



## Homelessness: A Philosophical Architecture

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To cite this article: Tony Fry (2005) Homelessness: A Philosophical Architecture, Design Philosophy Papers, 3:3, 191-203

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/144871305X13966254124798>



Published online: 29 Apr 2015.



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# Homelessness

## A Philosophical Architecture

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Homelessness, rather than existing in another sphere to design, is an unavoidable and underpinning condition of contemporary existence. In fact, it is possible to argue that homelessness actually insinuates itself into almost everything that design enable or disables, for the designed either facilitates or negates our ongoing ability to dwell in the environments we occupy.

Although connections to design are important to make, there is equally a need to explore how homelessness has been, or can be, thought – this, through ideas such as the unhomey, belonging, place, abode and dwelling. The point of doing this is not to abstract, and so avoid, the human dimension of this major problem of contemporary life in both rich and poor nations. In actuality, the scale of the problem of homelessness overwhelms the way the geopolitical map of ‘world development’ is drawn.

Obviously, the causes and effects of homelessness, and the character of its ‘victims’, do not fit a stereotypical picture. The reverse is true – the picture is complex. Yet while circumstances of difference are extensive, there are some common factors. Moreover, what we have to

say will also recognise a number of common objectives – most importantly, the (self)emancipation of the oppressed from their circumstances of oppression and thereafter: the generation of affirmative future options created by design; the necessity of the mobilisation of strategic guile; and, the ability of the homeless to forge alliances to create ‘change economies’ both within their cultures as well as between their cultures and progressive social organisations. How these objectives are realised will, of course, dramatically change according to every specific context. Additionally, what will be said will confront the general unthinking and invisibility that homelessness has for the majority of populations and governments of almost all nations.

In discussing homelessness, we need, first of all, to be clear about what we evoke when we call up the idea of home.

### **What Is the Essence of ‘Home’?**

We need to start by revisiting the foundational significance of the Greek idea of *oikos*, as it is generally characterised as meaning household, home, dwelling and the ‘abode of man’. *Oikos* is itself overdetermined by the very thing that rules the ability to dwell – *nomos*: ‘the law of the earth’. The German Zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1909) brought *oikos*, *nomos* and *logos* (ratio, reason) together when he coined the term ‘oekologie’ in 1869. He did this to help explain the relation of organic life to its environment.

Of course, *oekologie* became translated as ecology. It can be observed that ‘we’ dwell by dint of ecological laws and all that they determine; the ecological is, at least physiologically, our most basic place of dwelling. This means that to live unsustainably and to be complicit with the unsustainable, is to be destructive of our most essential ‘homeland’. Human dependencies are, of course, economic and cultural as well as ecological and biophysical. Although we have a sense of dwelling in our bodies, we are not nearly as individuated as we think our selves to be – we are physically part of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called ‘flesh of the world’.

So while it is the case that we have to be able to sustain ourselves in order to be able to sustain anything else, the actual division between our selves and our world is essentially perceptual. Equally, our thinking exists by virtue of ‘ecology of mind’ – no matter what we think, we do so because of having had access to the thought of others, from our parents to the intellects from which our culture and its traditions emanated.<sup>1</sup>

These observations do not diminish the centrality of the idea of *oikos*, but reinforce its position as the primary location of exchange of every element of dependence. For instance, linguistically, ‘economy’ arrived from bringing the Greek terms *oikonomia* (which was predominantly understood as household management) together with *oikosnomos* (the rules by which the

house is managed). *Oikosnomos* equally opens out into *nomos* underpinning the rule of order to communal life. Such thinking was transposed into ‘the modern’ as the functionality and freedoms of civil society as enabled by the rule of law.

Over time, the ‘natural’, the synthetic, the material and immaterial ecologies have fused into a composite, essential ground of dwelling upon which the majority of the world’s population now absolutely depends. Yet (this expanded) ecological is taken-for-granted, or worse, actively damaged. In this respect, unsustainability, understood as a negation of being-in-the-world, is also a process that produces a fundamental homelessness. It is not seen that way. In fact, homelessness rather than being seen as fundamental and complex is reduced to simply being without a place of shelter, a house. Beyond question, lacking a place of shelter is a major lack, yet homelessness is more than this – the house (or any equivalent structure) is so often taken to be the home, but the home is far more than just a house.

