

# BEING-AT-HOME

## WINNICOTT, LEVINAS, AND BACHELARD

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### *Abstract*

The paper investigates the concept of being-at-home in both phenomenology and psychoanalysis. In order to accomplish this task, I draw on Donald Winnicott's scattered psychoanalytical observations regarding the question what belonging to a home means. Furthermore, certain phenomenological concepts, which can be found in the works of canonical authors, such as Emmanuel Levinas and Gaston Bachelard, are applied onto this analysis. The whole aim is to prove that in both phenomenology

and psychoanalysis, the notion of being-at-home plays a major role. Moreover, the two disciplines, bringing along their own perspectives, contribute to and enrich one another. I attempt to show that the home, which we live in, is of great importance in establishing *the potential space* (between mother and infant). Therefore, I endeavor to prove that the home is not merely a house, but allows the potential space (Winnicott) to take place and unfold. From there, play and creativity arise.

*Keywords:* home, dwelling, play, recollection, dreams, day-dreams, nostalgia.

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### **Biti-doma. Winnicott, Levinas in Bachelard**

#### *Povzetek*

186

Članek raziskuje pojem »biti-doma« znotraj fenomenologije in psihoanalize. Z namenom razgrnitve takšne naloge se sklicujem na razpršene psihoanalitične opazke Donalda Winnicotta glede vprašanja, kaj pomeni pripadnost domu. Na analizo apliciram tudi določene fenomenološke pojme, ki jih je mogoče najti v delih kanoničnih avtorjev, kakršna sta Emmanuel Levinas in Gaston Bachelard. Cilj razprave je utemeljiti, da tako v fenomenologiji kakor v psihoanalizi ideja »biti-doma« igra pomembno vlogo. Celo več, obe disciplini lahko z razpiranjem lastnih perspektiv prispevata ena k drugi in se medsebojno obogatita. Pokazati skušam, da ima dom, v katerem živimo, pomemben vpliv na vzpostavljanje *potencialnega prostora* (med materjo in otrokom). Zato si prizadevam dokazati, da dom ni samo hiša, ampak omogoča dogajanje in razvijanje potencialnega prostora (Winnicott). Šele tako lahko rasteta tudi igra in ustvarjalnost.

*Ključne besede:* dom, prebivanje, igra, spominjanje, sanje, sanjarjenje, nostalgija.

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## Introduction

There have been several recent discussions about the compatibility between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. In the present paper, I wish to explore this conjunction via the concept of being-at-home. Therefore, the article explores the home-like feeling through the scattered psychoanalytical observations of Donald Winnicott. In his texts, the main concern is that of the problem of homeless children during the Second World War. The theories of certain phenomenological authors, such as Emmanuel Levinas and Gaston Bachelard, will be evoked, in order to establish the correlation between the psychoanalytical and the philosophical perspectives. The outline of this paper consists of the following: 1) the part concerning Winnicott's psychological aspects of *being-at-home*; and 2) the phenomenological authors' perspectives on this issue. Anticipating our conclusions, we could already state that the phenomenological aspects of belonging to a home shed light on Winnicott's observations, which were not meant to be scientific, but were, instead, thought of being just useful explanations of and insights into those rough situations, in which people found themselves during the Second World War. 187

The theory of the Belgian phenomenologist Marc Richir, whose theory of the transcendental reminiscence will be also invoked, bears certain similarities to Levinas's recollection, because the very first experiences of *the ordinary devoted home* were situated in the pre-history of the subject's life, and they might be brought to the surface of consciousness by experiences similar to that of Marcel Proust's. Furthermore, Bachelard's thematization comes to a certain degree closest to Winnicott's theory, because the French phenomenological author links *being-at-home* with the function of imagination; thus, the problem of play arises at the point, in which Bachelard considers that the person projects his/her imagination onto the house, in which he/she lives, coloring it with the subjective elements of his/her own self. Thereby, in Winnicott's words, there is established the third area of experience, namely *the potential space*.

