Heidegger on Being and the World

Wednesdays at 1pm in 1008 B, Cathedral of Learning Bob Brandom (rbrandom@pitt.edu)

The course website, with a week-by-week schedule and all the readings, is available at:
https://spaceofreasons.netlify.app/courses/heidegger-2026/
Or by drilling down under the "Courses" tab from my Pitt website:
https://sites.pitt.edu/~rbrandom/

Week 12: November 11, 2026 "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" ["Bauen, Wohnen, Denken"]

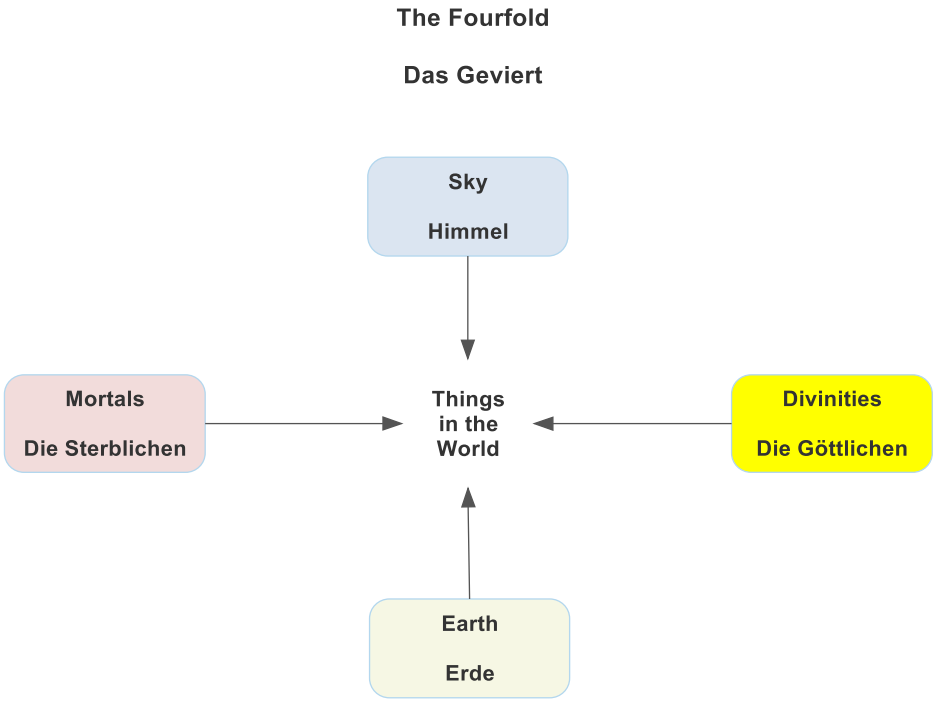
It is language that tells us about the essence of a thing, provided that we respect language's own essence….Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact **language remains the master of man**.…Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first. [BDT 348]

…the old word *buan* not only tells us that *bauen*, to build, **is really** to dwell; it also gives us a clue as to **how we have to think about** the dwelling it signifies. [BDT 349]

Bauen **originally means** to dwell. Where the word bauen **still speaks in its original sense** it also **says** how far the essence of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen, buan, bhu, beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: ich bin, I am, du bist, you are, the imperative form bis, be. **What then does *ich bin* mean**? **The old word *bauen*, to which the bin belongs, answers: ich bin, du bist mean I dwell, you dwell**. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which **says that** man is insofar as he dwells, this word *bauen*, however, also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. [BDT 349]

That language in a way retracts the proper meaning of the word *bauen*, which is dwelling, is evidence of **the original one of these meanings**; for **with the essential words of language, what they genuinely say easily falls into oblivion in favor of foreground meanings**. Man has hardly yet pondered the mystery of this process. **Language withdraws from man its simple and high speech**. But **its primal call** does not thereby become incapable of speech; it merely falls silent. Man, though, fails to heed this silence.
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. [BDT 350]

But in what does the essence of dwelling consist? Let us **listen once more to what language says to us**. The Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian*, like the old word *bauen*, mean to remain, to stay in a place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. 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. [BDT 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]

To **preserve** the fourfold, to **save** the earth, to **receive** the sky, to **await** the divinities, to **initiate** mortals—this fourfold preserving is the simple essence of dwelling. [360]

Passages from "The Question Concerning Technology":

