

Placing the Fourfold: Topology as Environmental Design

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Winning the war on global warming requires slaughtering some of environmentalism's sacred cows... In the age of climate change, what matters most is cutting carbon dioxide and other green house gasses. That means rethinking everything you ever learned about being green.¹

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The truth of the immediate experience of the world disappears by reason of the scientific interpretation of the world.²

[Martin Heidegger]

When attempting to respond to an endangered world it can be easy to fall into narrowly focused actions of resource management, technological intervention, or idealistic conservationism. Certainly a little of each of these is needed at one time or another. However, if we allow ourselves to slide into the haze of limited understanding, then we are destined to level down the complexities of nature, the environment, and the places we inhabit. The difficulty of approaching sustainability with holism and integrity is exacerbated by fears of declining fossil fuels and the spectre of global warming. These threats are certainly real, but reactive solutions in the face of fear will only lead to the new problems of the future. Thus, it is critical that we act but do not panic, moving forward to re-frame our actions within a more inclusive worldview.

Building practices contribute to environmental distress in large portions. In addition to the conspic-

uousness of procedures that are overtly insensitive there is a less obvious yet equally problematic phenomenon that occurs with technological 'green' design. Although technical innovation certainly aids the way in which we may build sustainably, falling into mere technological 'fixes' (as in other fields) further promotes decontextualised problem solving, thus perpetuating the isolating and atomising spiral that has raised environmental issues in the first place. For architecture, with interventions and modifications of the environment taking place by the minute, developing more nuanced strategies and methods must be the first (and most important) order of business. Without an attitude adjustment, not only will our material resources be threatened but increasingly the intangible resource of place too moves toward extinction.

Taking up the cause of the environment not only as nature but also as the built environments that humans create and inhabit should be a central concern of any movement toward sustainability. I draw this out because this is the nexus of real environmental design; that is to say the conservation of energy and materials must simply become non-negotiable, as without energy and materials we would be unable to even engage this conversation. Further, if these were the only things sustained then the experiential and atmospheric human environments that, as Alberto Perez-Gomez once said, 'keep us from going back to our rooms and slitting our wrists',³ are in serious jeopardy. In light of the potential disappearance of place it is important to

acknowledge that the threat of environmental degradation through unattuned building morphology is substantial and appears to be ever increasing. For these reasons recognising place as an issue fundamental to the question of sustainability is imperative. With this recognition it becomes clear that developing a way of living that is merely sustainable is not enough. This in turn is the moment where the design of the built environment perhaps rediscovers something more originary about itself, transitioning from the construction of individual creations toward the disclosure of places. It is with this shift that those experiences that move us, which are shaped by unique ecosystems, cultures, things, and people, are allowed to remain affectual. The phenomenon of place is precisely that which will provide the fortitude to press ahead into the unknown with an unflinching commitment to sustainability and an integral understanding of environmental design. In this way the problem of sustainability might be simply phrased as the prioritising of place in our world.

Thinking Topology

In hopes of better understanding the forces at play in this dilemma this paper looks to the thinking of Martin Heidegger for clues. As one of the first exponents of a philosophy that questioned the reductive proclivities of the Western metaphysical tradition, Heidegger was a 'trenchant critic of space conceived as mere site',⁴ pointing out that the Greeks had no word for space, 'for they experienced the spatial on the basis ... of place (*topos*)'.⁵ Through his questioning of the tradition Heidegger responded with an emphasis on relationships, context, and the unique experiences of the world encountered by us as embodied humans existingly. Heidegger's work not only implicates the negative forces at work in this reduction, but also provides possibilities for re-invigorating our relations to building and place.

Heidegger is generally seen to have had three periods of thought during his career, all of which are concerned with the philosophical tradition's forget-

fulness of 'being'. That is, its focus on 'beings' as extant entities, rather than 'being' as the basis upon which entities are understood. Inseparable from the question of being for Heidegger was 'situatedness', which has to do with the specific 'worlded' circumstances in which we primarily find ourselves. In other words, Heidegger sees that we are first and for the most part *involved* in particular contexts as opposed to existing as objective observers (which he understands to be the view of science and metaphysics). This interdependence of world situation and human involvement as prior to scientific inquiry and categorisation is pointed to in lecture in 1927, as Heidegger says:

*[C]hurches and graves are oriented in very definite directions. These regions under question here, for example, east, west, have no relation at all to geographical contexts but to sunrise and sunset, life and death, hence to Dasein [human existence] itself.*⁶

Heidegger's thinking about being progresses over the years as he moves from the earlier 'meaning of being' to the middle period's 'truth of being', and in a seminar in 1969 he explains his subsequent shift into new territory, explaining that:

*[I]n order to avoid a falsification of the sense of truth, in order to exclude its being understood as correctness, 'truth of being' was explained by 'location of being' – truth as locality of being. This already presupposes, however, an understanding of the place-being of place. Hence the expression topology of be-ing...*⁷

