DWELLING AMIDST THINGS:
A HEIDEGGERIAN SYNTHESIS

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Why is there something rather than nothing? Any student of philosophy is not unfamiliar with this perennial metaphysical question. I remember this being asked as a principal question in ancient philosophy, finding some grounding in God in medieval philosophy, subjected to investigation and certitude in modern philosophy, and then being recovered and rearticulated in contemporary philosophy.[1]

Why is there something rather than nothing? It is only recently, as I engage in thinking through this synthesis paper, that I have noticed a fundamental assumption in asking the said question. This question holds water because it assumes that there *is* something. Metaphysically, one must ask, "Is there something?" before one can ask, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Epistemologically, one will also ask, "How do I know there is something?" I belong to those who posit that there *is*, indeed, something. But instead of dwelling on why there is something rather than nothing, I am drawn to question essentially—for "questioning is the piety of thought"[2]—the way this something is, or even the way that nothing is if it is at all.

1. I am limiting the historical divisions of philosophy to the Western tradition. I am not speaking here of the development of philosophical thought in the Eastern tradition.

2. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 35.

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For this short paper, I shall focus my questioning on this "thing" to which either "some" or "no(ne)" is attached. What is the thing in some-thing and no-thing?[3] Again, this assumes that there is a thing, that it exists. So what is this thing? What is the thing? What is a thing? What are things? While this attempt appears to take off from a mere play on morphology, its buoyant force proceeds from an ardent desire to recover the essential unfolding[4] of the thing. Let me preface this inquiry with a story.

Dearest freshness deep down things

At the end of every academic year, Jesuit *formands* are sent to various Jesuit communities and ministries across the country. During last year's intersession, I was sent, with two others, to Xavier University (XU) – Ateneo de Cagayan. We spent one month in El Gaucho (literally, the cowboy), a land that belongs to XU and on which about 139 families have informally settled. We joined a team of community organizers assisting the community in transitioning to a new settlement. We would spend the whole day with the community and then come home to XU.

3. I am treating the "thing" in "something" and in "nothing" as the same reference to the thing because precisely by stating that something is, by virtue of composition, then by virtue of division, I am also stating what there is not, which is nothing.

4. I am using Dr. Remmon Barbaza's preferred translation of the German noun *Wesen* as "essential unfolding." Its traditional translation is "essence," but Martin Heidegger's use of *Wesen* means the way something is, and not just what something is as in the Latin *quidditas*. I believe "essential unfolding" very aptly captures the understanding that Heidegger attempts to recover in his fundamental ontology. For further details, see footnote 1 in "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 3.

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Once, at breakfast, the three of us were seated with a Jesuit priest who taught us English Literature when we were Juniors.[5] He asked, "So how has your apostolate been going?" "Oh here, Father," I said, "we've just been asked to create three modules: one each on values formation, good governance, and waste management."

"Given your context as *formands*, the first two are certainly doable," he replied, "but the last?" Then he continued, "All three of you majored in English, didn't you?" I knew he was hinting at something, but I was yet to figure it out until he said, "And English seems far-off from waste management!" We all laughed!

Then I said, "Well, Father, what about 'the dearest freshness deep down things'?" At that moment, I knew I made him proudHe jokingly replied, "Uhm, not fresh at all!" But really, who could ever forget that poignant, ever-arresting, calm and soothing, inexhaustibly rich line from Gerard Manley Hopkins's "God's Grandeur"? "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things."[6] The same question arises: "What are things?"

The English Jesuit poet himself must have grappled with "things," "deep down" which, "[t]here lives the dearest freshness," even after "[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod."[7] In 1889, he left this world that "is charged with the grandeur of God."[8] That same year German philosopher Martin Heidegger was born. He, too, would investigate—in a sense

5. "Juniors" is the term used to refer to newly vowed Jesuits who are studying the humanities and the arts in the Juniorate, which is the next phase of Jesuit formation after Novitiate.

6. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*, n.d., accessed Feb. 5, 2024, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur.

7. Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*.

8. Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*.

proper to his ontology[9]—the essential unfolding of things in the world.

Nearness, Thingness, and Handiness

In his lecture, "The Thing" (*Das Ding*), which he delivered on June 6, 1950,[10] Heidegger prefaces the question of the thing with the question of nearness. He says, "Nearness, it seems, cannot be encountered directly. We succeed in reaching it by attending to what is near. Near to us are what we usually call things."[11,12] This is why in *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of useful things in their handiness,[13] thereby positing that the primordial relationship that the human being, Dasein,[14] has toward things is understanding. Being-in-the-world, Dasein is always already situated in the world. This world Heidegger understands in the ontic sense,[15] that is this world is this world of things in which the human being "moves and lives and has

9. "Ontology is possible only as a phenomenology." [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, revised and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 34.]

10. Remmon Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 66.

11. Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 165.

12. This reminds me of the ontological difference (which he would later refer to as the "duality of being") that Heidegger spells out in *Being and Time*, namely, "The being of a being is itself not a being" (5) and "Being is always the being of a being" (8). It is through things that nearness is encountered, much like how being may be encountered through the human being for whom being is a question.

13. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68-9.

14. In ordinary German, *Dasein* simply means existence. Heidegger uses it in *Being and Time* as *Da-sein* (there-being) to denote the being of the beings that we human beings are.

15. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 65.

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his being."[16] Thus, human beings always understand things in this world. Heidegger writes, "Dasein always already *is* in this way; for example, in opening the door, I use the doorknob.... In our dealings, we find utensils for writing, utensils for sewing, utensils for working, driving, measuring."[17]

The human being always already understands things in their inconspicuousness. One does not stare at a doorknob. Instead, as Heidegger mentions above, one uses it to open the door. Heidegger calls this the thing's primordial handiness or readiness-to-hand.[18] He writes, "What is peculiar to what is initially at hand is that it withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness to be handy."[19] However, when what is ready-to-hand becomes unusable, it becomes conspicuous and jumps out of itself, as it were, becoming present-at-hand. It enters the mode of obtrusiveness until it is returned to its primordial handiness, when it is inconspicuous again. When I touch the doorknob, for instance, and I cannot turn it to open the door of my room, then I begin to notice the doorknob and investigate why it is not functioning as usual. The doorknob jumps out of itself and presents itself to me as a thing in a totality of things.[20] As soon as I fix the doorknob, it returns to its inconspicuousness, and I readily use it to open the door of my room as I have always already done before. Indeed, Heidegger's question of the thing is intimately connected to the question

16. An allusion to Acts 17:28.

17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67-8.

18. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

19. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

20. Heidegger writes in *Being and Time,* 68, "Strictly speaking, there 'is' no such thing as a useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is... A totality of useful things is always already discovered before the individual useful thing."

of nearness because things constitute what is near to human beings. And what are things?

Just as the forgotten question of being can be attended to through the human being for whom being is a question, then the question of the thing (or the thingness of the thing) can also be addressed through things. As such, Heidegger takes a jug nearby because a jug is a thing. I must clarify at this point that "things" can be generally divided into two: those that are physically palpable and those that are considered non-palpable or spiritual, like God.[21] Regarding the latter, in ordinary usage, human beings hesitate to call God a thing; nor do they consider animals as things, even though they may belong to "living things."[22] Of course, human beings do not call themselves things. In the history of ideas, I can only think of René Descartes as the thinker who once referred to the existence of the "I" that is delivered in the act of doubting as a "thinking thing."[23] If I would reduce that human being to this "I," then, following Descartes, the human being would be but a thing.

With regard to the former, included are both useful things and "mere things," as Heidegger refers to them in *Being and Time*.[24] Again, useful things are those that belong to one's world or "context of references," what Heidegger calls *Verweisungszusammenhänge*.[25] "Mere things" do not have immediate significance to one's world.[26] One must be careful,

21. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 39.

22. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 40.

23. René Descartes, "Second Meditation," in *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

24. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68.

25. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74.

26. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 40.

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however, not to fall into the trap of dismissing what may initially be "mere things" as mere things.

As a young boy, I noticed my mother's penchant for keeping cellophane and plastic bags from any purchase of dry goods. She would carefully fold and compile them in an empty, rectangular food container. To me, they had no use anymore, so it would be better to dispose of them. I thought they were "mere things," until I realized that it was from this collection that my mother would retrieve carefully folded cellophane she would insert in my backpack every time I had an out-of-town school trip. Those cellophane served me well whenever I felt the need to throw up due to motion sickness. Those cellophane concretely reminded me of my mother's abiding love during those days when I was not at home. The usefulness and meaningfulness of things, then, consists in their belonging to the totality that is the world in which the human being dwells near them. With this in mind, let us return to the thing that Heidegger provides in his lecture—the jug.

Dominant interpretations of the thing

The jug is a thing. What kind of thing? A vessel. As such, it is capable of containing something else within it. Heidegger acknowledges this in the lecture. He affirms that the jug, in that sense, is a useful thing. As mentioned earlier in this paper through the doorknob example, useful things lie inconspicuously, ready-to-hand when we need them. As a useful thing, the jug remains in inconspicuousness wherever it is stored until it is, for instance, broken, and so we can readily replace it by acquiring a new one, or, in the spirit of kintsugi, we can repair the broken jug using lacquer with some precious metal

like gold or silver.[27] Once replaced or repaired, we have a new jug to use, and this supports what we have been saying about its being a vessel, a useful thing: that it stands there on its own, in the sense that it is there whether we notice it or not.

Might we then leave the jug alone to stand there on its own? Might we let it be the vessel that it is? Might we simply let the jug jug as jug?[28] Heidegger does not deny that the jug, indeed, stands on its own. What he is wary about is assuming that the standing-on-its-own of the jug alone already reaches the thingly character of the thing.[29] Beneath this assertion is Heidegger's firmness on rejecting the preconception that the standing-on-its-own[30] of the thing already frees the thing from being conceived merely as an object.[31] Heidegger writes, "An independent, self-supporting thing may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in a recollective re-presentation."[32]

I understand Heidegger's rejection of thinking the thing merely as an object in the context of the epoch within which he is questioning as a philosopher. He is avoiding reducing the thing to its mere objectness. He must have learned aplenty

27. In case I break a jug, I doubt the latter will ever be an option. A poor Jesuit that I am, where shall I get the precious metal with which to repair its cracks?

28. To let the jug jug as jug is to let it be in its essential unfolding. In this case, the jug's essential unfolding consists in its standing-on-its-own. It is not just Heidegger who has attempted to capture essential unfolding by turning a noun into a verb, like when he takes "being" to mean "be-ing." Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J. translated "being" into Filipino as "*pagmemeron*." Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. writes in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire": "I say móre: the just man justices."

29. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 71.

30. Again, by standing-on-its-own, I mean the jug's lying in inconspicuousness.

31. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling,* 71.

32. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 167.

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from the Cartesian wound that ruptured the original unity between subject and object, or between knower and known. Treated as an object, the thing is abstracted from the world. It is de-worlded. It is taken out of the totality of things, and so the problem of the bridge persists, because Dasein is precisely being-in-the-world, wherein the world includes things. To leave the jug to stand on its own is to abstract it from its context vis-à-vis other things. There is more to the jug than this.