### **The House, the Home and Places of Dwelling**

Initially, the human species and its progenitors were nomadic dwellers-in-the-world, hunting and gathering across the land where food could be found. Then, around 10,000 years ago, after dramatic changes in global climate – specifically a drought that lasted for over 1,000 years followed by rapid warming – the human species started to transform the fate of the environments they occupied.<sup>2</sup> This occurred in the Fertile Crescent of Southern Mesopotamia (an arc cutting through the Nile Valley, the Levant, Jordan valley, south-eastern Turkey through Iran to Northern Iraq). In particular, two things happened: hunter gatherers stopped travelling because of the drying out of the lands around the region; and they began to establish settlements where food was plentiful.

Around the same time, they also began to cultivate wild einkorn (a forerunner of wheat) – a plant they had previously gathered. What resulted was, *de facto*, the birth of farming, the construction of permanent dwellings (houses), the establishment of the foundations out of which the culture of static communities could be constituted, and the creation of the conditions that would allow the size of the human population to rapidly grow.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the transition from nomadic life to settlement was no simple and instant change in a way of life – it was undoubtedly a protracted process of complex adjustment.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of settlements and the making of houses constituted ‘the world’ as an exteriority. These events marked the loss of the world, an abandonment of ‘being at home in the world’ as one’s absolute ‘homeland’. Rather than being a figure of patriotism or nationalist rhetoric, ‘homeland’ is understood here as the naming of ‘man’s’ historical locatedness. Settlement thus marked a fundamental shift from our being world dwellers,

who owned nothing and everything, to our becoming dwellers in (a) place to which the claim of belonging was made. In a real sense, belonging made the accumulation of belongings possible.

Thereafter, homecoming became not merely coming home, but a reconnecting to belonging together in place with one's belongings.<sup>5</sup> Belonging, for those who became house dwellers, was not being-at-home-in-the world, but its surrogate. For nomadic peoples in the past (and the trace of nomadic cultures in the present) 'home' was a mobile enactment of social relations in the land of one's ancestors.<sup>6</sup> The land was not merely 'nature' or 'environment' but a geography of culturally significant signs, memories and narratives, that was lived in with all the familiarity we static people now associate with houses, buildings and streets.

Home-making, in the modern sense, thus arrived to counter the loss of the 'homeland', and of being 'world-less' (and with it, design unknowingly came to be a means to bring another world, a world of fabrication, into being). Additionally, human settlement also marked the start of violence upon the world as it shifted from 'living within a world subject to its vagaries' to 'living by treating the world as an unending source of resources to appropriate' (the world as a 'standing reserve').

### **The House Is not the Home**

At the moment of establishment of human settlement, a structural distinction was created between 'house' and 'being-at-home-in-the-world'. With the advancement of 'civilisation' this distinction has deepened and became increasingly more problematic, especially as the dialectic of sustainment (which is the inseparable relation between creation and destruction) became amplified as the human population grew and its technological capability increased.<sup>7</sup> The violence of the material construction of the house established an object lacking human attachment until it was *made* a home, by a cultural mode of dwelling and emotional investment.

This violence, it should be understood, was not just exercised by human beings in making a place in the world, but also in their self-formation as human – 'we' are not born human but, as many thinkers in various ways have told us, we are made so by the violent repression of our animality. The home became the primary locus for making the human. This 'mastery' of the animal out of which the human was/is forged, was but one dimension of conquest whereby "Man must master to become himself". The human being is inescapably anthropocentric and cannot be without being both a creator and destroyer. Unavoidably, a moment has now been reached when unless 'man' learns what should be created and what should be destroyed, and establishes this as a basis of a materialised ethics, his/her future as a species will be bleak.

Effectively, and notwithstanding the 'unavoidable violence of our becoming', as an individual comes into being, their attachment

to the home increases. In one direction home flows from house to street, neighbourhood, village/town/city, land and in another, it flows into memory, experience and the symbolic. So to be homeless is far more than just being without shelter. It is to be without a crucial point of reference from which one's self and world is comprehended. Thus, the forms of place-making and solidarity that some homeless people manage to create, can be grasped as not simply a means of survival, but equally as a claim on the world and resistance to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Intuitively, the diminishment of their humanity, human dignity and de-humanisation is recoiled against.

The narrative of the home is far more contradictory than is usually recognised.