With the transition into the 'topology of being' we see Heidegger's work become place-specific and fall more deeply under the influence of the pre-Socratics and the poet Hölderlin. This period also finds Heidegger wary of much of his former lexicon, eschewing words such as 'being', and 'language'.⁸ In this former terminology he sees words that

have become ossified and confusing through their everyday definability. It seems the habitual understandings Heidegger had attempted to revitalise through his technical retooling of them in his early work still left him a way of speaking that appeared to prioritise linearity, present-ness, and a subject-object split. Heidegger speaks to this shift in his use of language in a seminar of 1966. The moderator explains Heidegger's thoughts:

But the language of Being and Time, Heidegger says, lacks assurance. For the most part, it still speaks in expressions borrowed from metaphysics and seeks to present what it wants to say through new coining, creating new words. Jean Beaufret mentions that in 1959 Hans Georg Gadamer said of his teacher: 'Hölderlin first set his tongue loose.' Heidegger now says, more precisely, that through Hölderlin he came to understand how useless it is to coin new words; only after Being and Time was the necessity of a return to the essential simplicity of language clear to him.⁹

So rather than trying to re-define terms or invent words, we see with the topology of being a link Heidegger is making between the existential structures of being and the world of involvement through the poetic embrace of everyday language. This adjustment allows Heidegger to highlight the processes, events, specificity, multiplicity, and uncertainty that he sees in the human encounter with the world through descriptions that directly mesh with this experience.¹⁰ This is an important point - Heidegger does not drop his earlier concerns, but rather finds that if he uses language more skilfully (within its limits) it allows him new ways to unfold his prior technical explications directly into the specific situations of place. With the tongue that was 'freed by Holderlin', Heidegger is able to express the idea he saw in the Greek *topos*, which was that, 'the place belongs to the thing itself'.¹¹ This is to say that there was a deep interrelation for Heidegger in humans' understandings of place and the play of things in

a place, as Ed Casey has suggested, that 'things congeal the places we remember, just as places congeal remembered worlds'.¹² This meshing of thing, place, and humans is the event of being (*Ereignis*) and is where Heidegger finds that instead of trying to explain the structure of experience (as in *Being and Time*) it is in fact more effective to evoke it directly. This is seen perhaps most clearly in 'The Thinker as Poet', as Heidegger (almost sounding East Asian¹³) sketches a series of lyrical vignettes drawing out the interrelation of place and thing. For example:

When the evening light, slanting into the woods somewhere, bathes the tree trunks in gold...¹⁴

or:

When the wind, shifting quickly, grumbles in the rafters of the cabin, and the weather threatens to become nasty...¹⁵

With the play of immaterial phenomena in these works one sees the glimmerings of Heidegger's 'fourfold', which is the interplay of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. In the play of the four Heidegger is able to reveal material and immaterial variability, as well as offering a poetic openness that holds things, humans, and the forces of nature together within the significance of place. Further, the broad stokes that Heidegger uses to paint these four allow much of his earlier thought to be embedded in them and thus be couched in the experience of the world.¹⁶ In this way, the poetic for Heidegger has the ability to reveal things that are often concealed in logical rumination. Place is the ground for this revealing. Heidegger's position is that place does not form out of extended space as the tradition has posited; rather, place is indicative of our very orientation within environments, and in this way the poetic interplay between things and location is seen to be fundamental to our being-in-the-world. The topology

of being takes over the question of being and folds it into notions about cultivation, building, dwelling, and the presencing of place often demonstrated in Heidegger's 'exemplary cases of things-as-locations'.¹⁷ With this understanding we are now ready to consider the richness of Heidegger's topology of being and how the fourfold in particular shows itself to be instructive in the pursuit of a sustainable built environment.

Unfolding the Fourfold

'Every interpretation, as Heidegger reminds us, is a translation and thus a transition from our own initial place to another one and from there back again to our own'.¹⁸

Heidegger describes the fourfold as follows:

Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal. When we say earth, we are already thinking the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

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 the blue depth of the ether. When we say sky, we are already thinking the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

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. When we speak of the divinities, we are already thinking the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

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 the earth, under the sky, before the divinities. When we speak of the mortals, we are already thinking the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

This simple oneness of the four we call the fourfold. Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling.¹⁹

In taking up the fourfold it is best to follow Heidegger's advice that, 'if we speak of a thinker we must heed what is unsaid in what is said'.²⁰ Combining this advice with the prior outline of Heidegger's thinking, it becomes clear that a full reading of Heidegger's later writing is only attained through a broad understanding of his thinking in general.²¹ Although the fourfold clears away much of his thinking's resemblance to metaphysical speculation and subject-oriented thought, the success of this assimilation is also a primary reason that the fourfold is so beguiling. In order to be able to consider the fourfold in light of Heidegger's earlier thought without, as Mark Wrathall warns, 'doing violence to the text',²² it is important to proceed cautiously, advancing slowly and assuredly by thinking along with Heidegger. This is done best by developing an ear for his language and keeping the phenomena close at all times. I mostly agree with Wrathall's assertion that 'the four are meant, by Heidegger, quite literally'.²³ (as imposing metaphoric meaning obliterates the phenomena themselves); however, I do think one still needs to be vigilant of the processes at work here, as the mutability, 'hidden riches that language holds in store...',²⁴ and interplay of the phenomena coupled with Heidegger's poetic intent requires that we must undergo the experiences ourselves and measure these against the words so as to live the full implications of the text. To this end Heidegger suggests, 'as soon as we have the thing before our eyes, and in our hearts an ear for the word, thinking prospers'.²⁵

