discover America. Rather, the Vikings found it first.” In other words, we spoke quite effectively of Columbus at the beginning even though our description of him was actually false.

The choice is not just between speaking of something or not speaking of it. We all know a way of speaking of a thing without quite speaking of it: namely, we allude to it. Allusion occurs in thinking no less than in speaking. To say “the tree that lies outside thinking” is neither a successful statement about a thought nor a failed statement about a thing. Instead, it is an allusion to something that might be real but which cannot become fully present. And that is why philosophy is *philosophia*: love of wisdom rather than wisdom itself. The Philosophy of Access wants philosophy to be a wisdom about thought, when really it is a love of wisdom about that which lies beyond thought. For this reason, we should rewrite Berkeley’s passage as follows: “It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst modern philosophers, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects have no existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding.”

Indirect Causation

This book has portrayed objects as existing in their own right, as autonomous from their relations with other things. But in that case it might be wondered how they interact at all, since total autonomy is incompatible with relations of any sort, and partial autonomy has yet to be explained. Given that things’ obviously do seem to interact, this might be viewed as an artificial problem: for what is the point of separating objects only to bring them back into contact again? Yet the point is that they are never brought completely back into contact; the reality of objects is never fully deployed in their relations. Instead of trying to eliminate the paradox of objects and relations by turning the world into nothing but a system of relations, we need to understand the polarizations at work in objects themselves.

And here we reach a point where many of the classical problems of philosophy are gathered. For along with the difference between objects and relations, we have those between objects and accidents and objects and qualities. In one sense a thing does have many different features, but in another sense it does not, since each thing is one. How is it possible for an object both to have and not to have features? Insofar as the object is a unified pole while its qualities are diverse, we encounter here the ancient problem of the one and the many, though here the “one” refers to each individual unit rather than a single cosmic lump. Furthermore, insofar as real objects have reality outside experience while sensual objects exist only within experience, we also encounter something like the mind-body problem, though I will soon suggest that this cannot be restricted to human or even animal minds. All of these problems involve
polarizations between objects and one of four other terms: accidents, relations, qualities, and moments.

A. Occasionalism and Scepticism

The theme of indirect causation is not new in philosophy, but has venerable roots. It could be said that the ancient world produced two dominant models of causation: the neo-Platonism that views cause in the vertical terms of a higher world emanating into the lower, and the Aristotelian model of horizontal causation between individual substances. But a third option entered philosophy through the early Islamic theology of Iraq: occasionalism. Certain passages of the Qur'an refer to important actions that may have seemed to occur naturally, but which were actually performed directly by Allah. A group of theologians in Basra, led by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, drew broad conclusions from these verses and held that nothing but Allah could affect anything else directly. These Ash'arites, as they came to be known, endorsed a divine monopoly on all relations. Created entities were depicted as islands cut off not only from each other, but even from their own accidents, which had to be supplied directly by God. And since even duration was viewed as an accident, no created object was viewed as inherently durable; each would perish in an instant if not for God continuing to grant it the accident of duration. Given this direct divine intervention in everything that occurred, the early occasionalists emphasized God's omnipotence to a staggering degree: he could make two plus two equal five, allow someone sitting at home in Baghdad to be simultaneously inside a tent in Mecca, and even send a good man to hell or an evil one to heaven for no reason at all. In this sense the Islamic occasionalists belonged to an "irrationalist" camp opposed by the Muslim heirs of Greece, especially Avicenna and Averroes.

There are no clear examples of occasionalism in medieval Christian philosophy. Francisco Suárez notes that when Thomas Aquinas criticizes the occasionalist doctrine, he does not list any of its adherents by name. Nor does Suárez himself (writing in the 1590's) seem to know who they are. But in fact, although Suárez opposes divine intervention in all cases short of miracles and the creation of new souls at conception, he himself draws close to one aspect of the occasionalist doctrine when he says that things do not touch directly, but only by way of their accidents (by which he means their qualities). Still, it is only with Descartes that Europe has its first strong taste of this formerly Islamic doctrine. The two kinds of created substance for Descartes, res cogitans and res extensa, are of different kinds and hence cannot interact directly; only God can bridge the gap between them. In this way a somewhat tedious mind-body problem was born, whereas in Islam there had been a wider and more interesting body-body problem as well. This same wider problem reappears in France when Cordemoy and Malebranche break extended substance into pieces, so that God must take part in inanimate interactions in a way not needed by the Cartesian philosophy. The term "occasionalism" is often used too restrictively to refer to those seventeenth century French philosophies in which God intervenes directly and repeatedly in every instant. But in fact the term deserves wider application to all philosophies in which things do not interact directly, but only by passing through God. In this sense the term deserves to be applied to Spinoza, Leibniz, and Berkeley, and in the past century even to Whitehead, who holds that God harbors the "eternal objects," the universal qualities by which every entity objectifies every other. Such occasionalism is of obvious historical interest, but in the eyes of many it belongs only to history. In Western societies, though not in my adopted homeland of Egypt, it is now rare to meet people who see the hand of God at work in every least event, whether it be dogs fighting in the street or grains of dust falling to the ground.
But there is another philosophy of much greater prestige in our time, one that might easily be described as an inverted or upside-down occasionalism. I refer to the empirical or skeptical philosophy associated most closely with Hume. If occasionalism grants the existence of substances while denying that they can relate, empiricism performs the reverse maneuver, beginning with relations while denying that they necessarily involve independent substances. The link between impressions or ideas is not problematic for Hume; it always already exists, in the form of *habitual* links built up through customary conjunction. An apple may be nothing more than a nickname for a bundle of qualities pasted together, but human habit does in fact paste them together. What this doctrine shares with occasionalism, despite the obvious inversion, is that both grant a monopoly on relations to a single entity. Today it is easy to laugh at occasionalists who say that all relations pass through God, but no one laughs when it is said that they all pass through human experience instead. The latter might initially seem more rigorous, since we all have direct access to human experience while only a handful of mystics claim direct access to God. But the principle remains the same in both cases. Relations are denied to all entities, but in the end they are hypocritically allowed to just *one*: either the almighty God of religion, or the almighty empiricist God known as the human.