If our shared understanding of the jug as a useful thing that stands on its own (and so, may be presented before one's immediate awareness or re-presented in the mind's recollection) does not capture the jug's essential unfolding, to where must we turn our gaze to discover the jugness of the jug or the thingness of the thing? Heidegger invokes traditional metaphysics but only to disagree with it! Traditional metaphysics teaches us that the essential unfolding of the thing can be grasped in terms of the way it typically looks like, its *eidos* or *idea*.[33] Heidegger writes, "But what the vessel of this aspect *is* as this jug, what and how the jug *is* as this jug-thing, is something we can never learn—let alone think properly—by looking at the outward appearance, the *idea*."[34] Then, he critiques Plato,[35]

33. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 72.

34. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

35. Given that the eternal and the unchanging only exist in the world of Forms, such that things in this world of appearances merely participate in the former, then, by way of Platonian metaphysics, I do not think we can ever reach the thingness of the thing because what is here in this world of appearances are just copies of thereal in the world of Forms. This is also why, for Plato, works of art – as I learned in Aesthetics distance us from the really real because they are copies of copies, illusions of illusions.

Aristotle,[36] and all subsequent thinkers[37,38] for missing the thingness of the thing by reducing it to an object of making.[39] In other words, the jug is made to stand forth. Heidegger asserts, "The jug is not a vessel because it was made; rather, the jug had to be made because it is this holding vessel."[40] Viewing

36. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle posits that there is only one world, which is this world in which we are. There are no eternal Forms outside the physical world. Why a thing is as it is can be explained by the four causes: material, formal, efficient, and final (Nemesio Que, "Heidegger's Critique of Metaphysics," *Philo 203: Metaphysics*, February 13, 2023). Material cause is that out of which something is made. Formal cause is that in a thing which makes it to be such a thing. Efficient cause is that by which something is made. Final cause is that for the sake of which something is made. Heidegger's critique here is quite obvious. Aristotle's four causes all refer to the thing as an object of making. Even the formal cause, which sounds quite near to the thingness of the thing, reinforces the thing in its outward appearance, which, for Heidegger, distances us from the thingness of the thing.

37. I would like to mention Descartes again. After Descartes had arrived at the indubitable, the *res cogitans*, he must have realized that he needed to account for the reality outside of the "I," which we call the problem of the bridge. Indeed, such was a significant turning point in philosophy, signaling the modern period because subsequent thinkers devoted themselves into bridging that divide. It must be noted, however, that Descartes himself had already attempted to bridge it by talking about the wax in his "Second Meditation" (22). When all else has been extracted from the wax, what remains is a thing that is flexible, mutable, and extended (ibid.). Descartes' wax is but a *res extensa*, an extended thing. This is precisely Heidegger's point when he speaks of the oblivion (and the flattening) of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), which, in this case, is the thingness of the thing.

38. The other thinker that I can recall is Immanuel Kant. For him, only things as they appear and are processed by the categories of the mind are knowable. But things-in-themselves? No. And then I ask, "How can Kant ever think of 'things-in-themselves' when he cannot, after all, have access to them?" Heidegger is clear that such a concept does not exist. There are no "things-in-themselves." There are things, which are always already in the world. Again, "The being of a being is itself not a being" (*Being and Time*, 5). At the same time, "being is always the being of a being" (*Being and Time*, 8).

39. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

40. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

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the jug as what stands forth (*Herstand*) because it is an object of making (*Gegenstand*) falls under the representational, merely objectifying kind of thinking that does not reach the thing as the thing that it is.[41] What it does is to distance us from the jugness or the jug-character of the jug. Again, shall we not experience the jug as the vessel that it is?

Heidegger's critique of traditional metaphysics can be scandalizing. But as I pour myself into thinking through his assertion, I begin to experience anew the "dearest freshness" that it brings forth, a glimpse into unconcealment that, while beyond me, speaks to me. He goes on in the lecture, "The jug's thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel."[42] One might ask what else could be new in such a statement. Common understanding has already informed us of the obvious fact that the jug is a vessel, so why does Heidegger direct our attention to this? Could it be that we have only been seeing the jug as standing-on-its-own and standing-forth as an object of making and nothing else? In these two senses, the jug remains far from us. Dasein, indeed, we are, and so we are, as Heidegger claims, essentially de-distancing.[43] We always desire to be near. This is also why Heidegger prefaces his lecture on the question of the thing with the question of nearness. What is near to us are things. Ah! We must then experience the jug as the vessel that it is! This we can only do when we pour something into it. However, as soon as we think of the jug in its being *qua* vessel, Heidegger warns us not to fall into the trap of scientific thinking.[44] Yes, we might pour water or wine into the jug, and physical science would say that a liquid had displaced the air

41. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 73.

42. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 169.

43. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 108.

44. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 169.

that used to fill the jug. The holding void is gone. It is but a hollow filled with air. Scientific thinking has extinguished it! Even water and wine have been reduced to mere liquids that can fill the empty space. Or was there an empty space at all to fill? Heidegger calls what scientific compulsion does as the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the thing.[45]

At this point, then, we know that, in arriving at the essential unfolding of the thing, Heidegger is not only critical of what common understanding posits (that the jug stands on its own) or what traditional metaphysics has passed on (that the jug is an object of making that is made to stand forth), but of physical science, too. In all three, I think what Heidegger warns against is a representational, objectifying, abstractionist, and reductionist thinking of the thing. Representational thinking objectifies the thing, inasmuch as abstractionist thinking takes the thing out of the world to which it rightly and harmoniously belongs. Reductionist thinking annihilates the thing. All these, I would say, cannot be considered thinking[46] at all. They are but thoughtless attempts into the thingness of the thing. Instead of bringing near, they contribute to the distance, and worse, the estrangement that the human being experiences from what was a primordial relationship of understanding that the human being has toward things. So let us accompany Heidegger as he recovers the thingness of the thing.

45. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 170. Heidegger did not mean the annihilation of the thing primarily in the physical sense, as in physical destruction. What he meant was its further concealment and forgottenness.

46. I say this in the Heideggerian sense of "questioning as the piety of thought" ("The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 35).

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The thing in its thinging

We recall once more that the jug's thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel. The jug is a thing. It is a vessel. As a vessel, it holds. Its void holds. But this void is not a hollow filled with air that can be displaced by liquids such that filling a jug means exchanging one filling for another. The call is to let the jug's void be the jug's void that it is, so that the jug that shows itself might show itself from itself.[47] Let me quote Heidegger at length.

> How does the jug's void hold? It holds by taking what is poured in. It holds by keeping and retaining what it took in. The void holds in a twofold manner: taking and keeping. The word "hold" is therefore ambiguous. Nevertheless, the taking of what is poured in and the keeping of what was poured belong together. But their unity is determined by the outpouring for which the jug is fitted as a jug. The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is. To pour from the jug is to give. The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring. Holding needs the void as that which holds. The nature of the holding void is gathered in the giving. But giving is richer than a mere pouring out. The giving, whereby the jug is a jug, gathers in the twofold holding—in the outpouring. We call the gathering of the twofold holding into the outpouring, which, as a being together, first constitutes the full presence of giving: the poured gift. The jug's jug-character consists in the poured gift of the pouring out.[48]

47. Heidegger (*Being and Time*, 32) describes phenomenology as letting what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.

48. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 171-2.

First, we have seen that the outpouring is itself the purpose[49] for which the jug has been made in the first place. This is the opposite of what common understanding, traditional metaphysics, and scientific thinking propose. This outpouring unifies the belonging together of the taking and the keeping, which both take place in the jug as the vessel that it is. Then, in this very outpouring, which is a giving (*Schenken*) and not just a mere pouring out (*Ausschenken*), a gathering (*Versammlung*) occurs, wherein the essential unfolding of the holding void is gathered (*versammelt*) in the giving.[50] This is why, as Heidegger says in the block quote above, the holding is authentically how it is in the outpouring.

