Affective Familiarity and the Experience of Home: A Phenomenological Exploration

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ABSTRACT. This paper provides a phenomenological analysis of the emotional aspects of the experience of home. Researchers have studied home from several perspectives, but there is a need for a detailed phenomenological analysis of the emotional intentionality which underlies the meanings and experiences of home as an emotionally charged place. This paper provides novel conceptual tools for understanding the interrelation between home and its inhabitant's personal identity by introducing the concept of "feeling of ownness". The relevance and meaning of this concept is demonstrated through experiential examples which illustrate how home can be experienced as one's "own". Moreover, this paper discussess and complements Kim Dovey's account of home which construes home as a spatial, temporal and socio-cultural "order". The main result of this analysis is that the experience of home involves an element of affective familiarity, and that homes are structured around things that are personally significant for the experiencing subject.

KEYWORDS. Home; Phenomenology; Feeling of Home; Caring; Personal significance.

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There is no doubt that familiarity is an essential part of our experiential life. In normal circumstances, we live in the midst of objects and people that are familiar to us, in some form or another. Because of this, familiarity has been a topic of phenomenological research since its early days. For example, Edmund Husserl wrote about the experiential origins of normativity; Maurice Merleau-Ponty analyzed the habituality of our lived bodies; and Martin Heidegger examined Dasein's "everydayness" (*Alltäglichkei*t), which is defined by the practical familiarity of our everyday life.[1]

The main objective of this paper is not to examine what earlier phenomenologists have said about familiarity. Instead, I will approach the topic of familiarity through the phenomenon of home. I analyze emotional aspects of the experience of home and argue that this phenomenon includes an element of affective familiarity, which is experienced in relation to things that have become *personally significant* for the experiencing subject. The main idea I will propose and elaborate in this paper is that homes are structured around things that are of high personal value for us, and that interaction with such things enables affective experiences that involve familiarity not only with the home-environment itself, but also with ourselves as feeling and caring beings. I will introduce the concept of *feeling of ownness* in order to describe this affective self-experience and to clarify in what sense it is constitutive for the phenomenon of home.

This paper is structured as follows. First, I offer a review of the study of home. I will review both philosophical and scientific literature in order to clarify how the meaning of home has been understood by researchers. Second, I will introduce my concept of feeling of ownness and clarify its origins in the emotive intentionality. Third, I offer an analysis of the affective components of the experience of home and clarify its intrinsic affective familiarity in light of the concept of feeling of ownness.

1 HUSSERL 1973; MERLEAU-PONTY 2012, 137-48; HEIDEGGER 1962, 95-122, 163-8; STEINBOCK 1995, TAIPALE 2014, 121-68; CROWELL 2013.

1. The meaning of home

As Shelley Mallet (2004) has pointed out, home is widely recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon. The literature on home is vast since the topic has been studied for several decades by researchers from multiple different disciplines including sociology, human geography, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, nursing studies, gender studies, history, and architecture.[2] Even though my own approach is philosophical in nature,[3] I believe that it is worthwhile to find out what non-philosophically oriented researchers have to say about home.

Even though there is no consensus of the final meaning of home, certain themes and key-ideas occur repeatedly in the literature. These have been pointed out and examined by scholars such as Mallett (2004), Despréss (1991), Moore (2000) and Easthope (2004) in their influential research reviews. Any attempt to simply summarize or define the general meaning of home will inevitably overlook some of its aspects, but I think at least a relatively comprehensive and balanced overview of the key-findings can be formulated as follows: homes are places which typically include material, social, practical and emotional features, are designed to provide shelter and comfort to us, but are also defined and shaped by the histories, values and personal imaginaries of their inhabitants.[4] Thus, homes are complex and multidimensional parts of our lifeworlds. They are not reducible to mere houses, apartments or temporary shelters, but still seem to be

2 Despréss 1991; Mallett 2004; Moore 2000.

3 To be more precise, my methodological and theoretical background is in Husserlian phenomenology. Since transcendental and eidetic analyzes depend on creative, systematic, and open-minded usage of imagination and intuition, it is often useful to get familiar with relevant scientific literature as a part of "nourishing" one's imagination. On Husserlian phenomenology and methodology, see Bernet, Kern & Marbach 1993.

4 Blunt & Dowling 2006, 6-29; Easthope 2004; Porteous & Smith 2001, 25-32; Sommerville 1997; Despréss 1991; Mallett 2004; Moore 2000; Relph 1976; Tuan 1975.

essentially related to the given material environment.[5] However, even though it is common to view home first and foremost as a special kind of *place*, some researchers understand home primarily as an *order* of familiar meanings, habits, and expectations, through which a person organizes one's life temporally and practically, orients itself to the world, and achieves a sense of control and stability in life.[6] For instance, since I believe that there is a place where I can return to whenever I want, I can focus on things that interest me rather than spend all my energy to find safety, food, and a place to sleep.[7]

Homes may well be either special places or meaningful ordering systems, but research suggests that homes are also intimately related to our identities.[8] The relation between home and identity may be forged and upheld in different ways, such as through memories, emotional attachments, or manipulation and cultivation of our environment.[9] A classic example of an approach that highlights the interconnection between the identity and home is Cooper's account of home as a "symbol of the self", which reflects its inhabitants' personality through things such as furniture, personal possessions, location, and rules of proper behaviour.[10] As such, homes are personalized, familiar, and emotionally charged places, which can be constituted only through caring and emotional commitment. For instance, Relph has famously described home as a "field of care" and as a "place of irreplaceable significance", into which our identities are "rooted".[11] Even though some scholars have argued that metaphors such as "rootedness" may lead us to think home in too simplistic and

5 On the "false dichotomy" between house as a material structure and home as emotional construct, see EASTHOPE 2004, 136.