In this respect it should be clear that the occasionalist problem never really died, but was merely inverted into the positions of Hume and Kant, the two philosophers who guard acceptable mainstream philosophy from the wild borderlands of dogmatic metaphysics. In the twenty-first century one can still be a literal disciple of Hume or Kant and have a perfectly successful academic career. But outside certain religious circles, few observers would keep a straight face if you were to proclaim your literal belief in the philosophies of Avicenna, Aquinas, or even Leibniz.

**B. The Point of Contact**

We have seen that real objects cannot touch. Their reality consists solely in being what they are, not in some sort of impact on other things. An object is not a bundle of qualities, and for this reason a thing cannot be reproduced simply by duplicating all of its qualities and bundling them together. At most this would give us an externally convincing simulacrum of the thing, not the thing itself. This is why nothing can be modeled adequately by any form of knowledge, or by any sort of translation at all. In its primary sense an object is not used or known, but simply is what it is. No reconstruction of that object can step in for it in the cosmos. In this sense it cannot even be true that God is omniscient, since an omniscient entity would not just need to know all things, but to *be* all things. And even if he were capable of being all things, introspection is no more exhaustive than knowledge gained from the outside, and hence God cannot even fully understand *himself*. This would have serious ramifications for any attempt at an object-oriented theology, and already has profound consequences for the theory of knowledge, since it implies that no scientific model will ever succeed in replacing a thing by listing its various features. Access to the things themselves can only be indirect.

But the following objection to this theory often arises: why exaggerate and say that things cannot touch at all? Does it not seem instead that things *partly* make contact with each other? After all, we have been speaking all along of how humans have partial access to hammers while using them, and have also reflected on how fire touches certain qualities of cotton despite not touching the cotton as a whole. The problem is that objects cannot be touched “in part,” because there is a sense in which objects have no parts. It is not as if things were made of seventy or eighty qualities and there were a mere practical limit ensuring that five or six of the qualities would always be withheld from the organs of sense. For even if we were to
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perceive every quality of an object perfectly, we would still not reconstruct the thing in its reality. To be an object means to be itself, to enact the reality in the cosmos of which that object alone is capable. It does not mean to possess X number of qualities, since these qualities serve at best as instructions for how to identify it from the outside. Objects are unified, like Leibniz’s monads. There are certainly detachable parts associated with them, just as there are tiny component pieces that give rise to them. But this does not mean that the object is reducible, whether downward to its pieces or upward to its analyzable traits. Though it does seem true that we are able to make contact with certain parts (or qualities) of a hammer or cotton ball, this merely pushes the problem a step further, since it is still unclear how those parts touch the object itself.

But although we never touch real objects, we always touch sensual objects. Sensual objects would not even exist if they did not exist for me, or for some other agent that expends its energy in taking them seriously. And here we have our first case of a pair that differs from the four aforementioned tensions between objects and their qualities. What we have, in short, is a real object in direct contact with a sensual one. For the “I” that is sincerely absorbed in dealing with trees, wolves, or beach balls is the real me, not a sensual one. My life is truly absorbed in dealing with these objects. This contact between real and sensual objects is quite unique, replicated nowhere else on our emerging map of the world. For real objects forever withdraw from one another into the shadows of the world, and sensual objects are no better than contiguous with each other through a real object that happens to be experiencing both at the same time.

Consider the skyline of a giant city, filled with countless spires and towers. Insofar as these are all merely sensual objects, they obviously cannot make contact except through the deputy or mediator who experiences them. And insofar as they are real objects I cannot come into contact with them, for the simple reason that real objects always recede from one another. In a sense, this means that we already have a rough preliminary solution to the causal problem posed by occasionalism. If contact in the realm of the real is utterly impossible, but contact in the sensual realm is an absolute requirement, then obviously the sensual realm of experience must be where all causation is triggered. The real objects that withdraw from all contact must somehow be translated into sensual caricatures of themselves, and these exaggerated profiles are what must serve as fuel for the causal relations that are impossible between concealed real things. Somehow, the events that occur in the sensual sphere must be capable of a retroactive effect on the reality that lies outside all experience. And I will claim later that not all experience is of the human or even animal kind.

