

ABSTRACT

When we say that there is no place like home, we offer a platitude for why homes are special. Underneath the cliché, however, there is something substantive to this claim: home *is* a special place, one that is important in ways that others are not.

My project considers both what a home is and why it might be the special place that we imagine it to be. To do so, I engage with Kirsten Jacobson's arguments for the importance of home: first, that homes are refuges of a particular sort, and second, that as such refuges, they provide one with the ability to successfully operate within the wider world. The basis of both arguments is her definition of home as a place of familiarity and security. This claim is where my primary critique lies. Although it may seem intuitive, this definition does not account for many home spaces, including those that are abusive, unstable, or unsafe, among others. To account for these homes, Jacobson is left with two possible responses. She can claim that these spaces are *not* homes in the sense that she intends. Doing so, however, renders her goal of providing a universal definition of home a failure. Alternatively, she can revise her definition to include a shallower, more inclusive sense of familiarity and security. Redefining the home in this way, however, would defeat the purpose of claiming that home is unique, as it includes spaces we do not consider to be homes.

I show that for Jacobson to preserve her larger project goal, she must sacrifice the universality of her argument and instead offer a normative claim about the home. This move is not without adverse consequences. In making it, Jacobson either revokes the home-status of many home spaces, or claims that such spaces are *bad* homes. Those within these spaces will also not have the tools to succeed in the world, per Jacobson's argument. I argue that the larger insight she provides about the importance of home is worth this sacrifice. In choosing the normative definition, however, Jacobson has not resolved all issues with her conception of home. Familiarity and security are complex ideas; too much of either in one's life can be harmful. After demonstrating the potential harms of familiarity and security, and considering the perspective of Martin Heidegger, I argue that we should imagine a normative conception of the home that differs in important ways from that which Jacobson has given us. This conception must account for the importance of home as a refuge space, but it must also describe the value of a home that enables growth through risks and discovery. It is this home that we can successfully argue will prepare one for the wider world.

More Than Where the Heart Is: A Philosophical Consideration of the Home

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INTRODUCTION

Background

As someone whose family moved every few years while I was growing up, I often found myself wondering what it meant for a place to be a home. My concerns had little to do with literal house structures, but they had everything to do with the spaces and experiences I'd laid claim to in my previous cities and towns: the path from my neighborhood to the house of my best friend; the way my patch of rural Pennsylvania smelled in the dry heat before a thunderstorm; the pale, dimpled stucco of the apartments on my block. I mourned the loss of these spaces and places each time I relocated somewhere new, and each time, this mourning caught me off guard. Why was I so attached? Why did they matter to me? What made these places so special?

In my last cross-country move before coming to Mount Holyoke, I was struggling to readjust to a city I had once called home but no longer knew—an experience that was bizarre, and often painful—when someone told me “You can love more than one place at the same time.” It was a radical idea; it forced me to acknowledge the fact that I was clinging to an old and familiar way of being in a home that I no longer had, and denying myself the opportunity to discover the new one in front of me. While moving to California for the second time was ultimately a lesson in the rewards of finding home again, it was first a lesson in the dangers of being too preoccupied with one's home space. The questions I had always had about the home were not answered by either of these lessons, but they strengthened my conviction that these were questions worth asking in the first place.

The Project

My inquiry into the topic of home starts with two questions: what is a home, and why does home matter? To think through these questions, I consider two different perspectives on home: one offered by Kirsten Jacobson,¹ and the other offered by Martin Heidegger in his discussion of dwelling, Being-at-home, and the uncanny.² I then ultimately offer my own account of the home, which draws from both Heidegger and Jacobson, and advocates for centering risk and authenticity in our home-spaces.

I engage with two arguments of Jacobson's. The first is that there is a universal "shared core" that all experiences of being-at-home have, and which makes homes refuge spaces.³ The second is that the type of space a home is for us—a refuge—makes it one which "supports and even propels us to venture out into the public sphere."⁴ I take this claim to mean that homes allow us go out into and be successful in the wider, outside world as citizens and public beings

My primary exploration of Heidegger, meanwhile, revolves around his argument that human beings are creatures who "dwell". As such creatures, he claims that we have a unique way of Being in the world—one that is characterized by belonging, and by our involvements with the things with which we share space. These involvements distinguish our dwelling and Being from that of other creatures because we are sense makers; in other words, human existence is unique in that we are capable of reflecting on our own existence, and on the existence of other things in the world. When applied to the home, Heidegger's argument discusses the potential problems of

¹ Kirsten Jacobson, "A Developed Nature: A Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home," *Continental Philosophy Review* 42 (2009): 355-373.; Kirsten Jacobson, "The Experience of Home and the Space of Citizenship," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 3 (2010): 219-245.

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1962).; Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 143-159.

³ Jacobson, "A Developed Nature," 356.

⁴ Jacobson, "Experience of Home," 245.

how a preoccupation with belonging can lead one to avoid being open to the very reflectiveness that is a part of human nature.

Jacobson's Account of the Home

I begin sympathetically, but ultimately problematize Kirsten Jacobson's compelling account of home as a refuge—as a place of familiarity and security.⁵ Jacobson's subtle and plausible understanding of home distinguishes between house and home by discussing home spaces as varied as those belonging to homeless individuals and to nomadic peoples. Her desire to account for the myriad expressions of home fits my intuition that home can include street corners, neighborhoods, and cross-country journeys. Despite these resonances, however, I argue that a closer look at the nature of familiarity and security shows that neither actual nor good homes can have them as necessary features in the way she describes. My critique of Jacobson reveals that while a good home cannot be one that is entirely free of familiarity or full of danger, too much familiarity and security can also be problematic in the home.

I have two main critiques of Jacobson's account of the home as necessarily secure and familiar. First, despite what the definition may suggest, not all homes have familiarity and security. Abusive, dangerous, or unstable homes have little to no security. A new home may be unfamiliar. Such homes pose a problem for Jacobson's definition: she must either admit it is wrong, and abandon or revise it, or insist it is right and say that these spaces are not actually homes. The second option is problematic, however, because there *is* a sense in which these problematic spaces are homes. If Jacobson is committed to finding a "shared core" of all experiences of being-at-home, then she cannot sacrifice these homes without sacrificing the

⁵ Jacobson, "A Developed Nature," 356-358.

universality of her argument.⁶ I ultimately suggest that she do just that, and offer a normative rather than a universal definition of the home. This requires her to give up the shared core of all experiences of being-at-home, but it allows homes to play the role she requires of them for her larger argument.

This improvement leads to a new problem, however. Do we really think that *good* homes are necessarily familiar and secure? Could familiarity and security ever be *bad* features of a home, either independently or together? I argue that good homes are not necessarily familiar and secure ones, and that familiarity and security can be, both independently and together, problematic features of home.

To demonstrate this, I first explain how familiarity might go wrong in a home. Briefly, the idea is this: familiarity can desensitize one to problematic environments, reinforce negative patterns of behavior, and thus inhibit change. Too much security, meanwhile, can leave one unprepared for the challenges one will inevitably face outside of the home, and can prevent access to the risks that enable growth and change. If this is right, then we shouldn't so quickly conclude that a good home is a fully familiar and secure one.

Heidegger's Account of the Home

I turn to Heidegger to expand my criticism of the home as a secure and familiar refuge. If we are the kinds of creatures Heidegger says we are—namely, creatures who dwell—then an excess of familiarity and security is bad for us: it obscures our authentic existence (Being). This occurs because we are kept from accessing the reflective capacities that enable us to take control of our lives and break free of distracting—and potentially harmful—preoccupations.

⁶ Jacobson, "A Developed Nature," 356.

I suggest that we imagine homes as a smaller-scale version of the world in which Heidegger says we dwell. Just as we inescapably belong to the world through our Being in it and through our involvement with the entities—the things—that exist in it, so too do we belong to our homes through our Being in them and through our involvement with their entities. Our Being is inauthentic when we are overly preoccupied with our involvements; this can take place when we think of our existence only in relation to the things around us, or when we fall into prescribed ways of being and into the familiar. Heidegger sees this as our “average everydayness,” and acknowledges it as a part of our nature.⁷ Authentic Being, meanwhile, is when we are removed from this everyday-perspective; the things with which we have become preoccupied fade into the background, and we see our existence disentangled from the entities that surround us. This opens us up to the many possibilities of our Being that are accessible for us, and over which we have control.

Heidegger claims that we are at home in the everydayness of our inauthenticity, and we find comfort and familiarity in the pre-established routines and things on which we fixate. This familiarity and comfort—as well as the sense of security it gives us—prevent us from facing the potential of our authentic Being. While home here refers to comfort rather than a home space, I argue that we can see how the comfort and familiarity we find in our homes could similarly lead us to continue inauthentic ways of being. While familiarity is “tranquilizing,” security can support one’s fixation with familiarity, and can prevent one from having the opportunities available to disturb it and reveal what we have not been able to see. The situation is analogous from the macro-scale of the world down to the micro-scale of the home; familiarity and security combined can prevent important revelations, and keep us from arriving at our authentic Being.

⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 225.

In this light, Heidegger both affirms my criticisms of familiarity and security as good, and offers an additional account of why they might be bad for creatures like us.

Upshot

We come out of our evaluations of Jacobson and Heidegger with a complicated picture of what a home is and why it is important. Still, I believe that there is still something we can say about the importance of home and what the ideal home might look like. I will argue that Jacobson is right to see the ideal home as something of a refuge space, and thus it will be one in which we have *some* security and familiarity. Contrary to Jacobson, however, I will argue that although the home is a refuge, it should be one that provokes us to change instead of sheltering us in complacency. Rather than a complete shelter *from* the outside world, this home must facilitate the kind of risk and growth that will prepare one *for* the outside world. It must also disturb stagnant familiarity and encourage reflection—particularly reflection on and acceptance of what it means to be uncanny creatures. Even if there are no answers, as Katherine Withy writes, owning our uncanniness means following Heidegger’s call to “let *being* unhomely become worthy of question.”⁸ It is this kind of home that will truly enable one to succeed outside of the home, and this home which will propel one out into the world as a citizen.

⁸ Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2015), 205.; Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "the Ister"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 115/143.

CHAPTER ONE

Home as a Refuge

1.1 *The Big Picture*

One take on the importance of home is Kirsten Jacobson's. She claims that the home allows us go out into, and be successful in, the wider world as citizens and public beings.⁹ A simple reconstruction of her argument for this is as follows:

1. Home is a refuge—specifically, home is a refuge one can claim for oneself as an individual.
2. Having a refuge for oneself as an individual allows one to develop a sense of one's place in the world.
3. Home allows one to develop a sense of one's place in the world. (1,2)
4. To move through the world successfully, one must have a sense of one's place in the world.

C: Home allows one to move through the world successfully. (3,4)

I find this account of home's importance compelling, particularly the claim that having a refuge space of one's own enables one to develop a sense of place in the world at large. This seems intuitive, even on a superficial reading of what developing a sense of place entails.

Consider the example of a child who learns where her home is on the block. If she were to go down the street to play with her friends, her knowledge and experience of her home would

⁹ Jacobson, "Experience of Home," 245.

enable her to confidently find her way back. This confidence in where her home is, and where she stands in relation to it, allows her to move outside of the home without fear.

We can see how this scenario about the home might work on a larger scale as well, particularly as we get older. Having developed a sense of what it means to be at home somewhere, the child who once wandered down the street now wanders away from home and to a new city or town, taking with her that sense of home and recreating it in a new place. It is fair to say that she is prepared to do this by the life she has had up to that point—a life that was marked by a home or homes that were refuges in which she learned how to orient herself in the world, and eventually, how to propel herself out further into it.

As intuitive as this may seem, we do not yet have the resources to evaluate Jacobson's argument for the importance of home. A critical piece of this argument is her first premise: that home is a refuge. For us to even begin making sense of why home is important, we must first make sense of what a home *is*—therefore, we must better understand what it means for home to be a refuge. I will focus in on this premise, and will consider Jacobson's definition of home as both its own worthwhile inquiry, as well as a means through which to assess the success of her larger argument.

1.2 Argument for Home as a Refuge

In Jacobson's article "A developed nature: a phenomenological account of the experience of home," she argues that the home must be a place of familiarity and security, and thus a refuge for those who claim it. Her argument for this is as follows:

P1. A place¹⁰ is a home if and only if it is a place of familiarity and security.

¹⁰ Take 'place' as a placeholder for "x is a home"; I, like Jacobson, am not entirely committed to home being only a place—or rather, to home being only a space easily defined by walls and tangible borders.

P2. Places of familiarity and security are refuges.

C. Therefore, home is a refuge.

First and foremost, this argument is significant because it provides Jacobson's definition of home—P1—which is a critical foundation for her discussion of why home is important. In doing so, it also posits home as a space which *by definition* has the qualities necessary for it to be a refuge.

