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Heidegger
and
The Wander of Poetry

A THESIS
The Department of Philosophy
College of St. Benedict/Saint John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Distinction and
the Degree Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Philosophy

by
John T. Pollard
May, 1991

The message of the country lane awakes a feeling of love for the open . . . on its track, winter storms and harvest days confront each other, the blood-stirring excitement of Spring meets the resignation of Autumn's death and the wisdom of old age looks on at the play of children. But in one single harmonious note, whose echo the lane carries silently with it, this way and that, everything is made clear.

Martin Heidegger
"The Country Lane"

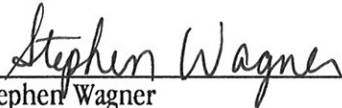
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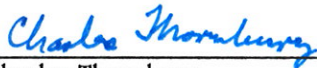
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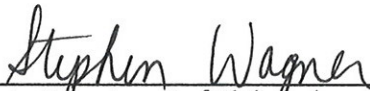
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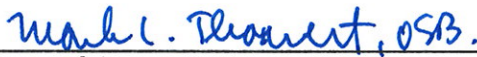
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I

An Opening

A Search for Significance

This project has its beginnings in a course on Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* that Fr. Rene McGraw taught at Saint John's in the spring of 1989. From that time until today the later works of Martin Heidegger have intrigued me for their style, their voice, and their truth. Here I explore, using two of Heidegger's later essays, what it is that makes human existence significant. I seek here the well-spring of human significance. And through my study of Heidegger I am led to an answer to my quest. This is my answer: the human encounter with the world, which will show itself as a two-fold presence, a presence made possible by language, is our source of significance. But at this point this answer is irrelevant, it is unclear, for the world as something that is two-fold has not yet been explained, nor has the role of language, the meaning of *presence*, or my understanding of significance. Thus this entire project is an explanation of my above answer. My explanation is one that wrestles with Heidegger's essays: *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry* and *Building Dwelling Thinking*. Before and after my work with these texts, I offer a synthesis and interpretation of aspects of Heidegger's thought present in these works. In my opening, my aim is to introduce the distinctions and terminology present within my writing, and the spirit and aim of my project as a whole.

In Heidegger's later thought one is confronted with a world that is "two-fold¹." Not a world that is hierarchical with two planes, as in Plato's world of appearance and world of forms. No, Heidegger's is a world that is unified, yet one possessing two very distinct aspects. Each of these

aspects, he thinks, relies upon language for its very presence. They rely upon language not only in the narrow sense of word, syntax, and grammar, but language in the broadest sense of word, gesture, and action. Language, we shall see, is that which brings the world into the light, that which makes it important to us as a place that is familiar, as a place that is our home. Specifically, then, we have the normative world of our everyday lives. And, secondly, we have the World of the poet.

Furthermore, Heidegger thinks that not only is the world made real, tangible, and important to us through language, our existence in the world is revealed as something that is always "four-fold²." Our existence is comprised essentially of a manifold of living on the Earth, beneath the sky, among fellow people, and before the divine. Indeed this four-fold of our existence forms the limits of our language-founded awareness of the world. One cannot be aware of anything about his or her existence that is outside of the four-fold. This four-fold is our limit. Thus language and the four-fold are closely inter-twined for Heidegger. Our language always reveals our existence in the world in terms of being upon, being beneath, being among, and being before.

A Search for Significance

vis á vis

Poets, Language, and World

We are born into a world that is whole. But for Heidegger this wholeness, like every wholeness, has constituent aspects. In this case the terminology to describe Heidegger's treatment of world here is my own. The words, "two-fold," WORLD, and world are my own. Heidegger does use not these terms; however, conceptually, he does refer to them. For Heidegger we exist in a world that is everyday and usual to us, that we experience because we assume it has always been that way and will continue to be so. I see the Abbey Church at Saint John's the same way every time I drive onto our campus--massive, monolithic, and obviously angular. It is usual. It is everyday. This *is* the Abbey Church. I am speaking here of the first aspect of the world as two-fold.

The Abbey Church as it *is*, is present to us because of language. It is one entity in the world into which we easily slip day-to-day, the place that at one time or another everyone of us perceives to be unchanging and static. "This is the way it is," we say. "This is the Abbey in its true, fixed nature!" This first fold I have just illustrated is best thought of as normative; it is the world that we so often mistake as being universally and forever the same.

We can follow through with the Abbey example to illustrate the companion to this first fold of the world: WORLD. What I said about the Abbey Church previously was what I saw and thought it to be when I first arrived at Saint John's. And, I think, if I were to ask most any first or second year student about their perception of our Church they would most likely say the same--or any third or fourth year student for that matter. But as I was walking late one night at a time later in my stay at Saint John's, I found newness in the Abbey. I found that if you look at the sides of its massive roof, you will see that they are not straight, cold lines--they are curves. Furthermore, on either side of the church, if you stand in the same position relative to it, and look into the small side windows, the cross over the altar is in perfect view. Breuer had obviously intended this. What I found was that there are many subtleties in the Church's massive structure that are easily missed in a first glance, a first glance that for Heidegger becomes a fixing glance, one that can rivet our understanding into a certain, fixed encasement. My new perspective yielded me the Church in a new light, one that indicated that the Church is in no way a fixed, static thing (despite its immediate monolithic appearance); rather, it is a dynamic, ever-revealing one. Metaphorically, I have just described the second fold of our world. For Heidegger, whatever is in our usual worlds is not the end--there are new dimensions, new aspects, new understandings and attunements, that our journeys will light up. This newness is the WORLD, the second aspect of the two-fold world into which we have born. And we shall see that it is the poet's original use of language that attunes us to this newly discovered place.