I would now like to venture into the specific methodological and philosophical considerations that this paper implies. First, this study aims at being a comparative one. This means that I gather sources from both phenomenology and psychoanalysis in an attempt to show that these two fields are compatible

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with one another via certain concepts, which I am going to evoke. The main theme of the paper is the issue of our initial dwelling place, the home. Of this notion, which would seem to be something very clear, yet is very complicated, I would claim that the philosophical background of the problem concerned in this paper is supported by recent studies in the phenomenology of place and dwelling. Here, one can mention the contributions of Edward Casey involving the problem of the status of dwelling-places (Casey 1993, 107). Therefore, our inquiry concerns the phenomenology of a specific dwelling place, namely the home. Considering the topic of dwelling-places, I chose to discuss being-at-home, because this concept might help to bridge the gap between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, thus demonstrating how these two epistemologically different disciplines might interact and enrich one another. Secondly, the arguments, which Donald Winnicott presents, resonate with the theories of the phenomenological authors mentioned above. This means that both Donald Winnicott and the phenomenologists came close to the essence of what it means to dwell at home. Nonetheless, their perspectives focus on different aspects of being-at-home. As will be shown, Winnicott stresses the importance of the home for the well-being of the infant and for its capacity to play and discover external reality. Whereas Winnicott's account is a psychoanalytical one, the theories of the phenomenologists aim at disclosing aspects of being-at-home, which would have seemed quite forgotten. Levinas is very attentive towards the way, in which we feel when we are at home; he thus concludes that a certain nostalgia is always felt towards the initial dwelling-place. This is the condition for hospitality, namely the desire to live in harmony with others in the common world. Last, but not least, Bachelard comes close to Winnicott, because the French phenomenologist always links home with the possibility that the imaginative contents of our mind might be projected onto it, enriching the experience of dwelling. The final consideration, concerning the methodological and philosophical issues of this paper, which I wish to indicate, is that our attempt is far from being an exhaustive one; namely, we just inquire into the analysis of the possibilities of bridging the gap between phenomenology and psychoanalysis via the concept of being-at-home. A synthesis of the three perspectives, which are going to be mentioned below, is not the aim of this paper; nonetheless, I will indicate such a possibility in the conclusion of the essay.

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## The ordinary devoted home

The initial chapter is named after the concept Winnicott introduced to describe *the good-enough home environment*. In the case of this inquiry, I bring together Winnicott's scattered psychoanalytic observations concerning how a good-enough home should function, so that the child might develop his/her true self. The context of Winnicott's scattered observations of what it means to be at home is situated at the moment of the evacuation of children during the Second World War. Therefore, the texts, which will stand at the basis of our analysis, were written from 1939, the year when the Second World War started, until some years after it was finished, namely 1948. We can notice that the last texts involve the problem of how parents should behave, when their children are coming back home from the hostel. The concluding building block will be the volume *Deprivation and Delinquency*, but we are also going to connect the themes found in the shorter texts with Winnicott's bigger picture of child psychology and development, via what he calls *transitional area/potential space* and *transitional object*.

From the beginning onwards, Winnicott assumes the position, which relates home to love. The parents can, of course, cook for the children, play with them, etc., but love and *imaginative understanding* are far more important, because the child has, as a human being, both physical needs and psychological ones. Therefore, the parents have to provide the child with everything he/she needs for a proper development. We then find out that the feeling of homeliness is fundamental for the development of the child; hence, without this absolute point of reference, which is the home (*the absolute here*, in Husserl's terms), a place we always come back to, there could be no development, because *the holding environment* lacks some fundamental aspects, such as the love from the mother and father or the small face-to-face interactions and exchanges, which represent a great deal for the infant. These interactions involve reciprocity; thus, we could say that the saying "home is where we start from" applies even for our ethical life, which is continuously developing. The theme of the process of humanization might be linked with what Donald Winnicott called the ordinary devoted home.

The home is also the ground, from where the child develops his/her sense of trust, and we must remember Winnicott's analysis of trust from *Playing and*

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*Reality*, his *magnum opus*, in which this theme of trust is thematized under the title of transitional phenomenon (Winnicott 2005, 69). The ordinary devoted home could also represent a substitute for the lack of understanding, Winnicott insists.