Jacobson is not concerned with providing a definition of what a refuge is in itself, however, as it is not important to her argument that she say homes and refuges are equivalent—it is only important that she demonstrate that a home by definition is also a refuge. Plus, when looking at her argument, Jacobson's second premise is fairly intuitive—it makes sense that security is a quality that would make a space a refuge. A refuge, after all, is a space in which one is protected from something; it is a space in which one is safe. We can thus understand it as a place of security. A familiar and secure place would be no less of a refuge because it was also familiar.

The philosophical action is in P1, for two primary reasons. First, because it is less obvious than the claim that a refuge involves security. Second, because given the many senses of home, any claim with necessary and sufficient conditions for home will seem to be incomplete. This premise is thus most worth discussing in an assessment of her argument.

Jacobson ultimately wants to argue that because of the refuge a home provides, it equips one with the tools one needs to go out in the world successfully. To get there, she must first offer her argument for why home *is* a refuge. In this paper, I will consider both of Jacobson's conclusions for the importance of home.

My primary focus in considering the success of this argument will be to evaluate her definition of home as presented in P1. Jacobson believes that what enables the home to both be a

refuge and to play the larger role it does in our lives is its possession of familiarity and security. I will first consider whether this seems like a reasonable assessment of what a home involves, then will explore these two ideas independently of the home to better understand what they mean. After establishing how we understand familiarity and security independently of Jacobson's definition, I will revisit her claim that a home is by definition a place which contains these two qualities, and will evaluate whether this claim is as reasonable as it initially seemed.

I will argue that Jacobson's definition of home as it currently stands does not do what she claims—it does not capture all homes. Specifically, it does not capture homes which are not safe or are not familiar places. If she continues with this definition, she will not succeed in claiming that home is a refuge, and will thus risk failing her ultimate project goal. If, however, she abandons the universal claim and instead makes a normative one, she will be able to save her argument from this critique. Offering insight into what a home *should* be, or what the ideal home *is*, meanwhile, is still a compelling and worthwhile investigation.

1.3 *Familiarity, Security, and the Home: Initial Thoughts*

What does it mean for a home to be a familiar place? Well, intuitively, that would mean that it was a place with which one had some degree of experience and knowledge—qualities that it makes a lot of sense for a home to have. If I said that a place was my home, but knew nothing about it, nor was I familiar with it, I imagine that we would think there was something amiss. On a superficial level, we can imagine that one thing that distinguishes the home of a friend from *my* home is the fact that I am not familiar with it and my friend is. Our respective homes are to each of us places of familiarity. We can find support for this even in some of the colloquial ways we talk about homes: when we say that something is “homey,” we are generally referring to

something comfortable that puts us at ease. Familiar spaces are often just that—places that set us at ease and provide comfort in their familiarity. Similarly, when we say that we “felt at home” somewhere, we are saying that some place felt like a familiar space, one in which we could find comfort. It is reasonable to imagine that familiarity is in some way connected to what it means for something to be a home.

Security also appears to be relevant to the home. We generally imagine homes to be safe and stable. Imagine a space in which one is not safe, and we are likely inclined to think that this space would not be described as a home for the person whom it threatens. If we think specifically of a *house* that is a home, for example, we probably imagine that it has walls, a roof, and doors which can close and lock—all of which protect the inhabitants both from the elements and from outside forces. This protection, which is an essential part of the construction of such a house, is a type of security for the space. Thinking about the home as a place of security is thus intuitive, whether or not we think it is representative of all homes in the world.

We have now established that Jacobson’s first premise is plausible. Our understanding of what familiarity and security mean, however, is still superficial. These concepts are clearly more complex than our initial reading demonstrates, and we would be remiss to agree with P1 of Jacobson’s argument without first exploring them in greater depth. Let us flesh out familiarity and security as individual ideas, and then reincorporate them into our discussion of Jacobson’s definition of home.

1.31 Security

Up to this point, I have described security as something related to safety. What supports this interpretation? To answer this question, let’s explore the ordinary language use of ‘security’.

When one hears ‘security’, many things come to mind: job security, security guards, security systems. Similarly, when one hears ‘secure’, one may imagine a variety of things: being secure in oneself or in one’s relationship; something that is locked away in a safe; or a secure line of communication—to name only a few. It is apparent, then, that there are many different types of things—ideas, jobs, physical objects—that we associate with security. What do these security-related things have in common?

Job security, for example, refers to having assurance of one’s continued employment. A common way to think of this is in terms of continuity, which implies *stability* in such status over time. Security guards and security systems, meanwhile, share a common purpose: protecting people, places, or things by preventing theft or access by unauthorized individuals—ensuring *safety*.

Alternatively, two of the things we associated with ‘secure’—being secure in a relationship or in oneself—have to do with confidence and stability; the other two—a secure line of communication, or items secure in a safe—are also associated with protecting something, whether that be jewelry or information shared between people.

Each of these examples falls into one of two larger categories that cover most connotations of ‘security’ and ‘secure’. The commonality between these examples is this: they have to do with either safety, or stability. Our earlier discussion of security in terms of safety is thus affirmed by our use of the word in our everyday lives, as is the new sense of security in terms of stability.

Another way to categorize these examples is in terms of physical and emotional security. For example, security in one’s self or in one’s relationship is a type of emotional security. Something like a security system or a safe, meanwhile, is an example of physical security. We now have two different ways in which we can categorize and consider security. For now, let us put stability

and safety to the side, and focus primarily on the physical and emotional aspects of security through a new set of more detailed examples.

Amy. Amy is a 54-year old woman who has been in a committed relationship with her wife for over twenty years, and has been married to her for the last six. Together they have two young children, a corgi, and a small house in San Francisco. Both Amy and her wife have had steady jobs over the past five years, leading them to have strong savings. They also have a large base of friends in neighboring cities and houses on whom they can readily rely, and with whom they are close. Amy feels satisfied and comfortable in her day-to-day life, and does not have many large-scale worries or concerns.

Sandra. Sandra is a 32-year old woman who recently re-entered a relationship with an ex-boyfriend. Sandra just moved to San Francisco for a new job—about which she is feeling conflicted—and has been staying in her sister’s house across the street from Amy and Louise until she can find an affordable place to live long-term. Her boyfriend, Mark, lives in Boston, and they are beginning to feel the strain of the long-distance. Although Sandra is grateful to have her sister, she does yet know anyone else in the area, and often feels lonely and unsure about whether or not she will be able to make new friends.

Who is more secure? Clearly, Amy, for several reasons. Amy has security in basically every aspect of her life, both physical and emotional; she is secure in her relationship, job, finances, house, friends, etc. Sandra, on the other hand, lacks both physical and emotional security in most aspects of her life: her relationship, living situation, friendships (or lack thereof), new job, and, therefore, finances are all precarious.

What makes Amy secure and Sandra insecure in their respective emotional and physical worlds is the safety and stability each has in her life. Amy feels emotionally secure in her relationship and friendships—she trusts that these relationships are reliable (i.e. *stable*), and that she can count on them. She is physically secure in her housing situation because she and her wife own their home—it is a *stable* housing situation—and it is solid, *safe*, and protects them from the elements. Amy is emotionally secure in her job, meanwhile, because she trusts that she is valued

and respected in the organization, and because she has had the stability of working there for a number of years.

Sandra, however, does not feel emotionally secure in her relationship or her job. Mark is an on again off again boyfriend; she does not trust that they will continue to be together, and that makes this a precarious and *unstable* situation. Her job, meanwhile, is similarly insecure; she has doubts which lead her to think she may either lose the position, or may be forced to quit, thus losing the stability a reliable job entails. Staying with her sister is also a short-term option, one that leaves her physically secure only insofar as she can be confident that her sister won't ask her to leave, or that she herself won't want to leave and be unable to do so—both options that would create an unstable, if not unsafe, housing situation from that point forward.

We have now made a discovery about security: if one is not safe or stable—either physically or emotionally—in a situation or place, then one is not secure in that situation or place. This is the intuition that tells us that although they both have relationships, jobs, and homes, Amy's life is more secure than Sandra's.

Before we become too invested in this claim, however, we should figure out the relationship between safety, stability, and security. Are safety and stability both necessary for security? To answer this, I will present three scenarios of security: financial, physical, and emotional.¹¹ In each scenario, I will assess whether or not safety and stability are necessary for one to be secure.

Let us start with financial security. Can there be financial security in the face of financial danger? What about in the face of financial instability? If your bank account is about to drop below zero and you have no method of restoring your funds, you are in financial danger. If you

¹¹ While I do not think that financial security is a larger category on par with physical or emotional security, I find it useful to consider it as one for this question.

need a loan shark to pay your mortgage, but can't pay your loan shark, you are in financial (and arguably physical) danger. In both examples, it is fair to say that you are *not* financially secure.

Consider instead, however, the example of a trust fund kid with a bad spending habit. He erratically drops hundreds of dollars on new jackets, overpriced lotions for a friend, and internet subscriptions that he does not need. His spending is unstable in the sense that it frequently changes, follows no regular pattern or reason, and cannot be moderated. While this certainly seems like an issue, and inadvisable, does it make him financially insecure? Because of his trust fund, he is not wanting the funds to finance his extravagant and ill-advised spending, nor is he threatened in his ability to continue spending due to his unstable financial choices. If, however, his excessive spending was observed—and frowned upon—by a guardian or official who had the option to cut off access to his money, then perhaps we would consider his financial instability to be a detriment to his financial security.

Of course, most people who deal with financial instability are not trust fund kids. For these people, unstable funds due to erratic spending or unreliable employment may certainly put them in financial danger and thus make them financially insecure. Therefore, although financial instability does not necessarily lead to financial insecurity, we can see that it often does—and when it does, it is because the instability is tied to financial danger. Let us conclude, then, that financially unstable situations *may* lead one to be financially insecure, but that financially dangerous ones *do*. Financial safety is necessary for financial security, but stability is not.

We can reach a similar conclusion regarding physical security. If one is in physical danger, or is physically unstable, is one physically secure? Immediately, the answer to the physical danger question is clear: physical danger is incompatible with physical security. Danger thus has a close relationship to security—or rather, to a lack of it—and to be in danger is to necessarily

not be secure. Someone in a war zone, whose body and life are in constant danger, is not physically secure. Even less severe examples lead to the same conclusion: if I am walking through a baseball game at a local park and am not paying attention to my surroundings, then I am not physically secure until I no longer face the danger of a stray ball or a running athlete.

Physical instability, however, is a slightly different story. There are many ways in which one can be physically unstable; one could have a degenerative disease that makes movements difficult and one's body unsteady, or one could be participating in an event that forces one to move from place to place, such as the Iditarod. Thus, not all instances of physical instability are bad. If I am physically unstable because I am participating in a race of over 1000 miles, I am not necessarily physically insecure. One would imagine that this is an instability I have sought out, and the fact that I am in almost constant motion from the beginning of the race to the end does not affect my overall physical security—rather, the danger I encounter along the way is what would make me insecure. Similarly, the impaired coordination of someone with multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease does not itself reflect a lack of physical security. The dangers associated with one's impairments in cases of MS and Parkinson's, such as falling, or the inherent dangers of the disease itself, such as long-term health effects, are what demonstrate a lack of physical security.

What separates bad instability from neutral or positive instability are the circumstances and the context in which the instability takes place. If one is in danger, such as the earlier example of a refugee fleeing a warzone, then physical instability is bad. Remove the condition of danger, however, and the situation is radically different. If MS and Parkinson's did not involve any short or long-term dangers for those who had them, the physical instability they entail would be a nuisance, not a serious security risk. This does not make the instability positive, however.

Consider the example of a wobble-board rider: while he chooses to ride the wobble-board, and only does so occasionally, someone with MS or Parkinson's does not have choice or relief from their physical instability. Although neither person in this scenario lacks physical security, the wobble-board rider has a positive experience of instability, while the person with MS or Parkinson's does not. It may be unrealistic to attempt to separate the dangers of these diseases from the symptoms, but we can see how the relationship between physical danger and physical instability radically changes the repercussions of the latter. We can assume, then, a new rule about this relationship: physical stability is itself not necessary for security, but physical safety is. If one's instability is accompanied by danger, then one is not secure—but it is the danger that does the work, not the instability.