Characterised as a place of nurture, a secure shelter from the ravages of the world, a familiar place of warmth and care, the home is above all a place, as Emmanuel Levinas tells us, that (in the first instance) makes all such activity possible.<sup>8</sup> These qualities of the home define what Martin Heidegger called 'the homely'<sup>9</sup> What goes unspoken and unseen is, however, its *abysmal qualities*. Contemporary society fails to acknowledge that the home has been turned into a 'machine of destruction' that drives a constantly growing volume of unsustainable consumption. Such destruction is crucial to the ongoing functioning of what are in actuality defuturing economies. In an often dangerous and increasingly environmentally unstable world, homes are dominantly viewed as places of withdrawal – they are where people feel most secure. They are treated as spaces that accommodate what Christopher Lasch called 'the minimal self' – a self who retreats into an illusory space of supposed worldly exclusion.<sup>10</sup> Such worldly disengagement is counterproductive; it effectively increases human vulnerability to that which threatens.

Whatever the problems and limitations that homes have (especially for affluent contemporary humanity) there is much that is critical to register.

Homes, as places of anchorage and return, enable journeying. Likewise, one cannot underestimate their importance as places of becoming and lasting. So while they are 'machines of destruction' they are also (and essentially) the locus of sustaining. Again, being homeless is far more than lacking shelter, for it is also the loss of the possibility, or potentiality, of being sustained and sustaining. This means that people with homes that fail to sustain, can effectively be regarded as homeless.

## On Dwelling

Dwelling transcends being at home. It is not merely a being in place but existence in time, language and a becoming with others that every 'one' depends on (as Levinas so powerfully shows, 'I' cannot come to be without 'your' face<sup>11</sup>). Increasingly, and

fearfully (although not mostly seen as such), ‘we’ are now dwelling technologically. We have not simply dwelt in the world but have transformed it technologically – this increasingly from the hospitable to the inhospitable.

Making one’s world an unhomely place, living without caring for the place of one’s dependence is to live toward homelessness. In the 20th century homelessness was dominantly linked to war and economic upheavals, but it is becoming clear that in the 21st century it will increase be driven by the unsustainable. For instance, ‘environmental refugees’, produced by ever proliferating forms of unsustainability (including the un-naturalness of ‘natural disasters’), now outnumber those created by conflicts.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Homely and Unhomely**

The nature of the homely (*heimisch*) and the unhomely (*unheimisch*) beg elaboration, as do the relations between the unhomely and the uncanny (*unheimlich*).

‘The homely’ gathers spatially complex places of sustainment, becoming and departing, material and immaterial life, creation and destruction, the familiar and the strange. It also should be emphasised is that is prefigured by a sense of place that pervades the absolute abode of human being.<sup>13</sup> Heidegger explored what this means at length in his 1942 lecture course on Friedrich Hölderline’s hymn “The Ister” (the river Danube).<sup>14</sup> That he delivered the course at this particular historical moment is not without significance or problems – war, belonging and the fatherland all figure as subtext (issues for another time and place). What he observes is the river as a locality, and as this, a place to build an abode to dwell ‘upon the earth’ in time, around which human life is gathered. The river brings the locale, home and historical abiding together in the place of belonging, and keeps it as such. To become an independent being one, however, abandons where one belongs (we ‘leave home’) and journey from it, but in so doing the homely becomes that which can only be returned to by journeying via “a passage” and “encounter with the foreign”.

However, it is this coming to the familiar from difference that brings the homely out of concealment as a place of sustainment.<sup>15</sup> It should be recognised that the home and the homely, although not the same as each other, are intimately connected, in fact “the homely always remains related to the unhomely in such a way that the latter is always present in the former”.<sup>16</sup> The unhomely, as the strange, also directly links to the uncanny as that which is “not at home – not homely in that which is homely.”<sup>17</sup> The unhomely can thus be “uncanny”, as something that is ‘frightening’, ‘alienating’, and a source of ‘anxiety’.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Uncanny (Unheimlich)<sup>19</sup>**

The uncanny as an “overpowering” that prevents us being, and making, ourselves at home, a casting out of the “homely”, directly

links to 'man's' violence.<sup>20</sup> In Heidegger's reading of the chorus of Antigone of Sophocles 'man' is '*deinon*' – "the violent one", "strange" and "uncanny".<sup>21</sup> Although the uncanny marks the impossibility of either being at home in the world or homely, it equally gathers that violence that feeds an 'overpowering' force' that strives to command being (as such it is elemental to anthropocentrism). Here then is a definition of 'man' that history has confirmed – a history of violence and force that not only finds its way into almost all of 'man's' actions, including 'building, home-making and dwelling', but also through which 'man' passes to become human. This violence is at the core of 'man's' strangeness.

