importantly influenced by what *it* wants independently of the "they." This is a reason why anxiety is so unsettling for *Dasein* because through it *Dasein* can see that *it itself* has options that exceed what it has adopted from its society. It is in anxiety, then, where *Dasein* can understand that it itself, as a human being, is capable of directing *its own life* and pursuing the things that it genuinely desires, if only it has the fortitude and resolve to acknowledge that these things will not be done for it.<sup>38</sup>

Though Heidegger stresses the existence of a free component to *Dasein* — its freedom to "choose itself" — he also argues that this takes place within the context of a constrictive "facticity." This means, for example, that *Dasein* cannot choose whether it wants to be in a world, that it cannot choose to be in a human body, or, that it cannot choose to be historically indebted to past human achievement, because these are "facts" of its existence — things that

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<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 165: Heidegger writes that the "they" disburdens *Dasein*.

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 167: Heidegger suggests that an important component of understanding the "who" of *Dasein* is recognizing that a substantial portion of it is defined by the "they" - so much so, that Heidegger believes *Dasein* to have a "they-self," in which a piece of its existence is sensitive to, and eager to adopt the modes of, what has been publicly done. This is a crucial part of *Dasein's* existence, and it cannot be removed from it; the point, rather, is that *Dasein* can observe the ways in which it has been caught in "inauthentic" or "public" modes of behaving, and so it can be authentic in juxtaposition by not doing as "they" do.

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 229

<sup>38</sup> Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 70: It is important to note that the "fleeing" that *Dasein* does in its existence is not always a self-aware fleeing; by "fleeing" Heidegger has in mind the constitutive aspect of *Dasein's* existence that is "fallen," or that aspect of *Dasein* that has "taken flight from its authentic self." Fallen *Dasein* passively adopts the modes and attitudes of the They, and does not have to be the result of *Dasein's* concentrated effort to become inauthentic.

cannot be undone or altered in any way because they have determined the existence of *Dasein*.<sup>39</sup><sup>40</sup> Within this facticity, however, is the glimmer of a free *Dasein*, one that has some leeway to "choose itself" while being firmly entrenched in its facticity. As Heidegger says in Division Two of *Being and Time*, "Our fates have already been guided in advance, in our being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities. Only in communicating *and in struggling* does the power of destiny become free."<sup>41</sup> *Dasein*, then, can struggle within its facticity and seize hold of the possibilities made available therein through the *struggle* of its existence.<sup>42</sup> Though *Dasein's* facticity constricts *Dasein*, it does not fully determine it, and anxiety itself is a recognition from within *Dasein* that this is so, as it makes clear that "choice" in itself is a relevant option for *Dasein*, something that could only be the case if *Dasein* were, at its core, capable of some genuine freedom to choose within the confines of how it has been factually determined.

This experience of anxiety, where one has the ability to "choose" oneself, is what Heidegger calls being "ill at ease," a phrase that takes root as one of the chief descriptors of the anxious state of mind in Heideggerian philosophy.<sup>43</sup> Being "ill" in this context is being cognizant of a detrimental alteration in one's sense of security and well-being in times when one is not threatened by an obvious physical danger; hence, one can be "ill" while one is within the purview

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<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 82

<sup>40</sup> See Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 37: Richardson captures the thrust of *Dasein's* facticity well by offering the following: "There-Being [*Dasein*] is not the source of its own Being but rather finds itself as an already existing fact, sc. immersed in its original situation as a comprehension of the Being of beings."

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 436

<sup>42</sup> See Sartre, Jean-Paul. pp. 96-116: Sartre provides a discussion of "Bad Faith" in which he outlines the experience of living in denial of one's facticity, and living in denial of one's freedom. Bad Faith references one's inability to recognize that one is open to struggle within the terms of their freedom, as Heidegger has outlined here.

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 101

of physical safety ("ease"). This precisely characterizes the previous scenario of the man waiting for his bus, for he too is "ill" as made evident by the gnawing feeling of insecurity that he experiences despite the lack of a definite threat in the world to serve as the locus of his woes. Standing at the corner of the bus-stop, the man is not threatened by anything immediately obvious in his environment; indeed, a bystander would report as much if they were to describe the man as he appears to them, but this is the exact logic being "ill at ease" operates through: If one is "ill at ease" one does not need anything other than oneself to feel insecure, and this insecurity develops through one's recognition of being answerable to oneself to figure out how one is to exist in the world.

Though anxiety can grip individuals while they are at ease, the power of this claim only comes to life when one differentiates the notion of fear from the notion of anxiety as Heidegger rightly does in *Being and Time*, and "What is Metaphysics?" Within these works anxiety is starkly contrasted from fear by differentiating the subject matter that preoccupies an individual when they endure fear and anxiety respectively. Fear, as Heidegger says, is fear for "this or that" whereas anxiety is experienced for no definable object.<sup>44</sup> For example, if an individual has the misfortune of being confronted by a deadly and poisonous snake, the bare appearance of the snake could elicit a fearful response.<sup>45</sup> During the confrontation, the individual might begin fidgeting, or sweating, or even sprint in the opposite direction of the snake, but each of these responses from the person's body would be made for a good reason, namely, the snake that threatens that individual's life. In this sense, the person *fears* the snake as an object that elicits their fear and so the entire experience of the person's fear in relation to the snake takes place in a

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<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 100

<sup>45</sup> Not everyone fears snakes. However, the logic of fear operates the same way no matter what individual thing provokes someone's fear: i.e., fear *has* an object.

closed system with definable elements that can be sorted out and even brought under a causal understanding.<sup>46</sup> As a result of this, fear features a straightforwardness and obviousness implicit to the experience, for a fearful man has located the exact entity of his worry, and there is no question as to *what* is causing his fear.<sup>47,48</sup>

Comparatively speaking, anxiety lacks fear's straightforwardness and obviousness. As Heidegger says: "Anxiety is indeed anxiety in the face of..., but not in the face of this or that thing. Anxiety is in the face of... is always anxiety for..., but not for this or that."<sup>49</sup> This is the raw experience of anxiety that Heidegger has outlined, here understood as an unsettling lack of direction which differentiates itself from the acute focus that fear affords. When one is anxious one cannot point to something *in the world* as the source of one's anxiety. This is because one of the issues that anxiety makes apparent is not a threatening object in the world but rather *one's unsettled existence itself*, something that does not appear in the world as a chair does, or as a computer does. In his commentary on *Being and Time*, Michael Gelven offers a comment regarding the specificity of what *Dasein* targets in its anxiety, and in a lucid remark he writes, "we dread our being able to be ourselves."<sup>50</sup> This comment is well placed, because through our "dreading our being able to be ourselves" we can acknowledge the inherent difficulty of living a human life; for it is within the human experience of anxiety that we can confront the fact that our own existence is not something ready-made and decided, but is rather something pointedly

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<sup>46</sup> i.e., I am a person, this snake could affect my ability to be a living person, therefore I am going to run from it.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 230: "that in the face of which we fear is a detrimental entity within-the-world which comes from some definite region."

<sup>48</sup> See Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time."* p. 118: Gelven rightly points out in his commentary on *Being and Time* that the fearful man in his fear knows exactly what object would have to be removed from the world for his fear to subside.

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 100

<sup>50</sup> Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time."* p. 118



undecided and in need of work to be given form. In other words, we realize through our anxiety, that our existence itself is an issue for us, and this is what we "dread" as Gelven has suggested. This strikes us as troubling because anxiety announces a seriousness implicit to our lives: that our lives in themselves will not automatically sprout and flourish, but will require an intelligent and concentrated effort to grow and become something. Consequently, there is undoubtedly a heaviness implicit to the burden of recognizing what the experience of anxiety tells us, and it is precisely this heaviness that causes us to feel "ill at ease."

Within Franz Kafka's novels, anxiety and that which provokes it are common themes explored by the author. *The Trial*, perhaps, stands as Kafka's most revealing foray into the experience of anxiety in which the protagonist, "K," finds himself implicated in a criminal investigation and accused of a crime that is never revealed to the reader. Throughout the telling of the story, a bureaucracy of immense power looms over K "pulling strings" and directing him along the path to his trial's completion. As this happens, the powers that be remain beyond K's immediate purview such that he never actually observes the source of these powers, nor does he ever observe the actual entity that has caused his grief by bringing the trial about in the first place. The source of this grief and the cause of his being summoned for the trial remains beyond K's perspective throughout *The Trial* such that this source only ever finds itself represented through smaller branches of power by proxy, be it the magistrates, the police, or even the mysterious stalkers at the end of the book. By keeping the source of K's trial a mystery, and by making K answerable to an unknown power that guides him and constricts him throughout his trial, Kafka generates a story about anxiety.

By being caught in the demands of his mysterious trial, K's life takes on a distinctive sense of discomfort that lingers within him and prohibits him from casually and securely living

out his day. For K, the ability to have an "everyday" involvement with the world in which he can non-reflectively deploy his behaviour is a great difficulty to him, as he feels the constant strain of his answerability to *be himself* throughout *The Trial*, a recognition that makes his casual absorption into the world hard since he thematizes his own existence as an issue for himself constantly. This is something that prevents K from living his life casually, as it causes him to be uncomfortably "on edge" throughout the entirety of the book. This happens because K lives his life as someone implicated in a criminal investigation where his future well-being is a constantly renewed question that is unanswerable, but a question that he knows he will have to address. K's anxiety from being implicated in an investigation that *could* see charges being brought against him *holds on to him* as he goes about his day, and as long as he is implicated in the investigation in the eyes of the bureaucracy, he cannot have peace of mind. In this state, K lives his life as though he is held hostage, as though at any point in time his master could come calling and expect something of him. This alienates K, and prevents him from establishing the same level of comfort that his fellow men enjoy who are without the threat of legal punishment looming over them. As such, K's experience is one of being burdened by the heaviness of his own existence, and the investigation itself serves as a constant reminder that K is implicated in something from which he cannot readily wriggle free, as something that he, and only he, must endure. K's anxiety is apparent in *The Trial* because this truth sticks to him like glue — he knows that he cannot get away from the issue surrounding his trial because his own existence is the issue.<sup>51</sup>

K's experience with the bureaucracy that controls him, and the man restlessly waiting for his bus are both examples of anxiety. In both cases, that which threatens each person is the recognition that their existence is tied to them as something for which they alone are

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<sup>51</sup> See Pondrom's discussion of the ways in which K experiences "inevitability" in *The Trial*, "Kafka and Phenomenology: Josef K.'s Search for Information." pp. 83-84

responsible.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the man waiting for his bus, he stands there shaking before his own existence. With each trembling shake of his body the man knows that he is something whose very existence is at issue, and that he is something that must respond to this issue on his own. The same can be said of K in *The Trial*. Though K attempts to seek refuge in the safety of others in *The Trial* to escape his loneliness and lessen the burden of his anxiety, these are ultimately ineffective gestures.<sup>53</sup> Though others can undoubtedly help in such cases, K's trial is ultimately all his as it is he who will have to answer to the bureaucracy, and no one will be able to stand in his place to disburden him. Being isolated, and knowing that it is he that will have to take on *his trial* alone occasions K's anxiety. His future and his wellbeing are on the line, and it will be up to him to navigate his troubles to make his situation work to his advantage. Such is living with anxiety.