Most architectural readings of the fourfold I have encountered have tended toward the literal, which, although not wholly incorrect, simply leaves too much out. Additionally, these readings often fragment the fourfold into a collection of static components (as opposed to the temporal forces that they are).²⁶ So for example, dwelling is taken to be domiciles and the earth and sky are simply the ground we walk on and the sky overhead. This sort of reading focuses the fourfold too tightly, by simply looking into the way in which a building might stand on the horizon. The particular sensibilities of how a building meets the ground and reaches toward the sky are no small matter, as many buildings do not consider this basic question with any seriousness; however this question is really quite basic and frankly in no need of the fourfold for its resolution. Further, this reading holds primarily visual focus and lends itself toward the objectifying tendencies of the metaphysical tradition. In order to allow Heidegger's thinking to be vital, the fourfold asks for our participation within the temporality of place.

The dwelling of mortals is the action that opens the understanding of temporality in the fourfold, where dwelling is the attentive activity of engagement in which mortals take care of things. When one hears dwelling one should hear echoes of Heidegger's earlier 'being-in' and its corresponding temporal structures. As Heidegger says in *The History of the Concept of Time*, 'dwelling is also taken here as taking care of something in intimate familiarity, being-involved-with'.²⁷ So, with the fourfold we move from being-in as in-volvement, to dwelling as in-habitation, where the everyday dealings of involvement are associated with particular places.²⁸ Central to the cultivating and constructing that accompany dwelling (and the fourfold in general) is *phusis*.

Phusis is the pre-Socratic 'self blossoming emergence'²⁹ of nature, and Heidegger understands *phusis* to include 'becoming as well as being'.³⁰

Heidegger tells us that, '*phusis* ... can be observed everywhere, e.g. in celestial phenomena (the rising of the sun), in the rolling of the sea, in the growth of plants, in the coming forth of man and animal from the womb'.³¹ When Heidegger suggests that, 'we must think time together with *phusis*',³² he is reinforcing the idea that *phusis* is not to be equated with Modern conceptions of nature as object. Primordial temporality permeates the fourfold: mortals die; earth is constantly growing and decaying; sky holds the passage of the seasons and the rising and setting sun; and divinities are fleeting in their appearances, and timeless in their existence. So immediately with the understanding of time, the ontology of the fourfold becomes more than simple objects standing in relation to one another. This is further amplified as Heidegger speaks of the 'mirror-play' of the fourfold, by which he means that each element of the four mirrors and is mirrored in certain aspects of the others. For example, the very notion of season is tied to the witnessing mortals, and the growing earth depends on the rainfall and sunlight of the sky; the miracle of this convergence reveals the divinities which are in turn welcomed in by the mortals receiving of this event.

Mortals connect with *phusis* in two primary ways. When things only ask for the mortals' attentiveness in becoming things, such as a seed becoming a tree, this is the self-freeing of *phusis*. Things that do not free themselves need mortals' poetic know-how or *techne-poiesis* to set them free. This attention to things as things is a saving that, in the language of 'Building Dwelling Thinking', 'means to set something free into its own presencing'.³³ In other words, when the thing is set to work as a thing it gathers an event. Dwelling and building are both activities of revealing this event and through revealing architecture begins the shift from individual creation to disclosure of place.

The temporality of the fourfold is particularly critical to environmentally sensitive design as it reconnects

one to the processes of existence. Understanding the fourfold from a temporal perspective keeps the notion of place from turning into a nostalgic snapshot and affords a complexity not found in modern technological thinking. The temporal view of 'earth' stands in stark contrast to the enframing of earth as resource and opens up the self-revealing and simultaneous dark concealing of nature, as well as the specificity that emerges in things.³⁴ Since 'all unveiling requires an antecedent illumination',³⁵ we find the sky to play the counterpart to the darkness of the earth, in that the sky is the lighting that illuminates certain potentialities of earth as seen in the rain and sunlight that aid life's striving toward *telos*, as well as the less apparent 'lighting' of the background of a shared history, language, or culture. These worlded phenomena relate sky to being, as Heidegger says that the 'understanding of being already moves in a horizon that is everywhere illuminate, giving luminous brightness'.³⁶ The light of the sky provides everyday intelligibility. The temporality of sky is most closely related to our world time through the seasons and the daily passage of the sun, where 'the sun is not understood as an astronomical thing but as something environmentally on hand constantly used in everyday concern, namely as that which gives light and warmth in the cycle of day and night'.³⁷ Time is one among many examples of how the fourfold weds ontology with place, in that with the fourfold time is always 'world time'—that is to say, time is always determined in reference to human experience of events.³⁸ Place begins to take shape as the intertwining of earth and sky, revealed as climates, ecologies, landforms, and cultures. In this way temporality allows the constant becoming of place, which is gathered around things.