Now I need to say something more about language. In these later works we see that for Heidegger language and Being are closely related ideas. Furthermore, in Heidegger's entire work, what-is, Being and presencing, are all closely related and interwoven as well. All refer to revelation. Metaphorically, Being can best be described as light, for light brings illumination, and therefore is

revealing. In both cases above, the Abbey Church exists within the light of Being. It is present. The Abbey Church is present because of language. Language is light. Thus, we see that our world is a complicated place, for it is one that is continually being lighted up by language, but eventually that which is lighted becomes that which covers over because of usualness. In the case of the Abbey, I took my initial awareness for *the* Abbey, indeed nothing else existed about it. After time, however, as I took my meandering evening walk, I came upon a new truth about the Church, a new insight. This insight, this new discovery, is like the work of poets, thinks Heidegger. And, very importantly, their discoveries are dependent upon where language takes them, it is language that is their master, just as on my walk my master was not my will, but the uncontrollable drift of my walking. Language is our master, and both aspects of the world come to us because of it. Heidegger says:

It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature. . . . Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man³.

For Heidegger, what is before us in our two-fold world is founded upon language as both the usual world of the "it is this way," and the WORLD of shifting, new attunement. Those who act as language's channel, through word, gesture, and action, tap us into this WORLD. However, Heidegger thinks these poets are not merely naming something that is already existent but simply hidden, they are discovering through language's wandering, a new, previously non-existent World indeed.

I have chosen to write about Heidegger's understanding of world, its foundation in language, language's channel, poetry, and the four-fold of human existence, principally because I think Heidegger offers us an understanding of world and our place within it that is truthful. Heidegger has achieved in his philosophy something positive that many contemporary language philosophers have failed to do, and this positive achievement touches upon the ground of human significance in my understanding. I am aware that Heidegger uses this word, *significance*, in a specific context throughout his philosophy, but it is beyond what I can accommodate in my project. The *significance* that I speak of here refers to the importance and power of living that is revealed in Heidegger's description of the world and our place within it as beings gifted with language. Indeed the continual

re-routing of poetry, and the new paths that because of language poets go down, is the ground for our significance as living beings. Our language as it is manifested in poems, dance, political discourse and oratory, music, painting, and sculpture is the essence of life, it seems to me, and Heidegger despite all of the complexities of his vocabulary attempts to describe accurately and truthfully our being in this world. That we can create, that we can voice our innermost experience and our encounter with the un-revealed, and present to our fellow people this truthful vision is significant, and, moreover, it is cause for celebration.

A Word About Form

My project consists of two concentric circles. The outer ring speaks of my own thoughts about the significance of human existence, and is my purpose for writing. The inner circle consists of my analysis of Heidegger's writing. From this inner circle arises the material for the outer synthesis. Thus it is difficult to say which aspect is primary for the unified text, for the outer concern founded the project, whereas the inner concern founds it. Suffice it to say, then, that the two-part form I have chosen for this project is one that engenders a creative tension in the work, and between which there is a play that makes the project dynamic.

Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry

A Critical Analysis

In *Building Dwelling Thinking* Martin Heidegger examines at length the etymology of various present day German and English words from their High German and Old English origins with the intention of deriving a linguistic understanding of his principal subjects, "building" and "dwelling". I mention this fact in my introduction to Heidegger's essay on poetry, because in *Building Dwelling Thinking* Heidegger makes an assertion about language that becomes central for understanding *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*. There Heidegger says that

[i]t is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature. In the mean time, to be sure there rages around the world a clever talking writing and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while language is the master of man⁴.

If it is true, as Heidegger suggests, that we do not control language, as is so often thought, then we are left with a number of problems, problems central to my analysis here. These are: (1) the nature and role of poetry in relation to language; and (2) the role of poets as channels of language.

In his analysis of Hölderlin, Heidegger concludes that language *is* our master. Given this assertion, human beings are channels of language. We are subject to language's wandering, and we follow its many currents and pathways to the discoveries to which it leads. Therefore, what the poet and her reader discover in the poet's poem is connected essentially to what language brings forth. The poet always discovers newness through language in her poems. WORLD is brought to the fore as

a result of her poetic use of language. In this way language is her master. For it is always language that tells her, and indeed us all, about the nature of any thing or experience. The poet for the first time reveals newness, but this revelation never arises from an encounter of poet and an un-named or undescribed thing or experience; rather, it is a result of her closeness with language, of her living with it, and her discoveries of its limits. The poet then stretches the limits of language. And in this stretch that new WORLDS pour forth as previously non-existent. Thus language finds WORLD. And the poet is the medium for this finding.

In thinking more about this idea, one need only think of a child who through his small language has a world that is very simple. The same is true for us adults. The world as it is before us is always the world that language makes present. The poets expand this limit by working with language, stretching its bounds; they thereby enlarge our world by revealing the fold of the world that does expand.

At the outset of this essay one might ask, as Heidegger does, why Friedrich Hölderlin? After all, this is an essay on the essence of poetry, and certainly Hölderlin is a minor poet quietly residing in the shadows of western giants like Sophocles, Goethe, Shakespeare, Whitman, or Rilke. Yet the answer is simple, it lies in the nature of Heidegger's quest: the essence of poetry. Heidegger's analysis leads him to considerations of the essence of language, human interaction with poetry, and the emergence of our world from language in poetry. And it is Heidegger's contention that in the thoughts of Friedrich Hölderlin one finds the essence of poetry, not because he is the greatest of poets, nor because his work is the essence of poetry writing. Hölderlin is a model subject because it is his intent, it is his vocation, to write about the essence of poetry. He was a meta-poet. Thus in Hölderlin's work one finds an address to the essence of poetry and the role of poets.

Therefore, in his look at Hölderlin's thoughts, Heidegger does not proceed systematically through the poet's work; rather, he takes five pointers, five lines from different poems and letters written by Hölderlin, that address specifically the essence of poetry and the role of poets. These five pointers, thinks Heidegger, will reveal to us "the essential essence of poetry⁵." It is my intention to

proceed slowly through this essay's five-part structure as a means to explicate this densely packed and intricately structured text.