This concludes the first aspect of anxiety that this chapter aims to attend to. Now, we will move from focusing on anxiety as a concern over one's individual existence to focusing on how the world itself can be disclosed through the anxious state-of-mind. Specifically, we will explore the nature of Heidegger's contention that it is within the experience of anxiety that "the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence."<sup>54</sup> To do this, we will have to recapitulate, briefly, what it is like to have these ready-to-hand and present-at-hand involvements to fully understand the gravity of Heidegger's assertion that we can lose these things in anxiety. Accordingly, we will first look to the experience of home, where these

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<sup>52</sup> See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*. pp. 7-19: Levinas offers a complementary suggestion regarding weariness and effort: In one's weariness is a reminder of one's commitment to exist, that one will have to take up this "contract" and exert effort despite the difficulty. Anxiety is a similar "awakening" to one's commitment to exist as it is within the experience of anxiety that one can realize that one is a being in the world, a being in the world whose existence can be "chosen" and directed.

<sup>53</sup> See Kafka, *The Trial*. Ch 6 "Uncle Leni," Ch 7 "The Painter"

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231

ready-at-hand and present-at-hand involvements are well-constituted in *Dasein's* everydayness. From there, we will turn to the *uncanny* or "not-at-home" quality of anxiety, and explore the experience of losing one's home. By doing this we will be in a position to see the fragility of home, and by way of that, home's nature of being something that is open to change and open to becoming something new.

## **2.2: A Recapitulation of the Experience of "Home"**

While anxiety is undoubtedly a challenging experience for one to endure, it is something that only appears intermittently in human experience. As Heidegger says, the true experience of anxiety is rare, and the more common experience is the "everydayness," or "averageness" of being-at-home in the world where one is not challenged by anxiety's call to acknowledge one's responsibility to exist in the world.<sup>5556</sup>

As previously discussed, *Dasein's* being-in-the-world allows for its "everydayness" which grants *Dasein* the ability to become absorbed into a local environment in an intelligent and pre-reflective way. It is in this pre-reflective "everydayness" that *Dasein* spends most of its time, where it is caught up in the use of an inconspicuous world where things are at the ready, and where *Dasein* can exude a sense of confidence, and self-assurance about itself as being-in-the-world. These qualities of confidence and self-assurance that one exudes in their everydayness are crucial to recognize as features of *Dasein's* potential existence because, as we have seen, they serve an important role in understanding the specific quality and "feel" that takes place when one

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<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 100

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 198. Richardson writes that *Dasein* is generally "lost in the superficiality of everydayness." It is when *Dasein* is "lost" in this, that it does not have to thematize its own existence as an explicit issue for itself, as it does in anxiety. This is why Heidegger says that being-at-home is tranquil (See p. 233 of *Being and Time*).

is at home in the world. Heidegger contends that it is primarily people who are assured by their connection to the world, and those who are confident in their comportment towards that world, that are at home in it.<sup>57</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the confidence and self-assurance expressed here are not of the order of, "I reflectively *know* of my confidence and self-assurance," but rather find their expression in individuals when they can reliably (and unreflectively) depend upon themselves to engage the world meaningfully through their tasks and behaviours. As such, if one is at home, one's self-assurance and confidence becomes the meaningful context through which *one's activity* expresses itself, which means that there is no doubt as to one's capacity to act and engage with things when one is truly at home because one is unreflectively self-assured that one can do so.

When things are at the ready for *Dasein*, and when its behaviour is inconspicuously deployed in the world, *Dasein* is assured of itself and is at home in the world. It is here that one no longer feels one's own salience as a human being — as something that "stands out" in the world. It is this salience that particularly falls out of view when one is at home because when one is at home one has folded oneself into one's surroundings and has understood what is "ready" and "present" there. As we have seen in Chapter One, it is by being-at-home that *Dasein's* surroundings have become known and have become capable of being anticipated, and so *Dasein's* self-assured activity occurs when it is at home because it does not have to consider how it will make use of its environment to make its way through the world since it *knows* that it "can" dependably make use its environment to make its way through the world. We saw an example of this in Chapter One with the individual who used her environment to support the task of her writing. It was suggested there that she was able to utilize her pen, paper, chair, and desk in a

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<sup>57</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233: *Being-at-home* is understood here as tranquilized self-assurance.

non-reflective way because she was at home in that situation, and because she could confidently and self-assuredly comport herself to the needs of her situation by resting on her understanding of her environment that was non-thematic. By involving herself in this way, she could effectively "drop out of view" in the task of writing, as her being-at-home in that situation allowed for her to focus squarely on what she was writing rather than focus on her own salience in her room and the various implements she relied on to bring about her writing. As such, this, most basically, is what it means to experience the familiarity of "home:" it is spatial understanding particularized by an individual person through which one exhibits one's own self-assurance which can enable one's own salience to drop out of view.

Consider the experience of entering a familiar abode, one that you call "home," and one that you return to each day. What is this like? Even at face-value, entering such a place is unlike any other structure that you may have entered throughout your day. The evidence of this is made clear by the very way you likely take your first steps into your home and how the immediate environment comes to life for you. For example, one often experiences the immediate compulsion to interact with one's home in various ways when one first enters it: The place for shoes is "there," the coat is to be hung on the hook by the door, one's mail and one's keys are to be placed on the nearby table, and the light switch is to be flipped on because the night has enveloped the house in darkness. This is one's home as experienced as a home. It is not a place where one has to reflect upon how one is to become involved with things, but rather it is a place where one is *already* beyond one's reflection and *already* involved with things. When one first enters one's home, one immediately sets into motion the meaningful relations and various significances that have personalized that place and made it one's own. One folds into this place,

and belongs there, and this is made possible because *Dasein* can, in principle, adhere to its surroundings that are understood, and be at home in them as being-in-the-world.

This experience of one's home as *a home* highlights the difference in how one may experience the home as a *house*, or as a geometrical object. The house as interpreted as a geometrical object is viewed as a site for measured distances and dimension, as four walls and a roof. The significance of differentiating home and house is to highlight the difference in how *Dasein* can interpret a structure as a site of familiarity (home), or as a site of cold geometrical dimension (house). When *Dasein* is at home in this structure, things are at the ready for it, so much so that *Dasein's* activity takes on an easy and automatic character, and *Dasein* itself drops out of view through the deployment of its behaviour. However, if *Dasein* is not at home in the structure, and is rather within it as a house, the structure's geometrical features appear salient and conspicuous, and the very materiality of the surrounding structure takes on a foreign and distant quality rather than welcoming and intimate one.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, *Dasein itself* becomes something salient and something to be noticed in this cold environment, as the question of how to "fit into" this place becomes a thematized issue specifically because *Dasein* is not at home in this place. As a result, the difference highlighted here is the difference between *Dasein's* potential stance regarding a structure in the world. In particular, it highlights the phenomenon of a house before it has become a home.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This is similar to the experience that was highlighted in Chapter One that focused on what it is like to be in an interviewer's office.

<sup>59</sup> The "geometrical understanding" is how one *first* encounters their home as a house, but not how one actually *lives* in that home; it refers to a place in time before one's home became a unique space for dwelling — a place in time when the spatial dimensions of the house had no rapport with the inhabitant, and when no connection had yet been made. The house, therefore, is an opportunity to make a home.

Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*, offers a complementary description of the difference between the house and the home. As Bachelard points out, once a house has been *experienced* as a home, the geometrical view stands aside from it, because: "inhabited space transcends geometrical space."<sup>60</sup> This is an importantly good description of the difference between a house and a home because it sheds light on the possibility for an individual to experience a shift in their understanding of a particular place in the world when that place has become a home to them. While it is pointedly true that places in the world can initially seem cold and distant to us, it is also importantly true that when we insert ourselves in those places, and when we truly *inhabit* those places by understanding what can be ready-at-hand or present-at-hand there, that we can enact a fundamental shift in our understanding of that place. It is because we can pull things close and understand them in these ways that these things can lose their foreign and distant quality, and that we can "transcend" geometrical space as Bachelard suggests, and be at home in the world. Once this transcendence has been experienced, we usher in a completely new relationship to our environment, one where we can feel confident and self-assured in our stance towards it, rather than separate or alienated from it.

The foregoing analysis in this chapter has spoken of home in the sense of its relation to the buildings that *Dasein* finds itself in, showing it to be specifically realized in physical abodes. While these physical abodes provide the most obvious case for when being-at-home can occur, they are not the only way to experience home. Since one's being-at-home is made up of the same phenomenal content as *Dasein's* everyday self-assuredness and readiness to become intelligently involved with the world, one can be at home outside of one's house. For example, walking along the sidewalk of a busy street can become such an ingrained behaviour in one's everyday activity

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<sup>60</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 47



that it too can exude a homelike character. Even though cars may speed by in aggressive ways, and people may serve as obstacles as one traverses the sidewalk, the familiarity of the sidewalk itself can become so pronounced that its readiness, and homelike character, announces itself. This can be seen when one knows where to not step on a bad section of the sidewalk, and when one knows how to duck under a troublesome low hanging branch that blocks the way, or when one knows how to pass a fellow walker that is slowing the flow of movement. The fruition of these activities can achieve a seamless automatic character, and since this is so, one can feel at home on the sidewalk, and self-assured about their involvement with it. Even "K," when he is working at the bank in *The Trial*, experiences the homelike character of his environment by knowing where he should work and how he should work there. Though K's experience is most basically characterized by an anxiety that generally prohibits his casual comportment to the world, he still manages to make his way through the world because he is at home in his city. This is possible because K's ability to navigate the world is precisely what his home is capable of providing for him if he has established it in the world: It provides for him the means to *exist*, not just in a theoretical attitude that studies and interrogates the world, but to exist as united with the world and as seamlessly incorporated into it with things to do. As such, one's sense of "home" can indeed extend outside of one's physical abode because *being-in-the-world means that one can pull one's environment close and establish familiarity*. This means, ultimately, that the streets in one's town can become as familiar as the hallway in one's house.

Having recapitulated the experience of home, we can now turn to address the second aspect of anxiety that this chapter focuses on which considers anxiety's capacity to disclose the world as "not-at-home" and as lacking its usual meaning where, "the totality of involvements of

the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence."<sup>61</sup> It will be by focusing on the loss of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand, and the subsequent loss of home that this entails, that we will be able to understand the fragility of home that anxiety makes apparent in human experience. Moreover, it will be by focusing on this fragility we will be in a position to understand home as a feature of human existence that is inherently responsive to alteration, as the experience of anxiety will reveal home to be an impermanent aspect of our lives rather than a permanent aspect that we can depend on for all time.

### **2.3: Anxiety's Disruption of Home**

As outlined previously in the example of the man who waits for his bus anxiously, the man's anxiety announces that he has a responsibility for determining his own existence. This is why, in part, anxiety has a threatening character, because it can announce a sense of responsibility that one has for oneself as a being in the world. While this captures an important sense in which anxiety can be threatening to those who experience it, it can also emerge in another threatening way when one recognizes the specific disruption it can introduce to one's sense of being-at-home in the world in which one is self-assured and familiar with one's surroundings. It is this second way that anxiety can emerge in human experience that shows that one's being-at-home in the world can be *halted*, where one's "everyday familiarity" can collapse, and where one can distinctively feel oneself to be "not-at-home" in the world.<sup>62</sup> This type of threat is different in kind from recognizing one's own responsibility to be a being in the world. This is because this type of threat stems from the very way that the world itself has been presented to one, a world

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<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231

<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233

that has been presented as alien and uninviting, and a world that puts into question the very meaning of one's home itself.

As we have seen, when we are at home, we populate our world meaningfully and confidently. We know, for example, how to conduct ourselves in an everyday way, by using things and doing things, all without thinking about how to bring about this behaviour thanks to our being "at home" in the world and our being "ready" to inconspicuously engage the world. However, when we are anxious the world ceases to exhibit this "ready" character. As Heidegger writes, "Anxiety brings *Dasein* back from its absorption in the world."<sup>63</sup> It is in this experience that we cease to be non-reflectively absorbed in the world because our anxiety prevents this way of relating to the world from expressing itself. Anxiety is able to do this because through it we are capable of a new awareness of the world, one that is at odds with our usual awareness of the world that depicts it as a familiar (and accommodating) site for our everyday life.