C. The Asymmetry of Contact

A few words on asymmetry are now in order. Real objects cannot touch real objects, and in this respect Heidegger’s tool-analysis reawakens the occasionalist scenario. And sensual objects do not touch other sensual objects, but exist only as contiguous in a single experience that serves as their bridge. For this reason the only possible kind of direct contact is asymmetrical, with real objects touching the sensual objects that they experience. This contradicts the usual assumption that causal or relational contact is always symmetrical, always transitive. If a first object touches a second, then supposedly the second cannot avoid touching the first in return: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction; look into the abyss and it looks back into you. But that is not what happens according to the model developed in this book. Instead, there is always just one real object involved in any interaction. If I perceive the tree, it can probably perceive me in turn. But this must occur as part of a different relation, not as the reverse side of the same one.
It is obvious that this direct contact between a real object and various sensual objects works differently from the sorts of "tensions" already described between objects and qualities. In such cases we noted the paradox that the object both has and does not have its qualities. A ripe apple must somehow have the ripeness, yet it remains the same apple both before and after the ripeness is attained, meaning that the apple maintains a certain distance from its own qualities. But the situation in which a real object touches a sensual one is different: here the contact is direct. The sensual horse, diamond, or maypole is directly before me, without need of mediators to enable us to touch. By contrast, the house I observe makes no direct contact with any of its own sensual profiles, for the simple reason that it is a sensual object and has accidents only for those who experience it. The house or dog we encounter is indifferent to all the shadows and angles and moods through which it appears to us. This yields a fascinating result. For so far, we have spoken only of the inability of real objects to touch, and hence of their need for mediators in order to exert force on one another. But now this also seems to be true of the four object-quality tensions as well. Perhaps even these tensions need bridges in order to relate in some way.

We now have a menagerie of interactions between various sorts of objects and qualities, one that risks boring or confusing the reader. A catalog is needed to make sense of the turmoil, just as the standard model of particle physics has since the early 1970s helped to make sense of the profusion of particles and forces in nature. The only form of direct contact we know so far is between the real object that experiences the world and the various sensual objects it encounters. There they are before me: I am absorbed by their reality. Here no bridge is needed. But none of the four tensions is quite this fortunate. Each of these polarizations between an object and qualities is possibly in need of mediation as well. Perhaps even these tensions need bridges in order to relate in some way.

Given our four basic poles of reality, six combinations between them ought to exhaust the possible permutations of the four separate terms. But we should also consider those cases of relation in which each of the poles interacts with another of its own kind. After all, the whole point of this exercise is to solve the occasionalist problem of the relation between a real object and another real object, and the three parallel cases must also be considered. And as for the case of two sensual objects, we know that they do not touch others of their kind, but are merely contiguous in the experience of some real object that serves as their bridge. As for the contact between multiple sensual qualities, I as a real object might seem to link these qualities just as I serve as the bridge between many sensual objects: But surprisingly enough, this turns out to be false. Despite the claims of empiricism, I have no direct contact with sensual qualities at all. For precisely this is the meaning of Husserl's great discovery: I never encounter black as an isolated quality, but only as the black of ink or poison, a black infused with the style of these objects. In this way sensual objects serve as the bridge between their diverse sensual qualities. But we must also remember that if I as a real object do not serve as the bridge between sensual qualities, a different real object does. For the various qualities of a hammer do not emanate only from the sensual hammer that I have in view. They also emanate from the real hammer that withdraws into subterranean depths beyond all access. Sensual qualities serve two masters, like moons orbiting two planets at the same time: one visible and the other invisible. An analogous situation occurs between multiple real qualities. In one sense they all inhere in the same real object. But at the same time, a multitude of real qualities also belongs to a sensual hammer, dog, or tree as components of its eidos. What is beginning to emerge is a cartography of ten possible permutations of the two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities. From the basic insights of Husserl and Heidegger, a strange but refreshing geography of objects begins to emerge, leading to results that can barely be guessed. But we are getting a bit ahead.
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of our mentors, since Heidegger never develops his own permutations of being beyond the number four.

FIGURE 4: The Ten Possible Links

D. On Fourfold Structures

Unlike botanists, zoologists, linguists, and anthropologists, philosophers try to simplify the universe. When undertaking a census of the cosmos, they do not scavenge through countless empirical details to determine the number of basic elements at play in the world. Instead, philosophers tend to look for basic overarching structures. We are specialists in simplicity. But things are not altogether simple, and thus philosophy is no more master than handmaid of the other disciplines. When studying philosophers we should therefore always ask how many fundamental structures they recognize in the universe, since much of the detail of any philosophy unfolds from a small number of basic features. Not surprisingly, the numbers most commonly found in philosophy are one, two, three, and four. In those rare cases where we find larger numbers, they are generally found to be complex permutations of these simpler numerical structures.

The number one is the password of monism. Despite its comforting promise of holistic unity, it tends to be too sanguine in its implicit assertion that difference and strife are less real than a primal harmony in things. The number two seems to announce a conflict of two opposed principles. But such dualism turns out to be paradoxically monotonous, since usually nothing occurs but a constant struggle back and forth across the divide. The number three seems more sophisticated, with its claim to unify two opposed principles in a dynamic third term that both preserves and transcends the crucial features of the two opposite terms; it is essentially dualism with the introduction of a mediator, as in Hegel’s dialectic and Heidegger’s own repetitive threes. But the frequent danger of threefold structures is that of false happy endings that neuter the tragic force of opposition, uniting all opposites in a place too easily accessible to human resolution.