Winnicott is clear enough to let us know that what he means by home is fundamentally different from being merely a house, because the home needs to meet certain psychological criteria, which enable the development of the child, whereas a mere house is just a place for shelter and provides just the basic elements for the survival of the person, but not the kind of things, which make us human, which are to be found in *the ordinary devoted home*. Furthermore, a person who welcomes the child in their home becomes somehow a mother substitute (Winnicott 2012, 35). We can already notice that Winnicott addresses a theme, which is similar to hospitality in the Levinasian sense.

190 Winnicott cautions us that the child placed in a foster home or in a hostel might have memories about his/her initial home, and even of his/her mother's cooking, which is considered, of course, to be the best of all. Winnicott insists on the process of the infant's accommodation to its new home, which takes time. The child will most probably never forget his/her initial home, considering it to be the best of all the possible homes. Primary maternal preoccupation (Winnicott 2001, 300) plays here a crucial role, because this state provides the child the initial *holding environment*. This holding environment will later be represented by the family and even by society, as Jan Abram puts it (Abram 2007, 193).

As early as 1945, Winnicott introduces the concept of *the transitional object*, but not explicitly. He argues that a doll or a teddy bear might help the child to withstand the *transition* from the initial home to the foster home. This sort of existential mobility was also described by Kirsten Jacobsen, when she analyzes the relationship between the body and the home (Jacobson 2009, 369). *The transitional object* might bring comfort to the infant, because it helps it remember the initial home, alongside the parents and the siblings, etc. Here, *the transitional object* can be considered in terms of what Daniel Stern called "evoked companions" (Stern 1998a, 111). The evoked companions are introjected figures of mother and father whom we carry along for the rest of our lives in the guise of toys or even of significant objects, such as the *transitional*

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ones. Here, *the transitional object* has a certain dialogical function. In Martin Buber's terms, this object facilitates the child's remembering of his/her mother, and it also provides the feeling of the *presence* of the mother or the father, etc. Buber's idea of the instinct of making virtually everything into a *Thou* or, more precisely, *the innate Thou*, is very useful here. In his text *I and Thou*, Buber also invokes the example of a dirty teddy bear, to which the child becomes attached. The teddy bear is a symbol, representing the mother. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that the mother–infant relation is the prototype for each I–Thou relation, which might come later in the life of the person (Buber 2013, 19). Thus, Buber can be seen as one of the forerunners of Winnicott's theory.

*The transitional object* also marks the passage from the subjective dimension (phantasms, dreams, daydreaming, etc.) to the objective one (the shared reality). In this case, for the child who is brought to the foster home, *the transitional object* plays its role in facilitating the passage from the idealized initial home to the real and actual foster home. The tension is played out between the child's imagination of his/her own home and the situation, in which he/she is placed into an unknown new home. Following Winnicott, the infant can never replace the initial home and its *good-enough environment* with the foster home.

191

Returning to the problem of *the transitional object* and the foster home, we can consider that the *transitional object* plays three major roles. The first one would be that of enabling the child to remember his/her own home, so this would be the *mnemonic* and *attachment* function. Here, we could recall Marc Richir's theory of the transcendental reminiscence, which connects the present to the past (the transcendental one) (Richir 1987, 195). The transitional object might also provide *comfort* during the *transition* from the initial home to the foster home, this being the second function. Thirdly, it separates what is the subjective from the objective, namely the child's introjected image of his/her initial home and the actual foster home, which is, of course, not as great as his/her own home. *The transitional object* keeps the image of the parents and, as could be added, *the holding environment* at large alive, while it also helps the child accept his/her new foster home.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that, although *the transitional object* is the first *not-me possession*, it is also the first *symbolic object*, which the child

uses. In our case, such an object represents the initial actual home, namely *the holding environment* with the mother and father, etc. This *symbol* will keep the *presence* of the parents alive in the child's mind, not by means of introjection this time, but because of the *real presence* of the teddy bear or the dirty blanket (Winnicott 2012, 36). Therefore, *the transitional object* represents the entrance towards the symbolic order, which is already a great achievement for the infant.