This new awareness of the world that is made possible through anxiety is what Heidegger calls the "uncanny," or "not-at-home" awareness that anxiety can produce.<sup>64</sup> It is through this uncanny awareness that the very way that the world has become significant and compelling for *Dasein* falls to the wayside and takes on a pointedly unfamiliar, and peculiar character, where "beings as a whole become superfluous" and can "slip away."<sup>65</sup> This is one of the more salient and startling aspects of anxiety that can be potentially disclosed to someone who endures it because through such an experience one can feel one's *familiarity* draining out of the world in such a way that one's experience with the world *feels novel and unexplored*, as though one had *not spent one's life* making a physical location or situational encounter familiar or at home to

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<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233

<sup>64</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 233: "Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that which *Dasein* finds itself alongside in anxiety, comes proximally to expression: the "nothing and nowhere."

<sup>65</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 102, p. 104

one. The anxiety of "panic attacks," and the symptoms of derealisation and depersonalization that entail it, offer a complementary way of conceiving of anxiety's unfamiliar disclosure of the world, as these attacks are spoken of in this same exact register.<sup>66</sup> As Hunter et al, note, "depersonalization is an experience in which the individual feels a sense of unreality and detachment from themselves. This is often accompanied by the symptom of derealisation in which the external world also appears unfamiliar." Hunter et al, go on to say, "Sufferers often describe their experiences of unreality as if they are living in a dream, and their sense of detachment from the world as though they are viewing life from behind glass. These experiences are not delusional since the sufferer retains insight that these are subjective phenomena rather than objective reality."<sup>67</sup>As such, we can see that anxiety, as Heidegger describes it, shares much in common with the depersonalisation and derealisation that a panic attack is capable of issuing, precisely because both of these things describe a disclosure of the "not-at-home" nature of the world in human experience in which one can gaze out at something unfamiliar, rather than something familiar.

As we have seen, when one is caught in the throes of anxiety one can feel estranged from one's environment, but it is also through this experience that one can also feel as though one's environment is not a site from which one can confidently launch their projects, because, as Heidegger says, it is in anxiety that things "recede" from *Dasein*, and so one's comportment towards one's environment becomes difficult if not outright impossible in anxiety.<sup>68</sup> As he says, "The receding of beings as a whole, closing in on us in anxiety, oppresses us. We can get no hold on things. In the slipping away of beings only this 'no hold on things' comes over us and

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<sup>66</sup> Of the 13 potential symptoms of panic attacks that the DSM-V describes, it is the 11th that outlines the potential for derealisation and depersonalization.

<sup>67</sup> Hunter et al. p. 1122

<sup>68</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 101

remains."<sup>69</sup> When one experiences anxiety one is still within the material world, and is still surrounded by the same material things, but in this anxiety *Dasein's* comportment to both the material world and the surrounding situation is threatened, and so *Dasein* lacks its usual confidence to reach its surroundings because they have been presented to it as unfamiliar (or "unreal") in its anxious state. It is for this reason that Heidegger writes: "Here, the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand discovered within-the-world, is, as such, of no consequence; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance."<sup>70</sup> Anxiety, then, puts *Dasein* in a unique relation to space, one where *Dasein* can perceive the world as pointedly "new," and where it can register the world not as its well-developed home, but, rather, as its *lack of home*.<sup>71</sup> As a result we can see that anxiety is distinct in that it affects humanity at the level of its closest and most readily realized sense of familiarity in the world — its home. Accordingly, it is because of anxiety that human beings can exhibit an existence that finds them capable of fluctuating between being-at-home in the world and not-being-at-home in the world. This is because anxiety has, within its own power, the capacity to pluck human beings from their homes and occasion them with the opportunity to gaze out at a world that is not their familiar home, but, rather, a world that feels *novel* and unexplored in a genuine way.

I will now turn to isolating and describing this experience of novelty that anxiety is capable of disclosing to *Dasein* by exploring Heidegger's work on the "nothingness" of anxiety.

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<sup>69</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics [Pathmarks]*. p. 88

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231

<sup>71</sup> Richardson, *Heidegger*. p. 73: "There-being [*Dasein*] is not anxious about any being in particular but about the complete indetermination of the World as such...as it is when stripped of all modifications and association with others, left to the empty individuality of a being whose only characteristic is to-be-in-the-World."

From this, we will see that the novelty that anxiety generates enables *Dasein* to see into the fragility of its home because the novelty presented in anxiety is at odds with *Dasein's* seemingly well-constituted understanding of being-at-home in the world. The fact that anxiety can occasion within *Dasein* an opportunity to see a fresh new world will be the evidence, then, that home is fragile, impermanent, and malleable.

#### **2.4: Anxiety's Disclosure of Nothingness: Anxiety as a Novel Opening unto the World**

In Heidegger's essay "What is Metaphysics," anxiety is explicitly taken up as a theme of phenomenological study. The chief difference between the analysis of anxiety provided in "What is Metaphysics" and the analysis of anxiety provided in *Being and Time* is found in how the latter primarily focuses on *Dasein's* potential to be authentically itself, whereas the former focuses on the fundamental makeup of anxiety as a particular (and unique) disclosure of the world. In *Being and Time*, the earlier of the two works, anxiety has a strong relation to death, as it is revealed there that *Dasein* is authentically owning up to its own death through its anxious mood, in that anxiety allows for a sober and sound-minded recognition of *Dasein's* own finitude which allows for it to see its own opportunity to engage the world on its own terms.<sup>72</sup> In "What is Metaphysics," however, there is no talk of death nor authenticity in its relation to anxiety at all. This is because the essay focuses primarily on the experience of anxiety as a depletion of the world's meaning and how this experience constitutes a unique disclosure of the world itself. For the purpose of this final section, the focal point of the proceeding analysis will aim at "What is Metaphysics'" project of providing a phenomenological description of how the world itself appears to *Dasein* through its anxiety. By doing this we will see how anxiety discloses a novel

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<sup>72</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 310

world by revealing "nothingness," and through this we will be able to see into the fragility of home and into the fragility of our developed familiarity in the world.

As has been stated, anxiety challenges the way in which *Dasein* inhabits space in its "everydayness." Anxiety is able to do this because it is a mood or "attunement" of *Dasein's*. Moods, for Heidegger, are phenomenally unique because they are capable of disclosing or revealing the entirety of the world as something *for Dasein* which can either contribute to or hinder *Dasein's* everyday use of the world by making that world available to *Dasein* in a way specific to its mood.<sup>73</sup> This is one of the more fascinating and interesting observations offered by Heidegger, because it suggests that *Dasein's* world is fundamentally disclosed in accordance with a particular mood that it experiences, and that this disclosure itself lends to the project of constituting the intelligibility of *Dasein's* world by making that world available to *Dasein* in ways specific to the mood experienced. As Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, moods, such as happiness or sadness, "throw" *Dasein* into its "there" and reveal the "there" as such. As he says, "mood brings *Dasein* before the 'that-it-is' of its 'there,' which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma."<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, any "there" in which *Dasein* finds itself is a "there" in which *Dasein* is already emotionally comported towards, where the world itself is opened up to *Dasein* in accordance with the emotion that it experiences. As a result, the world itself, in all of its importance for *Dasein*, becomes available to *Dasein* through the emotion that attunes it, and, as Heidegger argues, no world can be disclosed without an accompanying

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<sup>73</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics [Pathmarks]*. p. 87: "Finding ourselves attuned not only unveils beings as a whole in various ways, but this unveiling - far from being merely incidental - is also the fundamental occurrence of our Da-sein."

<sup>74</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 176

<sup>75</sup> Richardson, *Heidegger*. p 64: Richardson notes that it is because of *Dasein's* moods that it is able to discover its own "luminosity" at any given point in time, precisely because the specificity of one's mood discloses, or uncovers, in part, the "there" of *Dasein's* "being-there."

emotion to guide it whether that emotion is the frenetic concern of fear, or the calm indifference of boredom.<sup>76</sup>

This means that human experience is intrinsically emotional, and that these emotions come to constitute and colour the world. For example, if *Dasein* is sad, its sadness discloses the world as a sad place to it. In being sad, *the very world itself* for *Dasein* takes on a sad character, where *Dasein* quite literally *sees* sadness in the world and navigates through this sadness to explore and interact with the world. In this way, moods have a certain momentum to them. This can be seen by the sad person who has difficulty registering happy or positive moments in their lives because their sad mood itself has disclosed the world and everything in it in a specific and determinate way, namely, a "sad" way that makes the recognition of contrary "happy" things a difficulty to bring about.<sup>77</sup> *Dasein's* moods, then, take over the entirety of the world because *Dasein* discloses the world through its moods, and so they are quite powerful given that they affect *Dasein's* comprehension of the world itself and the things inside of it.

Anxiety, much like sadness, is a mood. Accordingly, it has the power to disclose the world in a specific way for *Dasein*. Formerly we have explored how the "not-at-home" is made apparent in anxiety, and that the "not-at-home" of anxiety prohibits *Dasein's* "everyday" absorption into familiar space because through it "the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence."<sup>78</sup> Now, with an analysis of *Dasein's* mood offered, we can see that anxiety is able to do this because it discloses the world, which is to say, it makes the world available to *Dasein*, by draining it of its "ready" and "present" character, things which are formerly well-constituted when *Dasein* is *not* anxious.

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<sup>76</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 176

<sup>77</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 175: Heidegger suggests that it is when *Dasein* is in "bad moods" that *Dasein* itself can become blind to certain types of "seeing."

<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231



It is when anxiety makes the world available to *Dasein* in this way that "the nothing" of the world is uniquely disclosed. Heidegger writes:

In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the *original openness of beings as such arises*: that they are beings - and not nothing. But this 'and not nothing' we add in our talk is not some kind of appended clarification. Rather, it makes possible in advance the revelation of beings in general. The essence of the originally nihilating nothing lies in this, that it brings *Da-sein for the first time before beings as such*.<sup>79</sup>

Through anxiety, the world can be disclosed for *Dasein* as "nothing," which is to say that the world can be disclosed for *Dasein* as *lacking* its useful and obvious character. It is here where *Dasein* sees the "nothingness" of the world, because it does not see a world that it belongs to, but rather a world in which *nothing* is familiar.<sup>80</sup> As Heidegger says, this experience of nothingness does not lay waste to the world in an annihilative sense, as though *nothing* were left over in the wake of anxiety.<sup>81</sup> Anxiety does not annihilate the *things* of the world, *but rather annihilates Dasein's comportment towards them*, such that these entities are retained in the world but in a way that they are encountered as though *Dasein* has no history of knowing them, nor has any way of channeling a sense of confidence to reach them.<sup>82</sup> This presentation of the world as lacking its useful and obvious character is what Heidegger references through his use of the term

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<sup>79</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*. p. 103 My emphasis.

<sup>80</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*. p. 179: "unlike ordinary equipmental breakdown, anxiety is a *total disturbance*. Rather than revealing some part of the workshop world from the inside, it reveals the whole world as if from outside. It reveals the groundlessness of the world and of *Dasein's* being-in-the-world."

<sup>81</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics [Pathmarks]*. p. 90: "Beings are not annihilated by anxiety, so that nothing is left. How could they be, when anxiety finds itself precisely in utter impotence with regards to beings as a whole?"

<sup>82</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. p. 291: "In dread worldhood as such presents itself together with my being in it, without bringing any definite datum to the foreground."