Authenticity here becomes understood—more richly—as gathering or being gathered. I remember telling myself to gather myself first before speaking or acting when I was caught in a difficult situation, whether internally or externally. I also remember being told by my spiritual director to allow the Lord to help me in gathering myself, especially those bits and pieces of me that need integration in the context of my broken yet graced history. Human as I am, I am not immune to dissipation and disintegration. As such, I appreciate our regular recollections in the formation community when I am called to drop academics, apostolate, and other engagements for one day and focus on gathering myself, on recollecting what might have dissipated and what needs to be brought near and one again. An intensive, prolonged version, of course, is the annual eight-day retreat, a renewal of my experience of the 30-day retreat, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

49. But how is this different from the final cause? I think it is different in that it does not approach the thing in its mere instrumentality. Instead, it opens itself to the thing's essential unfolding.

50. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 78.

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The jug, therefore, is the vessel that it is – authentically – in its gathering. This gathering brings forth the poured gift. And precisely because Heidegger speaks of gathering in this way,he is making it clear that this is not a gathering that challenges forth or demands out. This latter gathering is characteristic of modern technology, whose essential unfolding, for Heidegger, is Enframing (*Gestell*).[51] It has standing-reserve in view. But the gathering that the jug as a thing does is one that lets be and sets free. It is faithful to the essential unfolding of "technology[52] as a way of revealing."[53] Again, the jug is the jug—the thing—that it is in the poured gift.

The thing's thinging of the world

This has been a lengthy exposition. Have we already reached the thingness of the thing? Partly yes. Why? Because the gathering that happens in the gift of outpouring does not only concern the essential unfolding of the holding void of the jug.[54] An even wider gathering happens. Heidegger's thinking takes us towards this even wider gathering when he begins to speak of the spring that stays on in the water, the rock that dwells in the spring, the dark slumber of the earth, and the earth that receives the rain and dew of the sky.[55] Then we come

51. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 20.

52. There is an intimate connection here between the question of technology and the question of the thing that I will no longer explore in this paper. Suffice it to say that because technology is a way of revealing, then it is poetic (because poetry is bringing-forth). Similarly, because the jug (a thing) gathers in its outpouring,the jug can be considered technology, in the latter's pre-scientific, ontological sense.

53. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 12.

54. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 79.

55. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

into the picture, we drink the gift of the pouring out, whether water or wine, quenching our thirst, refreshing our leisure, enlivening our conviviality.[56] Yes, we who are mortals drink of the poured gift, we who are "capable of death as death,"[57] we who are "being towards death."[58] Heidegger also speaks of the jug's gift as being given for consecration. The poured gift is not just drink for mortals but libation for the immortal gods.[59]

In all, the wider (and greater) gathering that takes place in the gift of the outpouring is the gathering of earth and sky, mortals and divinities. These four – thought as one – are what Heidegger calls *das Geviert*, the fourfold. He writes, "Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring, earth, and sky, divinities and mortals dwell *together all at once*. These four, at once because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold."[60] This fourfold Heidegger names the world.[61] Thus, Heidegger claims, "The thing things world."[62] The world is itself the fourfold gathering of earth and sky, divinities and mortals.

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56. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

57. Heidegger claims that only human beings are capable of death *as* death. Other beings, such as plants and animals, perish, but they do not die ("The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 178; "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 150). They simply perish because nothing remains "outstanding" in them. They are, in that sense, already complete. The mortals are not, precisely because they – the being of the beings that they are – stand out there in the openness of possibility.

58. Refer to "Division Two" of Heidegger's *Being and Time,* 221-416 for a more detailed unfolding.

59. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

60. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 173.

61. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 179.

62. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 181.

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Have we reached the thingness of the thing? We understand that we have arrived quite close to nearness, whose question prefaced the question of the thing. In thinging, the thing brings near to one another the four in their remoteness.[63] What else could this bringing-near be but nearing? And, for Heidegger, nearing is the presencing of nearness.[64] Indeed, it is near things that human beings dwell. This is perhaps why, in a lecture somewhat parallel in structure, "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger notes that "[o]nly if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build."[65] I think this dwelling of which he speaks is in the fourfold and the building here has things as its orientation, so I am hazarding to edit the statement into, "Only if we are capable of dwelling in the fourfold, only then can we build things." And we will build things that correspond to the way we dwell.