Pointer 1.

Writing Poetry: 'That most innocent of all occupations'⁶

In this first section of the text Heidegger meditates upon the innocence of poets, and their seemingly simple vocation, by considering the phrase above taken from a letter of Hölderlin to his mother. Here Hölderlin remarks that poetry is like the games of children. Poetry is inventive. It creates with words and rhymes imaginary places and people for amusement and play. Poetry thus has nothing to do with serious work; it "has nothing about it of action, which grasps hold directly of the real, and alters it⁷." Poetry is this non-effectual in its leaps and jumps and whims and play.

Heidegger agrees with Hölderlin, poetry must be the most innocent of all occupations, for the poet is continually seeking the expansion of our world through her language; thus her world is in flux, it exists without clear knowledge that things remain the same, that all is indeed stable and clear, and exists with certain meaning. Thus she must approach her work with innocence and acceptance of the world's changing. She must be like the little child who plays and embraces the world as whole and without threat. This she must do, thinks Heidegger and Hölderlin, for her own safety. She must accept the nature of the world as something that is continually unfolding, and at the same time retain an acceptance of this world as a place that is affirming and without danger even in the face of perpetual change and little certainty.

Thus we have arrived at one quality of the poet, namely innocence, but we haven't thought about the essence of poetry. "Poetry creates its works in the realm and out the material of language⁸." Heidegger moves now to the second pointer.

Pointer 2

'Therefore has language, most dangerous of possessions, been given to man . . . so that he may affirm what he is'⁹

The second section of this essay is a critical one in relation to the remainder of the text. And to aid his study of this quotation, Heidegger lays down three specific questions to consider in an attempt to understand the essence of language and our relation to it. Heidegger's questions are: "(1) Whose possession is language? (2) To what extent is it the most dangerous of possessions? (3) In what sense is it really a possession¹⁰?" It is necessary, I think, to proceed through these considerations briefly in order that we may understand explicitly Heidegger's interpretation.

Heidegger notes that the context from which this quote is lifted is a series of notes Hölderlin was taking in preparation for a poem about "who man is¹¹." Heidegger thinks this subject is directly linked to the second element in pointer 2, i.e., to the process of human self-affirmation. Our nature is to affirm who we are, for "Man is *be* who *is*, precisely in the affirmation of his own existence¹²." But this affirmation is not merely a statement that we exist, that we live and breathe and walk around; rather, in self-affirmation we seek the nature of our existence. And the fundamental realization that we will come to in this process, thinks Heidegger, is that we belong to the earth¹³. Heidegger's use of the word earth here is problematic because it seems that it could be read in one of two ways. *Earth* can be read as a synonym for world, which is the way that I read this section. Or he may be referring here to the earth of the four-fold. In which case he would still ultimately be referring to the world, for the four-fold is the essence of our existence within the world.

Heidegger goes on to say that when we affirm who we are, we find both that we belong to the world, and that we are separate from the world as well--that we stand out within it. For reflecting on our place in the world implies distance between self and world, for in this case the world is always "over there," separate from us. Therefore, we are beings in a world to which we belong and from which we are inherently separate. This connectedness and separation Hölderlin calls "intimacy¹⁴." We live intimately with and in our world. It is language that allows this affirmation to occur. The

poet's relation to language, as a walker on a path, or a swimmer in a fast moving stream, is the ground for this "intimate" existence. And it is the continual encounter of poet with WORLD that illustrates this process. And finally, thinks Heidegger, the process of self-affirmation becomes actual as history¹⁵. Our generational process of self-affirmation through language makes the history of our many cultures possible, and indeed the actual events of this affirmation are the colorful events of our history. Language is the possession of humanity; language is the key to our human nature; language is the foundation of history. How, then, is it the most dangerous of possessions?

Danger, Heidegger thinks, "is the threat to one's existence from what is existent¹⁶." Yet danger is also, he asserts, the potential "loss of existence¹⁷." Thus I think the key to understanding Hölderlin's assertion that poetry is that most innocent of occupations is found in the medium that all poetry works within, language. For language reveals our world. Poetry as the usher of new WORLDS suggests that what lies before us today in our understanding of the world is forever changing. For example, before Nietzsche made the statement "God is dead," the world was a very different place. But because Nietzsche became a philosopher that people read and took seriously his insight into the human plight has seriously affected our place in the world, i.e., the way that we understand our place in the world. For many, the solid, reliable world of theism was and is shattered. Thus poets continually face the new unveiled WORLD, or the possibility of it, daily in their craft¹⁸. Thus, for Hölderlin and for Heidegger, while language does allow us to affirm who we are as beings in a world, this affirmation is one that is dangerous for the realization that language brings about the world's ever-shifting quality, and thus about our ever-shifting significance as mortals in the world as well. Indeed this is manifested, I think, in the propensity of us all to become immersed in the world of the already revealed, and our reluctance to see beyond the parameters of these worlds. Language is dangerous thinks Heidegger because of the awareness that language brings about the nature of our world. And the very fact that poets usher in WORLD suggests reveals this danger. This is why even in the face of this undeniable aspect of our language and world the poet must retain the innocence of children. Not innocence in the sense of naivete, but in the sense of acceptance of the world as a place that is affirming and abundant despite its continual changing.

Thus, Heidegger concludes that only where there is language is there world--the existent sphere of things and ideas and people that we know and connect with--and only where there is world and the process of self-affirmation is there history. Language is a possession because it affords us the guarantee that we "exist historically"¹⁹. Language is not a possession in the sense of a tool for communication; language is a possession insofar as it is ability that all humans possess which allows for us all to affirm the nature of our existence--that we are and we are in a world. Yet we must be sure of the essence of language if we are to understand fully the nature of poetry. Heidegger asks, "How does language become actual"²⁰? And with this question he moves us to pointer 3.