"nothingness" in "What is Metaphysics" as "nothingness" references the specific character that the world takes on in anxiety where the world shows itself to be lacking its usual well-defined meaning. It is in this state where *Dasein* can "get no hold on things," as Heidegger mentioned earlier, because through the disclosure of the nothingness of the world, *Dasein* observes a world in which is not-at-home.

As Heidegger suggests in "What is Metaphysics," looking out at the nothingness of the world in anxiety highlights an experience within *Dasein* in which it can feel itself to be *open to things purely* in the "clear night of the nothing."<sup>83</sup> It is in this experience of being open to an alien world that can lend anxiety its uncanny and bewildering character because in its anxiety *Dasein* can become captivated by the wonder of its own openness unto the world, where it can specifically focus on its openness to entities rather than the specificity of those entities *within* its own openness. As Heidegger says in "What is Metaphysics," *Dasein* "hovers" in anxiety, which is to say that in anxiety *Dasein* has no foothold in its former world.<sup>84</sup> It is in this state that *Dasein* struggles to begin grasping at things in an equipmental or "ready" context because in its anxiety *Dasein* is disconnected from its usual way of being engaged in the world and is rather, in place of this engagement, simply *open* to the world, "hovering" before it. In its anxiety, then, *Dasein* is open to something that it does not recognize as its home, and through this experience it struggles to make-use of this alien environment.

As it has been argued, the experience of anxiety reveals a world in which the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence, a world that, because of our inability to engage with it, takes on a novel and unexplored character. This novelty is, most basically, what we experience of the world when, in our anxiety, we sense our openness to things in the "clear

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<sup>83</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics [Pathmarks]*. p. 90

<sup>84</sup> Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics [Pathmarks]*. p. 88

night of the nothing," as it is in these situations where we are focused on our own opening unto the world rather than the specificity within it. It is this focus on our openness that is novel and bewildering, because this openness to things is devoid of an *understanding of things*.

Everydayness itself can become disrupted in anxiety because what becomes clear through *Dasein* in its anxiety is its *openness to beings* or the "nothingness" of the world, which is an uncanny or "not-at-home" exposure to the world that is at odds with the familiar world that *Dasein* is formerly engaged with in its "everydayness."

As a result, anxiety makes apparent an experience in which we can feel a kind of pure exposure to things, or, one in which we can feel "naked" in the world; where the things of the world are registered as existent to us, but where the specificity of those things and their usability is kept from us.<sup>8586</sup> This experience of anxiety has important implications for our experience of being-at-home, because, as anxiety shows, our homes can "come apart" and count for nothing, as can be seen by anxiety's ability to occasion within us the loss of our understanding of the world. When we are at home, we have direction and can seamlessly exist in the world, but in our anxiety we can feel that we lack direction and feel as though we do not belong *anywhere*. It is in anxiety that our homes are attacked, and where our well-constituted understanding of what things are and how they are useful to us is challenged. As noted earlier, we can see pronounced examples of this phenomenon happening in people who experience "panic attacks" where these individuals are challenged by the "unreality" of the world. These individuals, through their

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<sup>85</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 394: "Anxiety is anxious about naked *Dasein* as something that has been thrown into uncanniness. It brings one back to the pure "that-it-is" of one's ownmost individualized thrownness."

<sup>86</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. p. 291: "The of-which and the about-which of dread are both *Dasein* itself, more accurately, the fact that I am, that is, "I am" in the sense of *naked* being-in-the-world."

immense anxiety, are struggling to find the stability of home.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, their developed understanding of the world and how they are to become involved with it has "come apart" in their anxiety, and this has happened because the world has been disclosed as lacking the character of home.

By affecting our comportment to the world, anxiety shows us something of the nature of our homes by showing what can happen to them in light of the anxious state-of-mind. By bringing down our established familiarity with the world, anxiety shows that it is the nature of home to be plastic and dynamic rather than inflexible and static — as something that is inherently *open* to alteration. While it is true that anxiety shows us that we can lose our homes, it is also true that anxiety can only reveal this insight by granting us a view into the nature of home's malleability, which is to say, the nature of home's capacity to change at all. Home is, in accordance with this study on anxiety, then, something that is impermanent because anxiety can disrupt its nature as something well-constituted. This means, ultimately, that home is something that lacks an everlasting character, and is rather something that is, in principle, malleable and open to change within a human's life from beginning to end, so long as anxiety remains a possibility for humans to endure in their lives.

Providing this study of anxiety is not meant to offer a dark depiction of the difficulty of life, as though the possibility of the destruction of our familiarity were ultimately a bad thing.

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<sup>87</sup> See Pané-Farré et al. p. 523: Pané-Farré et al note that research collected on panic attacks and panic disorders show a tendency for these events to take place outside of the home. In three studies, 92% (Lelliott et al., 1989), 75% (Amering et al., 1997), and 63% (Hara et al., 2012) of the collected samples showed panic attacks that occurred outside of one's home. While the distinction of "home" in these studies points to a geometrical view of it (home as one's house) this trend in the data is fascinating, because it suggests that one's likelihood of experiencing a panic attack increases in places that are less homelike. Being in an area that one is less familiar with, then, could indeed increase the likelihood that someone will have an anxious event that makes the world *even less* familiar to them.

Rather, communicating the inverse has been my intention here, as this study aims to show the inherently liberating character of anxiety by focusing on how it reveals our homes to be not permanent fixtures, but rather sources of familiarity that are fundamentally open to change. While home has been depicted in a predominately positive light in the foregoing analysis, it has also been shown to be a constrictive phenomenon by showing that home enables human behaviour to express itself in definite ways. We saw in Chapter One, for example, that an individual's being-at-home in a hospital enabled them to engage with the space of that hospital unreflectively, where the hospital's wings, workers, and medical tools were things to be anticipated and engaged with in a way that was non-conspicuous. Though the individual's home in the world allowed them to engage with the hospital, this home ultimately constricted their behaviour by channeling it in definite dependable directions in which the question of "how they were to live their life" exhausted itself in what their home had made possible to them. By studying anxiety, we can see that any home, even the home that enabled the individual to work in a hospital, is impermanent rather than fixed because anxiety has shown that one's home lacks permanence. This observation means that we are not committed to specific ways of life because anxiety shows that these commitments that we are at home in are in fact impermanent rather than permanent. As such, anxiety is *liberating* because it shows that we are the kinds of beings that are open to change, and that we are the kinds of beings that can begin a new life.<sup>88</sup>

While anxiety can be understood to be a notion that is liberating, it can also be understood to be something that shows, most basically, the bare necessity for humans to have a home in the world to begin with. This is because anxiety shows us the challenge that occurs

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<sup>88</sup> In this way, we can see a strong similarity between the not-at-home nature of anxiety, and anxiety's capacity to disclose *Dasein's* possibility to "choose itself." This is because both of these reveal human nature to be unsettled, and in need of settling.

when the security and familiarity of home is compromised. By showing us this, it also shows a need for humans to have a home if they are to have a life at all because it shows a need for humans to have a *quality* of life that is not plagued exclusively by disorienting anxiety but is rather stable, and oriented. While home ultimately serves this role for us by providing us stability and orientation, we can miss appreciating this fact, especially if our anxiety is less pronounced. In a state of reduced anxiety we can potentially miss the experience of when our homes are not working properly, and so we can miss having an experience that would foster an appreciation for the important role that home plays in our lives. Heidegger offers a related idea in *Being and Time*, where we can realize the importance and significance of something after it has broken down for us. In the "unreadiness" of holding a broken hammer, for example, Heidegger says that we can see, in effect, that we were involved in the complicated minutiae of determining how hammers were to be held, where nails were to be struck, and the "whole work-world" of our hammering in general while the hammer was still operational.<sup>89</sup> Much in the same way Heidegger's "unready" hammer occasions us with an opportunity to appreciate the role it served us prior to its breakdown, our anxiety too occasions within us an opportunity to appreciate the role our homes play in our lives prior to their breakdown. In particular, we can see through our experience of anxiety that home is of supreme importance to us, as it is in our anxious moments when our homes are compromised that we are granted a unique view into the crucial, life-affirming role that home plays for us. In this way, the breakdown of the hammer and the breakdown of our homes in anxiety provide similar results: both *extract* us from our absorption into things and *free* our awareness enough to take stock of what is of true significance to us.

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<sup>89</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 105

While it is true that anxiety can rip down one's sense of being-at-home in the world and that this can be quite upsetting, it is also true that this can only happen so long as home is something that will, in principle, respond to alteration. We can now turn to the final chapter of this thesis, which will seize hold of the foregoing analysis of home and focus on what it means for home to be responsive to alteration specifically. In particular, the final chapter will show how human effort can be coordinated to adjust one's being-at-home in the world through the habitual contact that it makes with the world. By showing home to be something that we can engage with and change, we will see, in turn, the implication home has for the development of human agency, and human identity. This is because, as it will be argued, a change in what is considered to be home to us will bring a change in what is made possible to us, and when a change in what is made possible to us is enacted, we experience a change in who we are.

### *Chapter 3: Creating Home, and Creating Oneself*

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*Without home man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life.*

— Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

### **3. Introduction**

As we have seen, *Dasein's* anxiety is distinguished by its ability to halt *Dasein's* being-at-home in the world in which it is confidently and self-assuredly absorbed into the "everydayness" of its own existence. This observation has been offered to show that *Dasein's* home lacks an everlasting character, as it has revealed that *Dasein's* home can be brought down, rather than relied upon for all time. This, in turn, has shown home to be something that is inherently responsive to alteration. This is because home can be disrupted by anxiety only if it is something that is open to alteration in the first place. As such, from the preceding analysis of anxiety, we can see that it is home's nature to be open, rather than closed-off to change because anxiety has revealed its malleability.

In this chapter, I will build upon Chapter Two's conclusion regarding the malleability of one's home and explore how a change in one's home can affect the flourishing of one's agency,



and the instantiation of one's identity. To do this, I will draw from Gaston Bachelard and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to explore the nature of the human body's "levels" to demonstrate how the malleability of one's home in the world can be influenced by a human agent. By exploring these "levels" we will see that the development of one's home is connected to one's practice of making habitual contact with one's environment, and that the habits that one forms in their lives come to importantly influence one's sense of being-at-home in the world by serving as the "level" from which an agent can confront the world. This will show, ultimately, that home is something that can be changed if we change our habitual practices and that if we change our habitual practices that we can instantiate a change in what we find existentially feasible. After considering the body's levels and illuminating their power to establish one's home in the world, and, by way of that, their power to unlock a human subject's capacity to act, I will turn to the body's expressive dimension to consider the way in which the body's "levels" appear in the world through the gestures of one's body. This will be done to explore home's relation to identity, as it will be shown that the public and expressive dimension of the body's gestures ultimately displays one's acquired levels and, through that, evidence of one's identity. By exploring the nature of the body's levels, then, we will see that the phenomenal evidence contained within what is considered home to us can serve as the key to understanding who we are, and what can be done by us in our lives.

### **3.1: Bachelard: Maintenance and the "Dispersion of Being"**

The purpose of this section is to explore the nature of home as the means for one to develop their agency as a human being. Ultimately, an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological insight regarding the body and its nature to acquire habits will provide the means to see the connection

between one's home and one's power to act in the world. However, for the purpose of understanding home's relation to human agency, I will first explore the work of Gaston Bachelard to offer a preliminary account of why home is so crucially connected with this aspect of human life.