The examples of physical and financial security suggest a necessary relationship between safety and security. Does emotional security do the same? Again, if one is in emotional danger—experiencing emotional abuse, being manipulated, etc.—then one is not emotionally secure. Emotional instability, however, also seems like a bad thing, whether one is in danger or not. Clearly someone who is having emotional turmoil or unreliability and who *is* in a dangerous situation will be insecure. In my earlier examples, however, it was easy to imagine instances where one might opt into and enjoy physical instability. This is not so intuitive with emotional instability; we typically imagine that such instability is unpleasant. For example, to have schizophrenia and to be unable to manage one's symptoms in a way that is conducive with one's daily life seems like a bad thing. Likewise, experiencing the highs and lows of bipolar disorder without the ability to regulate such feelings would likely cause strife in one's life, and would lead one not to be secure. But is this the case?

Before I dive into these examples, I want to note that while we might initially think of emotional instability as connoting issues with mental health, these are not the only examples available to us. Emotional instability can take place on a much smaller scale. For example, consider someone who enjoys watching very scary movies or devastating tear-jerkers. This person is choosing to opt into an emotionally destabilizing experience for over an hour of his life, and *enjoys doing so*. Clearly, there is something about this emotional instability that is appealing to this person. I find it unlikely that we would think he lacks emotional security simply because he's watching an emotionally manipulative film, especially when it does not harm him in any way. On this example alone, we can see that emotional instability is not necessarily a bad experience. It thus bears greater resemblance to the previous instabilities, and the patterns we established between those and security, than it initially appeared.

The question of emotional instability regarding mental illness, however, is still a compelling one. I do not want to make assumptions about the lived experiences of those dealing with various emotionally destabilizing mental health issues. It is nonetheless intuitive that someone dealing with emotional instability of this kind faces many challenges, particularly in a world where mental health is still a taboo topic. If we then imagine that emotional instability without emotional danger *may* be a negative thing in an individual's life, do we think that this means such an individual does not have emotional security?

I think our intuition will be to think of the earlier schizophrenia and bipolar disorder examples and say "yes," or at least, "maybe." Yet it is worthwhile for us to question from where this intuition arises. Is it from an assumption we make about the risks associated with these examples? I specifically cited unmanaged symptoms and a lack of emotional control that leads to strife when describing them. Do we hear this and automatically think—perhaps reasonably—that

these are dangerous situations? If this is the case, danger is again doing the work in the example to prevent emotional security, not instability.

If we think that emotional danger is not always doing the work, there is another question we can ask ourselves about the implications of emotional instability on emotional security: is it the emotional instability *itself* that is problematic for security, or is it the emotional instability operating within a *world* where emotional stability is expected? If the latter is the case, then perhaps emotional instability *is* neutral unless accompanied by danger—as our earlier rule states. I will leave it up for debate whether this distinction makes a significant difference for a person when she is nonetheless experiencing a lack of security. What this discussion shows, however, is that emotional safety is necessary for emotional security, and emotional stability is not—although it is trickier in this case than in the previous examples.

At this point, we have looked at security in many forms—from physical to emotional, and from stable to safe. We have determined that for both physical and emotional security, stability is not a necessary condition. If homes are necessarily places of security, as Jacobson claims, then it need not be the case that they are also places of stability, despite her statement that “home is like the body in so far as it is . . . a place of initial stability and a foundation for the self.”¹² Instability appears to affect security only when it is paired with danger, although this is more complex with emotional than physical security. This exploration has given us a much more comprehensive picture of security: it is at a minimum the presence of physical or emotional safety. Let us consider familiarity with the same depth, then revisit both regard to the home.

¹² Jacobson, “A Developed Nature,” 361.

1.32 Familiarity

On initial reflection, we may think that familiarity is clear-cut: either you *are* familiar with something, or you are *not*. As with most things, however, it is more nuanced than this. Let us consider familiarity instead as a spectrum, with many degrees between the two poles of unfamiliar and familiar. We can sort these degrees into three more general stages through which one progresses in becoming familiar with something: acquaintanceship, understanding, and deep understanding.

This spectrum of familiarity applies to many types of things with which one can be familiar. We can also divide these things into three primary categories for further discussion: familiarity with things, including activities and ideas; familiarity with places; and familiarity with people. While acquaintanceship applies similarly across each of these categories—you can be acquainted with a person, a place, or a concept in a similar, superficial way—know-how or understanding and deep understanding differ in various ways for each. We can begin our exploration of familiarity by walking through a scenario of the three stages for each category.

Consider this example of the word ‘familiarity’ in conversation with others: Sam is walking with Eliza, and they are chatting about their respective days. Eliza remarks that she had a wonderful physics class that day, and had a breakthrough with a concept that she had previously found challenging. She asks Sam if he knows about the concept, and Sam remarks that he is familiar with it, but has never used it before.

Here, Sam is expressing that he is *acquainted* with the concept that Eliza has mentioned to him. He is certainly not familiar with it in the same way that she is, as she has studied it thoroughly and used it in class and in her assignments, but he nonetheless has an introductory degree of acquaintance with the concept. I call this an introductory degree because one must first

become acquainted with something before one can begin to know and understand it further, such as to the degree that Eliza does.

This brings us to the next stage of familiarity: know-how or understanding. This is the degree of familiarity that Eliza has with the physics concept in the example above; she knows how to use the concept and apply it in her studies, and she understands it. This is not the end of the spectrum, because one can imagine that Eliza—as a student—does not have the mastery of this concept that her professor does, or that an expert in the field would. Such a mastery would be the third and most advanced degree of familiarity: having such a deep and thorough understanding that one knows quite a lot. She does, however, know and understand the concept well enough that she would confidently say she is familiar with it in the sense that she can use it.

So far, I have considered what it means to have acquaintanceship, know-how and understanding, and deep understanding of a concept in physics. One can imagine that something similar could be said for having these stages of familiarity with an idea from any other field of study, or with an activity such as a sport.

What does it look like to have such familiarity with a place? If one is familiar with a place to the degree of acquaintanceship, one either has heard about the place, or has briefly travelled through it. You could know that it is famous for its bagels and lox, or that it has terrible traffic and dry weather, but know nothing deeper about it than one would from a quick Google search. In fact, this type of acquaintanceship might extend even further—perhaps you wrote a research paper on this place, or read as many books as you could find one summer that talked about it. Although this certainly extends into deeper degrees of knowledge than acquaintanceship did for a concept or idea, such knowledge of a place misses something important. To be familiar with a

place to the next degree—what we have thus far called understanding—you need to have real experience with it.

Say, for example, that I have always been enamored with the idea of New York City. Ever since I was a child, I read stories about people who lived there, researched the city for class, did dioramas of the five boroughs, had maps and pictures hanging over all of my walls, and finally visited for the first time when I was 15. Assume that I then visit New York three additional times, for relatively short visits. Compare me to a college student from out of state who has just finished her sophomore year at New York University. Clearly, there is something which separates the two of us in our understanding of the city: mine remains superficial, despite my many hours of research and my time spent there, while hers has ventured deeper. While I may have greater factual knowledge of the city, the time that our NYU student has spent eating, sleeping, traveling, and learning in the city has given her a knowledge that is not learned in a book. Her knowledge is not conceptual—although she likely understands many conceptual ideas related to the city—but rather reflects an understanding of the *life* of the city, both regarding what it means to live there, and regarding the almost living quality of the city itself as a location. There is certainly a sense in which I know more about New York City, but she nonetheless knows far more about it in some other sense.

Let us take our NYU student and fast forward twenty years. She still lives in New York, and has done so consistently since she graduated. Rather than simply understanding the city as a place which she has experienced, she understands the city as a place of which she is a part, and which is in some integral way a part of her. Were we to yank her out of New York and place her elsewhere, she would be nostalgic for what she left behind, and would lose a sense of comfort which she had developed over the years spent walking the same dirty streets and sunlit parks,

eating the same food cart hot dogs and next-door Pad Thai. Even if her overall experience in New York was worse than in later places she lives, we can still imagine that one would be nostalgic for particular positive moments and memories of that time. Such nostalgia could even be conjured by memories made positive after that fact, as deeply familiar things can elicit a longing or fondness that does not always reflect the current desires or past realities of the person recalling them.

Whatever her attitude towards living in New York, if someone were to ask our former NYU student for directions, she would likely be able to quickly rattle off street names, metro locations, and any delays that might affect travel time. Her younger self, meanwhile, might be able to point you in the general direction and tell you which train to take, while I—our imagined young New York wannabe-aficionado—could give you the details of where things were on a map, but could not assist in a more practical way.

While familiarity with an activity or idea relates primarily to the growth of the individual who is learning or becoming more familiar with it, familiarity with a place involves a growing dialogue *between* person and place. This dialogue is echoed in the familiarity that one can have with a person. Familiarity of this variety takes the form of a relationship between two people, and its progression reflects a growing intimacy experienced—ideally—on both sides. Again, the acquaintanceship stage remains most similar to the familiarities of the other categories: one meets someone new, or regularly sees someone around campus, but knows little to nothing about their character. This degree of familiarity allows an individual to remark to a friend who describes the person that she “knows” that person, but “knowing” here means only that she is familiar with the general idea of who that person is, or is familiar with what the person looks like.

The next degree of familiarity with a person diverges from the other categories most markedly in its relationship to intimacy. Know-how and understanding become different beasts when related to another human, rather than to a concept or an inanimate location. Knowing and understanding a person to this second degree means knowing something of what makes that individual who they are. Consider two people who start their first year of college in the same orientation group. They see each other every day for several days, but don't really talk at all during this time, and only know of each other what they learn in the somewhat forced conversations of the group. Each of them could say to their roommates that they know who the other person is, but they don't know each other in a substantial way.

Classes start, however, and they are in two of the same courses together. They end up sitting next to each other and chatting, eventually getting lunch and working on assignments together. Soon enough, they refer to each other as friends. Between that first initial meeting and this stage in their friendship, they have developed a greater degree of intimacy: laughing at jokes they each are comfortable enough to make, sharing worries and excitements, among other little details. If you were to analyze how they interacted, you would see that they each have become familiar with navigating some of the intricacies of the other person—they both have the know-how to manage their interactions, to predict how the other might react, to anticipate what will bring them shared amusement and what will create conflict. This know-how exists because understanding more generally exists, in two different capacities: on the one hand, they have begun to understand things about the other person that they previously had not; on the other hand, they share an understanding of the role they each play in the life of the other—they share some degree of trust and respect that is required for the sharing that allows the relationship to grow.

Through the continuation of this relationship over time, an even greater degree of intimacy is shared between the two, and thus the third degree of familiarity is reached. While one is never able to fully *know* a person in all of their complexities, to deeply know and understand someone is to have access to the very parts that they are least willing to share, as well as to have an intimacy that is perhaps almost second nature. Although ideas and places often experience change, growth, and innovation, a person is even less static than these—what it is to know a *person* so deeply, rather than an idea or a place, is to be fully engaged with another creature as complex as oneself, and to recognize that complexity.

It is possible that at the final degree of familiarity for each of the three categories we have discussed, there is a depth so similar that it is almost equivalent across the board. At some point, I can imagine, one's investment in an idea, activity, place, or person becomes so great that a dialogue exists between one and the other even in circumstances where the other component is a mathematical concept, or the rules of a game. At the same time, however, it is true that there is something about each category that is different at each stage—particularly the final stage—no matter how similar the degrees of familiarity may be. In this way, we can understand the assessment of stages and categories of familiarity that we have examined to be fairly comprehensive; we are now able to reintroduce this idea to Jacobson's conception of the home.

1.4 New Understanding of Familiarity and Security

Having thoroughly examined the concepts of familiarity and security apart from the home, we should be able to better understand Jacobson's definition of the home with regard to them. Let us now revisit Jacobson's first premise, and consider several examples of homes that lack familiarity or security.

A young couple moves into a pre-furnished apartment in a brand-new development, and lives there for a week. Would we call this a home? There is certainly a sense in which it is, as they inhabit it and come home to it each night, but something is clearly missing. It could just as easily be any other place; if they moved the next day into one of the many other apartments in the vicinity, it would make little difference to them, as there is not yet anything that they have developed in association with this new space that they stand to lose in moving out of it. This absence of a developed *something* in the couple's new apartment is an absence of a deeper level of familiarity; while the two are clearly acquainted with their new space, they do not have the relationship and intimacy with it that one has when they have an understanding of a place, and definitely do not have deep understanding. One could even imagine that this young couple would feel more at home visiting the apartment of a close friend than in their own new "home" space, and this would likely be true for longer than a week, a month, likely even longer than several months—as long as it takes for them to develop a greater familiarity, one that advances beyond the initial stage.

We can make the claim, then, that a home is a place with a certain level of familiarity: either the second level, of understanding, or the third, of deep understanding. This seems to suggest that Jacobson's definition of home is right, at least about familiarity. But what about in the cases where security is absent?