Pointer 3

Much has man learnt.

Many of the heavenly ones has he named,

Since we have been a conversation

And have been able to hear from one another²¹.

Throughout this work Heidegger tells us that the being of humanity is rooted in language, for language makes the world present and affords us the ability to affirm who we are as people within this world. In this section Heidegger wants to discover, more precisely, about the nature of language. And for a response to his closing question in the last section, Heidegger begins with a study of Hölderlin. Both men think that language becomes actual first and foremost in conversation²². My analysis of this section attempts to get at the root of this idea, and its importance for poetry.

Plainly, he thinks, a conversation is the act of speaking with others about something; it is a coming together²³. But there is much more here, he thinks. For it is obvious from the conversations that any of us have with friends or new acquaintances that we have come together to talk, and in talking we use language. But Hölderlin says, "Since we have been a conversation" and this for Heidegger suggests two types of conversation: the everyday conversation and the "single

conversation²⁴." The everyday conversation we already know about; the single conversation is most important here. For the single conversation is the conversation of the poet with her world. As the poet walks down the meandering path of language she encounters WORLD. She then brings this WORLD into the light in her work. Thus the single conversation here refers to the singular, individual encounter with WORLD that poet has because of language. Thus Heidegger's meaning here rests in the fact that one can have a conversation in which ideas are discussed because there exists for us all the "single conversation" of self and world through language. Without this foundation, e.g., that we exist within a world, no conversation, whatever the subject or focus, could be possible.

"Since" humanity has been a conversation marks the beginning of time and the start of historical existence, thinks Heidegger. Indeed existence as a single conversation and historical existence are one and the same thing²⁵. For in the single conversation the beginnings of the world's manifestation start. These manifestations through language then become part of our historical lives as we gather to discuss them. Thus language becomes actual in conversation because it is here that language is shared, names and ideas are compared and argued, some remain and most fade away. Time begins, thinks Heidegger, when things in the world first stand out. This occurs in single conversation through language. And this language, however, only becomes actual in conversation, in talking and sharing.

In single conversation one encounters the world and/or the gods. Language makes this possible; thus we never simply ascribe names to an already existent world or god. Indeed language brings this new WORLD into light. Heidegger's claim about time rests here. When the human first used language time began, and at this moment conversation began with him and others. And it continues. One still encounters new revelation about the world and the gods through language and this then enters human dialogue, it is part of our history. Ever since this time began we have been historical people; thus, thinks Heidegger, language is the supreme event of human existence²⁶.

Pointer 4

But that which remains is established by the poets²⁷.

Heidegger thinks that this quote from Hölderlin begins to shed light on the essence of poetry. And in this section Heidegger states in quick terms the role of the poet that I have struggled to illustrate thus far in the project. The poet brings the WORLD, newly revealed through language, into the common world of our everyday experience. "Poetry is the establishment of being by means of word²⁸," he says. Thus the poet brings into the existent, into the world, the newness that her language presents to her. In its two-fold sense, therefore, the world has its foundation in language. Without language it could not come into the light. Thus without humans who possess language there can be no world. And it is poetry, then, that originally establishes new revelations of the gods, or the earth, or sky, or fellow mortals in our two-fold world.

Pointer 5

Full of merit, and yet poetically, dwells

Man on this earth²⁹.

Poetry is the inaugural naming of things³⁰ thinks Heidegger. In poetry entities stand in our worlds for either the first time in history, or they stand in the world as seen anew after having been covered-up. The poet's work with language opens out Being and brings entities forth. In this way Heidegger thinks we dwell poetically. We live in the world with language, and it is the poetic invocation of this language, that makes the world possible in the first place. Heidegger begins to bring some loose ends together in this essay.

In this essay Heidegger has discovered that poetry is the inaugural naming of things, that one finds the essence of poetry through studying language, and that language is the most dangerous of possessions while poetry is the most innocent of occupations. Heidegger asserts in this final section that one arrives at the essence of poetry only by combining the danger of language and the innocence of poetry³¹.

Poetry appears harmless. Poets are cloaked in play. But does this suggest that their world is one of make-believe and magic? No, the poet must relate to the world with the innocence and acceptance of the child, for what their language as poets reveals for many is dangerous. For Hölderlin it was dangerous, for Nietzsche, for Berryman, it was dangerous. The poet's job is innocent, but never harmless. Her medium is one filled with danger; thus her work must be an accepting one, one that see the world in spite of continual shifting as good, affirming, and fascinating in its being alive.

In the final paragraphs of the essay, Heidegger briefly addresses the nature of truth as it relates to poetry; he tells us that the gift of the poet is a free one. Yet he does not simply take this to mean a gift freely given to us; rather he means, in Hölderlin's words, that "the poets must be free as swallows³²." Simply stated, the poet has the freedom to let be all that presents itself to him through language. The covered over (world) and that realm of the existent hitherto unknown to us (WORLD), are the places to which language takes him wandering. And as a result of what this drifting reveals, the poet and those who hear him walk differently in their world. New reality is established by the poet which alters everything about the world.

Poetry as this act of establishing is subject to "a two-fold control³³." The writing of poetry is the fundamental naming of the gods, but as Heidegger has already asserted that the poet must listen for the claim of the god--the god brings the poet to language. To exemplify what he means here Heidegger cites a phrase of Hölderlin's:

And signs to us from antiquity are the language
of the gods³⁴.

Now what Heidegger means by the two-fold control and this quotation is that the poet occupies a position between the new or old god and his culture. In their claims the poet always receives a new message, a knowledge of the not-yet-uncovered. But in the case of the gods who have fled one is left with a revelation of antiquity, and thus with perhaps something that was lost, but never an awareness of the gods to come. One's attunement to world is revealed in poetry.