Within Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, the reader is presented a phenomenological account of space through the analysis of poetic imagery of intimate spaces and places that focuses on how these arenas are near and dear to the human heart. Space, as Bachelard contends, is importantly unique because it can be *inhabited* by a human being, and it is because human beings can inhabit space that they are open to the possibility of its intimacy, where space can lose its foreign and alien quality, and where it can be taken up as one's familiar home, or one's "corner of the world."<sup>90</sup> Appreciating space at this level, at the level of its being a *home* to one, moves one away from understanding space as an inert and indifferent container for human life, and ushers in an appreciation for space that recognizes it for its potential warmth, and intimacy, which are types of familiarity that it is necessary to experience if one is to recognize how space can support human agency.

We can see the importance of having an inviting space for ourselves (or a "warm and intimate" space in Bachelard's terms), and how this is important for us to have for the flourishing of our agency, if we turn to a passage within the chapter "House and Universe" in which Bachelard invites the reader to consider the dichotomous nature between the protection that one's home affords and the potentially threatening character of the world or "universe" that situates it. It is here that he utilizes a poetic image, supplied by Baudelaire, that depicts a lone house

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<sup>90</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 4, p. 5, p. 78

"besieged by winter" to communicate the interplay of house and universe.<sup>91</sup> Through Baudelaire, we see that the house is juxtaposed by universe: Within it, one's house is warm, safe, familiar, and there is a distinct "absence of a struggle," whereas the outside world surrounding it is chaotic and features a threatening wintry hostility that endangers the house's inhabitant. Bachelard writes, "The house derives reserves and refinements of intimacy from winter; while in the outside world, snow covers all tracks, blurs the road, muffles every sound, conceals all colours. As a result of this universal whiteness, we feel a form of cosmic negation in action."<sup>92</sup> It is here that we can acquire a preliminary appreciation for the purpose of the inhabitant's home by means of this poetic image: the home shields its inhabitant from the chaos that surrounds it. It enables a space that permits life in a universe that prohibits it.

We can see the richness of this image and its philosophical strength in describing the importance of home and its connection to human agency by considering Bachelard's own perspective of the power and purpose of one's home which he shares early in his *Poetics of Space*. Here, Bachelard writes: "Without home man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life."<sup>93</sup> Home, as we have seen through Heidegger, provides the possibility for one to operate in the world comfortably and self-assuredly, and, through Bachelard, we have a richer understanding of how this is achieved. As he says, home maintains us — it enables us to confront the "storms of life" by neutralizing the "dispersion of being." But what does this "dispersion of being" refer to?

As Chapter Two's analysis of anxiety has shown, one's home, and by way of that, one's established familiarity, can be lost through anxiety. This loss of familiarity shows us one way in

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<sup>91</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 38

<sup>92</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 41

<sup>93</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 7, XXXVI

which the "dispersion of being" can appear in human experience because when one is anxious, "the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are of no consequence."<sup>94</sup> Our being is dispersed in anxiety because our grip on the world has loosened through it. It is because of this that we struggle to make meaningful sense of the world in our anxiety, as it is through our experiences of it that our formerly oriented and coherent world can lose its orientation through the loss of our ready-at-hand and present-at-hand involvements which have specifically served as our means to have a meaningful sense of the world in the first place. It is in our anxiety, then, that it is as though we are standing in Baudelaire's wintry scene without a home that we can turn to. Bachelard says that home "maintains" us because it provides us a refuge from experiences like anxiety in which our dispersion, or lack of orientation, can be pronounced. As a result, it is because we can be at home in the world that we are not perpetually anxious, and it is because we can be at home in the world that our dispersion has the possibility of being laid to rest strongly enough for us to focus on developing our lives through our agency. On this theme, Jacobson argues that if we lacked a home that our most general recognition of "there" would be in constant retreat, since we would lack the means of laying our dispersion to rest so as to even have a "there" at all.<sup>95</sup> Jacobson, much like Bachelard, then, sees the extreme necessity of having a home, as it is home that constitutes and defines one's place in the world securely enough to have a meaningful world that can be engaged with.

Turning back to Baudelaire's image of the house shielding its inhabitant from the wintry hostility that surrounds it, we can see that the inhabitant's home is indeed serving as a means of maintaining him. Without the home in Baudelaire's wintry scene the man would be fully exposed to the elements and entangled by the whims of the universe. There would be chaos without his

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<sup>94</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 231

<sup>95</sup> Jacobson. p. 361

refuge from the elements, because he would have no place in the world that could offer him the support necessary to see that his exposure to the elements is not all there is to his life. With the home, however, the man has a corner of space that is familiar and known, one that can serve as the dependable base from which he can encounter the universe that threatens him. As a result, it is because he has this home amidst the wintry world that surrounds him that he can begin the project of his life at all.

While Baudelaire's image is indeed poetic and, as a consequence, arguably lacking in philosophical rigor, his image still serves as a beneficial heuristic symbol for communicating Bachelard's assertion that the purpose of one's home is to maintain individuals and to combat the dispersion of being. As a result, this image can be used, albeit in a preliminary way, as a means for deepening this chapter's analysis of home's power to enable human agency, because, as we have seen through Bachelard, one's home plays a crucial role in situating a human being within the universe, and thus plays a role in providing them a meaningful venue in which they can express their activity.

This project will now turn to the work of Merleau-Ponty to show the body's role in developing a home in the world and show the essential connection between habit and familiarity that characterize the workings of that home. From this we will be able to see the strength of Bachelard's conviction that the home maintains human beings and calms their dispersion by showing humans to be "maintained" specifically due to the carving out of one's home that the body makes possible through its acquisition of "levels." This, in turn, will reveal how home enables the flourishing of human agency by showing the body's necessity of having a home in the world to be capable of engaging and interacting with that world.

### **3.2: Levels, Habits, and Homes: Anchorage as a Means to Act**

As we saw in Chapter One, *Dasein* is *being-in-the-world*, which means that *Dasein* is capable of inhabiting its environment uniquely by having a relation to its surroundings in which *Dasein* tacitly *understands* those surroundings. This unique feature of being-in-the-world was outlined through the example of a woman walking through her city. It was noted in this example that the woman walking encountered the immediate sight of buildings and cars, and the smell of pollution and fresh food while she walked rather than the sight and smell of things that were unknown to her and had to be intellectually processed or cognitively determined by her. Walking through the city, then, was not a difficult task, but rather an easy one, because she did not have to reflectively identify and consider the source of each piece of visual and auditory data that she encountered to successfully navigate through her city. This woman was able to do this because she *inhabited her world* and had an immediate understanding of both it and her place within it, as shown by the seamless everyday availability of it, and its settled and understood nature. From this we can see that the woman "understood" her city when she was in it, but that this understanding itself was not the end-product of self-conscious deliberation, but was rather the end-product of her intelligent inhabitation of her world, her "being-in-the-world," which spoke to how her existence itself touched upon the world, and not just how the productivity of her mind touched upon it. This example was offered to show that if one needs to understand one's surroundings, that one does not have to always "think things through," but can rather immediately understand them through the contributions of one's being-in-the-world that has, within it, an incorporated stance regarding the specificity of one's world and one's place within it.

Merleau-Ponty's work on the body's "levels" centers around the human body's capacity to understand the world tacitly, and so it operates in the same philosophical register as Heidegger's

notion of being-in-the-world by accounting for the way in which the world can be non-thematically specified and understood.<sup>96</sup> The body, for Merleau-Ponty, is our very existence. It is something capable of enacting its own intelligence, and is something that can be conditioned into ways of *seeing and understanding* the world that is based on the habitual practices that it has involved itself with.<sup>97</sup> For example, Merleau-Ponty speaks of a blind man who has begun learning how to use a cane to help him maneuver through his darkened world. In the example, the man inhabits a new mode of contact to the world that finds its expression through his familiarity with his cane, that is, the familiarity of holding his cane with his hand to "feel" the world through it. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "When the cane becomes a familiar instrument, the world of tactile objects expands, it no longer begins at the skin of the hand, but at the tip of the cane."<sup>98</sup> Prior to his blindness, and prior to his proficiency with the cane, the man would see with his eyes to view the world, as this was the way in which the world was available to his body as something to be seen. Now, in his blindness, he effectively *sees* with his cane, with the tip of it existing as a sensitive point of contact that dependably (and accurately) reveals the existence of objects to him in a way similar to what his eyes were once capable of. By habituating his hand to the feel of his cane as he uses it to locate nearby objects (and thereby embodying a new habit that understands how to precisely measure distances, and identify specific types of objects through his cane), the man inhabits a new mode of relating to the world, a new form of "seeing" that has its own intelligibility. By inhabiting this new form of seeing, the man establishes what Merleau-Ponty calls a new "level" with which to become informed of the significance of the world and the

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<sup>96</sup>Merleau-Ponty is quite clearly extending and building upon Heidegger's project as found within *Being and Time*, as many of the themes present in Heidegger's work re-emerge in Merleau-Ponty's project, albeit through his formulation of the embodied subject, rather than through "*Dasein*."

<sup>97</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 145

<sup>98</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 153

things in it, in this case, a new way to verify the existence of objects in the world. The development of the habit, then, leads to the establishment of a level, which then serves as the means through which the body is oriented in its understanding of the world.

The level, for Merleau-Ponty, is an embodied habitual commitment regarding *how* the world is considered intelligible and usable for a human subject, and so it is the body's levels that serve as a subject's "hold" on the world as he says.<sup>99</sup> It is comprised of the habits that a body has acquired, and as such both "habit" and "level" are used in reference to the same power within a human body that is used to approach and make contact with the world. The difference, however, and the primary reason why the word "level" is introduced to accompany the word "habit" is to articulate with richer clarity the precise way in which our habits serve us once they have been acquired, as it is these habits that our bodies acquire that serve as the foundation, or "level," with which our bodies have learned to have a world at all. For instance, in the case of the blind man previously discussed, we can see that he has conditioned a new type of bodily contact to the world in which the world itself can now be seen through his cane rather than through his eyes. Having habituated to the use of his cane, and having gotten a feel for identifying objects and distances through it, he now *lives through this new level*, this new way of "seeing" the world. As such, it will be by way of this level that the world attains an intelligibility that approaches that of what was once made possible through his eyes, as the things in his world regain their ability to be "seen" thanks to his new level. By habituating his body to use and see with the cane, then, the world opens up to the man in a different and new way, because through these habits his body has settled a new level from which to approach the world. It is for this reason that the level is indeed

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<sup>99</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 261 "the level is, then, a certain possession of the world by *my* body, a certain hold *my* body has on the world."



a powerful notion, for it is by way of it that the world attains a meaningful face, and the means by which we can understand our place within the world.