6 DOVEY 1985; JACOBSON 2009. On the temporal structures of homes, see WERNER, ALTMAN & OXLEY 1985.

7 STEENWINKEL & AL. (2012) have argued that a «dynamic balance between security and autonomy» is essential for the constitution of home (198-99).

8 DESPRÉSS 1991; MALLETT 2004, 82-3; EASTHOPE 2004.

9 CASEY 1993, 172-81; DOVEY 1985, 34-9; PORTEOUS & SMITH 2001, 54-7.

10 COOPER 2006. SEE WOOD & BECK 1994, 5-8; DOVEY 1985; BLUNT & DOWLING 2006, 12-4, 23.

11 RELPH 1976, 37-41. SEE BLUNT & DOWLING 2006, 22; SOMMERVILLE 1997, 234-35.

positive terms,[12] the idea that home is an intrinsically significant, personalized, and emotional place is still shared by many contributors.[13]

Despite their personal aspects, researchers have acknowledged the fact that homes are also embedded in a larger cultural-historical, ideological, and political context, which influences our understanding of the meaning of home.[14] Hence, it is generally viewed as naïve to construe home as a strictly private haven, which is free from the pressures and hostilities of the public realm that exists "outside" of our doors. Rather, home is viewed as a phenomenon that is contextualized and defined by ideological and societal factors, which may involve different forms of inequality, such as gender oppression.[15] In addition to this, empirical evidence suggests that certain instances of home and homeliness occur not in fixed and static places, but during movement, change and displacement. Such cases have been examined by Ikalović and Chiesi (2019), who argue that the home-experiences of young Tokyo residents are primarily grounded «in a familiarity with processes and in habituality», not in physical, social, or psychological aspects of fixed places.[16] These ideas illustrate a tendency to move towards a more flexible understanding of home, which is capable of accounting for its dynamic, context-dependent, and negative aspects.

Phenomenologists have contributed to the research of home by producing analyses and concepts that have been used by researchers of different theoretical backgrounds. Due to the restrictions of space, I have chosen to discuss only three phenomenological accounts here. I have chosen Anthony Steinbock's explication of Husserl's concept of "homeworld" (*Heimwelt*), Kim Dovey's account of home as a spatial,

12 See Gibas 2019.

13 Cooper 2006; Dovey 1985; Gurney 1995; Giuliani 1991; Blunt & Dowling 2006; Relph 1976; Porteous & Smith 2001, 45, 50-2, 61-3.

14 Moore 2000; Sommerville 1997; Duncan 1985; Saunders 1989.

15 On feminist critiques and perspectives to home, see Blunt & Dowling 2006, 14-21.

16 2019, 110. On the dynamism of home-experiences, see also Ortega 2014; Duyvendak 2011, 7-25.

temporal, and socio-cultural order, and Kirsten Jacobson's analysis of the interrelation of home and our lived bodies. I find these accounts most relevant for my purposes here since they strive to conceptualize and describe the home itself, instead of focusing to phenomena which are merely related to home in some way or another.[17]

Anthony Steinbock has analyzed and further developed Edmund Husserl's original concept of the "homeworld" (*Heimwelt*). According to Steinbock's interpretation, the homeworld is a practically and axiologically familiar lifeworld, which has developed historically in relation and tension with other worlds of meaning, which Husserl calls "alienworlds" (*Fremdwelten*). Hence, homeworld is a more concrete and specific concept of a world than the more commonly known "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*). It is a normal world, a world that is governed by typical traditions, language, and systems of familiarity, and its meaning can be upheld only in relation to something that is *not* familiar to its members.[18] Since homeworld is a social structure, it is correlated with a community of constituting subjects, which Husserl calls "homecomrades" (*Heimgenosse*).[19] Hence, a homeworld is not a universal horizon for all mankind, but it is a world for a specific group of people, who share a particular world and understand its typical structures.

Despite I think that the concept of the homeworld differs from that of home as such (even a homeless person can have a homeworld), I argue that it is still extremely important for analyzing the phenomenon of home and has not been examined nearly enough in research literature. Its main strength is that it allows us to understand how our individual homes are related to the world outside of them: our homes are surrounded, delimited, and defined by a larger context of familiarity (i.e., homeworld), which is not necessarily the same thing as one's own home, but which still contribute to the meaningful

17 Most important accounts that I have excluded here are Heidegger's (1993) and Levinas's (1969) concept of "dwelling" (*Wohnen* and *La demeure*), and Bachelard's analysis of the house (2014).

