

Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place

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1. Introduction: The Problem of Dwelling

'Building Dwelling Thinking' ('Bauen Wohnen Denken') is, as most of you will know, a lecture that Heidegger gave in 1951 to a symposium of architects and others on the general topic of 'Man and Space'.¹ In that lecture, Heidegger explores an idea that also appears elsewhere in his thinking – the concept of what is usually rendered in English as 'dwelling' (*Wohnen*). Heidegger asks after the nature of such dwelling and, along with this, the extent to which *building* (*Bauen*) belongs to dwelling. One of Heidegger's concluding claims is that "Only if we are capable to dwelling, only then can we build."² Building is thus seen as consequent on the possibility of human dwelling. Heidegger's discussion of dwelling has a relevance that goes well beyond architectural and design practice – and indeed, as he uses the term, 'building' refers not only to architectural construction, but to the whole range of human productive activity. Nevertheless, the essay does seem to have a special resonance for architects, and this is partly because it includes one of Heidegger's most sustained discussions of the concepts of space and place.

The idea of dwelling which figures so prominently in the lecture has been taken up within architectural theory by a number of writers, but perhaps most famously by Christian Norberg-Schulz³ – and it is partly Norberg-Schulz's influence, along with that of other writers such as Kenneth Frampton, that lies behind the prominence that Heidegger has had (and perhaps still has in some quarters) within architectural theory. Norberg-Schulz takes dwelling as a guiding concept for architectural practice, and as indicative of a mode of practice that is attentive to the human and the environmental context of architectural design, and that is therefore conducive to a genuine relation to place. There is much that is interesting and important in Norberg-Schulz, but there are also

some problematic features in the way in which he takes up the notion of dwelling in particular. In fact, I tend to think that so problematic are some of the ideas associated with the notion of dwelling, as taken up in Norberg-Schulz's work and elsewhere, that it has become a sort of devalued currency, and that, in many cases, it has actually become a barrier to thinking more adequately about place and the human relation to place. Perhaps it has become a barrier to thinking more adequately about late Heidegger also.

Of course, it might be argued that the concept of dwelling actually picks up on an absolutely central element in Heidegger's work, and that therefore it cannot reasonably be abandoned, no matter how devalued it may have become. Certainly the way Norberg-Schulz takes up the idea of dwelling, and the way the notion may be thought to appear in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in particular, is continuous with a set of concerns present in Heidegger's earlier thinking – the thinking present in *Being and Time* – no less than his later, and that seem closely tied to ideas of 'belonging', 'identity' and especially 'authenticity' (*Eigentlichkeit*). The later idea is often taken to be a key idea in Heidegger's earlier work, and 'dwelling' (which does appear briefly in *Being and Time* as well, although it is not much developed) might itself be viewed as a development out of the idea of 'authentic existence', so that what it is to live an authentic life comes to be seen to be identical with what it is to dwell. What this actually suggests, however, is that the critical engagement with the concept of dwelling cannot be restricted to Heidegger's later work, but also requires a rethinking of aspects of the earlier. Indeed, any critique of the concept of dwelling cannot be restricted to that concept alone, but will also need to extend to concepts like that of authenticity, and along with it, of identity and belonging.

The sort of broader engagement that is presaged here is exactly what I intend to embark upon, if all too briefly, here. In doing so, I will also be moving the discussion into the domain of what I have elsewhere referred to as Heidegger's 'topology', since it will involve addressing, in general terms, the question of place – *topos* – in Heidegger's thinking.⁴ As with the question of dwelling, the question of place is not a question that relates only to Heidegger's later thought. One of the things that happens in Heidegger's philosophical development from early to late, and that is centrally at issue in the move towards

the focus on dwelling, is a shift towards a more explicit concern with issues of 'space', and especially 'place'. Indeed, the very idea of dwelling inevitably brings with it an essentially topological mode of understanding. As I noted earlier, one of the reasons why 'Building Dwelling Thinking' can be seen as relevant reading for architects and designers is its explicit thematization of just these issues, but the earlier thinking is just as topological, just as spatially rich, as Heidegger's later thinking – the difference being that the earlier work is simply not as clear about these matters as the later.⁵