Yet, to remain faithful to the words of Heidegger, the poet must exist "between" the signs of the gods and the voices of her people³⁵. For it is in this between where the poet has been cast that

the nature of existence is settled and reconciled. And one need not be reminded of Hölderlin's understanding that "[p]oetically, dwells man on this earth." Hölderlin is the poet of the poet, for his work was above this "between." His poetry is meta-poetry--poetry about poetry's nature.

But Hölderlin's view belongs to a certain time. And to the extent that he was the poet of this time, he shaped that time. Yet the essence of poetry that he has presented is not a timelessly valid concept. Like all great poets, Hölderlin ushers in a new time. This new era is the time of the twilight of the old gods and the waiting period for the god to come. And this is a time of need, says Heidegger, for the very fact that we are now adrift without the security and direction of the old gods, and have we yet to receive the revitalization brought by the new god to come. We today experience the "No-more" of the old gods, and the "not-yet" of the gods to come³⁶. Hölderlin's work, therefore, anticipates a time that is to come, and yet is firmly rooted within the context and understanding of a particular historical epoch, an epoch upon which poetry's essence is then contingent.

III

Building Dwelling Thinking

A Critical Analysis

It is Heidegger's intention in this essay to arrive at the meaning of building and the meaning of dwelling. In doing so, he does not intend to write about construction technique, the history of architecture, or the art of building; rather, Heidegger wishes to trace "building back into that domain to which everything that *is* belongs³⁷." Here Heidegger examines specifically what it means to dwell, and, he thinks, one arrives at dwelling only through a study of building; thus a study of the significance of building will lead him to this final end. He says, "Dwelling and building are related as end and means³⁸." Yet, he later thinks, this means-end schema for understanding these two notions ultimately is of little help, because it becomes an obstacle to understanding their essential relationship, for building presupposes that one dwells. What then is building? What is dwelling? And, in terms of my own inquiry, how do these relate to poetry and the two-fold world? Understanding Heidegger's principal ideas in this text, and, specifically, seeing his notion of human interaction with the four-fold is my principal work here.

As has already been said, Heidegger sees language as the basis for our attunement to the world. Attunement, which he addresses specifically in *Being and Time*, is not a union of subject and object. That is, attunement does not suggest that myself and the world somehow are conjoined, unified. Attunement means that in the human the world is made manifest, and in the world the human is made manifest³⁹. So in this case world is brought to the fore because of language. It comes to stand before us because of the lighting up of the poet. And the poet is always manifest as

being within the world in her very work as poet. Thus without world there is no human and without the human there is no world for Heidegger. With one the other must necessarily be manifest.

To carry on, then, without language we are left without an ability to differentiate, without the ability to attune ourselves to anything at all. Heidegger makes this assertion at the beginning of *Building Dwelling Thinking*. Language, he says, makes awareness and attunement possible. It is our master. Here Heidegger makes this claim about language as an introduction to an extended etymological analysis of various Old English and High German words, an analysis he undertakes with the intention of finding the precise meaning of building and dwelling. Through this study he concludes that "the manner in which human beings *are* on the earth is dwelling⁴⁰." Heidegger draws this understanding, specifically, from a study he does of the ancient German and English word, *bauen*. *Bauen* means to dwell in the sense that it is our fundamental act of being as humans. But in addition to this revelation, *bauen* also at the same time means "to cherish and protect, to preserve and take care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine⁴¹." Thus this second sense provides us with an understanding of building, as well. Furthermore, he thinks, inherent in the definition of building is the idea of construction. Thus building has a two-fold definition: cultivation and construction. Yet building as cultivation and building as construction are done because one dwells. But our dwelling is not a conscious process; dwelling forever recedes behind constructing and cultivating, and yet paradoxically shines through these actions and their creations at all times as well.

Heidegger concludes his etymology section with the realization that his study of the word, *bauen*, has yielded three things: (1) building is dwelling; (2) dwelling is the manner in which we are on the earth; and (3) building is cultivation and construction. He goes on to say that the fundamental character of dwelling is preservation. As beings that *are*, we preserve things, we clear a space for them to become present. Heidegger's meaning here comes clearer when he later examines what in fact the created, the constructed, thing allows for. That which is built allows for the preservation of the four-fold, i.e., we create a place for the four-fold of our existence to come to the fore and become manifest in our acts of building.

Having said this, we have moved a step closer to why this essay is important for a study of world. Preservation in this case is very much like the poet's involvement with language. As a channel of language, the poet draws newness out into the world, and this newness is then preserved in her words. The new reality brought by the poet is either accepted or rejected by those that hear or see what she has brought to them. And often, thinks Heidegger, this newness becomes, for those unaware of language's mastery over their awareness and attunement, all that is. Here again we have the distinction between world and WORLD.

Building is dwelling. In building there is a preservation of the four-fold. Thus in dwelling one preserves the four-fold of his existence. Now it seems to me that poetry performs a similar function as does building. One builds out of dwelling. One creates poetry by existing with a language through which he attempts to discover his world. Both poetry and building manifest a more fundamental reality, namely, both that we dwell and that we exist fundamentally inside of language. But I have jumped too far ahead, for Heidegger wants to explain dwelling in more detail.

Heidegger's initial understanding of dwelling that he arrived at through his analysis of *bauen*, found that dwelling is "the manner in which we are on the earth⁴²." Yet the "in which we are on the earth" already presupposes much, thinks Heidegger. It suggests also that we are among other people, beneath the sky, and ultimately before the divine. He finds that our dwelling and our existence are essentially four-fold:

"Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming, fruiting, spreading out in rock and growing up in 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 light and dusk of day . . . The divinities are the beckoning masters of the godhead. . . . [And] the mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they die. . . . Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on the earth, under the sky, before the divinities⁴³.