18 STEINBOCK 1995, 178-85, 187-99.

19 STEINBOCK 1995, 223.

appearance of our homes as "centers" of our worlds.[20]

Whereas a Husserlian concept of homeworld transcends our individual homes, Dovey has provided an account of home that comes closer to an individual person. Dovey discusses home as a spatial, temporal, and socio-cultural "order" which helps us to orient towards the world in a meaningful way. According to him, homes shape our experience in several senses: the home is the center of our world (spatial order) to which we can return and from which we can leave again (temporal order), but it is also a place where certain norms, traditions and ways of living prevail and structure our daily life (sociocultural order).[21] Such order is established through dialectical interaction between privacy and publicity, past and future, and journeying and returning.[22] Moreover, he argues that home-orders are intertwined with our identities. Homes have become parts of us through a dialectical process of "appropriation", which he understands as a process through which we «take aspects of the world into our own being and are in turn taken by the world».[23] Thus, according to Dovey's final definition, home is an «integrative schema that is once a bonding of a person and place and, a set of connections between the experience of dwelling and the wider spatial, temporal and sociocultural context within which it emerges».[24]

Dovey's idea of home as an order is also touched in Kirsten Jacobson's analysis of the role of body in the constitution of home. Jacobson argues that home is primarily a matter of experiential passivity, which means that home provides a constant background for our experiences without demanding any effort from our side.[25] Jacobson applies Merleau-Ponty's concept of "level" in her analysis of home. She defines level as «an attunement […] that we have with our surroundings when the objects and general axes of our situation are

20 About the "centrality" of our homes, see GRAUMANN 1989.

21 DOVEY 1985, 35-9.

22 DOVEY 1985, 45-6, 48.

23 DOVEY 1985, 47-8. On the concept of appropriation, see KOROSEC-SERFATY 1985.

24 DOVEY 1985, 44.

25 JACOBSON 2009, 356.

such that we are able to successfully move about in and accomplish projects in this situation».[26] These levels allow us to navigate successfully in the world without voluntary or conscious effort, and they are founded in our bodily habits. Jacobson argues that a home is essentially a level which allows us to make sense of our environment and to be at ease in the world.[27] Hence, her account portrays home also as a kind of an "order", but this order is essentially founded in our deep-rooted bodily habits, anticipations and familiar ways of moving and acting in various environments.[28] Because the link between our homes and bodies is so strong, she argues, we can take (at least parts of) our homes with ourselves simply by moving to another location.[29] This might take some time, and it might require the presence of familiar objects, but she claims that it is still possible to make ourselves to feel at home even if we are a long way away from our original homes.

As this short review has illustrated, home has been examined from several perspectives. My aim in this paper is to reflect the distinctively affective aspects of home and to clarify the intentional structures which underlie the meaning of home as a highly significant place which is interconnected with our identities. As Mallett has pointed out, several scholars have argued that homes are deeply related to our identities, but only few explicate the nature of this connection.[30] This is precisely what I am going to do next.

2. Personal significance and the feeling of ownness

The core idea of my account can be formulated as follows. Homes are more or less rigidly localized structures of our lifeworlds, which typically function as shelters and practical contexts for everyday life.

26 JACOBSON 200, 366.
27 SEE JACOBSON 2010.
28 JACOBSON 2009, 369.
29 JACOBSON 2009, 369.
30 MALLETT 2004, 82.

However, what distinguishes them from mere apartments, houses, and shelters, is the fact that they are structured around things that are of high personal value and feel like one's own in a special sense of the term. As I will clarify later, such ownness is primarily not a matter of ownership: rather, it must be understood on the basis of caring, emotional attachment, and a peculiar form of self-experiencing. Thus, in my view, homes are concrete dwellings, but also systems of personal meanings and values which give rise to peculiar kinds of feelings. I have decided to call such importance with the term "personal significance", whereas the feeling that emerges in relation to such things is referred to with the term "feeling of ownness".

The purpose of the concept of "personal significance" is to capture a particular type of emotionally shaped value or the "worth" of something that appears to us. As the word "personal" suggests, the values and meanings that concern us here differ from mere instrumental or practical values: personally significant things are something we care about for their own sakes, not only as means to achieve something else. As Bennet Helm has pointed out, such caring typically involves that the person is more or less "vigilant" regarding what may happen to the object of care: thus, a caring person is typically willing and determined to spend extra energy to cultivate, preserve, and develop things that they hold important.[31] Each of us value and care about different things, but things such as hobbies, goals, personal values, vocations, family members, friends, homes, and personal possessions are common examples of personally significant objects.[32]

Since personal significance consists of meanings and values, it is something that has been constituted in consciousness. The constitutional origin of such significance lies in our emotional orientations towards the world and other people, which can be broadly described as forms of caring. Because my aim here is not to

31 HELM 2010, 57.

32 As these examples suggests, personally significant things may be real or ideal objects in the widest sense of the term. Thus, even things such as abstract ideas, states of affairs, processes, and subjective abilities of different kind may become significant in this sense.