It is not that *Being and Time* lacks a topological focus, then, but that it lacks a proper understanding of that focus and of its topological character. So there is a topology in both early and late Heidegger, but in early Heidegger, it remains largely implicit and inarticulate. Part of what occurs over the course of Heidegger's thinking is the increasing explication and articulation of this topology. The issue of dwelling is closely tied up with the thinking through of what might be involved in such a topology, and equally, getting clear about the topology also means getting clear about what might be at issue in the notion of dwelling – and, together with this, of notions such as belonging and identity. Moreover, doing this is also essential to any genuine thinking, or rethinking, of place – including any inquiry into its role in architectural theory and practice. Inasmuch as my aim here is to undertake such rethinking within a specifically Heideggerian context (although it could also be done independently of Heidegger), so much of this rethinking means, not only returning to Heidegger anew, but also returning to the conceptual and philosophical issues that Heidegger's thinking presents to us. My apologies in advance, then, for presenting a talk in an architecture school that will make little or no reference to any concrete architectural materials – but my aim is to inquire into a set of ideas that have been influential on architecture at a foundational level, and my hope is to provide a way of rethinking those ideas so that they can be influential again, but in a very different way.

2. The Suspicion of Place

It might be thought, however, that I am already getting ahead of myself – that before we embark on any 'rethinking', whether of 'dwelling' or anything else, we

need to know why such rethinking is needed. What, we might ask, is wrong with the idea of dwelling as it is deployed in writers such as Norberg-Schulz? In fact, the best way to approach this issue, especially in an architectural context, is through the larger question of place with which the issue of dwelling is so closely connected. Place, as well as space, is surely central to architecture – or at least so one might think. Yet not only is it contentious as to what might be meant by talk of 'place', but the fact is that place has only sometimes been taken up in any direct way by architects. If one looks, for instance, to a great deal of recent and contemporary architecture (although there are some important exceptions), it would seem as if place is often disregarded, with buildings frequently appearing as more or less autonomous in relation to their topographical surrounds.

Moreover, there is also a widespread tendency – one that extends well beyond architecture alone – to view the very concept of place with suspicion. Nowhere is this suspicion more evident than in attitudes towards the concept of place – and with it dwelling – as it appears in the work of the later Heidegger.

In Norberg-Schulz's work, however, place appears as a positive and benign notion – place is that within which we dwell, within which we are at home, and to dwell is to be located in a harmonious relationship with one's surrounding environment. Norberg-Schulz's valorization of place and dwelling is based in the idea that our dwelling in place grants us an identity and a meaning that we would otherwise lack – we find ourselves in place, and to dwell is to have found oneself, to have found a proper sense of oneself, *to have found a sense of belonging*. Dwelling is thus the antidote to a modernity in which we otherwise risk losing any sense of identity, self, or meaning. It is, however, just this focus on identify, self, and meaning, and especially the way these concepts seem to be articulated in relation to place and dwelling, that is seen to be a source of difficulty.

Place may be a means to ground identity, but the way it does this, so it is often claimed, is deeply problematic. According to a very common way of approaching the matter, place is an essentially deterministic, exclusionary, and nostalgic concept. The identity of place is thus a *determinate* one, a fixed identity, into which we ourselves are also fixed. That identity, in being rooted *in place*, is

also taken to be rooted *in the past*, and so to involve an essentially *backward-looking* orientation, one that prevents a genuine engagement with the future; inasmuch as that identity is based in our belonging within the *bounds* of place, so it leads us to *exclude* others from that place as the means to affirm that identity; as that identity is indeed determined by the place, so our own identity takes on a *determinacy* that lies outside our control. As the concept of dwelling appears to depend on the concept of place – as we must always dwell *somewhere* – so if place is an essentially deterministic, exclusionary, and nostalgic concept, then dwelling must be too, and this is just what many critics of the appeal to dwelling, from within architecture as well as outside, would claim.⁶