We have already emphasized the major role played by *demonstrative love* and *imaginative understanding*, elements, which could come only from the actual home setting of the child. For Winnicott, the mother and the father are the most suitable persons for understanding their own child, because they were there for him/her during the development, both physically and psychically, namely with their whole being. The fundamental role of *the good-enough holding environment* is also to make sure that the child's *psyche* dwells in the *soma*. After this stage, one can also consider the process, which Winnicott called the *psyche-soma continuum*, namely the indwelling of the *psyche* in the *soma* (Winnicott 1988, 11).

192 The foster home must likewise make sure that the child's memory-image of their parents is kept alive. Moreover, Winnicott anticipates the mirror-role that he would later thematize in a paper included into *Playing and Reality*. The mother, or mother-substitute in this case, must give something back to the child, which belongs to the infant's creative true self. Only then can the child feel alive and creative. Here, *the spontaneous gesture* is fundamental, because the mother or the mother-substitute must act like a mirror in giving back the infant something of its own, namely the validation of the creative gesture (Winnicott 2005, 149). Joonas Taipale talks about the role played by the social mirrors. The Finnish phenomenologist also stresses the importance of being seen by someone else, which can be considered in the mother-infant relation (Taipale 2016, 13).

Winnicott also warns us about the danger that the child might not remember the way, in which his/her mother behaved to him/her, because the introjected image of the mother does not last that long. Here, we are also reminded of the importance of the *presence* of the actual parents for the child's development and of *the primary maternal preoccupation*, of which we spoke above. In this state of *the primary maternal preoccupation*, the mother

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knows intuitively what the child feels, wishes, desires, and needs. The child psychologist, Daniel Stern, made a step further than Winnicott, when he talks about *the motherhood constellation* (Stern 1998b, 171) and *affect attunement* (Stern 1998a, 138). The attunement element is barely seen in the works of Winnicott, but the mirror-role of the mother's face and *the primary maternal preoccupation* include it. Affectivity, as described by certain phenomenological authors is also missing in Winnicott's work, but considering his view of *the primary maternal preoccupation*, alongside Daniel Stern's work and Alfred Schutz's intersubjective theory, we could as well discuss the way, in which the mother and the infant communicate musically (Schutz 1976, 159). This suggestion, however, is not the purpose of the present contribution.

The British psychoanalyst also discusses the meeting between the infant and the parents after the foster home period. He warns us that, although the mother or the father might rush to the child giving him/her a hug, the process of reaccommodating might take a lot of time, because there needs to take place certain interactions, certain dialogues, and certain gestures. The shock caused by the evacuation could be damaging to the degree that the family does not even remember, where their children are living (Winnicott 2012, 41).

The child likewise compares his/her foster home with his/her initial home, and this process might lead to the child's idealization of his/her initial home environment. If children run away from their foster homes, this means that they are looking for their initial homes. Such a statement resonates with Winnicott's theory that the child stealing away is actually looking for his/her mother. After some time, when the war is over, for example, the child comes home, and he/she has fantastic expectations about the initial home. Here, the role of both mother and father would be to disillusion the child, which, of course, takes time. The main function of the real home is therefore to show the child the limitations of reality, and this gives the child something positive in his/her life. Winnicott also stresses the importance of the parents saying "no" to their infant, an event, which limits the infant's omnipotence (Winnicott 2002, 109). Therefore, the child returning to his/her real home from the foster home might feel disappointed, because he/she idealized the initial home (Winnicott 2012, 42).

The ordinary devoted home must satisfy the child's basic needs. In a broadcast entitled *Home Again*, Winnicott stresses the meaning of the mother

or of *the holding environment* in meeting the child's needs at the right time. Here, we could insist on the notion called the illusion of omnipotence, namely the illusion that the infant created the world out of its needs. The mother, therefore, has the duty of disillusioning the child without traumatizing him/her. This disillusionment also means the presentation of the world in small doses (Winnicott 1987, 69). As Joonas Taipale also emphasizes, delaying is essential in this process of disillusionment (Taipale 2017, 165). We must insist on two more aspects of this process. First, the delay involves that the child is feeling frustrated, and, as Freud has shown, this is an essential process in achieving the stage of the reality principle (Freud 1958, 218). Second, the delay must not take much time, because there is the risk that the child will be traumatized, and all of this results in the mistrust towards the mother or the mother-figure.