Let us consider another example: a home that is the site of abuse. Despite the dangers present in such a home, it might still provide its inhabitants with a sense of familiarity—even the deep familiarity of the third stage. Imagine that you have lived in a house your entire life, and that you call this house your home. It has been witness to your play as a child, to your growth as a person, to your silent ponderings of your hopes and dreams, and to the patterns of your daily life—it is a

space that is deeply familiar to you. If all your life you have been the victim of physical abuse in this home, this abuse does not change the fact that you are intimately acquainted with the space, as well as with what it means to call this space your home. One can imagine the type of nostalgia people harbor for loved places from their past being directed towards aspects of this home and home life; perhaps being read a bedtime story, or the way the light shone through the kitchen window, or climbing a favorite tree in the backyard. This nostalgia may exist entirely divorced from the abuse experienced within the home, or may be entangled with such abuse; either way, this nostalgia stems from the same familiarity that might make one immediately associate the abuse of their childhood with what it means to have a home—perhaps even with what it means to have a home that one in some way loved. If nostalgia for home was caught up in a situation of abuse, even the abuse itself could be a familiar thing to you, something familiar in a more intimate way than we expect. I won't go so far as to suggest that one would miss the abuse, or that the abuse itself was a physically comfortable experience. Given this example, however, we can see that there is a sense in which one could have even a deep sense of familiarity with this space, and with the things one experienced within it.

Familiarity is clearly not the quality of home that this space lacks: it is the absence of security that most overtly characterizes a dangerous space. An individual in such a home lacks safety because the abuse is a harm, physically or emotionally. It is also likely that this person is not experiencing stability in this space. While certain reliable events and circumstances could trigger the violence, or patterns could exist with which one becomes aware, it is nonetheless true that a home in which one faces the risk of frequent physical or emotional harm is not stable. Why? Because such a home does not promote either physical consistency or a relatively uninterrupted emotional state—two things that are important for physical and emotional stability.

Regardless of the presence or absence of stability, however, we determined in our investigation of security that *safety* is necessary for security. Therefore, this person cannot be secure due to the danger they face, not the lack of stability they experience.

It is difficult to imagine how a space can be a home without the experience of security. As I noted when first considering how security relates to the home, there is something intuitive to us about homes being safe places. Safety is an integral and necessary part of security, and therefore it makes sense that homes would be something which should be secure. Our discussion of the relationship between security and stability in our deeper exploration of security also holds true here; while we may imagine that a *stable* home is a good home to have, a home without stability need not be a bad thing unless that instability is paired with danger. Such a home could still be a place of security even without stability.

Homes without security because they are unsafe, however, on initial reflection are one of two things: either *bad* homes, because one is unsafe within them, or not homes at all, because they are so dangerous. One can imagine, for example, a space in which someone has been trapped against their will and abused for years. This space lacks security to the point that it is absurd—even perverse—to call it a home. I can imagine that there are many spaces that we would also consider to be non-homes, due to the ways in which the experience of being within them is overwhelmed and dominated by danger. While a “bad” home might be one that its inhabitants would prefer not to have, yet would still identify *as* a home, the non-home is a space marked by a desire for escape, and lacking any qualities which the person inhabiting it would identify with home other than the fact that they live there.

The upshot of security in the home is this: while a little danger may make a home bad, too much danger makes it not a home. Consider the example of refugees fleeing a war zone. At some

point, the homes they had were homes as we normally understand them, and quite a few may have been homes that we would consider good. As the violence in their region escalated, however, their homes became less and less safe—and with that, less and less good. Eventually, their homes became so dangerous that they were forced to leave. The difference between where such a home starts and where it ends is vast. While there may be a sense in which the home that a refugee leaves is still a home, it seems more likely that it has been transformed past the point of recognition from the original home space that it once was. This assessment of the importance of security to the home supports Jacobson's definition of home.

At this point, we have considered Jacobson's starting premise in her argument for the importance of home. She posited that a place is a home if and only if it is a place of familiarity and security. I agreed that this was a plausible conception of what a home is, and considered what we find intuitive about this claim. Diving more deeply into familiarity and security, I considered these concepts separately from the home to better understand what we mean when we use them, and how we define them on their own. I then offered two different examples—that of the young couple's new home, and that of the abusive home—to bring these ideas back into the context of Jacobson's definition and to show what the absence of either of these two qualities does to our understanding of home.

In doing so, however, I have discovered an objection to her definition—namely, that there are homes which fall outside of it. I will explain this objection in greater depth, and then will consider several ways that Jacobson could respond to it. The strongest of these is that she intends familiarity and security in a thinner sense than I have described—one that will include the homes we think it should. I will argue that these replies fail to sufficiently address the objection, and her definition remains inadequate for her ultimate project goal of explaining the importance of home.

1.5 *An Objection to Jacobson's Definition of Home*

Although I set out to show why Jacobson could be right to say that one needs familiarity and security in a space for it to be home, my examples nonetheless describe *homes* where one or more of these qualities is absent. If Jacobson's first premise—her definition of home—is correct, the spaces that I described should not be homes. The new home of the young couple, lacking familiarity, should merely be characterized as a new apartment; the home that was the site of abuse, with its absence of security, would be better understood as simply a dangerous house in which someone grew up. This interpretation of these spaces, however, feels inaccurate, as there is a sense in which these spaces—even if they are bad or undesirable—are nonetheless homes. The fact that I described homes without the qualities of familiarity and security is an issue for Jacobson's definition: it is incorrect. If these homes do not possess Jacobson's two qualities, it follows that home does not necessarily involve them.

We might imagine that Jacobson would respond to this discrepancy by attempting to distance her definition of home from these homes which do not possess familiarity and security. This, however, is not a move that she could successfully make. As appealing as it is to argue that the abusive home and the new home of the young couple are *not* homes, we have already established that there is at least a sense in which both spaces *are* home to the people who inhabit them. To reject these spaces as homes because they are not ideal is to make a normative claim about what constitutes a home. Such a claim quickly precludes more and more home spaces, and ultimately undermines Jacobson's project goal of providing a definition of home that accounts for *all* homes—even if it may ultimately prove to be her best option.

There is another response Jacobson could make to my conclusion that her definition is incorrect because of the existence of homes which lack security or familiarity. Rather than

disagree about the status of these spaces as homes, she could grant this, and instead argue that her project is not talking about homes themselves, but rather about the experience of *being at home*. This move allows her to make the claim that the problematic homes I have given examples of so far are *homes*, but they are not places in which one can *be at home*, and because of this they are thus not relevant to her discussion.

This is a claim that she does not try to make, but it is worth considering. Arguing that Jacobson is concerned with *being at home* rather than with home itself raises good questions about what exactly she *does* mean in her larger discussion of home throughout the paper. She frequently vacillates between writing about home as place and home as experience, often referring first to one and then switching to the other, or referencing both with regard to the same ideas. In her discussion of what homes share, she writes that within all homes there is a “developed way of being,” but on the next page states that “home, as a *place* of and for the self, is a *situation* of refuge for us, a *place* or *way of being*.”¹³ This ambiguity continues throughout the paper.¹⁴ It is unclear here what the most important sense of home is to her discussion—is it how one *is* in one’s home, or is it the home itself? It is obvious that Jacobson is not discussing only what it is to *be* at home, as she frequently refers to what home itself—not merely the experience of it—provides. An argument made on the grounds that she is only concerned with being at home is false based on her writing alone.

Even if we were to allow that she intended the experience of being at home to be the focus of her project—despite the ambiguous textual support for this claim—there is more to say about this response. Jacobson would be claiming that the homes we have discussed thus far are homes

¹³ Jacobson, “A Developed Nature,” 356-7. Italics are mine in the second quote, and Jacobson’s in the first.

¹⁴ Several other examples include: “. . . that our home experience allows us to feel” (footnote 5, 358); “. . . home is a place of *self-nourishment*” (359); “The experience of being-at-home” (361); “. . . our being-at-home is something” (364); “In and through our homes” (369).

in which one may not *be* at home. It would be bizarre if what it means to be a home and what it means to be *at* home were so different from one another that this claim is true; the experience of a thing and the thing itself should not be so different, particularly regarding the topic of home.

Let us consider other examples of what it means for the experience of a thing and the thing itself to diverge so sharply. For example: schools are places where students are educated. The experience of attending school, we can generalize, is one of *being* educated. Can we imagine someone who doesn't have the experience of *being educated* while attending an educational institution? Practically, we might say yes; there are schools where not all students are able to receive an education, or where students lack the resources and support necessary to learn the things that a school would ideally teach them. There are several responses to consider to this example, however. First, even if the education afforded to the students is not ideal, or is not sufficient for their later success, we may still think that some form of education is being provided—just one that is bad. It is not that there is *no* experience of being educated happening in the school: it is that we think poorly of the education provided.

This is an important distinction, one as different as the statement that someone has a *bad* experience of being at home in their home, versus the statement that their “home” simply doesn't provide them with *any* experience of being at home. We might imagine that Jacobson could successfully argue the latter: a space that is *not* a home does not provide one with any experience of being at home. This follows my earlier example of a space that so greatly lacks security and so greatly contains danger that it is not a home space. It seems wrong, however, for her to suggest that there is not experience of being at home in a space that *is* a home, just as it seems wrong to claim this of a school that is in fact a school.

To expand on what is wrong with this move, consider an alternate interpretation of the problematic school example above. If we disregard the idea that a student receives a *bad* education, and instead accept that she is getting *no* education, we likely think then that there is something very wrong with the school. If a student is not *being educated* while attending school, then the “school” is a school in name only, as schools are necessarily places where students are educated.

This is the strongest objection to the idea that being at home and a home can come apart in the way that we imagine Jacobson could claim: when we consider this happening with other concepts and places, it doesn't work. If the experience that X necessarily involves does not occur—such as education in a school—then we do not think the failure *is* an instance of X. Calling it one would be a mistake.

Another example is that of depression and the experience of *being* depressed. Let us imagine that depression is a certain definable thing. If one does not have the experience of *being* this certain definable thing, then it is fair to say that one does not have depression. I don't mean that if one doesn't recognize their depression *as* depression, they aren't depressed. I mean that if one does not experience the symptoms, the diagnosis, or the measurable neurological markers of depression, then we would say that that person does not have the experience of being depressed, and thus is not depressed. Similarly, if one does not have the experience of being at home in a space, it would be fair to say that one is not in a space that is their home. Therefore, if Jacobson seeks to preserve some universality of the home by cleaving the experience of home from the place itself, she would still fail. She would have to concede that the places where she claimed one could not be at home were not homes at all.

Even if she refused to concede that the places without the experience of home were not homes, her reply to my objection would still fall prey to the same problem that her earlier option did: she needs her definition to be universal. Her project would have been undermined by the possibility of dismissing any home she deemed unideal. It would be equally undermined, then, if she claimed to look for the essential experience all homes share . . . except for some homes that lack it, because one cannot *be at home* in them. If she truly wants to stand by the position that there is a “fundamental human experience of home,” then Jacobson must be able to account for the good, the bad, and the ugly of home.¹⁵ Given that she explicitly states she wants to challenge the claim that there is nothing constant in the experience of home, this reply would not work.¹⁶

While Jacobson does not make either of these arguments, she does have a response to our apparent disapproval of her definition of home in P1. Our critique is one that she anticipates, and she provides an example to show that familiarity and security can be found in places we might not expect. “Even the ‘homeless’ person,” she writes, has “sites of familiarity”—despite her lack of the “home” we might think it would require.¹⁷ Jacobson claims that this is true because all homes have “patterns of regularity”: things that one does and ways in which one exists within a space that occur as a regular part of one’s life.¹⁸ One becomes accustomed to something when performing certain activities and rituals in a space time and time again, or when existing in a particular way within a space on a regular basis. When this happens, we say that one is familiar with it. Patterns of regularity thus lead to familiarity, and Jacobson continues by claiming that this familiarity can breed a kind of comfort and security within a space and environment.

¹⁵ Jacobson, “A Developed Nature,” 357.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. 358.

¹⁸ Ibid. 358.

In this way, Jacobson completely avoids the move to consider bad homes *not* homes—or homes where one cannot *be* at home—and instead actively tries to keep these spaces within her definition. She is not concerned here with a sense of familiarity and security, or with the comfort stemming from them, that we might imagine when we think of an ideal home: for example, a deep level of familiarity, and a sense of security where safety and stability are present. Rather, she is concerned with the idea that these things can be present *in some form* in all homes, even if only in a very thin sense. This articulation of familiarity and security enables Jacobson to ensure her definition in P1 actually gives us what all homes have in common. By picking a thin enough sense of each quality that it applies to all homes, she saves P1. But at what cost?