Building Things

*Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for ... as the Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world itself, its own self is reflected to it from things.*³⁹

In the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Heidegger famously cites the bridge as a thing gathering the banks of the river. In this gathering we see things on both banks acting upon one another to form particular relations. In this description it becomes evident that 'the actuality of things consists in their exercising the action of forces on each other',⁴⁰ and in so doing form specific places. For example, perhaps the bridge links a field and farmhouse, or maybe two cities, or city to nature preserve; in each case the relations are explicit and formed out of the force of particular things in dialogue with one another. In each different interaction the bridge gathers a different place, and in turn becomes a different bridge. Seeing how this interchange relates to one's experience of the world, it becomes clear 'that things themselves are places and do not merely belong to a place',⁴¹ as well as the converse, that 'place always opens a region in which it gathers the things in their belonging together'.⁴² Here emerges the seed to begin thinking about a building as analogous to Heidegger's thing.

In order to approach the building as thing one must also inquire into the nature of the relation between humans and things. Heidegger says that for humans 'being-in-the-world ... leaps toward us from the things'.⁴³ This is the fundamental connection to the thing where humans find their orientation and identity, or as Maurice Merleau-Ponty says so eloquently, 'colors, sounds, and things - like Van Gogh's stars - are the focal points and radiance of being'.⁴⁴ This is all to say that one's daily concerns and involvements are structured around and facilitated by the things of one's world. This notion is both poetic and pragmatic, because when things become mere objects for manipulation there is no longer the resilience required for the mirror play, and as a result the world begins to seem monochrome. Consequently, place is no longer understood with any degree of complexity and is slowly taken over by superficial understandings. In addition to under-

standing ourselves from things, the thing is by Heidegger's estimation also our peculiar way of relating to others. He describes this phenomenon in *The History of the Concept of Time*:

*The tool I am using is bought by someone, the book is a gift from..., the umbrella is forgotten by someone. The dining-table at home is not a round top on a stand but a piece of furniture in a particular place, which itself has its particular places at which particular others are seated every day. The empty place directly [shows the]... absence of others.*⁴⁵

Understanding the significance of the thing returns for us the full implication of viewing building as thing. With much of the built environment defined by buildings, buildings are one of the primary articulators of place. As a thing, buildings too orient us to the world, provide structures for involvement and reveal the presence and absence of others. However, to have the ability to do this a building as a thing must also reflect the specificity of its situation. As David Weinberger explains, 'the fourfold must in every case be gathered in a particular way ... the jug can be what it is (i.e., a jug) because it gathers the fourfold in a way that a sieve or a stool does not'.⁴⁶ So too it is that each building must be conceived as a very specific thing, gathering the fourfold in its own peculiar way according to its circumstances. Taking Weinberger's example further, it is not just that the jug is different than the sieve, but also that the jug of a religious ceremony is different from the jug used with dinner – each should gather the fourfold in a way appropriate to its context. In the built environment this is an urging that each building find its own unique relation to its surroundings, requirements, and users: shaping them as well as letting itself be shaped. A building becomes the particular thing that it is by revealing the fourfold in a particular way in the particular place that it stands. This is seen in examples as diverse as the Acropolis, a log cabin, the Salk Institute, or Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals. These types of particular attuned response

each bring a specific gathering of the fourfold. This gathering appears to be a fundamental basis for an architecture of place and by association, an environmental architecture.

However, in attempting to foster an environmental architecture understanding the thing is not enough to ensure success. Although the thing is the nexus gathering the fourfold, all aspects of the fourfold must be 'working' in their full depth so as to allow the thing to thing. This requirement of the gathering is important as its requisite multiplicity invalidates the idea of creation as a product of singular genius, that is to say, it is not enough to engage in a simple one to one, creator-created relation. The simple creator-created relation yields objects, which (intended or not) in their mere being somewhere puts them in relation to the fourfold. However, objects gather the fourfold according to their object-ness, which is to say that by being an object it is in their nature to stand out against the fourfold, thus revealing the four as simply four other objects. Returning to the temporality and multiplicity fundamental to the conception of the fourfold, it is clear that this sort of relation will be limited if not dysfunctional, as it results in simple relations and reductions that are not reflective of an experience of the world in its fullness. In order to engage a making that reveals and intertwines the temporal complexity of the fourfold with the thing, one must assume ownership of the way in which the process of design is undertaken. This requires humans to act as mortals, or in this case, designers to act as mortals.