194 Here, we reach one of the most important aspects of Winnicott's theory, namely that of *playing*. *The ordinary devoted home* is the place, where the child can play freely and experience the *transition* from imagination to reality, and vice versa. Linking Winnicott's theory with that of Eugen Fink, we could suggest that the home is the first place of experience of the *playworld* for the child, namely the first *oasis of happiness* (Fink 2016, 14). We should keep in mind that, being at home, the child has all the resources necessary to play. The needs must be satisfied, so that the drives do not interrupt the child's playing activities. *The ordinary devoted home* provides these requirements, namely the satisfaction of needs, but also good enough care and holding, or a secure base, in John Bowlby's terms (Bowlby 1988, 10–11). When these are accomplished, the infant is free to play and discover the world. In Winnicott's words, play is not just pleasure, it is a means to well-being, and the child away from his/her initial home may even lose touch with reality. The child who is at home is free to play, and this creative activity even enriches the outside world, because of his/her imaginative mental contents; here, we could recall the *in-between*, or the third area of experience, as thematized by both Winnicott and Eugen Fink (Winnicott 2012, 45). Succinctly stated, for the infant, there is a continuous overlapping and communication between the regions of subjective phantasy and objective reality. This continuous exchange gives rise to the place where we live in Winnicott's words; thus, home becomes the ground for this process.

The child who is away from home might even experience the anxiety that

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his/her house was destroyed due to war conditions. Therefore, the infant does not have an absolute point of reference, namely a home, to which it can return, after the war is over. Much of the child's developing potential might be lost because of this disaster. Coming back home might provide the child the freedom of thought and that of imagination, and therefore the infant might again play freely and discover the world. Moreover, the child also has the freedom to act; here, we could remember Shaun Gallagher's statement that ultimately action has its basis in interaction (Gallagher 2020, 98). In the beginning, there is the relation, Buber reminds us. The child playing is somehow never alone, because he/she uses his/her imagination in pretending that there are also other people present, with which he/she could play, just as in the example Daniel Stern provides us about the evoked companions, which might take the guise of imaginary friends. Stern links his notion of the evoked companions with the theory of the representations of interactions generalized (RIGs). This phenomenon could also be explained by Buber's *innate Thou*. The instinct of making everything into a *Thou* is responsible, we could say, for regarding objects as playing companions. Such an instinct might even act in the case of the imaginary *presence* of the mother or father, etc. (Winnicott 2012, 46).

195

Essential for the child's development is the continuity of management, and here the parents' joint responsibility is addressed, because, only if this joint responsibility is fulfilled, can the child later in his/her life become a citizen (Winnicott 2012, 47).

Winnicott later introduces the concept of *the primary home*, which is essential for the child's satisfaction of his/her needs. A home is a *primary home*, if the child has the essential elements to grow and develop further. Without this *primary home*, there would be no mental health. Without someone who is oriented towards the child—and here we can remember Schutz's *Thou-orientation*—, the child will not have access to external reality. Therefore, the child will not find his/her body or his/her personality. Nevertheless, we must remember the importance played by the process of mother–infant mirroring or, simply said, by the exchange of gazes.

Without a person whom he/she can love and hate, there can be no one towards whom he/she feels guilty. Guilt leads to reparation. The environment

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needs to provide the elements, towards which the child might feel angry, namely elements to meet his/her primary aggressivity. Here, Winnicott anticipates his famous theory of the survival of the object. Succinctly put, after the object survives the infant's aggressiveness, the child recognizes what is real and what is fantasy. Furthermore, this primary aggressiveness could also be called *a transitional phenomenon*, because it facilitates the passage from what is conceived to what is perceived. Winnicott introduces the term negotiation, in order to emphasize the child's relation to the environment (Winnicott 2012, 52).

Moreover, Winnicott makes an interesting claim about the hostel life, namely that life at the hostel may teach the child to view his/her initial home objectively and sympathetically; here, we must remember the tension played between what is subjectively conceived and what is objectively perceived, as in Winnicott's theory of the mirror-role of the mother's face. Joona Taipale calls Winnicott's theory of playing the illusion-model, contrasting it with that of Fink's, which in turn he calls the hybrid model (Taipale 2021, 208). The  
196 illusion-model suggests that, at first, phantasy and reality are not yet separated from one another, and that, therefore, the stage of destruction and survival of the object becomes a necessary condition for this process to take place.