If we try to place this revised idea of familiarity that Jacobson gives us on our earlier familiarity spectrum, where does it fall? Clearly it is related to familiarity with a place, in so far as we imagine a home being a place. Clearly it is also related to familiarity with an activity, as Jacobson claims that the routines and activities that one does in a space are what create the “patterns of regularity” which lead to her familiarity. It is not clear to me, however, that this familiarity would reach the third level of deep understanding, because she intends it to apply to places such as the new home of the young couple. We could, for the same reason, decline to call it the second-level familiarity of knowledge and understanding.

If we decide that Jacobson is only referring to bare acquaintanceship, then this is a very low level of familiarity to require for a home space. While we might imagine that some degree of comfort arises from such familiarity—as she claims—it nonetheless seems that this would be a rather insubstantial comfort, akin to what you might have if you stayed in a hotel for a week. Reconsidering our earlier example of the young couple in the new apartment using Jacobson’s newly defined terms, it is obvious that there has been a change in which qualities we perceive the

couple experiencing in the space. What previously was a home situation lacking the familiarity we would attribute to home has now become a home situation *possessing* familiarity.

Doubtlessly the young couple have established even within the first couple of days some patterns of regularity within the space, and thus have established all that is required for at least the beginnings of Jacobson's thin familiarity.

Even a version of the young couple's scenario in which the move was unwanted, the location undesired, or the apartment unpleasant, still fits the familiarity of a home that Jacobson claims is necessary once they have established the right kinds of patterns. While we may intuitively anticipate that living in such a situation would be uncomfortable—and thus not home-like—even as it became familiar, Jacobson would argue that this is not exactly true. According to her reasoning, there is a sense in which the couple *is* comfortable in this space in so far as it is familiar, and we have already determined that it must be familiar because of their experiences within it. This comfort, however, is clearly not the same as that which one would experience in a home one desired, or in a home for which one cared. It is fair to say that are now two senses of comfort on the table: a thin sense, and a thick sense. We can see these, in turn, correspond to a spectrum on which we have imagined familiarity: acquaintanceship elicits a thin sense of comfort, while a thicker sense requires a more substantial familiarity, such as knowledge and understanding or deep understanding.

Before we consider this further, we should also consider how Jacobson's new claim about familiarity affects security in her argument. It seems unlikely that security exists in some of the spaces that Jacobson's revised definition now allows. Consider the abusive home: it seems that Jacobson must now argue that my patterns of regularity within this home make it familiar, and therefore—in a sense—comfortable. Early in her paper, Jacobson lists a series of home spaces,

including “abusive or otherwise problematic” ones, and describes how there is a “shared core” among them.¹⁹ This “shared core” is familiarity and security. She elaborates that this is the case “even if this security is one of being comfortable in relationships and ways of behaving that are marked by great danger and instability for those involved.”²⁰

This is a rather bold claim: it would mean that I have a sense of security in the abusive space through its familiarity and the comfort that results from it. According to this assessment, if we were to compare the abusive home to a safe home, Jacobson’s own criteria would say that these two spaces have the “shared core” of familiarity, comfort, and security. Is that right? Something is amiss; even if we grant that Jacobson’s claim for the existence of a sense of familiarity, comfort, and security in the space is viable, we can still question whether the different senses of these qualities have the same value and legitimacy.

For security in particular, we are right to question whether such a claim is true. If someone feels secure, but is actually in danger, we would say that this person has a *false* sense of security. This person is not safe, and we have already established how critical safety is to security. In the abusive home, one is clearly in danger—therefore we would say that the sense of security one articulates within this space is a false sense. If we do accept Jacobson’s claim that one experiences security in this space, but with the caveat that this sense is false, we might wonder how someone develops this idea of security if it is not actually true. Here Jacobson’s earlier explanation is useful: if we grant that one has a sense of familiarity in a space, and that one derives some comfort from this, it is possible that this individual could mistake this comfort and familiarity for security. Both familiarity and security share comfort as a potential secondary quality: mistaking one’s comfort—however that comfort may have occurred—as having

¹⁹ Jacobson, “A Developed Nature,” 356.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

originated from the wrong source is an easy enough misstep. This mistake, however, does not in any way change the fact that the comfort does *not* originate from an actual possession of security in such a space. Security is absent, even though some degree—however small—of familiarity and comfort may be present in the space, and even though one might *feel* secure in such situations.

1.51 The Thin Senses

The upshot of our discussion of these changes thus far is this: to make her definition apply to all homes, Jacobson must use a thin sense of familiarity and security:

Thin familiarity. Familiarity which arises from patterns of regularity (i.e. regularly repeated activities and ways of being)

Thin security. Security which arises from familiarity and its accompanying comfort; can exist in dangerous and unstable spaces and situations

What is wrong with using these senses of familiarity and security? Regarding security, we realized that a thin sense is a false sense. One cannot have safety in a thin enough sense that it would apply to all homes, and therefore cannot have security in this sense either. Regarding familiarity, meanwhile, we discovered that choosing a small enough degree of familiarity to apply to all homes results in familiarity losing its power as a descriptor of home specifically. This first degree of familiarity to which Jacobson must refer could apply to one's experiences at the bank, the grocery store, or one's place of employment. It is no longer a word we can understand to capture anything special about home, as it does not capture the features and attributes of a deeper familiarity. The comfort we discussed familiarity creating has also been reduced to a similarly thin quality that could be experienced, again, at the bank, the grocery store, or the office.

So do these thin versions of familiarity and security even capture what sets home apart from other spaces? This is an important question for Jacobson's project, most notably because she is trying to articulate *why* home is important. It is also important because she claims that home is a refuge, and a refuge is not something that all spaces can be. Additionally, in making this conclusion specific to home, Jacobson is trying to make a claim about something unique in homes compared to other spaces. It does not make sense, then, for Jacobson to use a thin sense of familiarity and a false sense of security in her definition of home. Not only do these versions make her definition of home applicable to other spaces that we would *not* consider to be homes, but they also make her conclusion false. A refuge is a space in which one is safe and sheltered. A refuge is akin to what we imagine an ideal, safe home to be; it is *not* a space in which one is physically or emotionally violated, or a space in which one is endangered—all of which are spaces that home could come to encompass, given a definition based on the thin versions of familiarity and security. It is the deeper sense of familiarity, and the *true* sense of security, which makes P2 correct, and which thus makes Jacobson's conclusion follow.

Jacobson now faces a significant dilemma. Recall her argument:

P1. A place²¹ is a home if and only if it is a place of familiarity and security.

P2. Places of familiarity and security are refuges.

C. Therefore, home is a refuge.

We have just discussed why she cannot use a revised sense of familiarity and security for her argument: it would make P2 false, and thus her conclusion false as well. Yet we have also already discussed the many reasons why Jacobson cannot successfully argue for a deeper sense of familiarity and for authentic security: it would make her definition in P1 false as a universal

²¹ Take 'place' as a placeholder for "x is a home"; I, like Jacobson, am not entirely committed to home being only a place—or rather, to home being only a space easily defined by walls and tangible borders.

descriptive claim, and thus her conclusion false as well. The easiest sacrifice for Jacobson to make is the universality of her claim, and it is difficult at this point to see how she can make her argument work without giving it up.

Jacobson might disagree with my assessment of the situation, and in fact argue that I am wrong to think her options so limited. She could maintain that she is committed to this thin sense of familiarity and security, despite my conviction that such a security is false and such a familiarity is too inclusive. Perhaps I am simply misunderstanding what she means by refuge—she may intend it in a thinner sense, as well. This claim would rewire her entire argument: she would no longer be referring to these qualities in their ordinary senses, the senses in which we typically understand them. It is confusing for both one's readers and one's argument to say that home involves the experience of familiarity and security, but then redefine these words to capture the barest sense of their usual meanings. Doing so also strips her claim of its intuitive appeal.

Were Jacobson to suggest that she means refuge in a thinner sense as well, it would be a misunderstanding of the meaning of 'refuge' itself. One is not discussing a refuge if one means it in a thinner sense. If I say that a place is a refuge for me, I mean that it provides me with something substantial of which I am otherwise deprived. For a refuge to be more flexible than this means that it is a place where the things I am provided with are merely the thin versions of familiarity and security that Jacobson has discussed—yet this makes no sense. These qualities are thin enough that I can experience them in such a great number of places—even abusive homes, or homes which are under attack. We do not want to say that an abusive home is a refuge—calling it one would be nonsensical. A thin refuge is not a refuge.

These thin senses of familiarity, security, and refuge make it difficult to understand what the point of Jacobson's argument even *is* anymore. The power of asserting that home is important is completely undermined if home is essentially like any other space in which one has spent time previously and in which one *feels* secure, whether or not this feeling is warranted. Setting the thin implications of home aside, why even go so far as to say that home is a refuge, if being a refuge only means that one feels to some extent comfortable and safe—feelings one can have in a multitude of places, such as at beaches, restaurants, or in one's car?

Intuitively, redefining what it means to be familiar, secure, at home, or in a refuge feels wrong. Given what we have discussed so far, it is wrong for Jacobson's argument as well, and when we look more deeply into the goal of her project, we see that it is more problematic than it initially appears for Jacobson to rely on these thin senses. Jacobson wants to argue for the importance of home not only because she sees home as a refuge, but also because she believes that this refuge in home prepares us to operate successfully in the world at large—whether that be as citizens and public beings,²² or as people who have a strong enough foundation to step out into the unknown. Even with this small insight into her larger project, we can imagine how the homes that her thin definitions encompass will not do what Jacobson claims such spaces should. If I am on unsteady ground in my home, how likely am I to have a strong foundation to leave it? When home means danger and aggression to me, how am I supposed to operate successfully in the world outside of it?

²² Jacobson, "Experience of Home," 219.

1.6 *The Big Picture, Part Two: Tools for Success*

There are two ways in which Jacobson could likely conclude her argument. She could maintain the thin senses, and proceed with this strategy in the face of the critiques I have raised. If she takes this angle, she must argue that while home is important, it bears many similarities to other spaces that exist in the world. What makes home unique and important is less clear given these similarities; a home is a refuge, but a refuge is just like many other spaces, and therefore so is a home. Yes, we still have the idea of successfully operating in the wider world as a takeaway, but the necessary conditions for a home are now so broad that even this no longer is so special. Either what it means to successfully operate in the wider world is so basic that it can be provided even by an abusive home and a home like that of the young couple, or it is more complex, and thus not easily attained through all homes—or attained at all.

If this is unsatisfactory to you, I would have to agree; while we set out to discuss why home is important, Jacobson's take has led us to conclude that its importance is largely overstated. There is another option, of course; Jacobson could switch instead to the full senses of these qualities with which we began this investigation of home. At this point, one wonders why it would be such a bad thing for her to do this; it is the recurring option, the easy out, the solution to the frustrating problem at hand for preserving the purpose of her argument. I have stated several times that this option is not available to her because it would deny the universality she seeks, but it may be unclear why the preservation of this universality is worth the sacrifice of her argument's success. Unfortunately for Jacobson, universality is ultimately as important for the achievement of her project's goal as fuller senses of the qualities are.

A thin sense of home and all that it includes might leave a great many bad homes on the table which do not successfully do what Jacobson wants. A full sense which gives up her goal of

universality, however, not only revokes the home-status of many home spaces, but also states that people within these non-homes will not be able to go out into the world in the way that people with homes can. This is a normative claim, and Jacobson did not set out to provide us with a normative definition of home or its importance. Because the thinner definition of home involves a sacrifice of home's importance—or at least a sacrifice of clarity for why home is important—it may seem like this is the conclusion least compatible with her paper. To abandon universality, however, is for Jacobson to sacrifice home's importance in a different way.

Why? Once her definition becomes normative, Jacobson no longer argues that home is an important space. Instead, she argues that the *right* kind of home is important—the ideal home. Many homes are not ideal; even *most* homes at some time or another are not the *right* kinds of homes. A normative understanding of the home forces Jacobson to sacrifice the importance she hoped to claim for a larger category, and to acknowledge that these homes are not special, and do not provide an individual with something of value that other places don't.

Of course, we can still find value in less than ideal homes. Jacobson has offered an account of the importance of the home that she finds most compelling, but there are others, and many of these may apply to homes which Jacobson's no longer does. However, to offer one's most compelling account for why home is important, and then to say that not all homes possess this, is still a significant judgement about the quality of those additional spaces. Jacobson's conclusion then becomes this: that home—in a normative sense—is important for moving out into the world, and that it provides one with the tools necessary to do so successfully. The most serious consequence of this definition is that some people will necessarily not have homes in this sense, and these people will thus lack the support that such homes provide.