We shall soon see that it is in our acts of cultivation and construction, in our acts of building, that the simple unity of the four-fold is preserved and made manifest. Therefore, a relationship to begin

pondering is the one between poetry as that which preserves world by finding WORLD, and building as the act that preserves the four-fold. What is this relationship? Perhaps poetry and building are not the same, but it seems that they are closely related. For poetry and language reveal everything about our relationship with world in its two-fold nature, and building reveals how it is precisely that we are in the world, that we exist in a four-fold manner. One might ask: *Is building a poetic act?*

Heidegger goes on to say that "mortals dwell in the way that they preserve the four-fold in . . . its presencing⁴⁴." It is here that language and the four-fold come into obvious relation. When Heidegger says that the nature of dwelling is revealed in the nature of our building, he is saying much the same thing as he did previously in the essay on poetry, yet here he refers specifically to building. Indeed our attunement to our four-fold existence and to our world is founded upon language, yet here Heidegger says that the four-fold has been preserved in our building. Again, the kinship between poetry and building seems strong. For the poet, as she comes to journey differently in her world because of where her language has taken her, is the one who continually brings to us new preservation, new vision caught within a web of words or gestures. In the same way, the stone mason who builds a bridge or a cottage performs a similar task. We shall see shortly in Heidegger's analysis that this builder opens up *space* when he creates the bridge. He makes the areas around the bridge present to us. Thus as language leads the poet to new WORLDS, so does this builder attune us to new reality as well. Yet both, thinks Heidegger, can never reveal anything in their world that is outside of the four-fold. He says:

Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. . . . they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest. Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. . . . They do not make their gods for themselves⁴⁵.

And so on with mortals and earth. Thus what is built and what is uttered or painted can never suggest to us something that is not part of the four-fold. My over-arching question is now: *Is there a difference in language defined as gesture or action, and the act of building? Again, is building a poetic act?*

At the close of the essay's first section, Heidegger recapitulates his discussion; he emphasizes his principal assertions. Dwelling is a preservation, he thinks. The preservation of the four-fold is evident in our building. Thus, he thinks, one does not abstractly preserve the four-fold. One preserves concretely through building. Furthermore, one always builds things; thus the stone mason preserves the four-fold by "staying with things"⁴⁶, he thinks. Heidegger moves circularly here in the sense that things are the locus of the four-fold's manifestation, and yet it is only because we dwell that our acts of preservation through construction and cultivation can occur. I would hasten to add to this final point, that, as well, the poet preserves a new attunement with world and being in the world in her creation of a poem, as does the choreographer when he creates a dance. The world and our being in it become manifest in our creations--verbal and tactile. Again, is building a poetic construction? If not, how then might building be different than sculpture?

Heidegger moves now to a second section in which he asks specifically the question: *In what way does building belong to dwelling?*⁴⁷ Throughout my analysis of the first section I observed that there seems to be a similarity between Heidegger's understanding of building as an act of preservation, and poetry as a lighting up. As the poet's path of language wanders like a country path⁴⁸, new WORLDS are brought to the fore, and because of the poet's language such new attunement is fixed into our present awareness. Heidegger seems to be making a similar claim about the significance of our building, for we shall see that in building we actually preserve the four-fold. Building and poetry, as the acts of dwelling and language, therefore, are closely inter-twined.

Specifically, in this section Heidegger asks about the nature of things that are built. As an example he talks about a bridge. The bridge as a thing, he thinks, is more than just a mere thing. The bridge as something humanly crafted "gathers"⁴⁹ the four-fold into itself. Instead of re-stating his example, I want to illustrate Heidegger's thinking in this case with an example of my own. In this example the bridge of which I speak is always the thing in question. The person in my short narrative

who stops atop the bridge is afforded the opportunity to reflect because of the bridge, but this is not to say that everyone who stops there will think in such a way. In this case the bridge reveals the four-fold. As something constructed the four-fold has been called forth and manifested. Yet in all cases the four-fold is not necessarily manifested in the same way as it was by this bridge in this case. That is to say, the four-fold *is* manifested by all constructions and cultivations, but not in the same way continually for each particular act of building.

On the campus of Saint John's, near the Prep School, and adjacent to Lake Sagatagan, there stands an old stone bridge most likely built in the early 1920's. The monastic bridge is a gathering. For it joins together the two sides of the tiny stream that flows into the lake over which it arches, and in so doing it brings out the stream's two sides as banks and not simply as adjacent land. It reveals them as opposites to be crossed on the walker's journey. The bridge connects the peculiar landscape of Saint John's. For as he stops briefly at the top of the bridge's slight arch, the walker clearly sees the forest of oaks and poplars rising behind him which in the fall pay colorful tribute to the old stand of white pines now rising before him as in a greeting on his meditative walk. The bridge, a thing humanly crafted, gathers unto itself the earth on which we all live. And in so doing it reveals the distinctive forest of Saint John's. The bridge gathers the earth.

There is more. As the walker has stopped, he thinks a while of his surroundings, and is struck by the strangeness of the forest he has just walked through and the one into which he will soon journey. For in the fall one grove perishes in beautiful color while the other remains alive and abundant. Deep in these thoughts he is reminded of his friends in the monastery--those who have passed away and the community that persists. The bridge in its revelation of earth gives him time to ponder the presence of others and their inevitable departure from this place to God.

As the walker gets up to leave he notices that the bridge is in places covered with patches of yellow and green and orange--lichen formed from the many rains the bridge has endured for nearly seventy-five years. And he sees that the bridge's footings are colored too, for their blackened surfaces reveal the height that the flowing waters once had reached during spring rains or before the underground spring it had once crossed dried up. The sky above is indeed gathered into the bridge by

virtue of its mottled appearance, as is the withered stream by the bridge's discolored supports. Indeed forest, sky, friends, and God are gathered together by this simple construction, the bridge, the walker's old and venerable resting place.