Designers as Ends

So as to understand the connotations of viewing the process of design from the perspective of the mortals, it is necessary that we first understand what is implied in the notion of being mortal. The mortals hold much of Heidegger's earlier Dasein, in that mortals are the 'now' of time, and the 'here' of space, and their existence is centred around the concerned temporality of the care structure (i.e., the

world matters in particular ways according to past engagements and future possibilities). Heidegger's 'mortals', however, are changed in interesting ways from his earlier notion of Dasein. Where Dasein has been often misconstrued as another word for the subject, the mortals are now clearly many—all of us. Also with the mortals becoming only one of the four of the fourfold (as opposed to the centre), it is suggested that we as humans do not create the world through our action. Rather it is mortals' participation with things that enables the mirror-play of four. In fact the focus created by the mortals in staying with things is a crucial role; as Heidegger says, 'staying with things is the only way in which the fourfold stays within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity'.⁴⁷ It is through this conception of the mortals that Heidegger re-frames one's responsibility as a human being to be primarily one of attentiveness and openness (not agency). Heidegger drives this home in a variety of places, saying that 'mortals nurse and nurture the things that grow, and specially construct the things that do not grow';⁴⁸ 'mortals speak insofar they listen';⁴⁹ 'dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth [...] the fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving'.⁵⁰ All of these statements speak to a more receptive and responsive notion of being human than many are normally accustomed to. However, perhaps ringing most loudly in the notion of the human as mortal is the darkness of death. In this we see Heidegger linking existence directly to death, which eliminates his earlier talk of Dasein being either authentic or inauthentic, in their 'being-toward-death'. In either case death might be understood as a physical ceasing-to-be, but perhaps more importantly should also be unpacked as contingency, vulnerability, and the partaking of ends as ends. In the mortals Heidegger makes being-toward-death and existence inseparable.

But what does this really mean—that one should be constantly thinking about mortality? No, this

would be to think of death as object. So what does one do in order to be a mortal? Again, it must be seen as a way of being, and it seems some of the answer might be found in Heidegger's interest in Kant. In his earlier lectures Heidegger points to Kant's claim that 'man is a being which exists as its own end',⁵¹ and perhaps more interestingly that 'the moral person exists as its own end; it is itself an end'.⁵² So it might seem that being mortal implies engaging in an ongoing process of ends, and just as Kant in his categorical imperative instructs that people should always be treated as ends and never means, it might be suggested that Heidegger is expanding this imperative to include things as well.⁵³ In other words, things become ends in themselves on the condition that the one receiving them is also an end by being mindful of this interaction. This is the difficult but critical task of the mortals, as Heidegger tells us, for it is 'by the means-end schema we block our view of the essential relations'.⁵⁴ So, when one embraces ends of all magnitudes (physical death being a paradigm case), one reveals possibilities and may in turn act in accordance with them. Experiencing 'death as death' is how 'the world and our being-in-it show themselves purely and simply'.⁵⁵ That is, we are most aware when we (as an end) allow things, people, and events to touch our finitude, as this is what activates our ability to listen, see, and ultimately to care. For designers this point appears fundamental, since with this disposition the world is no longer allowed to become an object for management and control, rather it stands as the very source of inspiration. Further, taking ends as ends undermines the self-referential model of the Romantic genius, as experiencing ends requires that one become absorbed beyond themselves, in the things immediately before them. If a place is to be disclosed as place then a designer becomes mortal by developing into a receiver that allows the speaking of the world to become audible. In this way, when designers act as mortals they become a 'standing open for ... being addressed by things',⁵⁶ and it is this openness to the 'things' of any project,

that welcomes the divinities.

The Place of the Divinities

The arrival of the divinities is the announcement of place. This is to say the divinities bring the all-encompassing (and sometimes overwhelming) sense of the whole that one encounters in being situated in different locales. Buildings as things often structure and sometimes crystallise this encounter in their presence; as Heidegger says of the temple, '[its] standing there, opens a world'.⁵⁷ Jeff Malpas explains that of the four elements in the fourfold the divinities 'present the greatest difficulty for contemporary readers',⁵⁸ and 'that part of the difficulty resides in the common tendency to think of the gods in religious terms'.⁵⁹ Damon Young reinforces this thought by suggesting that, 'Heidegger's notion of divinity cannot be understood outside its context of poetic phenomenological hermeneutics'.⁶⁰ Seeking a deeper interpretation in a 1942 lecture course on Parmenides, Heidegger foreshadows the interplay of the fourfold: 'the Greeks neither fashioned the gods in human form nor did they divinize man ... they experienced the gods and men in their distinct essence, and in their reciprocal relation'.⁶¹ In his commentary on this same lecture, Malpas suggests that to understand the divinities one must keep in mind that 'much of Heidegger's thinking about the gods is determined by Greek thought and experience',⁶² and in the Parmenides course Heidegger explains that for the Greeks the gods were the 'attuning ones', as well as 'Being itself'.⁶³ These comments are intriguing because Heidegger tells us in *Being and Time* that being is not to be confused with a supreme being (the so-called ontotheological view), and further that when Heidegger speaks of attunement in *Being and Time* he is drawing upon the German word *stimmung*, a word that means both attunement and *mood*. The possibility of divinities understood as mood is echoed in a statement in the essay 'The Nature of Language', where Heidegger says that, 'to undergo an experience with something – be it a thing, a person, or a god – means that

this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us'.⁶⁴ With this information the interpretation of the divinities gains traction and one begins to see links between the divinities of the fourfold (as an experience in the world) and the phenomenon of *stimmung* of *Being and Time*. For environmental design this highlights the importance of atmosphere to the significance of place in that it is the ethereal experience of mood that is place and has caused many to speak of *genus loci* or the spirit of place.