So although 'blessed' with reason, 'man' still fundamentally fails to recognise that being inherently violent (towards Being) means 'his' future is perpetually negated. The uncanny tells us that this is not a new feature of the species but has always been present. Human being and being unsustainable fold into each other. Intrinsically, to be 'man' is to defuture. This 'fact of (human) life' is only just beginning to be grasped by a few thinkers. Such thinking delivers a confrontation with human-centred unsustainability as an unavoidable destination – which is to say: "homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world".<sup>22</sup> Heidegger prophetically uttered these words seventy years ago. As time has passed, their resonance has gained in momentum. They counter the impression of 'man' continually gaining control over his destiny (not least by positing faith in design, technology and science); the reverse is true – 'man' constantly displaces the possibility of 'being-at-home-in-the-world'

The more the uncanny is overlooked, and its meaning as the unhomely refused, the deeper our immersion in the unsustainable and its production of homelessness.

### **Homelessness (Heimatlosigkeit)**

Our analysis, so far, suggests a convergence between a fundamental ontological condition of homelessness *and* the production of the unsustainable by human agency. This is now especially evident in relation to the environmental impacts of the culture and economy of globalisation. The progressive abandonment of the rural environment in many countries and the massive concentrations of people in urban conurbations (especially in the 'newly developing world) are establishing conditions of increased vulnerability. Cities, and especially mega-cities, massively magnify the contradictory essence of the home as a place of warmth, sustenance, and security as well as of destruction.

Cities constitute spectacular sites of desire and utopian promise. They bring everything into the realm of the commodity – bodies, minds, labour, matter, goods, property, culture are all rendered available for exchange. Yet the desires they trade on are seldom realised. Acquisition always expands the void to be filled

by the yet-to-be-possessed. And so many of ‘the products from which dream are made’ are out of reach for the working poor and underclasses. Cities behave as if independent from the world of their dependence. As such they appear to have “... a destiny within the history of being and the truth of being”, that fully manifests itself as “a truth that lies in oblivion.”<sup>23</sup>

While for Karl Marx alienation was a consequence of the social relations of production within the capitalist means of production, it now can be seen to exist as an accompaniment of homelessness as it folds into the unhomely, the uncanny, the unsustainable and broken utopian dreams. These conditions directly link to the mobility of labour and commodities, the flow of capital, and the erasure of the specificity of place.

### **The Birth and Rebirth of Homelessness**

So much of what has been said centres on homelessness becoming the essence of universalised western ‘man’ – a homelessness that arrived with the loss of worldly dwelling that is directly connected to the externalisation and objectification of the ‘the world’ as ‘space and nature’ to organise and conquer.<sup>24</sup> While this trajectory inscribed the unsustainable in ‘man’s’ being it did so on the false premise of homemaking. The extent to which the unsustainable has become visible, and is creating tangible problems, recasts Heidegger’s remark that “homelessness is the coming destiny of the world”. This, not least, because homelessness is taking on a new character as the ‘nature’ of ‘unnatural disasters’ proliferates.

The consequences of this unhomely homemaking threatens both “the world” as our ‘life-world’ and much of the biophysical world at large. Yet it seems the more that these worlds appear to be damaged, the more ‘we’ posit faith in those instruments of ‘commanding and ordering’ (technologies). This deflects a confrontation with our defuturing selves and reinforces the error of faith in ‘technologically delivered salvation’. In the midst of defuturing, there is a ludicrous assumption that ‘our world’ can remain the same. We see this, for example, in governmental environmental discourse on ‘sustainable development’ and in ‘no regrets’ policies that assert ‘quantitative economic growth’ is compatible with ‘ecological sustainability’.

While such thinking rules, ‘the unhomely’ will become ever more inhospitable, and our ‘being on earth’ more ‘uncanny’. The human and ecological cost of such myopia can but increase – the already mentioned increase in environmental refugees being one sign of this.

Environmental refugees are not homeless people that have just lost their place of shelter, but people who have completely lost the world that once sustained them. They are forced into journeying without any place of return. They belong nowhere. Yet they will do

what homeless people always do – try to make a place in the world with the barest of material resources and a damaged culture. That the vast majority of the population of nations turn away from the plight of such people is an explicit mark of the refusal to face the unsustainable. The danger of unsustainability precisely rests with the refusal for it to be treated as crisis, and even more significantly a crisis inherent in (human) being. The ‘crisis of crisis’ – the refusal to name and engage that which is critical – is part of the general condition of contemporary culture.<sup>25</sup>

Against this backdrop, ‘negativity’ is not anything to do with giving voice to problems, but everything to do with a refusal to confront them. There is no place to hide, no home to go to from which the unsustainable world can be shut out – it dwells in our dwelling, it dwells in us.