We also find a number of fourfold structures in the history of philosophy. These are always the result of two intersecting dualisms that vary greatly from one thinker to the next. Four is a powerful number in philosophy. While fully maintaining the dualist insight into the struggle of opposites, it avoids the intrinsic monotony of this struggle by spreading it onto a second axis, creating a rich tension between four poles of the world. There are many instances of such structures in intellectual history. Along with the four elements of Empedocles, Plato’s divided line, and Aristotle’s four causes, we find Scotus Eriugena’s quadruple scheme of creation, Bacon’s four idols, Kant’s four groups of categories, Heidegger’s Geviert, Greimas’s semiotic square, and McLuhan’s tetradic laws of media. As already noted, none of these groupings of four key terms is deduced from empirical observation of the world; instead, each emerges from the intersection of two distinct axes of division.
This procedure of laying two binary oppositions crosswise over the world is not automatically either successful or unsuccessful. The degree of success depends primarily on two criteria. Criterion number one: how well chosen are the two axes of division? To take the extreme case; it is rather easy to produce stupid versions of fourfold structures whenever we wish. If I say that everything in the world comes either from Italy or elsewhere, and is either electrically powered or not, then we have a miraculous “fourfold” philosophy in which non-Italian, non-electrical entities make up the greatest portion of the universe. But this would be ridiculous. Criterion number two: does a given fourfold system provide a useful account of how the four poles interrelate? A fourfold structure that splits the universe into four parts while leaving them in static co-existence is merely a dull taxonomy that gives little instruction as to how the universe works.

These same criteria may be used to judge the emerging fourfold structure in this book. First, how well chosen are the axes of division that we have endorsed? It seems to me that the two dualities in question are not just feasible, but inevitable to the point of being exclusive. Heidegger makes an excellent case for his tool-analysis, which gives us an axis splitting the visible profiles of things from the obscurest depths of their being. And Husserl makes a decisive point on the difference between unified sensual objects and their shifting adumbrations. We do not encounter loose pixels of quality and compress them into sloppy united bulks through the sheer force of habit. Instead, we face a landscape of unified sensual objects that emanate or radiate different qualities at different times.

Once these two dualities are accepted, it immediately follows that the world is composed of four poles. These poles do not stand side-by-side in static isolation; we can already see them in tension with one another. They enter into various permutations, two at a time, and we have seen that there are ten possible combinations of terms. But the most interesting of these are the heterogeneous pairings of one object-term with one quality-term. There are four of these: four basic polarizations in the world. The reason for laying such stress on these issues is because the metaphysics developed in this book will probably seem strange, and whatever is strange often seems arbitrary or forced. But if the reader can grasp why the two axes of division are apparently so inevitable, perhaps it will be clear why the metaphysics that explores the workings of the fourfold is inevitable as well.
Heidegger’s Fourfold

We now come to das Geviert, “the fourfold.” It is the most notorious concept in Heidegger’s writings but also one of the most neglected. When speaking of the fourfold of earth, sky, gods, and mortals, and speaking of their relations in terms of mirror-plays, weddings, dances, and songs, Heidegger seems to reach his nadir of bombastic preciousness. Few clues are given in his writings for interpreting this poetic terminology in a more rigorous theoretical framework. Most scholars have simply ignored the concept, perhaps simply out of embarrassment. A few others have confined themselves to the mere paraphrase of Heidegger’s own words on the topic. Only a handful of specialists have dared to take the concept seriously, even though it saturates all of his later writings.

The topic of the fourfold first appears openly in Heidegger’s lecture cycle “Einblick in das was ist” (“Insight Into What Is”), delivered in December 1949 in the northern city of Bremen. As is well known, Heidegger was banned from university teaching following the war. This expulsion from academia, along with a general nervous collapse, kept him out of public view from the war’s end until his appearance in Bremen, which thus marks the first work of the later phase of his career. But the 1949 lectures count as Heidegger’s first late work for more than biographical reasons. An examination of his writings of the 1950’s on language, technology, and “the thing” shows them to be simple developments of what was already presented in Bremen. And even a cursory reading of these 1949 lectures shows that the fourfold lies absolutely at their center. It is my view that earth, sky, gods, and mortals are not the mere poetic distractions of an elderly sage, but are instead the ultimate destination of his lengthy path of thinking.

A. The Fourfold in Heidegger
None of Heidegger’s basic concepts has been more ridiculed than the fourfold. On December 1, 1949, Heidegger lectured before the Bremen Club, with its non-academic audience of shippers and industrialists. They were treated to Heidegger’s first public philosophical statement since the war: “Insight Into What Is,” surely the strangest masterpiece of twentieth century philosophy. The central concept of these lectures is clearly the fourfold. Six decades later, the quartet of earth, sky, gods, and mortals is still rarely discussed, let alone fully understood. The problem with downplaying the fourfold is its rather obtrusive status as the dominant concept in Heidegger’s later writings, and indeed as the very root of his meditations on both language and technology. Among recent scholars it is perhaps only in the work of Jean-François Mattei that we find genuine seriousness about the crucial role of the fourfold in Heidegger’s thinking. What still remains missing from Heidegger studies is an original philosophical interpretation of this concept. But in any case, 1949 in Bremen is where das Geviert appears in full-blown form. Here it takes the form of a poetic-sounding fourfold of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. The inherent poetry of these four terms, and the fact that Heidegger gives no clear explanation of their meaning, has led to widespread avoidance of the subject. Some interpreters hold that “four” is merely poetic slang for “many,” so that any plural number would have worked equally well. Others hold that the number four is nothing more than a quaint tribute to Hölderlin, despite the fact that the four terms never appear together in any known passage of Hölderlin.