analyze caring as such, I will not categorize, analyze, and examine different forms of caring.[33] However, since I understand the "personal" dimension of such significance on the basis of our emotions, it is necessary to clarify what kind of emotions are operative in the acts of caring that generate personal significance in the first place. As classical phenomenologists have pointed out, our emotions do not consist of mere feelings and sensations, but they have also an evaluative function: emotions evaluate their objects in positive and/or negative manners, without having to be actual judgements.[34] For example, if I confront a venomous snake on a beach, I typically experience several negative emotions and generate a negative attitude towards the snake. Because such emotions and attitudes emerge, the snake may appear to me as a "disgusting" and "dangerous" being. However, when it comes to personally significant objects, it is easy to see that they are evaluated mainly in positive terms. In fact, genuinely important and dear things appear to us as fundamentally positive even if they introduce hardships and discomfort into our lives. This is the case because their positive aspects override their negative features in our eyes. Hence, personally significant things do not need to be flawless and entirely positive for us, but our overarching evaluation regarding them needs to remain positive.

However, it seems clear that not all positive emotions constitute personal significance. For instance, most of us typically enjoy and feel happy about a nice and sunny morning without experiencing the morning itself as personally significant, at least in any relevant sense. In this case, we are dealing with something that we like or appreciate but do not care about in any deeper manner. My point is not to dismiss liking, appreciation, or any other less deep emotional orientations, but simply to point out that liking and appreciation are not enough to constitute personal significance. I argue that this is the case because they lack a certain level of emotional profundity: an emotion must be positive but also deeply anchored in the self in order

33 On the concept of caring, see FRANKFURT 2004; HELM 2020.

34 DRUMMOND 2020; FISETTE 2021; JARDINE 2020, 55-61. SEE HELM 2009, 2010.

to be constitutive for personal significance.[35]

I draw here from David Pugmire's account of emotional depth, which he has presented in his work Sound Sentiments (2005). According to Pugmire's full account, there are four conditions for emotional depth.[36] However, I am going to approach this topic only on the basis of the condition that Pugmire calls "embeddedness", since I find it to be the most important and convincing feature of emotional profundity, and its potential to clarify these matters is sufficient for my purpose here. The concept of embeddedness concerns the "form" or "structural character" of deep emotions.[37] Pugmire's idea is that in order to be deep, an emotion has to be related to interests and concerns that are *central* for our lives and personalities.[38] Pugmire illustrates this centrality with an analogy to fundamental truths, which cannot be denied without a great "epistemic cost": just like denying our key-beliefs about the world (such as fundamental laws of physics) would leave a great number of our other beliefs groundless, many aspects of our personal lives would be undermined if our key-interests and concerns were violated.[39] Deep emotions are experienced in relation to things that touch such concerns. For instance, a person whose whole life is defined by the goal of becoming a chess grandmaster might experience profound sadness after losing important games, since these losses harm something that is embedded in the person's life. Deep joy, genuine love, profound affection, and gratitude are examples of emotive experiences which participate in the

35 These ideas have been examined in depth by thinkers such as Edmund Husserl and Harry Frankfurt. My own account is motivated by and in debt to their ideas and analyses. See HEINÄMAA 2020; LOIDOLT 2012; FRANKFURT 2004.

36 Pugmire argues that there are four conditions for a deep emotion. First one is real belief: an emotion must be founded on a robust cognitive basis in order to be deep. Second one is the embeddedness of an emotion. Third one concerns external factors: the situation must actually be what our emotions try to make out of it. The fourth concerns the strength of a feeling. See PUGMIRE 2005, 38-64.

37 PUGMIRE 2005, 39, 42. Similar idea has been proposed also by Robert C. Roberts, who claims that the «depth of an emotion is the depth of its ingress into personality» (2013, 166).

38 PUGMIRE 2005, 39-45.

39 PUGMIRE 2005, 39-40.

constitution of personal significance by evaluating their objects in positive terms.

The reason why personal significance is crucial for understanding the feeling of ownness is simple. The feeling of ownness is an experience of personal significance: the very import of these special things is the object of this experience. The feeling of ownness may emerge only when we directly confront, remember, simulate, or just think about something that is of high personal value for us. Because this experience arises only in relation to *already* constituted significance, the feeling of ownness is essentially an *affective reactivation* of meanings and values that have been established through our previous acts of caring.

Whereas the object-pole of the feeling of ownness consists of something personally significant, the feeling-part of it is characterized by feelings of familiarity, intimacy, and control. All these aspects are involved when this feeling emerges, but some of them may be more intensively operative than the others, depending on the situation and person itself. The feeling of *familiarity* is a part of the experience since whatever is personally significant to us is necessarily more or less familiar to us. The feeling of *intimacy* is operative because the very importance of the significant object is grounded in our deepest emotions. Finally, the feeling of *control* follows because the significant thing is experienced as an integral part of our lives. These factors belong to the feeling of ownness, but it is noteworthy that not all experiences of personally significant objects are as positive and harmonious as the feeling of ownness itself. We can also have profoundly negative and disturbing feelings in relation to what is personally significant to us, for example in a situation when we lose something of indispensable value, or when we generate a negative attitude towards something that is important to us. Thus, it is evident that not all encounters with personal significance involve feelings of ownness, but only some of them does.