### **The Spirit of Design**

The nature and extent of the problems to be confronted are beyond the reach of instrumentally designed solutions – this is not to say that such actions are not needed, but rather it is to acknowledge that they, of themselves, are woefully inadequate. For design to have transformative agency in the face of the unsustainable, it first has to itself be transformed. There is no route to this other than learning the way.

Transforming design practices is not just a matter of ‘good ideas’. It cannot happen disarticulated from social, political and economic changes. Neither can it rest upon a continuation of treating ‘the world’ as a standing reserve at the disposal of humankind. So framed, learning another way is not just about the making of a new practice and agenda (although this might incidentally happen) but depends on creating new perceptions, knowledge and sensibilities. One starting place is to comprehend the ontological character of designed things. They do not exist as end-points, as completed products, but as ongoing process – *everything designed goes on designing*. Design is thus fundamentally not about bringing something into existence (which it does incidentally) but rather, the giving of direction via its efficacy.

Another key to change is the formation of a ‘community of concern’ out of which *the will to change* can be nurtured and generalised. Central to the knowledge-building of this community is a recognition that change has to be a ‘finding’ rather than a ‘forcing’ – which is not to say that there is a need to impose limitations (laws of sustainability in which freedoms can be secured). Finding here also implies locating points of entry into crisis to embrace the opportunities afforded – which in turn implies perception, courage and a higher level of ‘design intelligence’ to take design beyond productivism, the scientism of system (neo-functionalism), passivity-in-service and towards a new kind of eco-nomy.

Beyond the change pathways indicated, where and how can we begin to 'design otherwise' in the context of the unsustainable and homelessness?

Two answers immediately arrive: the first is to gain and inflame an anxiety towards what one already does (which means being able to move from being critical about one's self, and what one does, to acting upon that which is critical); second, is to start telling stories (in other words, designing an imaginary). So what kind of stories can we tell? What kind of scenarios can we collectively visualise? Who can we gather to author, hear, criticise and remake these stories? How can these stories become a home-making gathering?

We can of course re-narrativise what already exists, and in so doing refuse evolutionary claims (stories that evidence that we are not making progress). The same thinking equally applies to ideas – the idea of the 'common good' fused with sustainment and ethics is a case in point. Remaking is another potentially powerful idea that clearly links to reclamation, which in turn links to restoration. The taking back of neglected, abandoned, wasted objects, and the giving of structures or places a new life, future and purpose – here is the subject matter of stories that can report and valorise the leadership of the homeless and other underclasses ('victims' here transpire to be 'teachers'). Qualitative survival in the face of the oblivion that comes with hegemonic technology, homelessness, the uncanny and the unsustainable – all inescapable challenges that, know it or not, every human being travels toward – has to be prefigured with testable imaginaries. Dreams and hopes are not enough; pathways and points of arrival both have to become figures of creativity.

Accompanying pathmaking is the need to explore 'path clearing' and forms of 'elimination' that design away forms of unsustainability that are thrown into the future. Walk down any aisle in any supermarket anywhere and just see how much there is of gratuitous health-damaging 'foodstuff', wasted materials and products with minimal utility and short lives that we would be better off without. This same thinking can of course be brought to almost every area of 'consumption' (the problem with so many consumer goods is precisely the fact that they cannot be consumed, that they end up as landfill and have zero reuse value). There are, of course, things that far more directly and aggressively defuture that beg elimination – things that damage all the environments of our dependence.

The 'invention' of futuring 'homely pleasures' framed by concretised ethics (rather than by a stultifying political correctness) can be brought to these imperatives. Home-making in this setting is obviously not a cosy domestic activity but rather takes us back to where we started from – 'making-a-home-in-the-world'. Unless we do this, 'homelessness' as it "... is coming to be the destiny of

the world” will move from possibility to actuality at an ever faster speed.