Here I will cite from the essay “The Thing,” one of the better-known spinoff works from the Bremen lecture. Speaking of wine pouring from a jug, Heidegger tells us that “in thinging, [the
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jug] stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals." These four terms are most clearly defined in another spinoff essay of the Bremen lectures, “Building Dwelling Thinking.” Speaking of earth: “Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal.” As for sky: “The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year’s seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether.”

We now come to gods, who 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.”

And finally, mortals: “The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death.”

This is obviously not the sort of thing that would pass for rigor in Anglo-American analytic philosophy circles.

To each of these four terms, Heidegger appends the remark that to think one of them is to think the other three as well. In “The Thing” we find further discussion of this point: “Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own, within the simpleness of the four. And further: “This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presencing into simple belonging to one another.” We not only have four poles of the fourfold. We also find that they are not isolated from one another but reflect each other, each in its own way.

Before dismissing this fourfold as a self-indulgent or even crackpot concept, we need to remember how central it is for Heidegger. As already noted, the 1949 Bremen lectures are the key to all of his later writings. Along with “The Thing” and “Building Dwelling Thinking,” another Bremen spinoff is the celebrated “The Question Concerning Technology.” And finally, all of Heidegger’s later meditations on language are saturated with the fourfold: language is the interplay of thing and world, and this turns out to have a fourfold structure. There can be no question that Heidegger is deeply serious about the fourfold.

B. Interpreting Heidegger’s Fourfold

Moreover, das Geviert is not even especially difficult to interpret, as long as we keep a few basic principles in mind. The first of these, which ought to be obvious but is often ignored, is that the fourfold cannot refer to four specific kinds of objects. “Earth” does not mean strawberries and hay; “sky” does not mean comets and moons; “gods” does not signify Aphrodite, Jupiter, and Loki; and finally, “mortals” does not mean individual people such as Picasso and Virginia Woolf. The whole of Heidegger’s philosophy can be read as a critique of ontology: the sort of traditional philosophy which holds that one type of entity can explain all the others — whether it be atoms, perfect forms, the apeiron, mental images, or power. He insists that being is deeper than any of these manifestations. Obviously, Heidegger did not suddenly abandon this critique of ontology from 1949 onward in order to endorse a taxonomy of the four most important kinds of beings. If Heidegger had meant to do so, we would have seen some justification for why there are four key types of entities, and why these four and no other. In the absence of such an explicit reversal, it is safe to assume that his fourfold structure is an outgrowth of his previous thinking. Further evidence for this can be gathered from the “mirroring” he describes between all four members of the fourfold, which also suggests a ubiquitous ontological structure rather than a taxonomy of four different types of entities. In short, the four terms in the fourfold cannot be taken literally to mean: (a) things down on the ground, (b) things up high in the sky, (c) deities, and (d) people. There is only one case where Heidegger seems
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...to veer slightly from this tacit principle: in his treatment of mortals, which at times he does seem to identify literally with human entities.

Given this initial warning, it is surprisingly easy to interpret the meaning of Heidegger's fourfold. For if there is one axiom of his thinking that never varies, it is the constant opposition he draws between absence and presence, veiled and unveiled. And his choice of wording in Bremen makes it perfectly clear that earth and gods are both terms of concealment. As early as the artwork essay in 1935, the task of earth is to withdraw from all access, and the same holds true in 1949. As for gods, they are said only to "hint" rather than revealing themselves. By contrast, Heidegger tells us that mortals are linked with the as-structure of explicit visibility. And as for sky, it is clearly a matter of specifically visible entities, as opposed to the ceaseless withdrawal of earth.

So much for the first Heideggerian axis, a division repetitive and profound enough that it would make Parmenides proud. But there is also a second axis in Heidegger's thinking that makes it easy to read the fourfold in a second direction as well. In 1949, that axis is a second version of the famous ontological difference, or the difference between being and beings. For there are two possible ways to read this difference. One is to read it as a distinction between veiled and unveiled, absent and present, withdrawn and cleared, implicit and explicit. But it can also be read in a second sense as meaning that being is one and beings are many. And for Heidegger, this second axis repeats itself on both levels: veiled and unveiled. For on the concealed level "earth" is always read as a single, unified force. And the same is even more obviously true on the visible level of "mortals," who are mortals not by experiencing many different things, but by encountering beings as a whole: namely, in the form of death "as" death. The opposite is true of the other terms. On the concealed level Heidegger says "gods" rather than God, not as some gratuitous slap at monotheism, but to show the contrast between the singular earth that withdraws and the plurality of cryptic messages that the moment of "gods" represents. And on the revealed level, the menagerie of items included under "sky" contrasts with the singularity found in earth and mortals. In other words, the fourfold can be viewed as the intersection of two related but variant senses of the ontological difference: veiled vs. unveiled, and one vs. many.