Despite the consequences, I believe it is this conclusion that is in Jacobson's best interest for the preservation of her argument. This conclusion also makes the most sense; it is true that there are some homes which simply do not provide one with the tools one needs to successfully operate in the wider world. It does not follow from this that those who have homes which fall outside of Jacobson's definition are not, or cannot, be successful in the wider world. Perhaps one could accumulate the skills necessary through other means, in bits and pieces over time, or in another home later in one's life that *was* ideal in this sense. If Jacobson were to claim, however, that one could *only* develop these tools if one had a certain home, that would be a much stronger—and a much more controversial—claim. Whether she argues for this, or for the more generous take, I believe that this conception of home is nonetheless worth considering.

1.7 Problematizing Familiarity and Security

We have reached the conclusion that Jacobson's argument works best as a normative claim. This means that she is arguing for what good homes—or homes as we typically imagine them—involve, and she concludes that good homes possess familiarity and security. I imagine that up to this point we have assumed familiarity and security are good things, particularly because having them is what makes a good home. It makes sense that if we have a normative claim about what makes a good home, the ingredients for such a space would also be good. We can imagine other examples of this as well, such as a good essay. A good essay is one that includes a strong thesis, clear writing, and compelling evidence. We view these individual elements as good things because they are a part of what makes the paper itself good.

Our question when pushing back on Jacobson's argument thus far has been only whether or not these elements are necessary for a home. With our new, normative take on her definition, it

seems that they are. Before we move beyond this part of Jacobson's project, however, I believe we should revisit familiarity and security, particularly as it pertains to their goodness. Our initial assumption that they are positive characteristics deserves more investigation than we've given it.

1.71 Familiarity: Thoughts & Critiques

Consider, again, familiarity. I gave three examples of different types of familiarity in my earlier discussion of the concept: familiarity with a thing or an idea, such as with the physics student; familiarity with a place, such as with New York; and familiarity with a person. In each of these examples, an increase in familiarity was a good thing. We can likely trace any assumption about the goodness of familiarity to the fact that I presented only good examples; even in a later consideration of familiarity with an abusive home, I connected familiarity with positive memories and good experiences in an otherwise bad space. Based on these examples alone, it seems safe to imagine that familiarity *is* a good thing. I can imagine, however, other examples where one is familiar with something that is not good: for example, abuse. If I have a deep understanding of abuse as an experience rather than as a concept, then I am familiar with it. Here, however, my increased familiarity is a bad thing, rather than a good one.

This is an obvious critique; one can be familiar with anything, and some of those things will necessarily not be good. One might argue that this example that does not illustrate any issues with familiarity *itself*. The abuse is the problem in this scenario; it is the *bad thing* with which one is familiar that does the work to make us feel that my example is negative. My familiarity is merely an after-effect of my having had the bad experience so many times.

For the moment, let us grant that there is nothing bad about familiarity itself. Perhaps it is analogous to vision: one might view something bad, but it is not one's eyesight that *is* bad—it's

the bad thing that was observed that causes the problem. Even if we grant this, however, we can still question if familiarity is good, even using the eyesight analogy. For example, consider the influence violent media has on the individuals who consume it. Studies have been conducted on the effects repeated exposure to violent imagery has on children and young people, and the results indicate that long-term exposure increases violent tendencies and desensitizes individuals to acts of violence.²³ Following our earlier analogy, one's eyesight is neutral in this; however, when one repeatedly watches a bad thing, there are serious effects that one's visual intake of that bad thing has. In this light, one's eyesight *does* seem to play a role in the negativity of our example—similarly, we can imagine that familiarity may in fact be part of the problem in a bad situation, rather than be a neutral byproduct *of* that situation.

Let us consider another example: dating the wrong person. There is a story you may have heard before in a book, a movie, or from someone you know—a story about someone who chronically dates people who are bad for them. Usually, this person is a young woman, and the narrative in literature and film often revolves around issues this woman had with her absent father. These issues are then demonstrated in her life by the fact that she dates an array of men who are equally absent, and equally uninterested in her life.

Whatever one thinks about this specific example, it is true that people sometimes end up with partners who are similar to one another, whether that is good or bad. Why might this be? Perhaps because we become familiar with a certain way of being in a relationship, and end up recreating or repeating that in later relationships. We likely imagine that this is at play in our stereotypical example. In films which feature the above-mentioned woman who dates the wrong men, she

²³ L. Rowell Huesmann, "The Impact of Electronic Media Violence: Scientific Theory and Research." *The Journal of Adolescent Health* 41, no. 6, Supplement 1 (2007): S6–13, accessed February 20, 2017. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2704015/>

usually experiences a breakup and proclaims “never again!” only to end up—again—with the same kind of guy, because that is what she knows.

We see this pattern in other places as well: bullied kids who grow up to bully others, people from dysfunctional families who repeat their experienced dysfunction in their own lives, etc. While an experience with something like bullying or abuse does not mean that one is destined to perpetuate the cycle, there certainly are cases where this happens. In these cases, it seems to be the familiarity that is at play in creating the problem. A dysfunctional family may not be good, but there may be something comfortable about the kind of dysfunction that one knows—and, as we saw earlier, comfort can be linked to security, perhaps leading one to imagine that a comfortable situation is a safe one. Similarly, although being bullied is not a positive experience, it might nonetheless be an experience that one comes to associate with expressing frustration or handling conflicts. If this is a way of being in the world with which one has a great deal of personal experience, and with which one is familiar, then it can become a way of being in the world that one repeats.

As we established earlier in our discussion of security and familiarity, the repetition of an experience or way of being over time creates “patterns of regularity.” These patterns, in turn, create familiarity, and familiarity—Jacobson argues—breeds comfort. While I anticipate that we would resist this idea in many of the examples I list above, Jacobson is explicit in her belief that one can be comfortable even in “relationships and ways of behaving that are marked by great danger and instability for those involved.”²⁴ We can therefore understand this comfort as a problematic one; it is not what one imagines existing in a healthy relationship or in a safe environment. It also does not reflect literal physical comfort, or experiences that are emotionally

²⁴ Jacobson, “A Developed Nature,” 356.

supportive or pleasant. Rather, this problematic comfort that Jacobson describes appears to be connected to the discovery about desensitization in my earlier example about violent media. Over time, with repeated exposure, it appears that bad things can appear less bad to us. If they appear less bad, then what was once an uncomfortable or negative thing may be normalized to the point that one has a problematic comfort with it. After ten years in a house where one's parents are emotionally abusive to one another, one might not think that that behavior is as bad as one did the first time it manifested. A child in a house like this may have learned to go to her room and close the door, or to ignore it, and may think nothing is unusual about the way in which she has learned to react and deal with an otherwise unacceptable situation.

This does not mean that one is *always* comfortable in such an experience, even if we only mean problematic comfort. It does mean, however, that if patterns of regularity and familiarity are present, then it is possible that one *may* be comfortable in some way, whether or not it is good or safe for them and those around them. It is reasonable to take away from this the fact that familiarity can be bad in these situations.

Someone who is committed to the neutrality of familiarity may disagree with this last statement, and say that nothing I have showed so far proves that familiarity is itself bad. Using the logic of statements like “guns don't kill people, people kill people,” my opponent might argue that familiarity is merely something that can be handled poorly. While it might occasionally be put to bad use, that does not mean that it is bad. Familiarity with *abuse* is bad because it means there is a lot of abuse taking place, not because of a special role familiarity plays in somehow furthering the abuse. My neutral-familiarity opponent might say that more of a bad thing is always worse than less of a bad thing, and that is why my examples that include familiarity seem so problematic—which does not prove that familiarity is a problem.

There are several ways we might respond to such a nay-sayer. First, if we accept that familiarity is neutral rather than good, it seems worth asking if it still does the work that Jacobson needs it to do in her definition. We spent a considerable amount of time earlier figuring out why familiarity was an important quality of the home. In doing so, we considered examples where homes lacked familiarity, and where this lack appeared to negatively affect our perception of the space as a good home. The justification for it being a part of Jacobson's definition relied on the fact that it provided something positive to the home, and so we started with the assumption that familiarity was a good thing. For us to now be at the point where familiarity is neutral, something new must have been revealed. If having familiarity is good in a home, but familiarity is neutral, why should we believe this?

Another ramification of familiarity's neutrality might be that it is now less clear why a good home is good. If familiarity is not necessarily a good thing, but it is supposed to lead to a good thing—a good home—what does it pair with to get us there? The obvious answer is security (I will problematize this later, but for now, let us assume that this is correct). Yet if all neutral familiarity pairs with is security to get us to a good home, this seems insufficient. Security as we have discussed it is an absence of danger. This does not get us very far towards a home being a special place, or to it being a particularly “homey”—i.e., comfortable, nice, warm, etc.—place.

Last, but certainly not least, we can simply disagree with my opponent's statement—it is not at all apparent to me based on the examples I have considered so far that familiarity is neutral. Rather, I believe that these examples have proved that familiarity can be bad in certain situations. If familiarity with negative experiences, ways of being in the world, situations, and people can lead to comfort in those situations, then familiarity can lead to the perpetuation of those bad things in an individual's life. It can perhaps even lead to the exacerbation of bad things, and if

this is the case, then it is clear that the presence of familiarity as a quality of the home is not necessarily a good thing.

In response to this revelation, Jacobson might argue that familiarity is only bad in bad situations, and that a good home is necessarily one that does not have bad situations with which familiarity can negatively react. This statement depends on security ruling out bad homes, and therefore depends on security being good. This seems like a hard point to combat; surely security must be good, especially in the home. How could safety and stability be bad?

1.72 Security: Thoughts and Critiques

Security is in fact no less problematic of an idea than familiarity, although it is bad in different ways. Before we look at cases of security that are not necessarily good, it is worthwhile to go back to an assumption we made that a *lack* of security through safety is bad. Consider my earlier example of the Iditarod. In this example, I observed that the lack of physical stability was not in fact an issue for us—it did not make us think the person racing lacked physical security. Physical instability is, after all, a key component of the Iditarod, and it plays a role in motivating many of the people who participate to do so. I noted that what *may* make us think someone in the Iditarod lacks physical security is the danger that she experiences while doing the race.

What I did not ask during my initial presentation of this example was whether or not we think the danger in the Iditarod makes it a bad experience. This is a more complex question than whether a participant is physically secure: it requires us to make a judgement about whether physical security is in fact necessary for an experience to be good, worthwhile, or otherwise valuable for the person participating in it. Going from the Iditarod example alone, it appears that security is *not* necessary for an experience to be good or worthwhile. While I am sure people

have different opinions about the value of such intense and dangerous races, it remains the case that for the many individuals who compete in, staff, and otherwise assist in conducting them, they are valuable and positive experiences.

Even beyond the Iditarod, however, it seems that danger can be worthwhile. One is in potential emotional and physical danger anytime that one takes a risk—for example, asking someone out on a date, being vulnerable with a friend, participating in athletic events that test your limits, among others. We typically think that these risks are worthwhile, even if we experience emotional or physical harm when they do not go as planned. There are clearly times when security is neither necessary, nor the best option.

If the absence of security can be good, can the presence of security be bad? Perhaps yes, if security—or the pursuit of security—prevents one from having the opportunity to do other things that are good. Consider an example that Jacobson herself offers: that of someone with agoraphobia.²⁵ Jacobson's primary concern with the example of the agoraphobe is to illustrate that such an individual is in fact never at home, despite the fact that she always wants to be *in* her home. We can also, however, consider this an example of when a desire for, and a pursuit of, security is so strong that it is misplaced. Jacobson says that the person with agoraphobia is never at home because she does not in fact have the foundation she needs to be able to leave the home; similarly, we can say that the agoraphobe's search for security is one that in fact negatively impacts her life, as she is never able to feel safe in the world.

Even in less extreme examples, we can imagine that the presence of too much safety, too much stability, might limit one. Here the debate around helicopter parents comes to mind: it is perhaps possible to raise one's child too safely, and in the pursuit of protecting one's children,

²⁵ Jacobson, "Experience of Home," 231-236.

one may in fact put them in greater danger, and at least may make them ill-prepared for the wider world.

This last point is particularly relevant for our consideration of Jacobson's project. Jacobson hopes to illustrate how the home might make one able to go out into the world successfully; it is important to her that one be prepared—in some way—for the wider world. If security could in fact hinder one's ability to be prepared in this way, this could be a problem once again for her definition of home. While we discussed different degrees and levels of familiarity that one could have, and established that a certain deep degree is a part of what it means to have a home, we have not discussed levels of security in the same way. Perhaps there is a point at which security is no longer a trait of the home that allows it to do what Jacobson requires.

CHAPTER TWO

Heidegger on the Home

Jacobson's account of the importance of home starts with a definition of what a home is.

Heidegger's account of the home, meanwhile, starts with a description of what kinds of creatures *we* are. If Heidegger is right about our nature, then we can raise a related but distinct criticism of the home as a secure and familiar refuge. Let me first start by explaining Heidegger's view about what is essential to human existence.