Feelings of ownness vary in duration and intensity, and some of them may resemble more like a mood than an emotion. However,

what is common for all feelings of ownness is that they involve a peculiar *affective proximity with ourselves*. The point is that when this feeling occurs, we get in touch with ourselves, and not mainly in cognitive nor reflective terms, but more primarily in an emotional manner. This means that the feeling of ownness is simultaneously familiarity with significant objects, but also familiarity with ourselves as feeling and caring beings. I have chosen the term "ownness" because it is a fitting term to describe this dual familiarity within the feeling of ownness, not because I would like to claim that the feeling of ownness should be understood as a form of ownership.[40] We often articulate these feelings by saying that something "feels like me", or that something simply feels "right" and "natural" in the sense that the object reflects who we "truly" are. Such co-givenness of the self and personally significant things is possible because things of high personal value are "embedded" in our personalities: as objects of care and profound emotions, they are firmly related to our key-concerns, and thus can be felt as "parts" of ourselves. Hence, understanding experiences such as the feeling of ownness require that we approach the self as a being who is not solitary and self-sufficient, but thoroughly interconnected with the surrounding world and other people.[41]

40 Though feelings of ownness may occur in relation to our possessions, ownership is not a necessary feature of this experience.

41 In Husserlian phenomenology, the self—or the "ego"—is conceived as a being who exists within the stream of consciousness. The ego is ultimately individuated by what contemporary phenomenologist have called the "minimal self": experiences are always given to someone. This purely formal I-centeredness of consciousness is the most abstract aspect of the ego, but the ego also acquires a more complex "personal character" through time and interaction with other egos. However, Husserl argued that the ego is not only a person who has its own history and habitus. He argued that ego is also defined by its relation to its intentional objects: the full concreteness of the ego involves also its surrounding world, which reflects the ego's personal history, expectations, and concerns. Husserl used the term "monad" to describe the ego as a concrete and worldly whole. In light of this, we can conclude that personally significant objects belong to the monadic constitution of the ego, and thus can be experienced as parts of us through the feeling of ownness. See HUSSERL 1999, 65-8; HEINÄMAA 2007. On the concept of minimal self, see ZAHAVI 2014.

It has now become clear that the feeling of ownness is an affective experience of personal significance. However, as I pointed out, not all experiences of personal significance involve feelings of ownness. The reason for this is that the feeling of ownness is also an immersive experience, and not all experiential engagements with personal significance involve immersion. Concepts of "immersion" and "absorption" have been used in many senses in phenomenological tradition,[42] but I understand them on the basis of the structures of experience that Edmund Husserl called "horizons". According to Husserl, our experiences of the world and particular objects are framed by several interacting and overlapping contexts or "horizons" of meaning and value, which are often informed by our previous meaning-giving acts.[43] For example, my experience of eating in a restaurant is concretely framed by both perceptual and social meanings, such as my awareness of my immediate material environment, my understanding of proper behaviour, and by my anticipations regarding the way waiters act. Horizons involve massive amounts of already constituted meanings—including personal significance—and they operate as passive and unthematic background-structures of our experiences.[44] However, it is crucial to see that the contents that belong to the horizons of our experience may also become explicitly present to us. This may happen in many ways, such as through reflection, but it may also occur through a more spontaneous process of immersion. This is precisely what happens in the feeling of ownness: when you feel something as your "own", you experience the object in a deeper and more intimate fashion than in normal circumstances, because you get immersed in those horizonally given meanings and values that make it special for you in the first place.

On this basis, I can refine my previous characterization of the feeling of ownness. My final definition is that the feeling of ownness is an

42 See MÄCKLIN 2019; HØFFDING 2019.

43 HUSSERL 1973, 103-6, 121-7; PULKKINEN 2014; STEINBOCK 1995, 23.

44 This means that they function without any voluntary effort from our side. On the passivity of experience, see HUSSERL 1973; PULKKINEN 2014.

affective and immersive experience of personal significance. Feelings of ownness are typically harmonious and positive experiences, since they involve an affective contact with ourselves as feeling and caring beings, and because they allow us to feel connection and belonging in relation to various sorts of things. The next step is to clarify how this feeling is related to the experience of home.

3. Home as a place of one's own

As I have pointed out earlier, the main idea in my account is that personally significant things constitute the meaningful core of our homes and allow us to experience them as our *own* in a special sense of the term. As such, my account is in line with Relph's famous description of home as a "field of care". Since caring and personal significance can take many forms depending on the person, they allow different kinds of home-experiences to occur: some homes may be related mainly to social relations, whereas others may be anchored to places, traditions, or habitual activities. Moreover, because home-environments can be more or less functional in gathering and upholding things that are of high value for us, experiences of home can be more or less *comprehensive*, *profound*, and *intense*.[45] Whereas some experiences of home are warm, fulfilling, and soothing, other homes may feel incomplete and broken, or they might only "resemble" real homes.