Much of the argument for the problematic character of place, and so of dwelling, that is at issue here is based on historical or biographical evidence that supposedly connects place to reactionary politics. Nazism is usually taken as the paradigmatic example in this regard – Heidegger's own involvement with the movement usually being taken to reinforce the connection, both in his own case and more generally. Significantly, however, the assertion of the connection at stake here often depends on a fairly selective attentiveness to historical or biographical detail: thus appeals to place that operate within progressive politics (and there certainly are such) are ignored or seen as already demonstrating the less than progressive nature of such politics, while tendencies within reactionary politics that are antagonistic to place (including forms of nationalism, authoritarianism, and centralism) are overlooked. In Heidegger's case, there is little account taken, for instance, of the fact that the increasingly explicit appearance of ideas of place in his work occurs *after* his involvement with Nazism, and actually seems to figure as a key element in his critique of the nihilistic subjectivism that he takes Nazism to exemplify, while Heidegger's emphasis on *time* as having priority over space in the earlier work, and the apparent absence in that work of any developed notion of place, tends to be ignored. In these respects, the problematic character of place often seems to be something assumed rather than argued for – indeed, it often seems simply to be taken for granted that place is politically problematic.

Yet one might argue that there is an argument that lies behind the tendency to read place in this way, and in some cases that argument is made

explicit. In the work of Emmanuel Levinas, for instance, one finds the claim that the attachment to place, which Levinas does indeed see as exemplified by Heidegger's thought, entails both a *separation* of oneself from others (through the erecting of a boundary between those who belong to 'this' place and those who do not), coupled with a turning away from the other through the very focus *on the place* rather than on the other who appears within that place – so one's attention is turned to the surrounding horizon, as it were, rather than to the face that is immediately before one.⁷ In direct contrast to Heidegger, Levinas extols technology precisely because of its displacing character – because it frees us from the 'superstitions' of place, allowing us "to perceive men outside the situation in which they are placed, and let the human face shine in all its nudity."⁸ As Levinas sees it, then, the association of place with reactionary politics is underpinned by the character of place itself – place is always exclusionary, operating against any genuine sense of engagement with the human – and it is thus that it must stand opposed to any progressive politics, and also to any genuine ethics.

The sort of argument that is present in Levinas, although seldom explicitly invoked in any direct or detailed way, seems actually to be what underlies the tendency to view place as a problematic and reactionary concept. Levinas, like many others, sees this as evidence for the problematic character of Heidegger's thinking, especially the later thinking – and in this manner the argument could be extended to Norberg-Schulz also. For some readers of Heidegger, however, Norberg-Schulz's position needs to be set apart from Heidegger's, and Heidegger's position also needs to be set apart from the problematic reading of place advanced by such as Levinas. Thus, Massimo Cacciari seems to accept a great deal of the critique of place that is exemplified in Levinas, and yet he does not accept this as the basis for a critique of Heidegger. In contrast, Cacciari reads Heidegger as himself critical of the concept of place at issue, especially as it appears in Norberg-Schulz's work, taking it to be a concept that is inadequate to our contemporary situation. Consequently, Cacciari argues against what he views as the 'nostalgia' present in Norberg-Schulz and writes instead: "No nostalgia, then, in Heidegger—but rather the contrary. [Heidegger] radicalizes the discourse supporting any possible "nostalgic" attitude, lays bare its logic,

pitilessly emphasizes its insurmountable distance from the actual condition".⁹ I have some sympathy with Cacciari's position (although I would not use 'nostalgia' to name the issue that is at the heart of things),¹⁰ and what Cacciari emphasizes – namely the radicality of Heidegger's approach and its own critical and questioning stance – will also be central to the account I intend to offer here.

3. Place, Difference, Identity

Much of the argument for the problematic character of place, and so too of dwelling, is based in the association of place with a particular way of understanding identity and a particular way of understanding what it is to belong. These notions are taken to stand against any notion of difference – identity, on this account, is precisely that which excludes difference – and inasmuch as they are associated with notions of place and dwelling so these latter notions are seen as similarly exclusionary. Yet this way of understanding identity and belonging is surely not beyond question – and indeed, if we accept a connection between identity and place, then we can surely ask after the sense of identity that is at issue here, and whether the connection to place might not require a rethought conception of identity. In fact, when we look to Heidegger's work, the question of identity, and the rethinking of identity, is a central issue – one with which he dealt at length in one of his most important later essays – 'The Principle of identity' from 1957.¹¹