For Heidegger the bridge as a thing that is built is a gathering which allows the bridge to be manifested, but which also manifests and gathers the four-fold. The bridge allows a "site⁵⁰" for the four-fold to become manifest, he thinks. Yet only that which is a "location⁵¹" can allow a site for the four-fold to appear. For the location is never present before the bridge has been constructed. Thus in this analysis of the nature of a thing, Heidegger asserts that things, bridges, are locations that provide sites for the preservation of the four-fold.

Heidegger now moves to a study of spatiality. Only things such as the bridge that are locations can create spaces⁵². Space means, he thinks, a place cleared or freed⁵³. And, furthermore, a space must always have a boundary. And by boundary he refers to the meaning of the Greek word, *peras*, which does not mean that place where something stops; rather, a boundary is that place where something "begins its presencing⁵⁴." Thus the bridge has allowed for a site for the four-fold to become present, manifest to us, and has created the space that surrounds the bridge to come into the light as well. The building of this bridge has been an act of lighting, therefore, of bringing the essential nature of human existence to presence before us. And, more basically, the bridge has allowed for the space, the forests, lake, and stream all around it to become manifest as well. They in turn give significance to the bridge, and allow it to become manifested and present. Spaces, he thinks, receive their being from location. The location is a building, and it frees a site for the four-fold to occur. Now to understand dwelling in a clearer light, Heidegger asks about the relationship between humans and space. His claim here is that our relation to space is never some abstract notion of realizing distance, or dimension. The bridge and I are together even though I have merely told a make-believe story; we are together because it was imaged in my mind. In our very being as humans we are in space by virtue of dwelling among things as locations. Thus we understand space not as dimensional, but as relational. Space exists out of the relationship between myself and the thing and what areas (spaces) that the thing (the bridge) opens up around it. This notion is vitally important

because for Heidegger "the relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and strictly spoken⁵⁵." Our dwelling is then revealed by the things, and the spaces these things have opened up, that we create in our building.

The spaces that Heidegger speaks of are created by virtue of the location which has provided a site for the four-fold to become manifest and preserved. The spaces about the bridge are the forest, the stream, the sky above, and the monastery over the hill where the walker's living and dead acquaintances have dwelled. The bridge as a location creates and then joins spaces⁵⁶. In so doing, the bridge becomes a guard of the four-fold; thus in building there is a preservation. And this preservation is the essence of our dwelling as humans. Building is a letting-dwell⁵⁷. For dwelling, Heidegger thinks, "is the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist⁵⁸." Thus in building one sees the basic nature of our being as humans come to fore, namely that we exist before on the earth, beneath the sky, before the gods, and among the mortals. Building, then, lets this fact become manifest in our acts of preparing a garden, or in building a stone bridge.

Furthermore, Heidegger offers a hint about the answer to the question I have been asking throughout my analysis about the relationship of poetry and building. Thinking he says is akin to building in that thinking and building are inextricable aspects of dwelling--the importance of thinking is made evident in this thinking project⁵⁹. The subject of thinking, specifically, is one Heidegger treats at great length throughout all of his work, and it is a subject that he only alludes to in this essay, so I will not address it here. But I do think that, like thinking, language is not the same as building, but that it is very important, as is building, for understanding the nature of dwelling, the essence of our being humans. For language is perhaps the true foundation upon which our dwelling rests. Indeed the four-fold would not come into the fore without language, yet, paradoxically, at the first moment of language nothing can be revealed outside the parameters of the four-fold. Perhaps the more tangible question, however, is the one asking about about poetry and building. *Is building a poetic act?*

As I have thought about this question I have arrived at two responses and both of these I want to offer. I offer both because, while the second is the more accurate Heideggerian answer, the first is a commonly thought and often cited argument. Thus by offering both, the insight and vision

present in Heidegger's explanation of poetry and the four-fold comes to light in response to the limited insight offer in the first understanding. Thus I offer as follows a first response to the question about building and poetry.

Poetry uses language, language in the broad sense of word, gesture, and action. Yet the poet is subject to her medium. Language has currents and drifts of its own which the poet swims within and is subject to. The new WORLDS that the poet discovers, then, easily slip into our usual worlds of the "It is this way." I have asked, is the builder a poet? The stone mason builds locations. And our dwelling arises from the joining of the spaces created by his and others' locations together. The mason builds the bridge, the builder builds the school, the space joined between is human, it strictly speaking indicates our dwelling. Now the work of the builder is a never-shifting subject, unlike the poet's ever-shifting subject. The mason builds stone bridges. The poet writes about them. But the poet's language will continually reveal this bridge anew whenever it is written or spoken of. Thus the work of builders and poets seems to differ on the nature of subject. The builder is not a sculptor because he does not offer an interpretation of bridges, he offers bridges. The sculptor offers interpretation, and for Heidegger is therefore operating within the continually shifting realm of language.

Now, I think this is a strong argument, but I don't think Heidegger would agree, for the builder *is* an interpreter of bridges. He *or* she is not merely mechanized. Ultimately, the builder does work as a poet. The bridge at Saint John's, while being simple, is subtle. Its field stone composition reflects the area that it makes space for; it is hand made, and its very presence seems part of the landscape. Thus its poetic maker is very much different than the poet who designed the nearby Prep School and Abbey Church, yet simply because it is not representative of the avant-garde, or "high art," in no way suggests that its poetry is not evident. The builder is aware of two languages it seems to me: the language of technology--of how to make a bridge stand--and the language of the poet that allows him to bring forth a new vision of the bridge, one that is reflective of the locations near it and indicative of its surrounding space. In so doing the careful builder has become poet, and thereby wedded a technical language with a poetic one. The work of the builder is, then, much like the work

of the poet. Both have used language expressively to offer new visions, visions dependent upon where the wandering of their language through their worlds has taken them. The great builder, then, is not merely an assembler of stones; she is an interpreter of forms with field stones or cast steel or poured concrete.