Since my descriptions have been relatively abstract and theoretical thus far, the rest of this paper will be dedicated to phenomenological descriptions which illustrate how feelings of ownness *typically* occur in the context of home. I will take Kim Dovey's analysis of home as my starting point. Dovey's account captures several aspects of the experience of home, but its shortcoming is that Dovey does not clarify

45 Though most homes are far from perfect, I argue that some positive experiences are still required for the constitution of home. If a dwelling or a community does not involve anything worth caring for, or if one is completely unable to feel it as one's own, it will sooner or later lose its sense as one's *home*—if it ever even felt like one.

how our emotions participate in the constitution of home. He mentions emotions and even argues that the connection between our homes and our personal identities is «primarily affective and emotional»,[46] but he does not develop this insight further. Thus, my analyses are guided by Dovey's ideas, but they will also complement Dovey's original account. I will proceed by describing the feelings of ownness in relation to the (3.1) spatial, (3.2) temporal, and (3.3) socio-cultural dimensions of our homes.

3.1 Home as a spatial order

Dovey understands space in a phenomenological vein as a lived space, which is constituted in our bodily interaction with our environments. He distinguishes between three structures of lived space: first, there are fundamental distinctions between up/down, front/rear and left/right; second, there are our «space-grasping actions», such as walking, looking, hearing and manipulating things; and third, there is the general structure of the world, which has certain universal structures (we dwell on a horizontal surface between earth and sky) despite massive geographical differences between areas.[47] Thus understood, lived space is defined by both objective features and our subjective capabilities, which bestow meanings to places.[48]

Dovey argues that our homes function as the centers of our worlds: «To be at home is to know where you are; it means to inhabit a secure center and to be oriented in space».[49] As the center of our world, home is essentially a place which is interwoven with our personal identities.[50] This status of home as a center of one's world is

46 DOVEY 1985, 40.

47 DOVEY 1985, 35-6.

48 Dovey's analysis could be further developed by phenomenological concepts of "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*) and "lived body" (*Leib*). See HEINÄMAA 2021; CARR 2014; STEINBOCK 1995.

49 DOVEY 1985, 36.

50 Dovey argues that home-places are related to our identities at least in two ways, First, homes express our identities in the form of a social "statement", but homes also a "mirror" which reflects our character. Second, homes are also something from which we

determined by the dialectics of journeying and returning: because our life involves repetitive processes of leaving and returning, the world acquires experientially founded senses of inside and outside, but also those of center and periphery.[51] In Dovey's analysis, this does not entail that this "center" would be absolute, nor that the sense of having a center should be always explicitly present in our experience. Dovey does not use the phenomenological concept of passivity,[52] but it seems obvious that his idea is that homes structure our experiences precisely as an unthematic and passively pregiven background-structure.

There are at least two ways how the spatial aspects of our homes can be felt as one's own. The first one is related to the function of the home as a repository for our personal possessions, the second is related to environmental features of one's home-place.

First, a home-place can be felt as own in so far as it operates as a *locus of personal possessions*. People can dwell in all sorts of places, buildings, and shelters, but homes, in contrast, are always repositories for our belongings. There are many ways to "have" something, and some forms of being an owner are not institutional or juridical nor exclusively individual.[53] For instance, we can own things collectively, and we can take something to be ours without legally owning it. Since we are concerned by feelings of ownness, I will focus only on those instances of ownership which involve possessions that are of high personal value to the experiencing person. Typical examples of such objects are concrete dwellings and their immediate environments, but also things such as furniture, mementos, and objects that are related to our hobbies. Though feelings of ownness can occur in relation to particular possessions, I argue that there are also more comprehensive ways of experiencing the feeling of ownness in relation to our things. They are related to the fact that home-places tend to gather several

draw our identities. See DOVEY 1985, 42.

51 DOVEY 1985, 37, 45.

52 See PULKKINEN 2014.

53 The psychological aspects of ownership have been studied earlier with the concept of "psychological ownership". See PIERCE, KOSTOVA & DIRKS 2003.

significant things in one location. Because of this "gathering" function, homes provide a possibility for experiencing an emotional atmosphere of being centered by significant possessions. Thus, it is possible to have comprehensive and long-lasting feelings of ownness while being surrounded by things that are of great importance for us.

Second, a home can be experienced as own in the sense that a place *resembles or even matches our personal expectations and images of an aesthetically and practically satisfying life*. For instance, a certain feature in a landscape can be personally fulfilling in this sense, such as the presence of a forest, lake or a beautiful town. That which is "personally significant" in this context, are these expectations and images themselves: most of us would like to live a life of a particular sort even if we are unable to articulate clearly how and where we would like to live it.[54] All sorts of environmental features can be of great significance here: architecture, landscapes, flora and fauna, nearby places, and weather can be important factors for someone. However, since these constellations of images and expectations of a pleasant life tend to be also practical in character, the most concrete context for this feeling is constituted by the overall sense of *what it means to live in that place*.[55] For example, some people dream of life at a countryside, whereas some people want to live in a big city, and both set of images tend to involve expectations regarding everyday habits and practices: spending time in cozy cafeterias and tending to a garden on one's backyard are examples of such practices. If the actual life in a home resembles (or even matches with) these images, one can feel the home-place as own by getting immersed in a life that feels aesthetically and practically satisfying for oneself.