In that essay Heidegger takes identity, or sameness, as a "belonging together". But he points to a difference between the understanding of such belonging in a way that emphasizes the *belonging* or the *together*. If we think of identity as a "belonging *together*", then we give emphasis to the unity of the together over the belonging – that is, we give emphasis to the unity of that which belongs. On the other hand, if we think of identity as a "*belonging* together", then we give emphasis to the belonging – the relation between – that allows for the unity of the together. Heidegger takes the first of these ways of thinking to be the more usual, and as underpinning a metaphysical or 'representational' approach according to which belonging is grounded in the unity of that which belongs. On this approach, identity, the self-sameness of the being of the thing, is grounded in

the thing understood, one might say, 'autonomously'. The second way of thinking, however, moves us away from the thing understood in such an autonomous fashion, and towards the thing as already placed *in relation* – the belonging together of the thing with itself is not a matter of the simple self-sameness of the thing taken alone, but is rather a *belonging* together of being and thing. Identity thus appears as *relational* – and as relational, so the identity of the thing is also essentially tied to *difference*.

Such a way of understanding identity is markedly different from the approaches to identity that are common within the Western philosophical tradition in which identity – and with it unity also (for the two concepts are closely related) – is often taken to be paradigmatically understood on the model of *numerical* unity, and so as indeed exclusive of any difference and as apart from that which is different. As Heidegger presents matters, being cannot be said to be founded *in* identity (in the self-sameness of the thing), but instead identity stands under the sway of the *belonging* together of being *and* thing – and of being and the human – in which each is *appropriated* to the other. It is this belonging together that allows for both identity and for difference.

It is worth emphasizing just how different this way of thinking this approach is from our usual understanding of identity. Typically, we think of identity as indeed directing us to the thing as it stands apart from other things in its own self-same nature. This sense of identity has a founding role in metaphysical thinking – being is understood as itself founded in the idea of the thing in its self-identity – in its autonomous self-sameness. Heidegger's account displaces identity from this founding role as it also displaces the understanding of identity that is assumed here. As Heidegger presents matters, identity is never just a matter of the self-sameness of the thing, but always directs us towards the thing in its relationality – to the thing as it both *gathers* and is itself *gathered* – and in this way identity is understood as determined *by being* rather than that which determines or founds *being* (although it should be noted that being appears here in a way such that it is itself tied to relationality). Understanding identity – and so also unity (since the two are closely tied together) – in this way means understanding identity as dynamic, that is, as something that is constantly being worked out, *and* as encompassing an essential difference and

differentiation. Moreover, the difference at issue here is not the difference of two self-same entities that already stand apart from one another, but a difference that itself arises only in and through an essential relatedness. It is this event of gathering – which is also a belonging, a unifying, and a differentiating – that Heidegger connects directly to 'the event of appropriation' (to use the phrase employed in the English version of 'The Principle of Identity') – the *Ereignis* – that is such a central notion in his later thinking.¹² Of this event, in which both being and the human are themselves appropriated each to the other, Heidegger writes that it "is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and being reach each other in their nature" – making clear that this event is indeed a realm, a bounded domain, a *topos*, rather than purely and exclusively *temporal*.

Heidegger's understanding of identity as both dynamic and relational in character – and as itself *topological* – is not only evident in his explicit discussion of identity in his 1957 essay, but is evident throughout his thinking, especially his later thinking. If we turn back to 'Building Dwelling Thinking', for instance, then the way Heidegger there develops the idea of the Fourfold as the unitary gathering of earth, sky, mortals and gods makes very clear that not only is this unity itself articulated through the differentiated character of its elements, and so encompasses an essential multiplicity, but those elements are themselves constituted only through their being gathered within the 'Onefold' of the Four. What is at issue is the same 'event' of appropriation, though explicated differently, and in a more explicitly topological fashion, as that which is invoked in 'The Principle of Identity'. It is also the same 'event' that is instantiated, in a slightly different way again, in the Heideggerian notion of the *Lichtung* – the 'lighting' or 'clearing' – that is the event of truth, and that Heidegger explores across a number of different works over the course of his career.¹³ If we return here from the question of identity to the question of being itself, then what becomes evident is that, just as being is not determined or founded in the self-same identity of the thing, in the thing understood as somehow univocally self-determinate, so being must itself be understood through this same appropriative 'event' or 'realm' – through this same topology.