Heidegger has revealed to us here that, unlike in *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*, poetry exists in a much broader sense than just the written word. Poetry deals with new attunement through language. And language is not merely words. Language can be gesture and form and action. Thus we have the great builder in Marcel Breuer, but we also have the anonymous monk, a poet in his own right, who built the bridge. The poet is Breuer, is Whitman, is the anonymous builder. The poet employs her language in a form that then preserves the four-fold of our existence and the entities of our world. She brings forth the bridge, and she shows us that we dwell forever before the gods and the mortals and the sky and the earth as well. The poet reveals our attunement. For she shows to us that what is created in verse or stone or paint or wood is always an interpretative response to world that preserves the world, and indeed always preserves our dwelling in the world as four-fold.

IV

A Closing

"The Supreme Event of Human Existence"

The possession of language and its poetic use are for Heidegger the glory of human existence. Language allows our world to stand forth, it allows the gods to be present. In short, language attunes us to the world, and in this way reveals our attunement. Poetry is the innocent work of men and women who in their dwelling expand our attunement. For the poet is the one who knows her language. She lives with it, masters its rhythms and gestures, plays with its resonance and dissonance, knows its meaning and significance. The poet thereby stretches language, and in this stretching follows language where it leads her, and finds the WORLDS that language stumbles upon.

It is here that human significance rests, I think. Heidegger's thoughts about language reveal the basis for our attunement with the four-fold of our existence, and we discover there that without language we have no existence. For Heidegger it is clear, especially in his essay on the essence of poetry, that language is not a mere foundation. It is an event of importance and glory. Language and its poetic expression are the possession and the work of humans. Without language we have no earth or sky, no fellows or gods. Without language we have no basis for attunement; thus we have no possibility for connection with any in the four-fold. Human significance rests in the possession of poetry.

Yet, I think that language and poetry must be understood broadly. For someone who cannot speak possesses a language even beyond signs. A gesture can speak more than a novel. Laughter and weeping and dance can reveal what words will never say. Heidegger suggests that language is like a country path that wanders and winds, that reveals in its bends and twists new and enthralling places,

that ends gradually, and vanishes without a trace. And upon the path's end the poet must then journey back the way she came, through familiar countryside, and find new paths to lead her onward.

The poet is a disciple of her medium, she is the serving-bearer of her language. As so, she is a poet. And her message speaks of a love for the open. She travels down the path in the open of the countryside it wanders through. Her travel is her dance, her poem, her painting. It is in wandering down the path's bends and twists that her life is led. It is here that her new vision finds its form. Yet her new vision is always of that which remains the same. Her work is innocent in its continual discovery.

Heidegger brings forth the glory of human existence. Significance rests in the creative work of poets. Yet the creation that poets undertake is never the making of something new. It is the showing of something new, and is a newness that the wander of language makes possible.

In Heidegger's philosophy one finds a world in which humans belong essentially, one that through the skill and mastery of poets expands in its presence before us, but which can easily stagnate without poets, for without them there is no freshness of vision. Without the poets one is left only with a current frame in which to place the world; it grows thus weary and stale.

In Heidegger one finds that the varied and colorful histories of our world reveal the age-old work of poets as they have walked with their languages. And, what is more, despite the variance of these historical poets, one finds in Heidegger's thought that always and everywhere all poets respond to the four-fold of human existence. Every poet's work will manifest the gods, the sky, one's fellow mortals, and always the earth. All poets have their own revelation of what forever remains the same.

Thus a nagging question arises for us out of this meditation upon Heidegger's philosophy. In our days of petroleum addiction, as we reside in what seems to be the perennial shadow of war, in these days of the truth of science and technology, where have our poets gone? Have they gone? Many of us today await the vision of the new poets who will shake the foundations of our awareness, and make today's politics and science as small as a Ptolemaic universe.

V.

Notes

1. I will explain this word shortly in more precise terms. For now, it should be noted that this is not a word used by Heidegger. It is one that I use to describe what I believe Heidegger to be saying about the nature of world in his later essays that I explore here.
2. This is a word used by Heidegger. It is essential for this entire project, and will be addressed in detail. See Heidegger, Martin. *Building Dwelling Thinking* Poetry, Language, and Thought. Harper, New York. 1971. pp. 145-161
3. Heidegger, Martin. *Building Dwelling Thinking*. Poetry, Language, and Thought. Harper: New York, 1971 pp. 145-161.
4. *ibid*
5. Heidegger, Martin. *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry* Existence and Being. Gateway: New York, 1988. pp. 272
6. Heidegger 270
7. Heidegger 272
8. Heidegger 273
9. Heidegger 270
10. Heidegger 273
11. Heidegger 274
12. *ibid*
13. *ibid*
14. *ibid*
15. Heidegger 275
16. *ibid*

17. *ibid*
- 18.
19. Heidegger 276, his emphasis
20. Heidegger 277
21. Heidegger 270
22. Heidegger 277
23. *ibid*
24. Heidegger 278
25. Heidegger 279
26. Heidegger 278
27. Heidegger 270
28. Heidegger 281
29. Heidegger 270
30. Heidegger 282
31. Heidegger 284
32. *ibid*
33. *ibid*
34. *ibid*
35. Heidegger 289
36. *ibid*
37. Heidegger, Martin. *Building Dwelling Thinking*. Poetry, Language, and Thought. Harper: New York, 1971 p. 145
38. Heidegger 146
39. Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Harper: New York, 1962 pp. 172-173.
40. Heidegger 147

41. *ibid*
42. *ibid*
43. Heidegger 149-150
44. Heidegger 150
45. *ibid*
46. Heidegger 151
47. *ibid*
48. See Heidegger, Martin. "The Country Path"
49. Heidegger 152
50. Heidegger 154
51. *ibid*
52. *ibid*
53. *ibid*
54. *ibid*
55. Heidegger 157
56. Heidegger 158
57. Heidegger 159
58. Heidegger 160
59. *ibid*

VI.

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