An encounter with divinity that is grounded in the experience of the world is consistent with Malpas' reading of the divinities, as he advises that 'Heidegger's gods should not be construed as 'supernatural' in any of the usual ways'. In attempting to comprehend mood, Hubert Dreyfus points out that although mood is often thought to be a personal emotion, it is important to remember that mood is in-the-world, that it comes to us from our dealings within a situation. Dreyfus explains that Heidegger also has in mind other things when he speaks of *stimmung*:

*[M]ood can refer to the sensibility of an age (such as romantic), the culture of a company (such as aggressive), the temper of the times (such as revolutionary), as well as the mood in a current situation (such as the eager mood in the classroom) and, of course, the mood of an individual. These are all ways of finding that things matter. Thus they are all ontic specifications of affectedness, the ontological existential condition that things always already matter.*⁶⁵

The ek-static structure of *stimmung* is consistent with the significance of the 'reciprocal relation' between mortals and divinities. The notion of divinities as *stimmung* makes clear the nature of this reciprocation, in that the divinities announce themselves as a pervasive atmosphere that light up one's engagement with a specific situation, much

like the Homeric gods did in colouring encounters as belligerent, fortuitous, amorous, and so on. Unlike the everyday intelligibility offered by the light of the sky, the light of the divinities is more emotionally charged, which raises another nuance of the fourfold. Instead of limiting the divinities' presence to the typically religious notion of God as sacrosanct, *stimmung* frees this shining of the gods to be much more broadly influential. In this way the presence of the divinities can show up as sacred or irreverent, happy or sad, inspiring or bland as well as more subtly tinged shades. This inclusive view is consistent with Heidegger's repeated calls for openness and resoluteness, and offers a continuum for understanding the 'holy sway', corroborated by Heidegger's suggestion that 'secular spaces are always the privation of often very remote sacred spaces'.⁶⁶ In this understanding, the experience of the divinities moves from being something absolute, moralising, and singular to a question of how a person allows a mood to resonate, i.e. simply, is the experience of life taken up with awe? This question is perhaps *the* question for the future of a planet that sustains humanity.

The Mood of Place

The gathering of place, reflected as identity and orientation in things, is that which is basic to the determination of whether we live in a world worth saving. Going back to the object/thing distinction, the pivotal understanding to glean in this discourse is that environments will be gathered by the presence of a building (regardless of intent) and this gathering is open to both positive and negative results. This is where understanding the divinities in terms of *stimmung* is so important. There will always be some pervasive mood present in a situation, and so the question becomes, what is the effect of said mood? It is this revelatory aspect of the particular thing in the fourfold that helps us to see that a building becomes a particular place (for better or for worse) whether we plan for it or not. The importance of this is that we as human beings do not experience things

as neutral. For example, if a structure is built reductively as an object on a 'site' and is conceived only in terms of function, the commencement of human inhabitation will still transform it into a place (and in this case probably not a very positive one). In this way if a developer were to clear a 'site' investing in a new 'apartment building', this form of instrumental thinking will more likely than not find its resonance as brutal, banal, uninspiring, etc. This reflects the fact that for those who are to live in this apartment the 'site' of the 'apartment' becomes the 'place' of their 'home'. In a place so conceived as this, chances of it fostering any reciprocation will be slim, most likely tenants would experience the place of their home at best as inoffensive, at worst life draining. This example shows the divinities in their equally powerful negative aspect that is frequently called into being by the objects that dot our landscapes and call themselves buildings. Now this is certainly not endorsing a need for 'high' design, rather simply an ability and willingness for those involved in all aspects of such a building project to see the bigger picture and seek to give something back. As mortals we are all in this together. In the particular case of housing perhaps the quintessential example of an attuned, responsive, and resourceful architecture is found in the work of someone like Michael Pyatok, who does wonderful things with limited means, utilising 'an array of participatory design methods'.⁶⁷ In this way, understanding the fourfold shows that it is not *if*, but *how* a place is gathered that is most consequential. Because mood is always associated with place, if we as designers do not act (in either affirmation or positive correction) as ends within the context of the mortals (i.e. humanity) then we are not being sensitive to places as they stand in their complex totality, and our interventions and the ensuing human encounters with them will become increasingly Boschean.