3.2 Home as a temporal order

The second aspect of the home-order is temporal. The main sense in

54 A similar idea has been examined through the concept of "ideal home". See MALLET 2004.

55 Heidegger has captured this idea with his concept of "dwelling" (*Wohnen*). See HEIDEGGER 1993.

which home functions as a temporal order is that of *familiarity*. As Dovey argues, home is «thoroughly imbued with the familiarity of past experiences».[56] Because of this, we anticipate certain things to happen within our homes and normally have a strong feeling that we know our homes thoroughly. This often involves feelings of safety and control. Dovey argues that at least parts of this familiarity stem from our past experiences of home—sometimes even from our childhood homes, where our earliest expectations and images of homes and homely environments have been formed.[57]

Home as a temporal order does not mean only familiarity, but also indicates a place «where our identity is continually evoked through connections with the past».[58] When we are at home, we are concretely surrounded by things which have their own stories, and which remind us of our earlier life and choices. Photos, books, furniture and things that are related to our hobbies are good examples of such objects. However, as Dovey points out, home-order is not only related to the past, but also to the future. Home provides us a shelter in which we can plan our future, but also *imagine* and *dream*, as Gaston Bachelard has argued in his famous analysis of the house.[59] Hence, home as a temporal order implies rich connections with our past and future, and it provides us a sanctuary where we can grow and develop, but also recover, fall ill, suffer, and ultimately, also pass away.

Because home is so intimately related with our personal histories, there are several ways in which the temporal aspects of home can be felt as own. However, there are two forms of ownness that are perhaps the most crucial in the constitution of the home. These are related to past and future, and both experiences share also existential dimensions.

First form of ownness can be felt when the home is given as a *meaningful part of a personally acceptable future.* Even though life and future may sometimes seem chaotic, most of us share at least some

56 Dovey 1985, 37.
57 Dovey 1985, 37-8.
58 Dovey 1985, 42.
59 Dovey 1985, 43. See Bachelard 2014, 25-30.

expectations regarding our future and personal goals. Our expectations can be more or less clear to us, and they can be grounded in various factors, such as our goals, dreams, internalized narratives, and empirical circumstances. Not all expectations are relevant when it comes to the constitution of home, but some of them are indispensable. I argue that those expectations and views which are grounded in our deepest personal values are of critical importance here. Husserl's late concept of "values of love" (*Liebeswert*) provides an excellent tool for analyzing such values. According to contemporary interpreters, Husserl understood values of love as either moral or non-moral valuations, which have their intentional source in the emotive depths of the ego: these values are disclosed by the emotion and feelings of love, and they motivate our voluntary commitments to the flourishment of the object of love.[60] These values have a subjectively unconditional character in the sense that the ego feels that it *must* promote these values: thus, they have tremendous power in shaping our lives. They maintain the overall integrity of our lives by grounding our personal goals and vocations.[61] Hence, these valuations function as a perfect example of profound emotions, which constitute personally significant *standards* for acceptable views of the future. Such standards define what we truly want and need from our lives in order to be personally satisfied: if these expectations are not met in a sufficient manner,[62] something essential is lacking. The idea here is that home can be experienced as own if one has a sense that the home-place is as a *meaningful part of a life that is led on the basis of one's deepest values*. The most crucial thing here is that home orients us towards our goals by supporting and sheltering our projects: for instance, a home can provide a creative space for an artist or a proper place to raise a family.

Another way how home can be felt as own is to experience it as a *storage of central memories.* Just as we can store information in a diary, a

60 HEINÄMAA 2020; LOIDOLT 2012.

61 See HEINÄMAA 2020.

62 What is "sufficient" is partially defined by the nature of the persons values and expectations, but also by one's capability to make compromises in life.

home can function as a storage of memories. This happens organically through time, by the repetition activities and preservation of personal possessions which have played a role in our life. Such activities are framed by a concept or an image of a home. Of course, our homes can remind us of both good and bad things and events, and in most cases, it is impossible to distinguish personally significant and precious memories from those which are not. The reason why we do *not* need to draw such distinction here is that this type of ownness does not necessarily require an immersion into any specific memory but can also be invoked by less distinguished mood. This feeling surely can emerge from any good memory, but one can have this feeling also by feeling that home gathers the fragments of your story into one location. Thus, it is the *overall presence* of your personal history, which invokes the feeling of ownness in home.[63]

3.3 Home as a socio-cultural order

The third aspect of the home is socio-cultural. As Dovey argues, spatial and temporal aspects of home omit almost completely all those social meanings, values and norms which define our concrete being at home. As she argues, cultural beliefs and social practices form an "ordering system" which shapes our ways of being at home, but also define it in material and environmental senses.[64] For example, the decoration of our homes reflect our cultural background, and our everyday rituals and habits are strongly influenced by the socio-cultural context. Dovey mentions eating habits as examples: «[w]hereas Westerners eat while seated in chairs, Indians sit on the floor, and ancient Romans ate lying down».[65]

Dovey argues that a socio-cultural home-order is simultaneously "flexible" and "conservative" in character. It is flexible, because this order is not necessarily rooted in a certain house or a building, nor

63 Bachelard's analyses of house provide lucid descriptions of the relation between our memories and material dwellings. See BACHELARD 2014.