On this theme, Maria Talero notes that the body's levels take the form of an "ought" in human experience once they have been acquired.<sup>100</sup> The "ought," something that more commonly finds its expression in ethical discussions, comes to describe the normative dimension of one's perception of the world on Talero's view, because the "ought" comes to describe the very way in which the body habitually commits itself to understand the world, both in how it understands the world to be immediately available to it, and in how it understands the world to be available to it in the future. The "ought," then, materializes when one's body has habituated to ways of interpreting and understanding how the world is necessarily on-hand and ready for its involvement. For example, one habituates to the expectation that objects of a certain size and weight can be lifted by one's hands, or, one habituates to the expectation that doors or windows can be opened, or, using the previous example, one habituates to the expectation that the world can be identified through the tip of a cane. The "ought" that is contained within these levels of approaching the world are not simple, optional means through which one may or may not perceive the intelligibility of the world, but *the means* through which one has acquired a way they *ought* to perceive the intelligibility of the world. As such, they come to explain how the world itself opens up to an individual as something to be engaged with, and, correlatively, they come to show the parameters of one's possible engagement with the world by serving as *the terms* of having a world to begin with.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Talero. p. 443

<sup>101</sup> See Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*. p. 24: Gary Madison writes in his commentary on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, "My body teaches me what space is, because it is itself the author of space. It is the body which makes it be that there is for me a far and near, a low and a high. The world is spatial for me because I inhabit it by means of

Take, for instance, the habit of walking. Generally we do not consider this to be a habit of ours given the central importance it serves in our day to day lives. Indeed, we can often lose sight of the fact that we once learned *how* to walk, as we busy ourselves. However, if we consider the fact that newborns are not able to walk from birth, we can quickly see that this is indeed a learned behaviour and one that had to be developed over time with practice.<sup>102</sup> Once we have acquired a habit for walking, through the difficulty of habituating our bodies to understand what it means to "hold our weight" and through the difficulty of learning how move our legs in accordance with this new understanding, we inhabit a new mode of relating to the world — a new level — which comes to be the very way in which we understand the world as available to us. Whereas before the habit was acquired, when we had no option to enjoy bipedal movement, we now, in our capacity for walking, engage the world on these new terms.<sup>103</sup> In keeping with Talero's view, we begin to approach the world as objectively accessible to us through our power of walking, that we "ought" to be able to walk over to an object we desire, or that we "ought" to be able to walk up a flight of stairs if we want to go to bed. By acquiring the habit of walking, we also acquire a level from which to comprehend the world, and so our levels come to shape the

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my body." Madison writes this because human subjects depend upon their *being a body* for space to become meaningful. As bodies develop and acquire specific ways of habitually "having" space, space itself opens up in a way that is dependent on how the body has been conditioned. Hence we can have different spatial availabilities depending on whether we have learned to see space through our eyes, or through the tip of a cane, for example.

<sup>102</sup> See Adolf & Avolio, p. 1148: The authors note that infants acquire mobility by adapting to both their changing environment and to their changing bodily dimensions. The changes in bodily dimension are noted to particularly impact the difficulty of learning how to walk in the beginning of the infants' learning, as infants grow rapidly, and the need to adapt to changes in weight distribution happen regularly, hence the initial wobbliness of an infant's gait.

<sup>103</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. p 151. "With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated."

very way in which we interpret the world and our possibilities within it as it is these levels which demarcate what is familiar to us, and, by way of that, what is possible for us.

It should be noted, again, that the "interpreting" and "understanding" that is taking place when one knows that they can walk to a certain place is not an intellectual consideration, but a bodily one. One's *body* knows that it can walk through space once the habit for walking has been acquired, such that one's intellectual desire to do something in the world (e.g. wanting to go to bed so that one can sleep) can rest upon the promised fact that one's body can be used to move and bring about a resolution to one's desire. As Gary Madison writes, the body serves as our "pre-personal" means for getting around, and as such, it is "there" ready to be utilized in the background of our existence while we reflectively live out our "personal" intellectual lives.<sup>104</sup> In this way, the thinking "personal" life can draw upon an intelligent "pre-personal" bodily resource to get around the world which means that one does not have to think about the possibility of whether one can walk to bed, because the body's habit for walking serves as the context through which the desire to go to bed becomes an available option in the first place. As a result, one's intellectual desire operates in conjunction with the body that has made the world available and open to it in specific ways, and this openness is not explicitly intellectualized as it serves as the means for having a world to begin with. This means, ultimately, that the individual can desire to "go to bed," but never question the specific bodily movements that will be required to do so, either while actually walking to bed, or in the initial stages of desiring to sleep.

As demarcations of created familiarity, the body's levels bear a strong connection to home. Indeed, these levels, once acquired, perform the same role that our home does. As it has been argued through the forgoing analysis, our being-at-home finds itself expressed through our

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<sup>104</sup> Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*. p. 26

confident, self-assured activity in the world through which we can have a seamless pre-reflective involvement with our environments. As a correlate to being-at-home, the level, as meaningfully informed by the habits one has acquired, similarly enables confident, self-assured activity in the world. As Merleau-Ponty writes of the man who has habituated to the use of his cane to see the world, "Habit does not consist in interpreting the pressure of the cane on the hand like signs of certain positions of the cane, and then these positions as signs of an external object - for the habit *relieves us of this very task.*"<sup>105</sup> The habit relieves the blind man from over-intellectualizing his use of the cane, and leads to its feeling natural to him, as something he feels confident using as his means to approach the world. As such, the man is *at home* in the use of his cane once he has habituated himself to the feel of it when identifying things in the world, as it has become for him the very way in which he is someone who can contact that world to begin with. What counts as home to us, then, is strongly influenced by the habits of expectation that we have acquired in our lives, and it is through our having established habits that we are capable of feeling confident and self-assured enough to become pre-reflectively involved with the world.

As it has been shown, individuals see the world and operate in accordance with their established levels. We saw this with the walker who experiences the world as invitingly open to their power of walking, as a place that they would be able to exercise their bipedal movement without question. The walker, as it has been shown, "sees" the world through their level, which means that they can utilize a developed and familiar mode of understanding the world rather than tirelessly engage the world in situations that would require wholly genuine and authentic responses of them. For example, one does not have to re-learn how to make use of city transit every time it is utilized if one has habituated themselves to the demands of navigating such a

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<sup>105</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 153

thing; rather, if one is presented with the opportunity to use transit in subsequent experiences, one's body can fall back upon the established level that had previously sketched out how to make use of it. As a result, an individual that has established a level of familiarity with a city bus is someone who knows how to exchange fare for a transfer, knows how to stand securely while the bus is moving if its seats are full, and knows how to request a stop by pulling the bell-cord. This individual, as an agent whose integration into the world is characterized by acquired levels, knowingly moves in accordance with their past achievement of using the bus, such that their present success at using it relies on and works in conjunction with their accumulated success of using it. As such, this individual utilizes previous levels that have been acquired to engage new uses of the transit system and uses these levels as important guides to comprehend these new uses to do so. In this way, one's levels anchor oneself in the world as one's home does, as both of these terms point to the way in which a human being becomes situated in strong bonds of familiarity that enable them to act intelligently in the world.

Interestingly, if one's experience with a city bus is underdeveloped, or, if one's experience with it has been marked by difficulty or a hardship, this hardship or inexperience can also serve as the level that the body utilizes in its exposure to the transit system. In other words, we can become habituated to troubled responses to situations, just as we can become habituated to more smooth and effective responses. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "Each level in which we live appears when we drop anchor in some 'milieu' that is offered to us. This milieu is itself only defined spatially for a previously given level. Thus, each of our experiences in sequence, back to and including the first, passes forward an already acquired spatiality."<sup>106</sup> As Merleau-Ponty has made clear, levels are passed forward into one's present experience regardless of whether one passes

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<sup>106</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 264

forward an experience that is good or bad. As such, the individual with a rough history of dealing with the city bus can pass forward a level that makes subsequent experiences with the bus a difficulty. Since the level that was acquired was based on an unsuccessful navigation of the situation, the individual's subsequent exposure to the transit system may be predisposed to recognizing it in a negative light, one that could, arguably, lead to a certain timidity that might prohibit subsequent uses with the transit system. For example, perhaps an individual fell down while failing to grip a support bar as the bus drove forward. In this case, this individual's body may have acquired a level of familiarity with the bus, which is to say, this individual's body may have made itself a home in the world, that revealed the bus to be a site for pain, embarrassment, and great difficulty. Since this individual passes forward this acquired level into their present experience, the individual may stand on the bus in subsequent experiences with uncertain legs — if they get that far — knowing what is capable of transpiring.<sup>107</sup>

Though a negative impression can be acquired, and, indeed, acquired as a level that comes to shape how one views the world, this level does not have to be the last one. Though the body can become quite invested in the habits it has already acquired (and therefore might resist

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<sup>107</sup> Up to this point, home has been understood in variety of ways: that our being-at-home expresses itself to the world through our confident and self-assured activity, that it provides one's life direction and orientation, that it can be expressed through one's everydayness, and that it is meaningfully informed by what levels one has acquired through the habitual contact that has been made in the world. In this example, one's subsequent experience with the bus, post-fall, is charged with timidity, something that seems antithetical to a confident and self-assured stance that should be taking place if this individual is "at home" on the bus after their fall. However, self-assuredness and confidence in the context of home is not always a matter of feeling *good* or *positive* with respect to what one is at home in. The timid bus rider is self-assured and confident that the bus is a site for pain and embarrassment, not that he or she will have a good experience with it or that he or she will be in a position of calm and collected control, as confident people generally are. In this way we can see that the type of confidence and self-assuredness that takes place when one is at home in the world can take on a negative face, as it references not exclusively one's capacity to do this or that but rather one's way of confidently having the world available to them.

the introduction of new, contrary habits) it is forever open to catch more. As the previous chapter on anxiety has outlined, our home in the world is malleable. Anxiety was specifically addressed to outline this fact because it showed that even the strong bonds of familiarity that are present in one's sense of home are things that can become undone. Now, in light of Merleau-Ponty's insight regarding the body's levels, we can see another path to recognize home's malleability rather than its rigidity, albeit from a different angle. We can see this because Merleau-Ponty's analysis allows us to recognize that human beings are strongly informed by their collected levels, but that this does not preclude the possibility of introducing new levels because *habits themselves are things we are forever open to catch*.<sup>108</sup> With that said, if we are to introduce new levels into our lives, or new habits, it will only be possible to do so through our previously collected ones by introducing new behaviours in the world that are importantly conditioned and contextualized by our past. What this means for the timid bus rider is that their timidity can only be laid to rest by taking up their acquired level of uncertainty, and by *living through that level* in subsequent experiences with the transit system. It will only be by acting through these acquired levels that the possibility for developing a new (more positive) level in its place can arise, and, given this, it follows that one can only grow through their established levels since growth itself will always be conditioned by the openings one's levels allow for.<sup>109</sup> While difficult, the promise of accruing levels is there, as home's malleability is promised, not just through the fact that we can

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<sup>108</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 144

<sup>109</sup> Russon, *Human Experience*. p. 88: Russon comments on this idea in its relation to an individual who is caught in the habit of eating poorly: "Because the habit is a habit of interpretation, changing her habit will mean building new habits of interpretation that will supersede her old ways. But since her very capacities for intelligence and interpretation are embodied in her habits, this learning will mean working with the capacities afforded by the old habits to change those very habits. Her goal must become rehabilitation that means she must want not to act in specific ways simply because they are familiar, but to become familiar with the specific ways she wants to act."

experience anxiety, but also through the fact that the body is inherently open to "catching" habits.<sup>110</sup>

The body's levels, and, by extension, the body's home in the world, have a fascinating degree of elasticity and malleability integrated into them that accommodates the possibility for individuals to change.<sup>111</sup> It is because they allow for one to change that they are intimately connected to issues of *agency* within human experience. As Bachelard writes of home, "First it is a coat of armor, then it extends *ad infinitum*, which amounts to saying that we live in it in alternate security and adventure. It is both cell and world."<sup>112</sup> Here, Bachelard sees the home as a requirement for *adventure* in the world. This is because without a home we would lack the means to live in the world because our experience would be limited to the perpetual absence of familiarity — an experience devoid of meaning, security, and direction, one that would be fully (and permanently) characterized by the "dispersion of being."<sup>113</sup> Having a home, and by donning one's "armor," one is granted the opportunity to have adventure, to explore, and to make choices for oneself. One has choices when one is at home because one has settled oneself in the world *as* someone who *has choices* available to them. For example, if one acquires the level of standing upright, one has the choice of whether or not to walk into town. If one acquires a level to hold a guitar and manipulate its strings with one's fingers, one has the choice to make music. As a result, we can see that when these levels are acquired that one's efficacy grows, that is, one's capacity to choose to enact intelligent, meaningful behaviour in the world, and, by way of that,

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<sup>110</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 144

<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's usage of "level" to communicate one's acquired habitual contact with the world seems to importantly suggest that one is capable of shifting between different levels to comprehend the world. In this way, the usage of "level" in addition to "habit" seems to suggest room for growth, a "verticality" to one's potential being with room to move up or down in how one approaches the world.