The question of identity is not some merely peripheral issue in Heidegger's thought. Instead, it is a question that lies close to its very heart.

Indeed, in the Introduction to *Identity and Difference* – the volume in which 'The Principle of Identity' appears – the translator Joan Stambaugh writes that "it came as no surprise ... when Heidegger stated that he considered *Identity and Difference* to be the most important thing he has published since *Being and Time*".¹⁴ The question of identity is central to Heidegger's thought, as it is a central issue in philosophy more generally. Moreover, Heidegger contests the conventional understanding of identity in a way that is itself directly tied both to his thinking of the question of being, and to the topological frame within which that thinking proceeds. It is all the more striking, then, to find Heidegger so often read – by those who are sympathetic as well as antagonistic – in ways that take for granted a conventional understanding of identity, thereby attributing to Heidegger a view of identity that he explicitly eschews.

Heidegger's emphasis on identity as founded in appropriation, and so as standing in an essential relation to difference and relationality, as unity is also tied to multiplicity, itself reflects the character of place or *topos* as both bounded and open, as both singular and plural. Indeed, one might argue that one of Heidegger's most important insights is the recognition that the world opens up only in and through the bounded singularity of place. This is why the question of being must always begin with the question of the *Da* – the here/there – a *Da* that cannot be simply identified with the human even though it also implicates the human (where the 'human' is simply another name for mortals – those for whom their own being is an issue). This means, however, that rather than being tied to a problematic notion of identity as determinate and exclusionary, the notion of place itself provides the proper antidote to such a notion. Indeed, rather than thinking of place in terms of identity, identity needs to be rethought in terms of place itself – which means in terms of place in all of its complexity as well as its simplicity. It is not place that is the problem, then, but rather the inadequate thinking of place – a thinking that turns out also to be inadequate to identity. Identity, as Heidegger makes clear, is not a notion to be abandoned – without identity there is no difference just as without difference there is no identity – but a notion to be rethought. The rethinking that is required here expands to a rethinking of those other key notions, including of belonging and of dwelling – that are so often invoked by writers like Norberg-Schulz.

4. Place and Questioning

One of the great virtues of Massimo Cacciari's reading of Heidegger, whatever criticisms one may also make of it, is its emphasis on the genuinely questioning and critical character of Heidegger's thought. Cacciari does not commit Heidegger to inconsistency by assuming a conventional understanding of identity that then turns out to be at odds with other aspects of his thinking, or that is incompatible with a more critical mode of engagement. Heidegger himself emphasizes the centrality of questioning and questionability – and this centrality remains even after Heidegger qualifies his emphasis on questioning as 'the piety of thought'¹⁵ by insisting that it is listening that retains priority here.¹⁶ To listen is already to find oneself in a state of openness towards that is itself part of any genuine attitude of questioning – so long, that is, as one understands questioning, not as some form of inquisition, but rather as a mode, essentially, of receptivity. Again, this has a topological inflection, for such questioning listening already brings with it the idea of singular situatedness – an orientation within and towards – that is the necessary condition for anything to approach us, to come near to us, for anything even to be heard. Moreover, the topology that emerges here is not the result merely of some deeply entrenched metaphorical predilection or habit,¹⁷ but is itself a reflection of the fundamentally topological character of thinking and appearing.

Although recognizing the extent to which Heidegger has to be read as taking a stance against philosophical conventionalities, Cacciari nevertheless shares some of the conventional assumptions concerning the idea of place, and related notions such as belonging and even dwelling. Like Norberg-Schulz, and like Levinas too, Cacciari seems to treat these notions as to some extent tied to the idea of a mode of being that supposedly privileges the sedentary, secure, and familiar – place still appears to be seen, from this perspective, as an essentially deterministic, exclusionary, and 'nostalgic' concept. Cacciari's claim that there is no nostalgia in Heidegger can be read, not as directed towards the retrieval of an alternative conception of place, but rather as part of an argument to the effect that it is this very notion of place – and with it notions of belonging and dwelling

– that is no longer available to us as a viable option for thinking or living. On Cacciari's reading, then, Heidegger urges us to face up to the placelessness of modernity as our inevitable condition.