C. From Objects to World

Heidegger gave his first Freiburg Lecture Course in 1919, during the so-called War Emergency Semester. Though the philosopher was not yet thirty years old, this early lecture course is already a minor masterpiece. In the first place it already contains a full-blown version of the tool-analysis, refuting in advance the occasional strange claims that Heidegger stole this analysis from Husserl's work of the early 1920's. And beyond this, we are surprised to find that a version of the fourfold even exists already in Heidegger's 1919 course, though it differs from the full-blown later model in a crucial respect. We have seen that the fourfold of 1949 crossbreeds the distinction of veiled and unveiled with one between unity and plurality. And by unity he means the unity of the world as a whole, not of individual things. By contrast, Heidegger's second axis in 1919 more closely approaches Husserl's distinction between the unified intentional object and its plurality of traits, and I for one find it superior. Here there is still no talk of a single unified earth from which all things emerge, or a single experience of being as a whole in the Angst of mortals. The second axis in 1949 distinguishes between "beings as a whole" and individual beings such as dogs or apples. But in 1919 the distinction is the more Husserlian one between an individual apple and its plurality of traits. In short, there is a genuine sense in which Heidegger's 1949 fourfold marks a step backward from...
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the 1919 model. To show this, we might consider several possible approaches to the sensual realm.

- Hume: there are only apple-qualities, bundled together in a unit by human habit.

- Husserl: there is a duel between the apple-object and the shifting apple-qualities on its surface.

- Heidegger (1919): there is a duel between the apple as "something at all" and its specific apple-qualities. Yet there is nothing especially applesque about its "something at all" pole. Everything is "something at all" in the same sense as everything else. This makes the "something at all" disturbingly close to Hume's "bundle," which does not differ qua bundle in our respective experiences of cotton, dogs, melons, or trees.

- Heidegger (1949): there is a duel between reality as a whole and apple-qualities. What opposes the apple-qualities is neither a bundle, nor a sensual object, nor a "something at all." Rather, they are opposed by being as a whole, which is revealed to Dasein in the experience of Angst.

In other words, the 1919 Heidegger saw a drama underway in the heart of individual entities, even if less vividly than Husserl did. But the 1949 Heidegger sees it as a drama between being as a whole and specific beings. In this way the object-oriented spirit of Heidegger's Geviert is compromised, and hence we must not follow him down this path. For in fact, the 1949 version of the fourfold is philosophically less sophisticated than the model of 1919.

Of the four models of the sensual realm just listed, the best is that of Husserl, whose unfortunate idealism does not contam-
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inate his remarkable insights into the intentional realm. And if we speak purely of that realm, then the worst of the four models is that of Heidegger in 1949. By establishing a counterpoint between the world as a whole and the specific entities that populate it, the Heidegger of Bremen weakens all sense of drama within specific entities. Second place in the “worst model of objects” contest for our list of four is probably a tie between Hume and the Heidegger of 1919, both of whom see a need to bind together a multitude of traits, though both do this with a kind of vis dormitiva: qualities are bundled together by a bundling faculty. In Hume’s case habit is given the credit for creating the bundle, though no more explanation is given of such habit than of the workings of the occasionalist God. In the young Heidegger’s case the bundle arises from the fact that each entity is “something at all,” though again no explanation is offered of why certain specific qualities should be assigned to one “something at all” rather than another. But in Husserl’s case we have a truly marvelous insight, in which the unity of a melon is a melon-unity quite different from a cat-unity or coin-unity. The object is a vague yet compelling integer, a somewhat durable unit encrusted with shifting exteriors. In this sense, Heidegger fails to live up to his teacher’s matchless insights into the sensual realm.

But if we look beyond the sensual realm, then the picture is rather different. Here, last place on the list of four must go to Hume, with his fruitless agnosticism about what lies beyond the bounds of sensual experience. Second-to-last goes to Husserl, with his undeniable idealism that bans all reality that is not, in principle, accessible to intentionality. He edges Hume on the list for the sole but important reason that he allows sensual objects to have a real eidos: genuine qualities that make the sensual objects what they are, in contrast with the accidental traits swirling along their crust at any given moment. In deciding whether to give first place to the 1919 or 1949 Heidegger, we find that at both age thirty and age sixty the philosopher had an outstanding sense of the reality that withdraws from all presence to view. But as a tiebreaker, we award the trophy to the younger version of Heidegger insofar as he allows for a strife in the depths between individual objects and their qualities, and not just between reality-as-a-whole and qualities. His appeal to “earth” from 1935 onward, so often celebrated as a sensitive holistic breakthrough, is in fact a terrible relapse from his 1919 object-oriented model of phenomenology towards a half-cooked form of monism. In a sense, then, the fourfold model endorsed in this book follows Husserl when it comes to sensual objects, and the young Heidegger when it comes to real ones. While Heidegger gains in poetic force in 1949, he slips a notch as a philosopher of objects. While appeals to the supposed “world as a whole” always have an automatic air of intellectual gravitas and philosophical depth, there is no good reason to think that such an encompassing whole even exists. Instead, everything comes back to the strife between individual objects and their accidents, qualities, relations, and moments.