<sup>112</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. p. 51

<sup>113</sup> It would be a perpetual abyss of "nothingness" - the same kind outlined in Chapter Two.



the possibility for one to involve oneself in the world *and do otherwise*. As Merleau-Ponty notes, one must learn how to walk before one can dance, which is to say that being able to dance can only come to a human being who has acquired the necessary levels to support and open this possibility as something that can be chosen.<sup>114</sup> Without these levels, one cannot even begin to choose to dance. As a result, levels are intimately connected with the blossoming of human agency, as they open up possible channels for the body to travel, which, then, open up further channels.

There is an important connection between the body's levels and Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world that is crucial to illustrate in order to grasp an appreciation for the implicit variability that characterizes one's home, and, by way of that, the implicit variability of what can be made possible through one's agency. As we saw previously, being-in-the-world is a uniquely human affair, one that grants individuals the possibility of gearing into their surroundings in a non-thematic, "everyday" manner. In addition, the body's levels, as we have seen, account for the specificity of one's involvement with the world, where one can be timid, a guitar player, or someone who walks, for example. Whereas being-in-the-world points to the existential or ontological condition of *Dasein* that allows for its everydayness — that it always *exists* in-the-world — the body's levels point to the possibility for being-in-the-world to take on a variety of different shades such that *different ways to exist* become available through the variability of bodily experience and the habitual contact made through it. Both being-in-the-world and the body's levels are two intertwined notions, then, that circle around the possibility of familiarity, and when different levels are acquired, different styles of being-in-the-world are also acquired

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<sup>114</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 144

which in turn generates the possibility for different flavors of human agency to come about, that is, differences in what can be achieved by human beings.

We can see the relation between the body's levels and being-in-the-world and how this relation affects human agency by way of an example. When one has an established level with a transit system one's being-in-the-world has orientation, meaning that the way one *lives* in the world and the way one is at home in the world is as someone with the transit system as an active feature of one's life, as a possibility that can be chosen and utilized. When one has acquired this level, one exists in an everyday manner as a bus-rider, as someone who can (and does) get around one's city through public transportation and as someone who greets future requirements of moving around one's city through the lens of one's acquired level with the transit system. A person who does not have this level, but rather has a level established in its place that involves the skills of driving (and the ownership of a car), quite literally evinces a different style of being-in-the-world, and, as a result, has a differently geared set of possibilities for their agency.

Whereas the bus-rider exists in his city as bound to bus-routes and scheduling, the car-driver is less restricted. As a result, the car owner experiences her city differently: her job, relatives, and friends are all *closer* for her in comparison to the bus-rider, and, indeed, these things can be accessed in a faster and more efficient manner precisely because her developed bodily skills allow her to drive and thus open up her city differently to her when compared to the bus-rider who lacks these bodily skills. For the car-driver it is not a matter of planning around bus schedules to reach out into her city (which specifically determine *when* the city can be accessed), but, rather, it is about getting into her car and simply driving into it whenever she so chooses. Subsequently, the levels accrued by the two individuals determine different degrees of what can be made possible through their agency, which in this case shows its effect by revealing a

fundamental difference in how quickly one can access their city. As a result we can see that how these individuals have settled themselves in the world — how they have made themselves at home in it — comes to shape their openings onto the city that surrounds them in important ways, openings that determine the ways through which they can exercise their agency.

Depending on the levels established by individuals, different shades of being-in-the-world are produced. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "The possession of a body brings with it the power of changing levels and of 'understanding' space, just as the possession of a voice brings with it the power of changing pitches."<sup>115</sup> By virtue of having a body, then, humans are open to the possibility of great shifts of perspective and orientation — alterations in their being-in-the-world and fundamental shifts in what circumstances they can be at home in. We can see an exceptionally strong example of a human's capacity to alter what counts as "home" if we consider Merleau-Ponty's observations regarding a psychological experiment put forward by Psychologist George Stratton. As noted by Merleau-Ponty, Stratton's experiment focused on how spatial understanding is generated in individuals that are given a special set of goggles that invert their perceived environment. Upon giving the goggles to the test-subject it is noted that the test-subject reported an "unreal" sensation because the inversion of "up and down" brought forth through the goggles was reversed and was so drastic an alteration of their usual perception of the environment that it was "stripped it of its signification."<sup>116117</sup> According to the results of the experiment, even though the test-subject reported great difficulty initially, he did eventually acclimatize to his newly inverted world such that he began developing familiarity and

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<sup>115</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 262

<sup>116</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 263

<sup>117</sup> Stratton. pp. 343-346: Stratton comments on the initial difficulty presented by the goggles: "All images at first appeared inverted; all movements of the body at this time were awkward, uncertain, and full of surprises."

proficiency within it.<sup>118</sup> In light of Merleau-Ponty's observations on the body's levels demonstrated, we are in a position to understand how this drastic example of acclimatization is made possible, and, by way of that, we can see that what counts as home is variable, and consequently, what is possible to us as human beings is also variable.

Merleau-Ponty writes, "At the beginning of the experiment, the visual field appears simultaneously inverted and *unreal* because the subject does not *live* in this field and is not geared into it."<sup>119</sup> The environment, as has been previously stated, appears unreal because of the drastic change in the test-subject's regular perception of "up and down," however, Merleau-Ponty offers a deeper suggestion as to why the test-subject's distress occurs — a suggestion that is reliant on understanding the human being as being-in-the-world and as essentially capable of acquiring levels. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, the individual in Stratton's experiment does not *live* in the world he perceives. Though he is indeed physically alive in this new world, and it is true that he does "live" there, the sense of the word "live" that Merleau-Ponty employs in the above quotation does not concern the basic division of life and death. Rather, the sense that he understands the term "live" is akin to the sense used when one says one "lives" in one's home, where the implication is that the things of that home are ready and available to a person, and where there is no question of how to cohere with situations that utilize these things. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "What counts for the orientation of the spectacle is not my body, *such as it in fact exists*, as a thing in objective space, but rather my body as a system of possible actions, a virtual body whose phenomenal 'place' is defined by its task and by its situation. My body is wherever it

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<sup>118</sup> Stratton. p. 349: Upon the third day of the experiment, the test-subject notes: "I was beginning to feel more at home in the new experience. At no time during the day did any signs of nervous distress appear, and the hours passed more rapidly than on either of the preceding days."

<sup>119</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 262 My emphasis.

has something to do."<sup>120</sup> Consequently, the inverted world appears alien to the test-subject because he does not know how to "live" in this new space and connect with what he perceives, and the reason for this is because the body of the test-subject does not recognize the new orientation of up and down and so it does not have "something to do" as Merleau-Ponty suggests. Furthermore, the test-subject does not know how to live or "gear into" the new environment because the level he operated from prior to the experiment — the level that oriented up and down as definite, dependable directions — was challenged drastically by the goggles. In other words, how the test-subject had made himself at home in the world involved consistent and reliable orientations of up and down, such that these became the way in which he actually *viewed* the world, as a tacit understanding that meaningfully informed his world in the background of his existence. When his traditional categories of "up and down" were explicitly challenged, he experienced the loss of his anchorage in the world, the anchorage that he had been depending on for contextualizing and informing the meaningfulness of his world. As a result, the loss of these existentially cherished orientations was the definite cause of the test-subject's distress.

Interestingly, the fact that the test-subject does acclimatize to the new world suggests that he familiarizes himself with this new world by establishing new levels within it, levels that he can begin to depend on. By slowly recognizing and accepting the new demands that the inverted world has on his body (that down is up, and up is down), the test-subject becomes proficient in it and he begins to *inhabit* this new world. As Merleau-Ponty comments in the voice of the test-subject on the latter stages of the Stratton experiment, after the test-subject's body has established new levels to comprehend the inversion: "the perceptual field rights itself and at the end of the experiment I identify it without any reflection because I live within it, because I carry myself

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<sup>120</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 260

into the new spectacle entirely, and because I locate my center of gravity, so to speak, within it."<sup>121</sup> The test-subject is able to acclimatize to the inverted world because for him, a new perspective of what constitutes up and down is acquired as the new level to comprehend the world, and, as a result, this new level comes to be the new context through which he actually perceives and depends on the world. By establishing these new levels, the test-subject effectively inhabits the world differently, and, by way of this, how he *is* in the world — his being-in-the-world — alters.<sup>122</sup> This takes days in the experiment, and is incredibly challenging for the test-subject, however, the test-subject is so capable of establishing these new levels that when his goggles are removed at the end of the experiment he continues to live out the bodily routines he had established in the inverted world by moving the wrong arm required of him to perform certain tasks in the non-inverted world.<sup>123</sup> His new being-in-the-world, and the new levels he had accrued were so captivating, and so engrossing that he quite literally took them back to the non-inverted world with him.<sup>124</sup> This experiment reveals that one's potential home in the world has an impressive variability implicit to it, as does one's potential to develop their efficacy to engage

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<sup>121</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 262

<sup>122</sup> See Bredlau. p. 495: Susan Bredlau comments on this aspect of the Stratton experiment: "Wearing inverted lenses, therefore, places the perceiver in a situation where she cannot depend on her already established practical knowledge of patterns of sensorimotor contingency and must, instead, establish a new practical knowledge of the particular patterns of sensorimotor contingency that apply in this new situation."

<sup>123</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 255

<sup>124</sup> See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. pp. 82-88. Similar to this case is the phenomenon of the phantom limb where an amputee's being-in-the-world prevents him from accepting the loss of his limb. In both of these instances, the "momentum" of one's being-in-the-world affects how one's present experience meaningfully unfolds and takes shape. In the amputee's case, his being-in-the-world included the full use of his leg and he continues to experience his world as having the ability to utilize his lost limb, because, for him, he still lives in the world as someone who can utilize his limb, though it is now lost. In the test-subject's case, his new being-in-the-world included different orientations for up and down, left and right, and, as a result, he continued to live out these routines when the goggles were taken off. Merleau-Ponty writes, "The phantom limb is thus, like a repressed experience, a previous present that cannot commit to becoming past."

with the world. If one can make a home in the inverted world and begin operating proficiently in it, one's potential to grow and adapt their skills has far-reaching potential.

The experiential levels identified by Merleau-Ponty play an important role for illuminating not only the way in which familiarity operates in human experience, but also Bachelard's earlier contention that home *maintains* humans by neutralizing their "dispersion of being." This is because levels have been shown to be essential for orienting human experience in a dependable way, and essential for providing humans with a foundation from which to confront the world. As we saw in Stratton's experiment, the body's levels play an important role in allowing the world to make coherent sense to us; we saw that they play such an important role that our very efficacy as agents appears to be on the line when it comes to establishing levels because, as the early stages of the experiment showed, the test-subject was essentially crippled by his goggles due to his lacking the necessary levels to confront his new world. From the early stages of the experiment there was a clear need for something to resolve the incoherent nature of the test-subject's experience if he was to begin thriving in his new world, and it was the new levels, and the new home he instantiated in the inverted world, that provided him that much needed resolution. In this sense we can see that one's home, or, one's "levels" maintain us as Bachelard suggested earlier, by providing us with the means of having a meaningful world. Home achieves this by fashioning a coherent sense of the world, and by revealing our familiar place within it, a place where we can begin to exercise our agency. As Jacobson comments, "Learning to be at home is, in other words, learning a new level, and not simply any level, but rather the very level that allows us to belong somewhere such that we can establish a way of being-in-the-world."<sup>125</sup> As Jacobson has noted, our very way of being-in-the-world is on the line

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<sup>125</sup> Jacobson. p. 369

when it comes to levels, for they establish and furnish not only our possible familiarity, but also who we are and what we are capable of. Consequently, if we lack these levels, and if we lack a home in the world, we lack the means of coordinating our human effort to find these things about ourselves — all that remains in their stead is the "dispersion of being."