Yet just as one cannot afford to assume a conventional understanding of identity in Heidegger, neither can one assume a conventional understanding of place or of the concepts connected with it. The questioning that is so central to Heidegger's thinking extends to a questioning of place itself, and of what it might mean even to reside, to dwell, or even to belong. 'Building Dwelling Thinking' is directed at just such a rethinking – explicitly so, since it begins with the questions 'what is dwelling?' ('Was ist das Wohnen?') and 'how far does building belong to dwelling/'. The nature of these questions is clearer in German than in English, since the English translation of *Wohnen* as 'dwelling' obscures the fact that the focus of Heidegger's question is not some strange or exceptional mode of being, but rather something completely ordinary. When one asks, in German, 'where do you live', one says *Wo wohnen Sie?*, and in so doing one is not invoking anything beyond what one invokes with the same question in English. *Wohnen* is, in German, an ordinary and commonplace term in a way 'dwelling', in English, is not (dictionary entries typically note its use, beyond certain limited occurrences, as *archaic* or *poetic*), and Heidegger's question 'what is it to dwell' is intended to ask after the very character of our ordinary being in the world – even though it also leads towards the essential.¹⁸ This means that dwelling, if we are to remain with this English term, misleading though it is, does not name *one* mode of being as opposed to *another* – the nostalgic, perhaps, as opposed to the modern – but rather to the essential way human being is in the world. In that case, there will be a sense in which we continue to dwell even in the face of modernity. What modernity changes is the way such dwelling itself appears, and the so the way in which our own understanding of dwelling, and so our own self-understanding, is articulated.

If it were the case that dwelling did indeed simply name one mode of being among others – although a mode that was no longer possible – then it would name something that could only be of historical or antiquarian interest. Dwelling would be something irretrievably *past*, and of no relevance to our

contemporary situation. It could certainly play no role in any critical engagement with modernity – certainly not such that it would carry any normative force. There would be no reason why we should not embrace a complete and utter placelessness as our fate – and, not only that, but be content with it. Yet there is a critical and normative force that does indeed attach to Heidegger's talk of dwelling – a critical and normative force that is directed at technological modernity and what Heidegger clearly regards as its destructive character.

The point at issue here is, in this respect, a quite general one: without some notion of that which is proper to being and to the human – without a notion of that to which each is appropriated and the manner of that appropriation – there can be no grounds for any critique of the manner of their contemporary disclosedness. The 'effects' of modernity – whether understood in terms of placelessness, alienation, or the dissolution of things into mere 'resource' – are problematic only if set against a more fundamental measure that derives from an understanding of the extent to which even what appears lost still remains. Modernity itself remains bound by the very ontological conditions that it also effaces and obscures (obscuring even its own character as obscuring), and it is this that makes modernity problematic – it remains bound to its own topology at the very same time that it also promulgates its own overcoming of place, its own 'abolition' of the near and the far.¹⁹ Thus the homelessness that is characteristic of modernity, in its very character *as homelessness*, is nevertheless still a relation *to home*, even if a relation of estrangement. Indeed, one might say that the situation is one in which we remain homeless even when we are most essentially at home. As Heidegger writes:

We belong to being, and yet not. We reside in the realm of being and yet are not directly allowed in. We are, as it were, homeless in our ownmost homeland, assuming we may thus name our own essence. We reside in a realm constantly permeated by the casting toward and the casting-away of being. To be sure, we hardly ever pay attention to this characteristic of our abode, but we now ask: 'where' are we 'there,' when we are thus placed into such an abode?²⁰

The Heideggerian questioning of dwelling is intended to turn us back to the original place invoked here – back to that place in which we always already are, but from which we are so often turned away, and which modernity threatens to

hide almost completely.

