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DWELLING

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It. *Abitare*; Fr. *Habiter*; Germ. *Wohnen*; Span. *Habitar*. The notion of *dwelling* (also: *inhabiting*) refers to a wide range of human conceptions and practices binding individual and collective subjects to their place of habitual residence. Previously identified as an anthropological and ethnographic category, since the mid 20th-century dwelling has expanded to address an existential and aesthetic dimension of human life. Its manifold ramifications have invested all fields of human science related to space, such as geography, environmental psychology, urban studies and architecture. The notion's transversal nature has provided several occasions of interdisciplinary discussion and debate pivoting around the centrality of the subject and its relation to inhabited places. The concept of dwelling is also closely related to and sustains other notions that are central in phenomenology and the philosophy of emotions, such as homeliness and familiarity. The political implications of dwelling, relating it to categories of identity and autochthony, have given way to several strains of criticism and the emergence of opposing concepts, e.g. nomadism and uprootedness.

DWELLING IN MID-20TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

Dwelling plays a central role in Martin Heidegger's philosophy, first appearing in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) and becoming especially prominent in his later work. In Heidegger's 1951 essay *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*, dwelling emerges as a fundamental descriptor of how human existence unfolds in the world, exceeding locational space to include dimensions of rootedness, care and appropriation. Dwelling is thus (a) always specific to a people or a subject, as part of a learnt process of enculturation (Casey 1997), (b) tied to a certain place, in the sense of rootedness and homeliness (Malpas 2006), and (c) a locational unfolding of Being-in-the-world (*Dasein*), bound to sense-making practices and structures (Wheeler 2018). Heidegger's identification between building and dwelling implies a proactive stance rather than a passive, spontaneous

attitude: as Bollnow (1963) concludes elaborating on Heidegger's thought, dwelling requires a special effort countering the "onslaught of the desert", the thrownness of humankind's existential condition.

In Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), the act of inhabiting describes the presence of the subject's lived body in space and time. Inhabitation implies the intertwining between the experiencing individual and the things and other subjects encountered in the world. Dwelling becomes an essential and inherent background, a spontaneous attitude that, however, develops through the efforts of learning *how to dwell* (Jacobson 2009).

Both corporeality and a learnt form of dwelling also ground Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'espace* (1958), where the primordial experience of the unforgettable childhood home serves as a training ground for the inhabitations of all other houses that the individual will eventually encounter in her later life. Habit, according to Bachelard, is the deep liaison our bodies establish with familiar places, re-emerging as corporeal memory in later experience.

THE CURRENT DEBATE

From the Mid-1970s, Heidegger's concept of dwelling provided the foundation for place theory (Relph 1976), a transversal turn focusing on the human subjects' attachment to place and her relation to inhabited space vis-à-vis objectivizing spatial models. Equally indebted to Heidegger is the work of Edward S. Casey (1993; 1997), where dwelling as a human practice is recognized as crucial for the recognition and creation of a significant existential dimension bound to places. Casey's theory, sustained by a dwelling perspective, raises criticism against those models underscoring the vagueness and inconsistency of the concept of place, and the universalism and temporocentrism of Western thought.

Hermann Schmitz's *New Phenomenology* addresses the notion of dwelling from a different perspective. Elaborating on his theory of atmospheres as spatialized emotion, he claims that dwelling purports their cultivation in an enclosed space (1977). In Schmitz's view, although atmospheres cannot be intentionally produced, the dwelling subject establishes a corporeal connection with the forms (*Gestalten*) that are available in the spaces where she habitually resides, becoming carriers of atmospheres of feeling (Schmitz 2014). "Cultivation" implies a proactive attitude, not solely bound to the making or design of residential environments, but rather to the administration and selection of atmospheric feelings that otherwise uncontrollably pervade the world beyond the safe boundaries of home (Griffero 2019).

Geographer Jürgen Hasse espouses Schmitz's situational notion of dwelling, intending one's habitual residence as the place where the vital qualities of lived space unfold as an expression of lived time (2014). In his view, the practice of dwelling acquires a markedly social character extending beyond the boundary of the private residence. The individual is called to an existential task of establishing a complex web of relations to oneself, her contemporaries and the surrounding milieu (Hasse 2008). Dwelling thus proceeds collectively as a binding force from small communities to the wider scale of urban spaces: the act of *caring* for the physical environment – in the Heideggerian sense of *Schonung* – exceeds the purely pragmatic

sphere, addressing a broader social picture of the city as the home of a wide variety of human subjects (Hasse 2019).

The philosophy of dwelling has raised criticism from several sides, especially due to the claim that it sustains a regressive, nostalgic ideology. The most prominent counter-notion is Deleuze and Guattari's theory of *nomadism* (1980), where dwelling is considered part of a practice based on the speed and motion of the contemporary human subject. Nomadic space is substantially opposite to the rooted place of the sedentary inhabitant, becoming deterritorialized and establishing an altogether different interplay with a territory that is considered boundary-less, or where boundaries shift according to human and non-human patterns. The nomad's uprootedness also problematizes the valence of place as a source of identity, as mirrored in the counter-category of *non-places* (Augé 1992).

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

The Heideggerian legacy on dwelling emerges as seminal in several fields of study, due to its cross-cutting, interdisciplinary reach addressing human practices in relation to space. Seamon and Mugerauer (1985) explore how the notion of dwelling can sustain perspectives on human geography, language, embodiment, religious experience, vernacular architecture and the urban condition. Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000) theorizes how Heidegger's building-dwelling dyad can describe two opposite modes of interpreting the human experience in the environment. The building perspective considers an objective, given world that precedes the inhabitant's act of dwelling, as a universal ground of nature that sustains various cultural milieus. The dwelling perspective, conversely, implies that forms of life are not universally given, but rather emergent from situated development processes.

The domain of architectural theory has been particularly influenced by the philosophy of dwelling. Critic Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) leverages on Heidegger's thought to advocate an approach to design poetics meant to overcome the universalist perspective of early 20th century modernist architecture, subjected to intense scrutiny at the peak of the Post-modernist revision. The rootedness of an idealized primitive builder-dweller invokes the revival of local identity, situatedness, regional character and traditional architectural forms, conflated in the recovery of the notion of *genius loci*.

The reception of Heidegger's dwelling in architecture, however, has been widely controversial. Neil Leach (1999) underscores its mythical dimension, as harbinger of nostalgic regressive utopias likely to evoke questionable political orientations in both architecture and city making. The primacy of dwelling as a source of identification, thus, is questioned in the face of the cosmopolitan transformation of the urbanized landscape at a global scale. Equally prompting the revision of the concepts of both dwelling and place is Bernard Tschumi's critical oeuvre (1994). Here, space is no longer considered as a container capable of harbouring processes of attachment and appropriation, but rather as the catalyst of human movement and dynamics that are systematically disjoined from a stable environmental configuration, unfolding as events in a wider territorial network. More recently, in architecture and related design fields an expanded notion of dwelling, more distanced from the Heideggerian influence, has gained renewed

traction as a descriptor of human space-related practices, and of the interaction between the material infrastructure of the built world and the invisible dimension of inhabitation (Vitta 2008).

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