2.1 *The Kinds of Creatures We Are*

Heidegger says that human beings are dwellers. In *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, he writes that “To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.”²⁶ For Heidegger, dwelling has to do with how we are in the world. Just as “to dwell in a house is not merely to be inside it spatially . . . it is to belong there, to have a familiar place, there,” so, too, is to dwell in the world to belong and have a familiar place there.²⁷ The way that we are in the world thus mirrors the way that we are in our homes: we belong, and we are familiar with it.

What it means for us to be dwelling creatures also involves the way that we relate to the things in the world around us. Dwelling is a unique part of human existence, and human existence—or *Dasein*, as Heidegger calls it—involves reflection and sense-making. Our way of

²⁶ Heidegger, “Building,” 349.

²⁷ Michael Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter Edition (2016). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/heidegger/>

Being-in-the-world²⁸ enables us to see things and understand them in a way that is unique to human beings. He writes that we can “see something *as* something,” and we know that the things we see are beings.²⁹ Stuart Elden gives the example of a lizard and a rock—while a lizard may use the rock, it does not have the same understanding of “the rock *as* a rock” that we have.³⁰ Heidegger draws another noteworthy distinction between the ways in which humans and non-human animals are in the world when he says Being for plants and animals is *life*, while for humans, Being is *existence*. Our Being is unique because it is one that enables us to reflectively recognize the Being of other beings, and to recognize our own existence as well.

Heidegger describes two different ways that Dasein’s Being-in-the-world can take place: authentically, and inauthentically. Our inauthentic Being-in-the-world is what Heidegger calls our “average everydayness.” It is the type of Being in which we spend most of our life, and the one in which we have a sense of “Being-at-home.”³¹ Inauthentic Being corresponds to how preoccupied we are with our involvements in the world—with our connections to, relationships with, and meanings for entities (or things) in the world. If we are too preoccupied with our involvements, we become entangled in them. This can mean that we start to see our Being only in connection and relation to the entities around us, or that we fall into prescribed ways of Being, and into “tranquillized familiarity” and “self-assurance.”³² Inauthenticity involves the comfort of the known, the familiar, and what Heidegger calls the “public”; when we are in it, we feel off the hook for our own existence, and we “avoid owning [our] own life.”³³

²⁸ The capitalization of Being is intended to emphasize a distinction between *beings*—entities and creatures in the world—and their existence, *Being*, which is a non-entity. Being-in-the-world for Heidegger is the grounding phenomenon of Dasein

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 383–4.

³⁰ Stuart Elden, “Heidegger’s Animals,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 273–291.

³¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 233.

³² *Ibid.*, 233–4.

³³ Wheeler, “Heidegger.”

Heidegger also calls this type of Being-in-the-world “fallen,” because when we are in it, we fall into the world and are immersed in the entities that compose it. When we fall, we fall away from the possibilities of our Being-in-the-world. Although he describes this as inauthentic, Heidegger is reluctant to say that it is itself a bad thing; falling into the world and inauthenticity are not alien or unnatural things for us, but are a part of our nature.

While he may be reluctant to call it bad, Heidegger does not think that inauthentic existence is good—it necessarily keeps us from being our authentic selves, which we ideally should be. But what are our authentic selves? Authentic existence has to do with our openness to the potentialities of our Being-in-the-world—in other words, to our openness to the all of the possibilities for *how* we exist. Because inauthenticity involves a “levelling off of Dasein’s possibilities” to only what is “within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable” as determined by the public world of the “they,” authenticity is a reveal of the possibilities that were hidden when Dasein was fallen into the world.³⁴ I interpret Heidegger’s use of the “they” as akin to the status quo; our options for Being are limited by what we are told and shown to be acceptable in our society. When we exist in the authentic mode of Being, Heidegger says that we are individualized, because we are removed from—or at least given the perspective to see beyond—the “they” of public life. To be individualized is therefore to be moved beyond the social norms of one’s world, although this does not mean that one loses one’s society or connection to others.³⁵

How does one transition from inauthenticity to authenticity? This happens through anxiety, or angst. For Heidegger, anxiety is a state of mind that forces one to confront the fact that we are

³⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239.

³⁵ Wheeler, “Heidegger.”

creatures with the possibility to be authentic or inauthentic. Anxiety “brings [Dasein] back from its absorption in the ‘world’”, and makes entities sink away.³⁶ Because of this, anxiety serves as both a breakdown and a reveal: it breaks down the familiar world of fallen Dasein, lost among entities, and it reveals the potential for Dasein as a self-reflective and sense-making creature to “project[t] itself essentially upon possibilities.”³⁷ Anxiety is the action that individualizes us for authenticity, and which helps reveal that the stability and structure one thought was present in inauthenticity was not.

2.2 *The Problem of Our Existence*

Although anxiety is basically a reveal of authenticity, the experience of anxiety does not mean that one will then experience authentic Being-in-the-world. Authentic Being is scary; it involves facing choice, uncertainty, and accountability. Compared to the comfortable and familiar world of inauthentic Being—which Heidegger describes as bringing Dasein “a tranquility, for which everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors are open”³⁸—authentic being is the Real World, where the “right” answer is unclear and complicated. This is the opposite of our everydayness, and it is the opposite of our Being-at-home.

This is the uncanny: the fact that our Being-at-home is not our authentic Being, and yet both are true of our nature. When faced with the choice between the “not-at-home” of authenticity and the “‘at-home’ of publicness” in inauthenticity, Dasein usually responds by fleeing its uncanniness, and falling back into the entities that anxiety had briefly hidden.³⁹ Consider the following example of how inauthenticity, anxiety, and authenticity come together.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 233.

³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

Sammy is a young girl who wants to fit in with a specific group of friends at her school. To do so, she follows an unstated dress code that matches that of the clique she aspires to join, attends the events they do, and participates in activities in which they are interested. She believes that mimicking them in this way—and ultimately, becoming a part of their group—is the key to her happiness. Her spare time is spent pursuing this, and it reassures her to know that they approve of the way she is behaving.

We might think that Sammy is demonstrating a type of inauthentic Being-in-the-world. She is preoccupied with entities, follows a predetermined model for what her Being should look like—one she bases off the “they” of the clique—and she experiences Being primarily through the pursuit of their friendship.

Now imagine that a new student, Emma, comes to her school. Emma is very different from the group that the Sammy idolizes, and Emma sets out to befriend Sammy right away. After spending some time together and with other students Emma has befriended at the school, Sammy is suddenly confronted with the fact that she has a choice: with her new friends, she doesn't have to try to fit in to get along—but if she continues to spend time with Emma, the people and way of Being that she has pursued for so long will slip away.

Anxiety here reveals that Sammy is in charge of how she behaves and the way that she is in the world. While before her potentiality of Being-in-the-world was limited to what she could conceive in the context of her friend group, anxiety reveals that she has more options than she thought. It also breaks down the familiarity she has with her friend group: she now sees them in a different light based on her new perspective of what friendship is.

Per Heidegger, this is where the story usually goes south. It's scary to decide to stop Being someone you've tried to be for so long, and it's scary to give up people who are important to

you, even if you have good reasons for doing so. Faced with the fact that she both does and does not want to be Emma's friend, Sammy panics and throws herself back into her search for inclusion in the clique. The idea of giving up the security and familiarity of a group, even if the alternative is to live more honestly and openly, is a hard to swallow; Sammy, like Dasein in this situation, flees.

There is, however, the possibility for us not to flee in these moments of uncertainty, and to instead try—in our many occurrences of anxiety—to face up to our uncanniness and own it, rather than hide from it. While it is unclear to me whether Heidegger believes that this can truly be achieved, or whether authentic Being-in-the-world is something that can only be glimpsed rather than lived, this nonetheless seems like the option he would suggest we strive for. In the case of Sammy and Emma, it certainly seems like the better choice, even if it is unclear how it will end up.

2.3 *Back to the Home*

How does this relate to the home? As I noted when first introducing Heidegger's conception of dwelling, the way that we exist in the world mirrors the way that we exist in our homes.

Although it was his intention for 'dwelling' to capture how we are in the world, rather than how we are in a specific home-space, Heidegger links the two concepts in a causal chain. "We do not dwell because we have built," he writes in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, "but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers."⁴⁰ This means that while we do not *need* homes to dwell, it is because we are creatures who dwell that we can be at home.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, "Building," 350.

Being the creatures that we are, and dwelling in our homes as we do in the world, we fall prey to the same inauthenticity and preoccupation with entities within our homes as we face outside of them. The home is perhaps even more vulnerable to these issues than other spaces, as it entails a level of familiarity that can easily become a part of one's routine. If we become so caught up in our homes that we view them as the only source of our dwelling, or imagine our Being only through our home world, then our homes can push us further away from authenticity of Being-in-the-world.

Our preoccupation with home, then, can make us lose sight of who we are and how we are connected to the world. If I am preoccupied with my home as a place that I have filled with certain things and in which I live a certain life, then I may lose the fact that I do not need those things and that specific life to have a place in the world. The adage "don't lose the forest for the trees" is applicable here: by becoming so involved with and distracted by the familiar and comfortable details of our home lives, we are pushed further away from our authentic being.

The way in which we might lose ourselves in the material fixings of our homes is analogous to the way in which people sometimes lose themselves in the material symbols of love. Consider a couple who expresses affection primarily through gifts. Such love could be shaken if the gifts were to stop, come late, or fail to perfectly reflect thoughtfulness and intimacy on the giver's part. The point is not to never gift as a sign of affection. It is rather that an emphasis on material symbols of love can lead one to fixate in the wrong place and lose sight of the true nature of love.

Similarly, in our relationships with our homes, too much of a focus on a certain kind of life can obscure the potentiality of our existence. This is the skewed and inauthentic perspective into which we regularly fall. When we become lost in the entities that make up our lives—and in my

specific focus, our homes—we do not realize that we are distracted from the greater truth about our nature and existence.

Because inauthenticity is an inevitable, if unfortunate, part of our nature, anxiety is even more important. It is what disrupts our routine, shakes the familiar world we have established, and allows us to see clearly what we have let slip into the background. As with the example of Sammy, sometimes the familiar things with which we are comfortable are not good for us. In the home, familiarity has the same potential to be problematic.

This narrative of one's involvement in the home is a point from which we can see a Heideggerian problematization of familiarity and security. As I have described it, familiarity is a part of what enables us to become lost in the entities that surround us. When we have familiarity and comfort in a routine and a way of being, we are pushed farther away from ourselves by our preoccupations, and we lose sight of the many possibilities for how we can Be-in-the-world. This is an inauthentic mode of being; although it may be one we normally experience, it is not what we should aspire to.

Once this familiarity is disrupted, however, there is a breakdown of our preoccupations, a release from our entanglements, and a reveal of our uncanniness. This reveal offers us the chance to come closer to authenticity, and closer to an authentic and open way of Being-in-the-world. Familiarity is thus not necessarily a good in a home, on Heidegger's view, because it can push us into an inauthentic existence. Heidegger's account of familiarity also supports my earlier concern that it can enable and create problematic dynamics and cycles. If familiarity and the comfort it breeds lead Dasein to flee authenticity and return to inauthentic ways of being which may be bad—as in the Sammy example—then familiarity is bad.

Because of the role it plays in allowing familiarity, security can also be bad. What allows for the breakdown of familiarity in the above scenario is the interjection of a disturbance. A disturbance could be many things: a divorce, a midlife crisis, a cross-country move. The important point for our discussion is that such a disturbance forces one to see things that one could not when one was comfortable and secure in the familiar. Disturbances may be risky, dangerous, or threatening. They are nonetheless important for opening us up to what we have hidden from ourselves. Denying the potential for disturbances is a way in which to deny the potential for an authentic revelation of the self. While avoiding danger is often justified, if such avoidance comes at the expense of authentically Being-in-the-world, then the justification is weak at best. Heidegger even describes anxiety itself as a threat—a threat to Dasein’s “everyday lostness.”⁴¹ If we deny all risk, danger, or threat, then we deny even the good, motivating risks, the dangers that challenge us, and the threats that threaten our inauthentic ways of being. A security that does this is one which puts us in more danger than it protects us from.