The turning back – the *Kehre* – that is at issue here is not, it should be stressed, a turning back into the familiar and the secure. Rather, it is a turning back that into the opening up of a genuine questioning and listening – in contrast to the unquestioning attitude of modernity (an attitude that is itself tied to modernity's refusal of place²¹). It is a turning back that involves a proper attentiveness and responsiveness to the place in which we always already are – a place that appears, not as some already separated and determined 'location', but rather as constant gathering and differentiating in which we are ourselves taken up. To dwell is to stand in such a relation of attentiveness and responsiveness, of listening and of questioning, and this means that the question of dwelling is never a question that is ever settled or finally resolved. To dwell is to remain in a state in which what it is to dwell – and what it is to dwell *here*, in *this place* – is a question constantly put anew. Drawing on the language of *Being and Time* to which I alluded earlier – the language of the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' that has become so common among English readers – then one might say the authentic mode here is the very mode that puts its own character as authentic in question. Authenticity would thus be tied, not to adherence to some determinate inner 'truth', but rather to an openness to what Heidegger calls the 'event' of appropriation – an openness to the happening of place.²²

What, against this background, does it mean *to belong* – and especially to belong to *place* or to *a place*? Belonging here must itself be understood in relation to the idea of appropriation – belonging is thus both a being gathered into as well as a differentiating from – and so cannot be treated as if it were the relating of two otherwise separate and autonomous entities. To say, in particular, that we belong *to place* is to affirm the way in which our own identity, our own being, is inseparably tied to the places in and through which our lives are worked out – which means that we cannot understand ourselves independently of the places in which our lives unfold even though those places may be complex and multiple.²³ To say that we belong to place is also to affirm, once again, the questionability that lies at the heart of human existence. In belonging to place we are drawn into the questionability of place, the questionability of dwelling, the questionability of our own identity, rather than

into some secure and comfortable residence in which questioning has somehow been brought to an end. Of course, as such questionability is itself placed, so questionability only emerges, only takes on concrete form, in and through place itself. It is thus that the question of dwelling, along with the question of our own identity and belonging, first arises – can only arise – in and through the specific places in which we find ourselves, in and through which we encounter other persons and other things. We thus begin in the singularity and specificity of place – of *this* place – as that which, precisely through its singularity and specificity, opens us to the world and the world to us.

5. Conclusion: Building, Dwelling, Place

'What is dwelling?', asks Heidegger, and the question is one that he takes as directly relevant to the question as to how we can build and the nature of such building. Building, including the particular mode of building that is exemplified in architectural practice, depends on dwelling. What should now be evident, however, is that this dependence is not a matter of building somehow being determined by an already existing mode of life – not even one rooted in tradition or history.

One cannot respond to the question of dwelling simply by appealing to forms of life that have gone before – as if all that is needed is to reinscribe the past into the present and the future. Similarly, from a specifically architectural perspective, one cannot respond to the issue of building that the question of dwelling invokes by an appeal merely to archaic or vernacular forms – nor even by a steadfast adherence to the tenets of some pre-existing architectural practice, whether it be derived from the pre-modern, from modernism, or from the post-modern. Building, as it arises out of human dwelling, must always be a responsive engagement in and with the place in which it is constituted *as building*. There is no rule of formula that determines how this is to be done, not only because there is no rule or formula that determines the character of dwelling or of place, but because responsiveness, in any real sense, cannot be determined in advance, and certainly not by means of any rule or formula.

Building involves a responsiveness to place – but in that case, building does not 'make' places, and neither does architecture. Equally, however, places

do not 'make' architecture nor do they predetermine building in any complete and unequivocal fashion (even the built form that derives from a response to certain pre-eminent climatic or topographic features still retains a degree of architectural autonomy in relation even to those features). This not only because place is itself responsive to the architectural (which does not mean that place cannot also resist certain architectural impositions), but because the architectural engagement with place does indeed involve a relation of appropriation – a 'belonging together', a gathering and being-gathered, a unifying and differentiating – of exactly the sort that Heidegger describes in 'The Principle of Identity' as well as in 'Building Dwelling Thinking'. In this sense, one might say that architecture is itself a certain mode of appropriation – in the sense that Heidegger uses the term – and that architecture is therefore itself a practice whose own character as a practice is always in question in its practice.

Contrary to the sorts of reading so often associated with Norberg-Schulz and others, Heidegger's focus on dwelling and on place does not return us to some sort of pre-modern utopia in which the uncertainties of modernity can be laid to rest and neither does it imply commitment to some form of authoritarian and exclusionary politics. Instead, Heidegger leads us towards a critical rethinking of the key concepts that are at issue here – a rethinking in which the idea of place itself plays a crucial role. It is, indeed, through the return to place, and to a mode of thinking that is attuned to place, that the possibility of genuine questioning – as well as listening – itself appears.