### **3.3: The Body as Expression: Home as an Expression of Identity**

Having illuminated Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological insight regarding the body's levels, we have now seen what it means for a home to develop in an individual's life. As a result of this analysis we have also seen the enabling effect that a change in one's home has for one's efficacy as an agent. In this section I will sustain this concentration regarding the body's levels, however, I will transition from considering the enabling effect these levels have for one's agency to their capacity to reveal human identity. To do this, I will focus on the communicative or expressive aspect of the body to show that the body is capable of "saying" to the world something of who it is through the gestures that it performs. This will be achieved through an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's account of the expressive capacity of the body which will show, ultimately, that the body's expressivity is a non-optional aspect of its being, and that communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, is something that the body deploys invariably in the world. From there I will show that the gestures that one's body is capable of displaying are informed by one's body having acquired the levels necessary to render these gestures capable of being presented to the world. By showing this connection between gesture and level, we will see that the body's gestures, as meaningfully informed by the levels that it has acquired, *show evidence of a person's history of learning how to be at home in the world*. As a result of this observation, we will see that when one displays one's body that one also displays *how one is* at home in the world, and, through that,



*who one is*, as someone who presently exists as the current form of a unique life-project of becoming someone who is at home in the world in a specific way.

In the chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception* entitled "The Body as Expression and Speech," Merleau-Ponty offers a phenomenological account of human expression which outlines the distinctive role that the body plays in interpersonal communication. Within the chapter, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the body is an inherently *expressive body*, and he argues that there is no part of the body as it lives and moves that is not expressing something of itself to the world and to others. Merleau-Ponty makes this argument by analyzing the nature of angry and threatening gestures. He claims that there is an immediacy to one's comprehension of another's anger when it is presented, precisely because the body is able to be immediately read due to its inherent expressivity. He writes, "I do not perceive the anger or the threat as a psychological fact hidden behind the gesture, I read the anger in the gesture."<sup>126</sup> Anger, as exemplified in shakes of the fist, in bodily posturing, or in cross facial expressions is comprehended *immediately* thanks to the display of another's body, and through this display one does not have to consider the other's private thoughts to determine the anger that takes place. This is because the body, as visible, and as inherently expressive, contains meaning within the very gestures it performs.<sup>127</sup> Extracting meaning from another's body, then, is not generally something that has to be worked out through explicit, self-conscious deliberation; rather, seizing hold of the meaning of another's body is something that is immediately available through the performance and display of the other's gestures.

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<sup>126</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 190

<sup>127</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 190: Merleau-Ponty writes, "The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is the anger itself."

While anger can be an overt emotional expression, there are instances when it can be difficult to discern the anger of another person, especially when the other person's anger takes on a passive flavor. In these cases the body becomes more difficult to read, because, for example, another's external show of happiness can potentially yield to a truer core of internal anger. However, though the accuracy of one's comprehension of another's true feelings can indeed be misdirected, what cannot be misdirected is the fact that the body in question still expresses itself to the world. Though the "truth" of one's display may be in doubt, the body in view still plays a communicative role. Indeed, for the individual hiding their anger through smiles, they in fact count on the expressivity constitutive of their body so that they can successfully communicate to others a false vision of who they are and thus hide their true emotions. In this way one simply rests upon the promised fact that one's body can be interpreted by others when one wants to mislead people, and, while it is true that we may have issues determining what another's body is actually saying, we are always in a position to read into that body because of its inherent expressivity.

If it is true that the body and its gestures are expressive, then something of a body's levels, and, by way of that, the body's *home*, must be expressible too through that body's gestures. This is because the body's gestures can be meaningfully informed by the body's acquired levels, and thus must be expressible to the world. To see how this is so, and to see how this relates to human identity, consider the former example of the body that acquires a level for walking. As it was shown in the example, the individual who acquires this new level is only able to do so by having their world open up to them in a new way, namely, through their new power to walk. Having acquired this level, and having opened the world up through this new context, this individual is granted the ability to walk, but as this individual exercises this new capacity

through their walking we can see that they disclose something of their body's levels when they do so. This is because their ability to walk provides evidence of their acquiring the levels necessary to perform such a task. Consequently, this reveals that there is a communicable dimension to the body's levels because a body that shows itself to be capable of walking in the world serves as evidence of that body's having made itself at home in the world as *something that can walk*, as something that has acquired the levels necessary to enable that behaviour. It follows, then, that the body's gestures are far from simple, for they evince information about a person's identity within them since they serve as evidence of a person's history of developing the familiarity required to act in the world as they do. As such, we can learn who someone is if we observe their bodies, because it is in the display of these bodies that we see the culmination of individuals attempting to be at home in the world.

This observation has fascinating implications for comprehending the availability of one's identity. This is because the public nature of the body can communicate and reveal the depths of one's identity without speech, precisely because any human body that capably moves in the world suggests a lineage of levels that have been acquired by that body to have enabled it to reach that efficacious point.

To see how this is so, consider the difference between the appearance of a carpenter and the appearance of a layman. A carpenter that is on display to the world while working makes her capacity to operate with a number of specialized tools apparent through her actions, and, through this, she also reveals the levels that have allowed for such a thing to take place. For instance, carpenters are generally capable of utilizing tape measures to quickly measure pieces of wood for cutting, which involves using one's steady hand to pull the tape out of its plastic housing and using one's eyes to determine the precise length of tape that is needed for a measurement. While

a carpenter can do this quickly, and indeed, can do this with an impressive amount of accuracy too, someone who is not trained in the trade of carpentry (and does not have a level of habituation for dealing with a tape measure) would have a difficult time acquiring a measurement with it in a variety of ways. For instance, a layman might struggle to read the precise lines of length that are displayed on the tape measure, and might subsequently have to bring his eyes in close to it in order to read the difference between a quarter inch and an eighth of an inch. In similar fashion, the layman would likely struggle to wield a fully extended tape measure, as it is fully extended tape measures that have a propensity to recoil back into their plastic housing if they are not wielded by a confident and steady hand. Though the layman can learn how to use a tape measure with time, as he habituates to the demands of the task, it is through his unsuccessful use with it that he reveals a fundamental difference between himself and the carpenter, right in the very gestures he performs in the world. By leaning in to study the lines of the tape measure, and by failing to keep it extended while he uses it to acquire a measurement, he shows himself specifically *not* to be a carpenter, or someone with a set of levels that would allow for the seamless use of carpentry tools. The carpenter, on the other hand, through her steady and confident handling of the tape measure, reveals that she is a true professional — someone who has training, and experience — and that she is someone to whom the world can turn to for such expertise. In the display of each body we see into who these individuals are as individuals. In particular, we see into their history of making behaviours and tasks at home to them, and, as such, we see what they can do, and how well they can do it.

Though the layman, through his difficulty with the tape measure, reveals that he is someone who struggles in a carpenter's world, he is not without an identity, precisely because he is someone whose identity is partly informed by the bodily levels that have made the world

available to him. Though the layman likely has another vocation that occupies his time, and thus has a differently realized set of levels to inform his life, we can identify features of his identity without even exploring into his vocation, precisely because his levels can be revealed publicly. For example, perhaps he can swim, or perhaps he can sing. Either skill is a habitual way of having the world available to him, and is something that emerges publicly through either his capability to stay afloat in water or through the music he shares with the world. By swimming in the world and by singing to the world, his levels emerge, and through these levels, the project of his identity also emerges.

From this we can importantly see that what levels we have acquired, or *how we have made our home in the world* — as singers, as walkers, as carpenters — is not something that is exclusively private or something that we can completely hide from the world. Rather, how we have settled ourselves, and how we have made our home in the world features an important public dimension, one that finds its expression through the very gestures we perform through our bodies. Consequently, when we see individuals in the world, we see something of how they have dropped their anchors and made themselves at home. We see people skilled with tools and musical instruments, we see people who are timid, we see people who can and cannot dance, we see all manner of life. We see this variability because we see the public nature of humans making habitual contact with the world, and, through that, we see also into the intimate workings of human identity. As Madison writes, "while being a visible part of the world, the lived body is not like other visible parts of the world and other biological bodies, but is, in its very corporeity, more than it is — it is that "opening" in the world whence an invisible world, a world of meaning, emerges in the midst of *visibilia*."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*. p. 50

### **3.4: Concluding Remarks**

As the Introduction to this project asked, "Why is home something that we turn to, and why is it something that we so naturally revere?" Can we answer these questions now, having reached the final section of this project? Indeed we can.

Home is something that we turn to, and is something that we so naturally revere because it is the source of our familiarity in the world. Though we typically consider our home to be located within a cherished place in the world, between the walls of a specific house, we now know that this is a limited conception of what home can be. This is because we have now seen that home is much more than a special place that we wish to return to at the end of our long days, as we have seen that it is the nature of our home to be, rather, our means for having a meaningful world to begin with. We must, as a result, be capable of *being at home in the world*, and not just at home in our houses, because humanity, as we have seen, requires a recognizable space within which to belong and with which to confidently have a life, and this is precisely what we have seen home to allow for us by focusing on how home situates us in the world. It is for this reason that we so naturally revere it because at some level of our appreciation for home we recognize with gratitude the life-affirming role that we know home provides us. We turn to our home, and gravitate towards it because it is the source of our having a meaningful world, and for that, we are thankful.

Though the Introduction asked a series of preparatory questions regarding home, it also asked a series of preparatory questions regarding anxiety, too. It asked why anxiety could lead us to experience an unfamiliar world, and asked if anxiety could tell us something about our own lives. Are we able to answer these questions too, as we did with those regarding home? I believe so.

In our anxiety we can experience an unfamiliar world because our anxiety is the experience of our home in the world — our anchorage in the world — losing its compelling nature, when we are without our bonds of familiarity, and when we are without our traditional orientation towards the world. But what could such an experience tell us about our lives? It has been argued that anxiety "tells" us that our homes are not meant to be rigid, but rather plastic and malleable. *This* is the significance of anxiety, and *this* is precisely what it tries to tell us as when we are within its grip. I believe this to be so because I believe this meaning behind anxiety captures well that which we tend to recognize about our own lives as we grow into the world: That our lives require persistent shaping, and that who we are is meant to be a "project" from our first day to our last. By stripping us of our familiarity anxiety leads us to the realization that familiarity itself can be engaged with, and it is by becoming aware of anxiety, and by exploring its meaning that we can see that our own lives can be built upon, and that they are inherently (and perpetually) open to change.

This thesis has been entitled "The Familiar and Unfamiliar." Such a title captures well the subject-matter of this project on home and anxiety, but I think it also captures an important sense of what it means to be a human being too. I think this because so much of life itself seems to be spent navigating situations that are close and familiar to us, and navigating other situations that are foreign and unfamiliar to us. We do this with such predictability, and with such inevitability that at any time in our lives we can ask ourselves which domain we presently belong, whether that be the inviting nature of the familiar, or whether that be the alien nature of the unfamiliar. As a result, what it means to "be" a human being seems to mean being something that is intrinsically wrapped up in the project of navigating these opposed, yet complimentary terms of existence. There is just far too much of who we are as human beings that is enmeshed within these terms

for our existence to be characterized otherwise, and so who we are, and who we will become cannot help but take shape within the familiar and unfamiliar.



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