The child might even befriend other children in the hostel, and making friends becomes fundamental for his/her well-being (Winnicott 2012, 52). If the child is to develop, he/she needs stability coming from the part of the environment, personal management, and care (Winnicott 2012, 66). The initial home allows the child to be irresponsible when playing. The infant gathers from other people or even from school what he/she did not get from home. At home, the child develops the capacity to control himself/herself (Winnicott 2012, 99–100).

### **Levinas on home and hospitality**

Already in one of his earliest books, Levinas discusses the notion of home in relation to place. The Husserlian legacy of generative phenomenology becomes evident, when Levinas addresses the issue of the homeland. The French phenomenologist explains that a place, in our case a home, is not

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an indifferent “somewhere,” but rather a base and a condition (of inhabiting the world). Home becomes something definitory for our history, but also an atmosphere, in which we live and exist (Levinas 1978, 69–70).

Levinas, in a manner similar to the Heideggerian thematization, links home with habitation. Home can be understood as shelter, but, as we are going to notice, this is not the sole purpose of inhabiting a house. The home is ultimately a place of enjoyment. Thus, the home becomes the beginning of all human activity, the *sine qua non* condition of activity and even of work. Intimacy is the key word, which Levinas uses to designate being-at-home. Dwelling is not situated in the objective world, but the objective world is situated by its relation to dwelling. Therefore, we can notice once again the way, in which the home becomes the first point of reference, from which the world might be disclosed by means of exploration. Reminiscent of Heidegger’s *Ereignis*, Levinas also speaks of the event of dwelling (Levinas 1979, 152–153).

Recollection belongs to the work of separation, and it has its origin in the event of dwelling. The I who recollects takes refuge in the home. Recollection is then characterized as a movement of attention, which is freed from immediate enjoyment. Here, one could recall the Kierkegaardian distinction between repetition and recollection (Kierkegaard 1988, 10). As in Heidegger’s early works, familiarity is linked with being immersed in the world (of preoccupation and care). Familiarity presupposes intimacy (with someone), and recollection refers to a welcoming (of the other). The interiority of recollection is a solitude in a world already human. Familiarity is then addressed in terms of the *energy* of separation. Only by means of this process can separation constitute a dwelling and an inhabiting. Hospitality becomes then exactly this welcoming of the other into our homes (Levinas 1979, 154–155). In the Winnicottian framework, familiarity is acquired by virtue of the mother’s holding, which is also the source of the feeling of trust.

Dwelling is linked to the constitution or the genesis of the world, because Levinas insists that, with dwelling, the latent birth of the world is produced. The postponement of enjoyment makes accessible a world; here, we can recall Freud’s theory about the passage from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, which involves delay and even some sort of frustration (Freud 1958, 218). Such a postponement means, again with Winnicott’s words, that the

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infant who has his/her needs satisfied all the time will encounter a moment, when the mother fails to meet those certain needs, which constitutes the work of separation and the primal setting of the object outside of the omnipotent control. Levinas gives certain examples of what he calls the elements, which echo the primal elements of mythology of the world (fire, water, earth, and air). However, within Winnicott's framework of thought, we could envisage these elements as the early interactions of mother and infant. Therefore, the first theoretical feed implies the element of water (the mother's milk) and the earth (her holding). Only after the stage of the separation from this elemental reality, can we thematize the infant as an independent and autonomous person.

198 Levinas later connects enjoyment with timelessness and carefreeness; here, we might recall the discussion of Winnicott's *area of formlessness*, an area, out of which there springs even creativity, if the holding is good-enough. Winnicott discussed the notion of *the area of formlessness* in terms of relaxation, a relaxation, out of which *spontaneous gestures* might appear. These gestures have to be met by the mother's presence, in order for the infant to establish its creative true self. Therefore, *the area of formlessness* could be viewed as the forerunner of *the potential space*. In Levinas's words, being in the presence of the elemental (the mother's whole presence, in this case) means that the infant can establish the illusion of timelessness. Moreover, carefreeness is linked to the infant's satisfaction of its basic needs, thus the infant has nothing to care about. This means that the infant is able to relax and wait for the emergence of the spontaneous gesture, which has to be validated by the mother. Such a validation gives birth to a complex process of exchange between the world and the self, in which both sides are reciprocally enriched.