D. Other Problems with Heidegger’s Fourfold
Throughout this book I have expressed admiration for Heidegger for choosing two effective axes for his fourfold, especially in its abandoned and underdeveloped 1919 version. But along with the question of whether the fourfold structure is built of the right two axes, we should also ask whether it gives a sufficient account of how the four poles interact. After all, given that we are talking about a fourfold structure within objects rather than four separate kinds of them, the four terms must be unified in the life of every object, and must therefore be related in some manner. On this point Heidegger is less helpful. Yes, he tells us that his four poles are not static but interact with one another in dramatic fashion. But he sheds little light on the mechanisms of this drama. When discussing how the four terms
interact, Heidegger often provides nothing but the negative claim that they are not static. On those occasions when he does attempt to clarify their interrelations, he limits himself to poetic allusions to mirrors, weddings, dances, and songs. The image of the “mirror-play” is especially recurrent in Heidegger, though he never clarifies exactly how one term might be reflected in another. And not only that: he never even specifies whether every one of the four terms is able to mirror every other. In those cases where his diagrams of the fourfold include lines that join various pairs of terms, such diagrams usually give us nothing more than an X that links the corners diagonally. Only rarely does he draw horizontal and vertical lines as well to create a full set of six permutations. Thus, the question is never even posed. My point in saying these things is not to criticize Heidegger for his vagueness; no one expects a pioneer to establish a civilization refined to the point of decadence. My point is that we should expect ourselves to develop the matter a bit further than Heidegger did himself. “One requiteth a teacher badly if one remain only a scholar.”

There is still another problem with the fourfold. Although Heidegger already does a good job of avoiding a taxonomy of entities, he relapses slightly in at least two ways. One is by sometimes treating the pole of “mortals” as though it referred literally to people. The other is by restricting his examples of the fourfold to such poignant, romantic cases as Greek temples and peasant shoes. When speaking of technological artifacts such as nuclear power plants, hydroelectric dams, and mechanized farms, he seems less willing to grant any sort of dignity to these things. In fact, given that the poles of the fourfold do not exist in static isolation but only in interaction, the four terms we have described are less important than the possible fission and fusion between them, just as the four elements of Empedocles would have remained frozen without the workings of love and hate. More concretely, instead of speaking of earth, sky, gods, and mortals, it is the duel or tension between earth and sky, or gods and mortals, or any other combination of those terms, that ought to be the focus of any ontology of the fourfold object. And that is indeed the case for the position developed in this book. The model it proposes does not treat the two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities independently, but sees them as always in tension between one object-pole and one quality-pole. We have also seen that different relations exist besides tensions between object and quality. In fact, we have seen that there are ten possible permutations in all. These must be classified and recorded, and pushed to yield results that are fruitful rather than merely pedantic.

We are now far from the beaten path of recent philosophy far enough that the reader may need reassurance that this is not one of those homespun private ontologies easily found in the attics and basements of the internet. It is helpful to remember that despite the apparent strangeness of this fourfold model, it has powerful ancestors whose insights deserve to be honored. The quadruple structure combines the key insights of Heidegger and Husserl, both of them found on almost any short list of the great philosophers of the past century. But the metaphysics of objects has even deeper roots than this. For in a sense, this book seeks only to provide a weirder version of Aristotle’s theory of substance. Heidegger’s fourfold has certain features that make it fairly compelling. But when viewed closely, it fails to provide answers to a number of basic questions. For this reason, our goal should be to advance in such a way as to make it look primitive. Allow me to explain...

The highest compliment we can pay to thinkers is to grasp the central ideas of their respective systems and try to push them further. When this succeeds, it will always tend to make our predecessors look somewhat primitive — though by primitive I mean “classic” rather than “crude.” We will find that they have stopped at a point where we ourselves no longer have
the luxury of stopping. Our own contributions will need to display more flexibility, nuance, and scope than the originality of our predecessor. In the present day, Heidegger's fourfold structure appears to be merely a quirky and arbitrary outgrowth of his late system. But imagine a scenario in which, two centuries from now, all ontologies are built out of fourfold structures descended from his own. If that were to happen, then the status of the 1949 Bremen lectures would shift from "isolated and inexplicable oddity" to "classic ancestral text of quadruple ontology." The greatest compliment we can pay to our ancestors is not to imitate their words and gestures endlessly, but to turn them into the forerunners of something different.

The New Fourfold

The obvious danger of a fourfold structure is that it might seem crankish or bizarre, like a New Age doctrine or the creed of a false prophet. Das Geviert might lead one to imagine the leader of a cult on some remote Pacific island, with a reformed harlot on one arm and a child bride on the other, all united in worship of the Great Obsidian Cylinder where the four forces of the cosmos are stationed. Yet in the preceding chapters I have tried to show that reflection on the fourfold is inevitable once we acknowledge both the results of Heidegger's potent tool-analysis and Husserl's breakthrough into the duel between a unified sensual object and its multitude of profiles.

