“Building, Dwelling, Thinking” Passages

I.

It is language that tells us about the essence of a thing, provided that we respect language's own essence. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man's subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his essential being into alienation. That we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good, but it is of no help to us as long as language still serves us even then only as a means of expression. Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first. [348]

Building as dwelling, that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset "habitual"—we inhabit it, as our language says so beautifully: it is the Gewohnte. For this reason it recedes behind the manifold ways in which dwelling is accomplished, the activities of cultivation and construction [349]

But if we listen to what language says in the word bauen we hear three things:
1 . Building is really dwelling.
2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.
3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates
growing things and the building that erects buildings. [350]

The word for peace, Friede, means the free, das Frye; and fry means preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded. To free actually means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do riot harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we "free" it in the proper sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we recall that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth. [351]

Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal…

The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether….
The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead . Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment….
The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities….
This simple oneness of the four we call the fourfold. Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling. [351-2]

Mortals dwell in that they save the earth…
To save properly means to set something free into its own essence. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from boundless spoliation.
Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest.
Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.
Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own essential being-their being capable of death as death-into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death. To initiate mortals into the essence of death in no way means to make death, as the empty nothing, the goal. Nor does it mean to darken dwelling by blindly staring toward the end. [352]

In saving the earth, in receiving the sky, in awaiting the divinities, in initiating mortals, dwelling propriates as the fourfold preservation of the fourfold….
Mortals would never be capable of it if dwelling were merely a staying on earth under the sky, before the divinities, among mortals. Rather, dwelling itself is always a staying with things . Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things.
Staying with things, however, is not merely something attached to this fourfold preservation as a fifth something. On the contrary: staying with things is the only way in which the fourfold stay within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity. [353]

II.

what is a built thing? A bridge may serve as an example for our reflections. [354]

The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. [354]

…the bridge is ready for the sky's weather and its fickle nature. Even where the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more.
The bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants mortals their way, so that they may come and go from shore to shore. [354]

The bridge gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals. [355]

Gathering [Versammlung], by an ancient word of our language, is called thing. The bridge is a thing-and, indeed, it is such as the gathering of the fourfold which we have described. [355]

Yet the bridge would never be a mere bridge if it were not a thing.
To be sure, the bridge is a thing of its own kind; for it gathers the fourfold in such a way that it allows a site for it. But only something that is itself a locale can make space for a site. The locale is not already there before the bridge is. [355-6]

The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site for the fourfold. By this site are determined the places and paths by which a space is provided for. [356]

Accordingly, spaces receive their essential being from locales and not from "space."
Things which, as locales, allow a site we now in anticipation call buildings. [356]

These things are locales that allow a site for the fourfold, a site that in each case provides for a space. The relation between locale and space lies in the essence of these things as locales, but so does the relation of the locale to the man who lives there. [356]

The bridge is a locale. As such a thing, it allows a space into which earth and sky, divinities and mortals are admitted. [357]

when I say "a man," and in saying this word think of a being who exists in a human manner-that is, who dwells-then by the name "man," I already name the stay within the fourfold among things. [358]