Levinas again echoes Winnicott, when he states that being conscious involves having time, which can be thought in terms of what Winnicott designated as *the use of the object*. The last stage of the infant's experience of time would be to actually use time, namely, to know how to read a clock, etc. The use of the time is discussed by Levinas in terms of a certain distance; here, we could remember Buber's theory about distance and relation, the two movements of human life, which enable the person to have a world (Buber 1965, 60). Later, Levinas links the use of the time with labor (Levinas 1979, 166). We can conclude this section by stating that the infant who sets the elemental at a distance, is now able to

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use time objectively, and start to work (in the widest sense of the word), i.e., to organize its time according to a specific activity, which it wants to pursue, and to take it onto itself as a project (in the Heideggerian meaning of the term).

### **The house of dreams**

For Gaston Bachelard, the house is our corner of the world, the place, which we inhabit and in which we dwell. As Winnicott discussed *the transitional object*, which connected the infant's experience of a foster home with that of the initial home, Bachelard similarly talks about our attachment towards the house, in which we live, dream, and even daydream. The house, in which we live, is somehow, phenomenologically speaking, a *non-I* that protects the *I* (Bachelard 1994, 4).

As Winnicott's *potential space*, which is neither outside nor inside, but contains elements of both these areas, for Bachelard, the house is a place, onto which we project our imaginative contents (Bachelard 1994, 5). *The transcendental past* (as in Marc Richir) can also be invoked here; as in Levinas's case, the first experiences of our inhabiting the house are somehow immemorial and only recollection can bring these experiences back or, to speak with Richir's terms, a transcendental reminiscence starts to function.

The house shelters our daydreams, and it is seen as a kind of cradle. Bachelard then introduces the concept of *topoanalysis*, namely the psychoanalysis of places. The house is just the place for this kind of analysis, because of its virtue of being a space, in which our daydreams, dreams, and imagination can play freely. Here, it is possible to recall Winnicott's assertions from the second chapter of *Playing and Reality*, a chapter dedicated to fantasy and reverie. In it, Winnicott introduces the aforementioned concept of *the area of formlessness*, the state, in which the infant expects the moment of the sublime from the mother.

Levinas's and Bachelard's analyses seem to resemble with regard to a great number of aspects; here, I want to insist on the intimacy of the house, the recollection, which brings it back to us, and, of course, to our dwelling in a specific place (Bachelard 1994, 9). Comfort seems to be the key element, so that dreams, daydreams, and imagination may play freely. In this context, one

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could recall Winnicott's *area of formlessness* (and *timelessness*) and the *carefree element*, of which Levinas speaks.

Space calls for action, and, before action, imagination is at work. If, for Shaun Gallagher, action has its basis in interaction, for Bachelard, imagination serves as the basis, out of which action can spring. When talking about the oneiric element of the childhood home, Bachelard even implicitly comes close to Marcel Proust's depiction of the emergence of the memory of the childhood home from a smell (Bachelard 1994, 13).

The great function of poetry is to give back our dreams, Bachelard considers, and this is possible, only because of the house we live in, namely our home. Our house, the home, therefore, becomes the *embodiment* of our dreams. Bachelard advances the thesis that childhood is much more than mere reality, it is the place of our dreams, phantasies, imagination, etc. To read poetry is essentially to dream (Bachelard 1994, 16–17).

200 Bachelard insists on the vertical dimension of the home, a feature, which connects the home with the cosmos, a link, which would not have been possible, if the home was a mere horizontal house (Bachelard 1994, 27). The relation between the home and the cosmos was already present in the works of Heidegger and in his thematization of the fourfold.