2.4 *Can Home Be Good?*

Given the account I’ve just presented of the dangers of home in Heidegger’s view, one might ask if the home can be a good thing under a Heideggerian interpretation. While Jacobson suggested that homes are refuges which help us go out into the world, Heidegger has not appeared to offer an account of the importance of home. Heidegger’s perspective on the importance of home is much subtler than Jacobson’s, but he, too, believes that it helps us relate to the world. Earlier in this section, I mentioned that Heidegger would not say we need homes to dwell. He might say, however, that one’s home can allow one to get *closer* to our nature as dwellers. If our way of

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 234.

being at home and our way of being in the world mirror each other, then the way that we enact our dwelling in each space is similar. In a home, however, we have the added benefit of dwelling in its ordinary sense. This means that while we are trying to find our sense of belonging in the world, we can do so from a space in which we already have a concrete sense of belonging—one that will ideally help us in our search. Particularly when imagining good homes, such spaces can perhaps be ones where we base ourselves, and where we locate our foundation in the world. Heidegger would likely argue that the home is not necessary for us to have such a foundation, because our Being is such that we already belong in the world. That does not mean, however, that we as humans don't *seek* homes as spaces in which to pursue these goals, and that they don't assist us in some way towards getting nearer to them.

My critic might continue her worry by saying it is perhaps not plausible for a home to be both what I suggest, *and* be the somewhat authenticity-opposing space Heidegger describes. Perhaps there is too fine of a distinction between having the home help us dwell, and having it help us be inauthentic. Homes might just make us get caught up in them. The added layer of belonging that I mentioned as an advantage might be a disadvantage in this light; if we have another layer of comfort on which to base familiarity and security, then homes *are* more vulnerable to be coming bastions of inauthenticity. This may be why Hans Sluga argues that Heidegger advocates for us *leaving* the home.⁴²

In response to this critique, I say that my critic is right: the home does seem to be a problematic space, *if* it necessarily includes familiarity and security. These, after all, are where the issues arise for my Heideggerian interpretation: undisrupted familiarity leads to preoccupation, and too much security leads to a lack of the necessary disturbances to disrupt

⁴² Hans Sluga, "Homelessness and Homecoming: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Hölderlin," in *India and Beyond: Aspects of Literature, Meaning, Ritual and Thought*, ed. Dick van der Meij (London: Kegan Paul, 1997), 503.

familiarity. It is not apparent to me, however, that the home will remain this same problematic space if we revise the requirement of familiarity and security within it. If one seeks to preserve opportunities for disturbances of familiarity, and takes steps towards embracing the somewhat unintelligible contradiction of being an uncanny being, then one's home can help one return closer to the "nearness of the origin"—to our nature as dwellers.⁴³

Notice also that although Sluga is right that Heidegger advocates for leaving the home, Heidegger also argues that it is crucial that we return to it after leaving. The motivation for leaving is to seek a disruption, which can provide one with an external context through which to realize what was obscured in and by the home, and to reveal what was not recognized amidst one's preoccupations. The difference between a home that helps or hurts our authenticity and our attempts to get closer to our Being may be a narrow one, but this isn't a bad thing. That the line between such homes is so thin shows that it is accessible for us to revise our way of building and cultivating homes so that they are more in line with our dwelling, and suggests that even if we fail and fall back into our preoccupations—as we are likely to do—we will be able to try again.

The upshot of this exploration of Heidegger, dwelling, sense-making, and the home is this: familiarity and security remain troubled characteristics of the home even in Heidegger's account, as both can be seen to breed inauthenticity. The Heideggerian critiques I have made mirror my independent critiques. While Heidegger points to inauthenticity as a problem with familiarity, familiarity is also a problem in his account when it makes us lose sight of something important, such as the fact that dwelling is in our nature. I offered a similar claim about familiarity as an obscuring force when I described how it can desensitize us, and can help further negative cycles. The Heideggerian critique of security, meanwhile, is also that it leads to inauthenticity, but it

⁴³ Sluga, "Homelessness and Homecoming," 503.

does so from a lack of necessary risk—the risk of the disruption of what is familiar. In my account of how security can be negative, I also described the potential to miss certain worthwhile challenges or dangers.

My earlier analysis of familiarity and security problematized what seemed like positive concepts. A life built with too much emphasis on either can lead us to perpetuate dysfunction and abuse, and stunt emotional growth and character strength. My analysis of Heidegger supports concerns about these concepts by adding a new reason to be wary of them: they can blind us to our true natures and enmesh us in an inauthentic existence. Thus, familiarity and security do not necessarily a good home make.

CHAPTER THREE

A New Account

Given the concerns we have encountered about familiarity and security, it would be incorrect for us to say that they are necessarily good qualities. This is true of them as individual concepts, and it is also true of them together in the home. How, then, do we make sense of the claim that good homes are those with familiarity and security? Can this be true if familiarity and security are such a problem? If not, what does a good home look like?

We can start with Heidegger's account of authentic existence. If authentic existence involves owning and facing up to the possibilities of one's Being, then it involves risk. It is a risk, after all, to take control over how you live your life and exist in the world. It is also a challenge, as is leaving the safety, comfort, and familiarity of what you know for something else. Risk and challenge are thus at the core of what it means to Heidegger for us to authentically be the creatures that we are. It seems right, then, that good homes should be spaces which enable—even encourage—us to be authentic by allowing for risk and challenge. This means that a good home must be a space with a revised idea of security.

How does familiarity fit into this? According to both our intuitions and Heidegger, Jacobson is right to say that homes are familiar places. There seems to be something about belonging which involves familiarity. For Jacobson, belonging is the unspoken undercurrent to the type of refuge a home is—one “of and for the self.”⁴⁴ For Heidegger, it is an essential part of dwelling

⁴⁴ Jacobson, “Experience of Home,” 357.

and Being-in-the-world, and I think he is right to point to belonging as an important part of our existence, either inside or outside of the home.

I remain convinced, however, that familiarity can be a deeply problematic thing, even if it is perhaps an unavoidable part of what it means to call a space ‘home’. So how do we still account for a good home if it necessarily contains this problematic quality?

It all comes back to security. In my consideration of Heidegger, we saw that security is what allows for or prevents the disruption of familiarity. The right kind—one that encourages and propels one to take risks and be challenged—can therefore shake up and combat the places where familiarity goes wrong. If we have this kind of security, we have the right tools to be comfortable and secure enough to reevaluate the things we accept and unconsciously follow. A home with this security allows the disruption of familiarity without the ensuing “fleeing” back into inauthenticity. In this home, when faced with the uncomfortable, we can address it.

Perhaps this is another reason why the home is so important. Homes—at least, ideal ones—are our core spaces of safety and belonging in the world. This means that when we face challenges or risks in the world, we often escape back to and recover in the familiarity and safety of our homes. This is what Heidegger described more generally as the flight back to inauthenticity in the face of anxiety and authentic existence. Our homes are places that, as Jacobson might say, we can escape to and take refuge in when we need the comfort of our familiarity. They are where we go when the larger world offers us experiences that we do not have the tools or the will to face.

This also means that home is where our escape ends. Where do we hide in comfort and familiarity when the challenge is happening in the midst of our most comfortable and familiar

place? In a situation like this, maybe we don't run; maybe, because we belong in our homes and feel secure there, we can face the challenges instead of hiding from them.

In a home that encourages and allows for risk and challenge, and yet *makes you feel safe*, the dialogue between us and the world changes. We don't escape to our homes in the same way, because our homes simply offer us the chance to try again at dealing with what we couldn't handle in the wider world. If we can live this out in our homes, then it could even extend beyond them; if we have this kind of home, perhaps we will eventually be able to face things out in the wider world itself. Having the space to feel safe and secure in our ability to take risks might mean that we can take that safety and security with us outside of the home.

If one of the greatest dangers of our nature is that we stew in the familiar world we know, and let ourselves off the hook from making changes that are hard, uncomfortable, or scary, then we need homes that take us beyond this behavior, rather than enable it.

Jacobson is also right to say that a home is a refuge space for us, because that is how we use it. It is worth asking ourselves, however, whether it is the right kind of refuge. As a refuge, a home will contain *some* familiarity and security. But I argue that a good home is one that serves as a refuge from a world where our default is inauthenticity—a refuge where we are safe enough to take risks, be challenged, and grow.

I have described what security should do in my conception of a good home, but what does such a security look like? Where is the line between a worthwhile risk, and actual danger? I maintain that a good home should not be one in which one's physical safety is threatened—such as abusive homes and homes in war-zones. Does that mean that one should not be *able* to be physically unsafe in one's home? Perhaps not—a completely child-proofed home is not one in which an adult would want to live (sans child), nor does a home without any potential for danger

seem like a realistic or necessary space. One might burn her hand on the stove, or pull a muscle trying out a new bike, or skin her knee learning to skateboard. Dangers such as these need not be outlawed in a home.

Similarly, one's emotional safety should not be threatened by abuse. That does not mean, however, that one cannot be challenged in one's deeply held beliefs. A home should not outlaw emotional discomfort or risk that is not an act of violence.

Perhaps this is the key: a good home is one without emotional or physical violence. I will define violence as a nonconsensual act; if one's home doubles as a boxing gym, or is a place in which one consensually practices kinks that might be deemed violent, these need not be precluded. Similarly, an argument in which two people yell or in which something hurtful is said is not an act of emotional violence in the way this account intends. We can imagine that a good home might still be one in which arguments can occur and feelings be hurt.

A worry about this definition of security might be that it does not account for other dangers, such as those experienced in the home at the center of a war zone. While the war-zone might be precluded as a space filled with violent acts, a good home is also not one where the roof might collapse at any moment. This, however, does not seem to count as violence.

I suggest we revisit the idea of threat. If one's physical or emotional safety is threatened in a space, and we take "threatened" to include violence as well as other dangers that are hazards to one's health, then that space is not a good home. This does not mean that anything which might cause a harm in one's home threatens one's safety; a knife you use for cooking does not threaten your safety, even if you may harm yourself with it, but an unstable structure does. Similarly, while we might say that an idea or an opinion threatens your beliefs, this is different from the threat of emotional danger.

My account of a good home is this: a good home is one in which your physical and emotional safety is not threatened by violence or health hazards. It is one where you have the familiarity needed to have a sense of belonging and connection to the space, but where you also feel secure and safe enough to take risks and be challenged in ways that disrupt this. It is a space that facilitates growth, and is one in which one can tackle the issues, risks, and challenges of the outside world. A good home is also a home in which one can be prepared to tackle such issues, risks, and challenges *in* the outside world.

Jacobson suggested that the home is important because of the role it plays in our public lives, and in our success as public beings. If this is the case, then it must do more than serve as our shelter from the world at large.

CONCLUSION

My project began with two questions: what is a home, and why is it important? To answer them, I considered the perspectives of Kirsten Jacobson and Martin Heidegger. Jacobson offers that the home has value because it enables us to successfully go out into the world as public beings. Heidegger's account of the home, meanwhile, positions it as a space unique to human existence—one that arises from the fact that we are dwelling creatures.

Because Jacobson's account of the importance of home relies on also having an account of what home *is*, I introduced her larger argument, and then focused in on her definition of home as a place of familiarity and security. I then explored familiarity and security as independent ideas, before bringing them back into conversation with the home. Although they seem like intuitive characteristics of a home space, familiarity and security are not present in all homes. This is a problem for Jacobson's definition, and after considering several ways in which she could respond to this objection, I argued that to preserve her larger project goal, she must sacrifice the universality of her argument and instead offer a normative claim about the home. I then confronted the assumption that familiarity and security were good traits of the home, and instead argued that both can be bad things. Familiarity can perpetuate negative cycles, while security can both prevent one from taking worthwhile risks, and prevent one from breaking out of toxic familiarity.

Through an engagement with Heidegger's thoughts on dwelling, belonging, and Being-in-the-world, I offered a Heideggerian account of the dangers of familiarity and security: namely, that both can lead one to inauthentic existence. For Heidegger, this means closing oneself off

from the possibilities of one's Being, and hiding in fixations with the world and the material entities that make it up. Despite the negative role that familiarity and security can play in the home, I argued that Heidegger would still think the home was an important space because of its ability to encourage one's dwelling-in-the-world.

Finally, I offered a new account of the ideal home. My account considers both Heidegger and Jacobson's thoughts on the home, and argues that the home should be a place in which one is encouraged and supported to pursue authentic existence. I explained what this would look like by describing the role that security plays in moderating familiarity, and by outlining a security that supports the pursuit of worthwhile risks. Such a security is one that does not seek to ban all dangers from the home, but rather seeks to provide the physical and emotional safety necessary to make the challenges and possibilities of authentic existence less frightening.

This account is likely different from what we are used to expecting from the home. If it is possible to achieve in practice—and I believe it is—it will involve hard work, many failed attempts, and continuous revision. Such a home, however, is worth it—not only because it is a home that helps us to be authentic, but also because the world in which we currently live needs people who can take risks, face challenges, be authentic, and communicate and cooperate with others. We are called to exist authentically for more than just ourselves; the choices we make and the lives we live affect our fellow dwellers. If the home is important because it prepares us to succeed and move confidently in the wider world, then it is more critical than ever that we have homes which prepare us for the world that we currently face.

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