Notes and References

¹ See 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed and trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp.145-161.

² See 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p.160.

³ See especially *The Concept of Dwelling: On the Way to Figurative Architecture* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1985).

⁴ Topology is itself a term I take directly from Heidegger – see especially 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', in *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 47.

⁵ See *Heidegger's Topology*, esp. Chapter 3, pp.65-146, for a discussion of some of the difficulties surrounding Heidegger's treatment of place (and space) in *Being and Time*.

⁶ As is evident even in some of the exposition of Heidegger's view in Adam Scharr's *Heidegger for Architects* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) – see esp. pp. 112-113. Scharr talks of "Heidegger's problematic authenticity claims and the potential consequences of his romantic provincialism," writing that "[Heidegger] perceived the essence of building and dwelling in authentic attunement to being, unapologetic about the tendencies of essentialism and authenticity to exclude people."

⁷ See Levinas, 'Heidegger, Gagarin, and Us', in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Trans Séan Hand (London: Athlone Press, 1990), pp.231-234, and also 'Is Ontology Fundamental?', trans. Peter Atterton, Simon Critchley, and Graham Nocter in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.1-10.

⁸ Levinas, 'Heidegger, Gagarin, and Us', p.233.

⁹ Cacciari, "Eupalinos or Architecture", *Oppositions*, 21 (1980), pp.106-116, here p.107.

¹⁰ I would also argue for retaining a rethought (and more positively weighted) concept of the nostalgic – see my 'Philosophy's Nostalgia', in *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2012), pp.161-176.

¹¹ In *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp.23-41.

¹² In *Heidegger's Topology*, I summarily characterize the *Ereignis* as the 'disclosive happening of belonging' as a way of drawing together the notions of gathering/belonging, happening, and revealing/disclosing that all seem to be involved here – see *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.217-218.

¹³ In texts such as 'On the Essence of Truth' (1930), in the early thinking, to 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' (1964), in the later. See 'On the Essence of Truth', in *Pathmarks*, trans William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.134-156, and 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', in *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp.55-73.

¹⁴ *Identity and Difference*, p.7.

¹⁵ The original claim is made by Heidegger in 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p.35

¹⁶ See Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. D. Herz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.72.

¹⁷ Heidegger himself makes a claim similar to this in *Being and Time*. Acknowledging the

way even our thinking of time seems to be infused with spatial language, he aims to preempt any suggestion that this might compromise the primacy of the temporal by arguing that the way spatial language seems to come to the fore is a consequence of Dasein's prioritization of a particular mode of temporality, namely, being-present in the present (and also of the mode of 'falling') – see *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), H369.

¹⁸ This is an issue I discuss at greater length in my 'Heidegger, Aalto, and the Limits of Design', in David Espinet and Toni Hildebrandt (eds.), *Suchen Entwerfen Stiften: Randgänge zu Heideggers Entwurfsdenken* (Munich: Fink-Verlag, in press, 2013).

¹⁹ As Heidegger makes clear in 'The Thing', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, esp. pp.166-167.

²⁰ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, p.75.

²¹ See *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.291ff.

²² There are good reason for thinking, however, that 'authenticity' is itself a problematic concept – see my 'From Extremity to Releasement: Place, Authenticity, and the Self', in Hans Pedersen and Lawrence Hatab (eds), *The Horizons of Authenticity: Essays in Honor of Charles Guignon's Work on Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology* (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming, 2013). One might argue that the connotations of 'authenticity' in English make it an awkward term, at best, to use as a translation of the term *Eigentlichkeit* that Heidegger uses in *Being and Time* (*Eigentlichkeit* is itself linked etymologically to *Ereignis*).

²³ See my discussion of this in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially chapters six and seven.

There is an important connection between the essential *placedness* of human being and its *factual thrownness* – the latter referring to the character of human being in the world as a 'being-thrown' into a concrete situation (a key idea in *Being and Time*). Existence is, one might say, always a working-out of that concrete situatedness.

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