This is where environmental design must come back to the art of architecture as the cultivating and crafting of things in relation to *phusis*. With this

outlook one seeks to cultivate those things in the process of becoming or take up building as *techne-poesis* to structure and free the life-affirming aspects of the fourfold. Upon embracing the full spectrum of the fourfold, the interplay between earth, sky, mortals and divinities is taken up as palpable, in flux, and always experiential—all of which make it a vital force when thinking about building in a way that is sensitive to environments. When the four are allowed to presence in such a manner, then the environment is afforded the complexity it naturally possesses, and with this occurrence humans move into a sensitive and shared relation with the affectual character of place. However, if one allows the earth and sky to become objects or resources and the mortals and divinities mere figures or figures of speech, then one has lost the wonder necessary to experience the astonishment of life itself and therefore will not lead a mortal existence in this world. Taking care of things as they exist in their presencing and (when required) facilitating the growth of new things and tending to their becoming is the true task of the environmental designer.

Gathering Ends

The listening implicit in the dwelling of the mortals as staying and preserving provides a corrective to the transience of contemporary culture and the reduction of place to site. Dwelling suggests a tarrying amongst things as resistance to the frenetic inattentive activities of channel surfing, retail therapy, and the general restlessness of a technological society. This is why Heidegger reminds us that in order to build one must first be able to dwell. In the attentiveness of dwelling there is nearness and from this the cultivating and constructing of building (as *phusis* and *techne-poesis*) is enabled. It is in this activity that things remain things and a thing stands exactly opposite of the ‘resources’ of technological thinking.⁶⁸

Viewing place through the lens of the fourfold illuminates the basic task of architecture and

environmental design: providing opposition to the levelling that inevitably results from a technological worldview. A reinvestment in place might be the greatest hope for a turning toward an ecological epoch, as the environment does not need our reactive ‘fixes’; it needs our listening response. Engaging the poetics of the fourfold brings out the significance of Heidegger’s topology to environmental concerns and, in seeking a reciprocal relationship between architecture and the environment, the fourfold suggests how, as a building becomes a specific thing gathering earth, sky, mortals, and divinities, it becomes a particular place.

In the end it is not important that all minutiae of Heidegger’s corpus be drawn out from the fourfold so that it be effectual, rather simply that the depth of Heidegger’s thinking inform the way in which one sees their place on the earth. Further, realising the fourfold’s location-centric and temporal character demonstrates why any atomistic reading of its elements is both invalid and unhelpful. Drawing out the implications of the fourfold brings a revelation of how the intelligibility of our existence is tied to place and how our inhabitation of particular places is a continual process of transfiguration. This in turn suggests why place might prefigure any notions of environmentalism, sustainability, or green building, as these all have the preservation and disclosure of place at their core. Place is the nearness that calls us to dwell as mortals on the earth, under the sky, in the light of the divinities. With this awareness one finds not only that place precedes space, but perhaps place also precedes sustainability.

Notes

1. Matt Power, Joanna Pearlstein, and Spencer Reiss, ‘Inconvenient Truths’, *Wired*, 2008, 156, p. 59.
2. Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink, *Heracitus Seminar*, trans. Charles Seibert (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), p. 88.
3. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 28/03/08, 2009.

4. Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 211.
5. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 66.
6. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time : Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 229.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 41.
8. In the Heraclitus seminar, referring to being, he says: 'I do not like to use this word anymore ... we must keep the fundamental trait of what the Greeks called being'. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 8. See also Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper One, 1971).
9. Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, p. 51.
10. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 8. see also Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*.
11. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 66.
12. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p. 206.
13. For example Basho's
 A autumn wind
 More white
 Than the rocks in the rocky mountain.
 Ryu Yotsuya, *History of Haiku: 10 Haikuists and Their Works*, <<http://www.big.or.jp/~loupe/links/ehisto/ebasho.shtml>> [cited 12/06/08].
14. Martin Heidegger, 'The Thinker as Poet,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 13.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
16. In *Being and Time* many of the existential structures outlined are described as necessarily 'equiprimordial,' that is to say happening concurrently. The openness of poetry it seems offered Heidegger a way to speak of these simultaneous, interdependent phenomena, while keeping their description out of the problematic of linear explanation that arises in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time* to explain Dasein for example, one must explain world, everydayness, authenticity, temporality, *befindlichkeit*, equipment, and on and on. Poetry allowed the talk of being to occur in such a way that was more harmonious with Heidegger's conception of time: as he explains in the *Heraclitus seminar*, 'as I investigated the archaic idea of time with Pindar and Sophocles, it was striking that nowhere is time spoken in the sense of the sequence. Rather time is there taken in view as that which first grants the sequence...' Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 60. The ambiguous specificity of poetry offers description that is free from time as sequence and aligns more directly with our state of existence at any given moment which has a great deal of simultaneity.
17. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p. 211.
18. Hans Sluga, 'Heidegger's Nietzsche,' in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 2005), p. 118.
19. Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 147-48.
20. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 67.
21. In Carol White's book *Time and Death* she suggests that there is not really a turn in Heidegger's thought but rather Heidegger was in the process of continuing to work out and elaborate the ideas of being all along. On this understanding she reads his later work back into *Being and Time* in order to show more fully what he was attempting to flesh out in that work. Similarly Jeff Malpas suggests in *Heidegger's Topology* that Heidegger has been working toward a topology of being all along and reads his earlier work on the basis of his later work. Others too have taken up this task of establishing connections of earlier and later thought as Damon Young suggests, the fourfold is Heidegger's attempt to clarify the essential elements of the ontology of Dasein. Damon Young, 'Being Grateful for Being: Being, Reverence and Finitude,' *Sophia* 44, no. 2 (2005), p. 39. David Weinberger focuses his inquiry on the shift from the twofold of earth and world in 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' to the later fourfold as being