What is the instrumental itself? Within what do such things as means and end belong? A means is that whereby something is effected and thus attained. Whatever has an effect as its consequence is called a cause. But not only that by means of which something else is effected is a cause. The end that determines the kind of means to be used may also be considered a cause. Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality.
For centuries philosophy has taught that there are four causes:
(1) the *causa material* is, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made;
(2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters;
(3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the required chalice is determined as to its form and matter;
(4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith. [pp. 313-14 (in *Basic Writings*)]

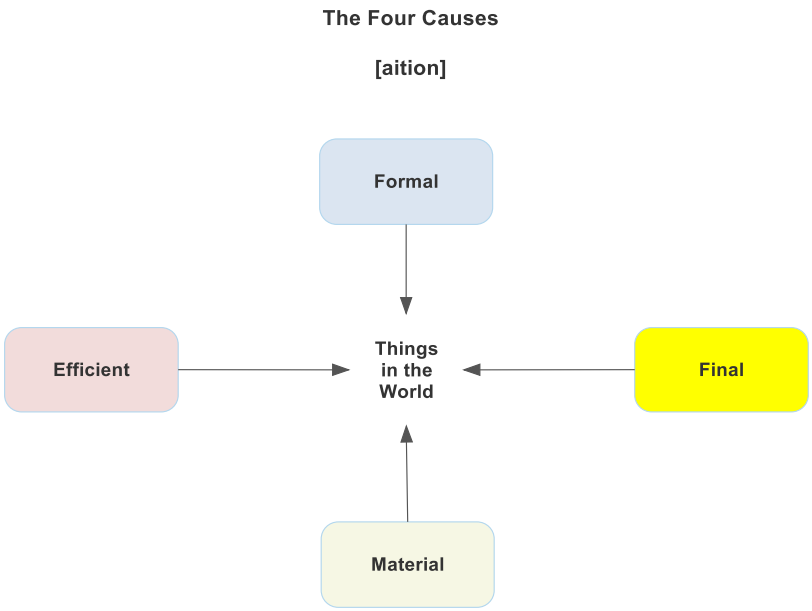
What we call cause [Ursache] and the Romans call causa is called ***aition*** by the Greeks, that to which something else is indebted [das, was ein anderes **verschuldet**]. **The four causes are the ways, all belonging at once to each other, of being responsible for something else.** [314]

Silver is that out of which the silver chalice is made. As this matter (*hyle*), it is co-responsible for the chalice. The chalice is indebted to, i.e., owes thanks to, the silver for that of which it consists. But the sacrificial vessel is indebted not only to the silver. **As a chalice, that which is indebted to the silver appears in the aspect of a chalice, and not in that of a brooch or a ring. Thus the sacred vessel is at the same time indebted to the aspect (*eidos*) of chaliceness**. Both the silver into which the aspect is admitted as chalice and the aspect in which the silver appears are in their respective ways co-responsible for the sacrificial vessel.

But there remains yet a third something that is above all responsible for the sacrificial vessel. It is that which in advance confines the chalice within the realm of consecration and bestowal. Through this the chalice is circumscribed as sacrificial vessel. Circumscribing gives bounds to the thing. With the bounds the thing does not stop; rather, from within them it begins to be what after production it will be. That which gives bounds, that which completes, in this sense is called in Greek *telos*, which is all too often translated as "aim" and "purpose," and so misinterpreted. The *telos* is responsible for what as matter and what as aspect are together co-responsible for the sacrificial vessel.

Finally, there is a fourth participant in the responsibility for the finished sacrificial vessel's lying before us ready for use, i.e., the silversmith—**but not at all because he, in working, brings about the finished sacrificial chalice as if it were the effect of a making; the silversmith is not a causa efficiens**. [315]

The silversmith considers carefully and gathers together the three aforementioned ways of being responsible and indebted. To consider carefully [überlegen] is in Greek *legein*, *logos*. *Legein* is rooted in *apophainesthai*, to bring forward into appearance. The silversmith is co-responsible as that from which the sacred vessel's being brought forth and subsistence take and retain their first departure. **The three previously mentioned ways of being responsible owe thanks to the pondering of the silversmith for the "that" and the "how" of their coming into appearance and into play for the production of the sacrificial vessel**. [315]



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]

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

Dwelling, however, is the basic character of Being, in keeping with which mortals exist. [362]

The proper dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. [363]

Our reference to the Black Forest farm in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses; rather, it illustrates by a dwelling that *has been* how it was able to build. [362]