64 DOVEY 1985, 38-9.

65 DOVEY 1985, 38.

even in a specific place: this order is embodied in our ways of patterning of our experience and behaviour. Thus, this order can be transported into another places, where people can simply start living according to their familiar traditions. However, this home-order is also conservative, because of its "taken for granted"-character.[66] As Jacobson has emphasized, home is integrated into the *passivity* of the ego in the form of bodily habits and deep-rooted expectations. As such, home is largely "unselfconscious",[67] and thus involves «considerable inertia to change».[68]

The first sense how home can be felt as one's own here, is that a home can be *a site where important traditions prevail.* There is a plethora of examples of traditions which are often located and celebrated in homes, such as important holidays, birthdays, national days, and everyday habits, which structure our normal life. The cultural or institutional status and "dignity" of a tradition is not an essential factor here, since all that matters for the feeling of ownness is personal and interpersonal significance: if you *care* about the tradition, it can awake a feeling of ownness. If an important tradition is localized or otherwise related to your home, your home can become a context for the feeling of ownness, which emanates from your emotional relationship to the tradition itself. What is especially important in traditions that are related to home, is that in these cases home functions as a place which shelters our felt belonging into communities, cultures, and perhaps even into more abstract wholes, such as nations or the humanity itself. Home does this by providing a concrete material and social framework for those practices, ceremonies and rituals, which are familiar and close to us. Holidays such as Christmas, and events such as birthdays and funerals are examples of home-related traditions which often involve feelings of belonging in a family, but also in one's own culture. Thus, by feeling a tradition as your own, one can experience home as a personal connection to other

66 Dovey 1985, 38-9.
67 Dovey 1985, 37.
68 Dovey 1985, 39.

people, to cultures, and perhaps even to larger historical narratives, which stems from the generative dynamics of one's homeworld.

The second form of ownness that is relevant here is related to the function of home as a *felt presence of significant others.* Empirical research and everyday experience confirm that home is intimately related to other people, especially to family structures.[69] Home is where we have been taken care of as a child, where we have interacted with others, but it is also a place through which we can control our current social relations. However, what seems to be extremely relevant in the context of home, is the felt presence of people who are *uniquely important* to us. Examples of such people are friends, family and loved ones: it is often central for the experience of home that you know and feel that your friends and family are at least somehow *present* in your life. Obviously, they do not necessarily need to *live* in the same place, but in many cases, one must have a sense that they belong in your life in a meaningful way. It is impossible to determine objectively when someone is close enough in order to be experienced as a meaningful part of our lives, since such proximity is a structurally ambiguous phenomenon and accessible only through us, the experiencing subjects. However, all that matters here, is that there are clearly various manners in which someone can be a part of another person's life. These are illustrated by changes of experience, which occur when a person who was earlier "there", just "drifts away" and becomes distant to you, or when a new person "enters" into your life. I argue that this kind of *felt presence of uniquely important people* is a major constituent in the experience of home, and that this kind of presence is a potential object of a feeling of ownness. For instance, it is possible to feel that you are surrounded and sheltered by people you love and respect. When a home participates in the process of upholding and managing such human relations and social experiences, it is experienced as one's own in a profound sense.

69 DESPRÉSS 1991; MALLET 2004.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that home is essentially a place which we feel as our own. I have provided conceptual tools for understanding highly personal aspects and meanings of our homes, and my analysis suggests that mere "affective bonds" are not sufficient for the constitution of home. What is also needed, is genuine caring[70] and personal significance, anchored in emotions and values that are crucial for us on a personal level. Caring establishes personally significant relations between us, the world, and other people, and thus allows us to feel that home is familiar in *twofold* sense: it is a locus of familiar things, and a place where you are familiar to yourself.

The main strength of the concepts of personal significance and feeling of ownness is their flexibility. They do not oblige us to think that home is first and foremost a social, practical, or material phenomenon, nor do they bind us to narrow views about the nature of home. As my descriptions illustrate, there are many ways in which a home can be felt as one's own. For instance, environmental features, practical ways of living, other people, traditions, possessions, and even orientations towards future can be felt as own in various senses, depending on their personal meanings and relations to other areas of our lives. These feelings contribute to the personalization of our home-environments by creating affective atmospheres through which we may feel connectedness and affective familiarity to ourselves.

70 As I have pointed out earlier, these are not completely new ideas. For instance, researchers such as SOMMERVILLE (1997) and RELPH (1976) have argued that there is an intimate relationship between caring and home.

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