## Notes

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty *The Visible and the Invisible* (trans Afonso Lingis) Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968. Merleau Ponty points out that while we exist with(in) bodies, our bodies are of the world – “...my body is made of the same flesh as the world” and “moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world” (p. 248). The idea of an ‘ecology of mind’ was coined by Gregory Bateson, to indicate that our minds and thoughts in general exist together within one ‘system’ of Mind in which ideas travel. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* Paladin: St Albans, 1973.
2. These events are presented in detail by Brian Fagan in *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilisation* New York: Basic Books, 2004.
3. Fagan lucidly outlines the evidence for these developments. He also shows that the birth of cultivation and burning marked the beginning of anthropogenic initiated greenhouse gas emissions – *ibid.*, pp. 79–145.
4. To give some sense of this, one can invert the feeling of reassurance that people who live in houses have with walls around them and a roof over their head; nomadic people gain this same reassurance from being in the landscape. Anthropologist, Michael Jackson, in conversation with a Warlpiri man from Central Australia, (the Warlpiri are just one of the aboriginal people of that country) quotes his remark that “a house is just like a big jail”. Michael Jackson *At Home in the World* Sydney: Harper Perennial, 1995, p. 84.
5. Martin Heidegger *Identity and Difference* (trans Joan Stambaugh) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, pp. 29–31 (2002 ed).
6. For example, the Warlpiri of Central Australia view home as “being with one’s kinsmen in one’s own country and land”... “where your kinsmen sit is your home”. In their language “*ngurra*” means “homeplace, camp, hearth, country.” Michael Jackson *At Home in the World* pp. 15, 19.
7. Tony Fry, ‘The Sustainment and its Dialectic’ *Design Philosophy Papers Collection One*: Ravensbourne: Team D/E/S Publications, 2004, pp. 33–45.
8. Emanuel Levinas *Totality and Infinity* (trans Alphonso Lingis) Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, p.152.
9. Martin Heidegger *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (trans Ralph Manheim) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959/1989, p. 151.
10. Christopher Lasch *The Minimal Self* New York: Norton, 1984.

11. Levinas 'Ethics and the Face' *Totality and Infinity* pp. 194–219.
12. The number of environmental refugees is projected to dramatically increase in coming decades, mainly due to the effects of coastal flooding, shoreline erosion and agricultural disruption. The International Red Cross Federation's *World Disasters Report 1999*, Switzerland, June 1999, (probably under) estimates that by 2050 there will be 150 million such refugees (far higher than the number of refugees caused by war). The International Red Cross estimates are supported by World Bank figures. Unpredictable natural events (tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, etc) only become 'disasters' if human lives are directly or indirectly lost. So often, loss of life is the result of the individual or combined consequences of inappropriate settlement, poorly constructed buildings and poverty – in this respect people die because of human-made disasters.
13. This is not merely a philosophical observation. Anthropologist Michael Jackson, when writing on the Warlpiri people of Central Australia, comments that location is not simply a spatial designation but "an index of social identity" – Michael Jackson *At Home in the World* p.19.
14. Martin Heidegger *Hölderline's Hymn "The Ister"* (trans William McNeill and Julia Davis) Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 21–27
15. *ibid.*, p. 54.
16. *ibid.*, p. 69
17. *ibid.*, p. 71
18. *ibid.*
19. The uncanny has been an idea that has been continually reworked across multiple disciplines. It features in the first edition (1927) of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, where it is directly linked to 'not-being-at-home' and to angst (as it collapses familiarity). Two years earlier, Sigmund Freud penned his celebrated essay 'The Uncanny', which drew the idea from literature, most notably from the German novelist and composer Ernst Hoffman (1776–1822). The uncanny featured in the latter's story *The Sand-Man* and his opera 'Tales of Hoffman'. The uncanny has also been addressed by Theodor Adorno, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard and Homi Bhabba.
20. Heidegger *An Introduction to Metaphysics* p.151.
21. *ibid.*
22. [Martin Heidegger 'Letter on Humanism' (trans Frank A. Capuzzi) in *Pathmarks* (ed William McNeill) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 258.
23. *ibid.*, p.259.
24. This remark is situated in Martin Heidegger's discussion of Nihilism and the History of Being – see *Nietzsche* Vol IV,

especially p. 248 (trans Frank Capuzzi and David Farrel Krell)  
New York: Harper Collins, 1991, pp. 199–250.

25. Supposedly 'natural disasters' are presented as blameless (a false assumption, e.g., buildings kill people, not earthquakes, and the more structurally unsound the buildings, the more people die); this means nobody is held to account – humanism can point its camera at such events without fear of being accused of taking sides. Conversely, terminal poverty is a product of injustice and inequity – yet those to blame shroud themselves in silence. Poverty is an omnipresent and dispersed condition from which millions die each year – consider that while there were 300,000 fatalities from the 2004/05 Indian Ocean Tsunami, 80 times more men, women and children will die in one year from causes directly related to extreme poverty. Likewise, millions of AIDS sufferers in Africa do not die simply because of the disease, but because they do not have the money to purchase treatments.