We flee in thought, in search for a real refuge, and the house becomes once again the place, which allows us to project our imaginative mind contents onto external reality. As far as we are concerned, Bachelard is the only phenomenological author who talks about *nostalgia* as being related to the house. Of course, Levinas may have already spoken about such *nostalgia*, when he was considering the phenomenon of recollection, but, in Bachelard, we find this concept explicitly linked to the house (Bachelard 1994, 33).

## Conclusions and perspectives

Summarizing the outlined discussion, we can emphasize different aspects, which we tried to reveal. First, there seems to be a strong connection between Winnicott's psychoanalytical discussion about the value of *the ordinary devoted home* and the phenomenological perspectives of *being-at-home*. This can once again strengthen the relation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology. The

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idea we consider to be the most important, an idea, which was already present in Winnicott's theory, is that merely a house is not yet a home. In order to be a home, a mere house must be shared by other "home-comrades" (the family, in Winnicott's example), and it must be a place, from out of which the development of the individual unfolds. Recalling Bachelard's theory, it can be stated that the home becomes *a potential space* (Winnicott) between the first manifestations of our imagination and the later artistic creativity. The home is essentially a place of interaction between—in the case discussed—infant and family, a place that binds and strengthens interhuman relations. One could recall Winnicott's *transitional objects* and *transitional phenomena* in the wider sense, manifestations of our creative and *spontaneous gestures*, which can be met by the validation of Otherness (the family, in our case), resulting in later creative activity.

Nonetheless, Winnicott's example of babbling is very telling, because, if this specific gesture is met by the mother, the babbling can become an artistic creativity, such as singing. Therefore, the house, in which we dwell, the home, becomes the ground, from out of which any *potential space* can arise, and this process takes place at the beginning of the individual's life. Winnicott also notices how different are the creative capabilities of children from the foster homes and the capabilities of the children in their initial *ordinary devoted home*.

201

If we return once again to Gaston Bachelard, it can be stated that the French author seems to share Eugen Fink's perspective, when he speaks of the imagination or the imaginary contents projected onto our home (or, in Fink's example, onto external reality), a process, which transforms the home in the house of dreams (Fink's *playworld*). Winnicott's assertions can be treated in conjunction with Bachelard's formulations that *the ordinary devoted home* allows the individual child to dream and daydream and to enhance his/her phantasms, all of this because the infant feels that it has *a secure base*, out of which creativity might spring. *The potential space*, as Winnicott insists numerous times, is the space between mother and infant, a space of separation and union. The idea we attempted to demonstrate is that, originally, the home is *the facilitating ground*, from out of which this space can arise.

Recollection is, as in Levinas, again a crucial element in the economy of the home, because it can give rise to the most sublime contents of our imagination

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via timelessness and carefreeness (Winnicott's *area of formlessness*). Because of this, our discussion recalled Marcel Proust's experience, which took him back to his childhood, when he was, at the same time, living the present moment. Such an *in-between* might also be the work of recollection, which brings our homes back to the mind like a wave of powerful feelings.

Last, but not least, Bachelard's notion of nostalgia can be linked to Levinas's recollection, because, by virtue of the home, which is *the place where we start from*, there is always a certain wish to come back to this place and to those feelings, which marked our childhood and which were the cradle of our innocence. In conclusion, *the ordinary devoted home* marks the beginning of our well-being, because it is a space, which allows one to be free; here, one could refer not only to the contents of imagination, but also to the earliest interactions with the others.

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202

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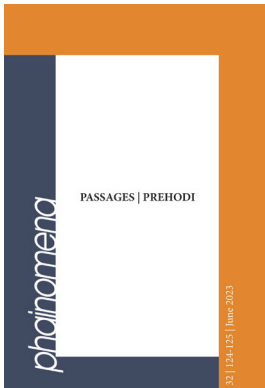
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*Phainomena 32 | 126-127 | November 2023*

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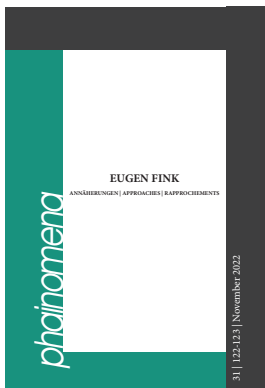
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