- a 'recovering of the basic truths of Heidegger's pre-[Die Ursprung des Kunstwerkes] thought.' David Weinberger, 'Earth, World, and Fourfold,' *Tulane Studies In Philosophy* 32 (1984), p. 103.
22. Mark Wrathall, 'Between the Earth and the Sky: Heidegger on Life after the Death of God,' in *Religion after Metaphysics*, ed. Mark Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 79.
23. Ibid.
24. Martin Heidegger, 'The Nature of Language', in *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper One, 1971), p. 91.
25. Heidegger, 'The Thinker as Poet', p. 5.
26. In a recent book that situates Heidegger's thought within architecture, the author speaks of the fourfold as both, 'mythic and mystical', as well as in more literal object-oriented terms such as, 'the four are always together, around us, and as such provide a single reference point'; and that the earth 'describes soil and planet'; sky, 'referred to practicalities necessitated by weather'; divinities refer, 'simultaneously to gods and the divine'; and mortals suggest that 'life persists in the face of its opposite'. Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 32, 33, 43-45.
27. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, p. 158.
28. Which still carries the past, present, future implications of affectedness, falling, and understanding from *Being and Time*.
29. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 14.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 36.
33. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 148.
34. The earth's impenetrability is such that the more one attempts to find transparency and absolute understanding the further away from the truth one gets. As Heidegger says in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 'breaking open the rock it does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been disclosed ... earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it'. Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 45. He goes on to talk of how the earth becomes unconcealed as the temple, the stone bridge, the sculpture, etc. and this is where the earth comes into the light of understanding, or as he says of the temple, that it does not use up the stone but rather causes the material to come forth for the very first time. Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 44-45.
35. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problem Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 283.
35. Heidegger, *The Basic Problem Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 284.
36. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, p. 229.
37. Heidegger expresses this difference saying, 'every day is oriented to the position of the sun according to the official astronomical ordering of time. Every time we look at a clock, we are simply making use of the co-presence of the world system'. And the importance of this is reflected in a reference to Homer and Hesiod, where Heidegger points out that 'both speak of time only out of experience'. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 61.
38. Heidegger, *The Basic Problem Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 159.
39. Ibid., p. 104.
40. Martin Heidegger, 'Art and Space', *Man and World*, 6, no.1, February (1973), p. 6.
41. Ibid.
42. Heidegger, *The Basic Problem Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 173.
43. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 15.
44. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, p. 239.
45. Weinberger, 'Earth, World, and Fourfold', p. 105.
46. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 149.
47. Ibid.
48. Martin Heidegger, 'Language', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 206.
49. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', pp. 146-47.

50. Heidegger, *The Basic Problem Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 9.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
53. This is interesting as it seems to be in direct contrast to the equipment of *Being and Time*, and in some ways it is. Late Heidegger all but drops the talk of equipment, speaking mainly of things. However, he still speaks of equipment-like things, for example the jug in 'The Thing'. The difference is that now the emphasis is on the interplay of things coming together in the event of being. This may seem antithetical to *Being and Time* but it is really just a cleaning up, because although in *Being and Time* Heidegger focused the peculiar mode of being of equipment, the point was how equipment aided in the opening of a world's possibilities. In this way it is not unrelated to topology, it is just that there was an over-articulation of means and ends rather as opposed to a simultaneous happening.
54. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 144.
55. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, p. 291.
56. Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, p. 125.
57. Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 41.
58. Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), p. 274.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Young, 'Being Grateful for Being: Being, Reverence and Finitude', p. 39.
61. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 110.
62. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 274.
63. Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 111.
64. Heidegger, 'The Nature of Language', p. 57.
65. Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1* (London and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 196.
66. Heidegger, 'Art and Space', p. 5.
67. Pyatok Architects, Inc., <<http://www.pyatok.com/index.html>> [cited 13/06/08 2008].
68. James C. Edwards, 'The Thinging of the Thing: The

Ethic of Conditionality in Heidegger's Later Work', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

Biography

Randall Teal is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Idaho. His pedagogical and research interests are on design fundamentals and architectural theory, often engaged through an interdisciplinary approach, employing philosophy, art, music, and film. A particular interest in creative processes and ways to bring creativity into dialogue with environments underlies much of his work. Randall is both a painter and designer and has taught previously at Southern University and the University of Oregon.