To dwell in the fourfold is to recognize that we stand on the earth and dwell under the sky, that we are mortals before the divinities (or shall I say, we are creatures before the Creator), that we are capable of death as death. First, standing on the earth is remembering the concrete ground on which we dwell. As I write this paper, my feet are on the floor of the computer room, which belongs to a wider structure that is the formation house I am in, which ultimately rests on the ground. Far from being the object of the sciences, this earth is the concrete earth on which I live as a human being, together with fellow human beings in the community, and always already near things.

Second, to dwell under the sky is to receive the sky as the sky, for instance, as it determines the rhythm of daily living.

63. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 177.

64. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 177.

65. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 160.

Sunrise signals the time to wake up, for a new day is beginning. Sunset points to another day that is ending, regardless of how it has been spent. I am amazed that two persons of different backgrounds both enjoy looking at the night sky: Ignatius of Loyola and Immanuel Kant. Of Ignatius, Pedro de Ribadeneira writes, "I would see him on a rooftop, or in some high place, from where he could see the horizon and a large part of the sky, fixing his eyes on it. And after some time spent in rapture and amazement, he would come to himself, moved, and with tears pouring from his eyes because of the great delight that his heart felt..."[66] Of himself, Kant writes in the first line of the conclusion of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within."[67]

Third, to dwell in the fourfold is also to live with finitude in view. It is to come to terms with dying, which is ultimately inseparable from living. My awareness and acceptance of my being towards death and my being capable of death as death impels me to dwell in this one life that I have, so that, in the midst of many possibilities, I shall choose that which frees me most. Many have asked me why I entered the religious life at twenty-one, when I could explore the world further and savor its joys. I must say I am most joyful where I am now.

And fourth, as I speak of mortality, I cannot but think of that which is immortal, whom Anselm believed to be "that

66. Pedro de Ribadeneira, *The Life of Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavur (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014), 5.1.15.

67. Immanuel Kant, "Conclusion," in *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. and ed. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 129.

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than which nothing greater can be thought"[68] and "that which cannot be thought not to exist."[69] In thinking of one, I am thinking of the other three. For instance, when I stand on earth, I always already stand under the sky. I am rooted on the earth, even as I am awed by the sky. At the same time, I am made to recall that I come from dust, and to dust I shall return—which humbles me and redirects me to my Creator. Indeed, only if we are capable of dwelling in the fourfold, only then can we build things.

We have reached the thingness of the thing, haven't we? At this point, I find it important to approach this ultimate question with ontological and epistemological humility. Heidegger himself says in the thing lecture, "When and in what way do things appear as things? They do not appear by means of human making. But neither do they appear without the vigilance of mortals."[70] Ontological humility means we can only respond to the question of the thing in the light of unconcealment. It is through this same light that we find ourselves humbled with how we know the thing epistemologically in its thinging of the fourfold in the worlding of the world in which we human beings dwell.

My brothers and I left El Gaucho after one month of presence and engagement and returned to the hill that is Ateneo de Manila. The people were yet to move to a new settlement. But in the present location on which they have perched a dwelling, I am humbled that they have been thriving with just the few

68. Anselm of Canterbury, "Chapter Two," in *Proslogion*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 93.

69. Anselm of Canterbury, "Chapter Three," in *Proslogion*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 94.

70. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 180.

things that they have. In a world flooded with objects, wherein the modern technological age prostitutes the earth, manipulates the skies, denies mortality, and profanes the sacred, I have experienced in the people I met in El Gaucho a fidelity to their primordial relationship to things, "deep down" which "lives the dearest freshness," even after "[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod."

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