Our quadruple enigma arises from the strange autonomy and lack of autonomy of real and sensual objects with respect to their real and sensual traits. In this sense our problem has a highly classical flavor: the Platonic or Kantian doctrine of a world beyond the senses is fused with an Aristotelian-sounding distinction between the unity of a substance and its plurality of traits. We began with the occasionalist deadlock in which no two objects are able to make contact. Yet this turned out to be just one piece of a larger puzzle in which it is still unclear how an object makes contact even with its own qualities. While it is a serious problem to know how fire touches cotton or human touches world, it is just as hard to know how an apple relates to its own features such as cold, red, hard, sweet, tangy, cheap, and juicy in the first place. In the present chapter I will try to make this model a bit more concrete.
A. Reviewing the Four Poles

We should begin by reviewing briefly the model of Heidegger's fourfold and comparing it with the similar quadruple structure of objects as endorsed by this book. It was noted that every rigorous fourfold structure in the history of philosophy results from the crossing of a pair of dualisms. In Heidegger's case one of those dualities is perfectly clear, since it saturates the whole of his career: the monotonous interplay of shadow and light, veiling and unveiling, concealing and revealing. This challenge to philosophies of presence, this insistence on an obscure subterranean depth that haunts all accessible entities, remains the obvious core of his philosophical journey. But Heidegger's second axis of reality is a bit hazier, and shifts during various portions of his career. In 1919, it is the difference between "something at all" and "something specific," a duality placed in the heart of every entity that exists, whether present or absent for conscious view. The broken hammer is both a specific visible entity and also an entity in general, but the same holds for the hammer-being unleashed in a depth that hides from every gaze. We have seen that in 1949 the fourfold no longer plays out in the heart of every entity. Instead it involves a duel, repeated in the two arenas of the veiled and unveiled, between what Heidegger calls "beings as a whole" and "beings as such"—between the world in its totality and the various specific things that populate the concealed and revealed worlds. The terms that merely hint while withdrawing from view are earth and gods; those to which we have access "as" what they are receive the names of mortals and sky. The terms that refer to the unity of the world are earth and mortals, while those that are shattered in advance into a multitude of realities are gods and sky. These four terms cannot be taken literally as a taxonomy of entities, but are four structures of reality in general, found everywhere and at all times—despite Heidegger's romantic tendency to find the quadruple mirroring structure in rustic handiwork while withholding fourfold status from despicable plastic cups and offshore oil rigs.

The version of the fourfold defended in this book is similar to Heidegger's 1919 model, but shifted in the direction of Husserl's model of intentional or sensual objects. When the young Heidegger says that every entity is both "something at all" and "something specific," the diversity of things is found only in the second of these moments. A hammer, monkey, chimney, watermelon, and star are all "specific" in different ways, but all are "something at all" in exactly the same fashion for Heidegger. In fact, to be "something at all" is a rather boring and formalistic honor that makes one entity interchangeable with the rest, despite Heidegger's occasional nods to Aristotle's principle that being is expressed in many ways. But in the case of Husserl we have seen that this does not happen, and it is Husserl's model that I wish to endorse. For if we consider the phenomenon of a watermelon in the mind, we do not find a dull opposition between (a) the melon in all its particularity, and (b) some "being in general" that would belong equally to the melon and to all other things. This is too reminiscent of Hume's bundles of qualities, with the sole difference that "being" is now adopted to serve the role of Hume's unifying bundle. Instead, the duel in question is between the watermelon as an enduring unit and the multitude of profiles that it exhibits at various times. The distinction is not between "something in general" and "specific watermelon" (as the young Heidegger would have it) but between watermelon-object and watermelon-qualities. So far Husserl is right, and should be opposed only in his idealistic claim that this watermelon-object in consciousness is not shadowed by a veiled melon-object inaccessible to every view.

The four poles of the fourfold endorsed by the present book have less poetic names than Heidegger's own. Instead of earth, gods, mortals, and sky, we offer real objects, real qualities, sensual objects, and sensual qualities. The relative lack of poetry
in this newest model compared with Heidegger’s is due not to some hideous aesthetic preference for desert landscapes: rather, it is because the drama for us lies not in the poles themselves, but in the tensions between them. Heidegger does refer to a dynamic interrelation of mirroring between the four terms of the fourfold, but never gives names to these tensions or considers them one by one.

The tension between sensual objects and their sensual qualities is the major topic of Husserl’s phenomenology. The simplest mailbox or tree remains the same unit for us over a certain period of time, despite the radiation of ever new profiles from its surface. Though the deadening habits of common sense strip this event of its mystery, there is something permanently strange about the manner in which an enduring sensual object can appear in countless incarnations depending on the viewer’s angle, distance, and mood. Perhaps children still appreciate this strangeness; in adults, strenuous exercises may be needed to recapture the atmosphere of mystery that ought to surround the merest rotation of a wine bottle or the shifting of light behind a mountain. Husserl also offers us a second tension in which the sensual object differs not from its shifting accidental facades, but from the plurality of qualities that it truly needs to remain what it is from moment to moment. But these are its real qualities, since they cannot be stripped from the sensual object without destroying it, and since they are withdrawn from all sensual access, limited to oblique approaches by the intellect. There is a further tension between real objects and their sensual qualities, as found in Heidegger’s tool-analysis. The withdrawn or subterranean hammer is a concealed unit, but one that emits sensual qualities into the phenomenal sphere. And finally, these withdrawn real objects are not just unified lumps, but differ from one another insofar as each has its own essential features. The tension between the real thing as a unified thing and its multitude of qualities or notes is not discussed by Husserl or Heidegger, but can be found in the *Monadology* of Leibniz, and in the lesser-known works of the twentieth-century Basque Spaniard Xavier Zubiri. Without adopting the Hölderlinian pathos of Heidegger’s own terminology, we will still give these four tensions the suggestive names they deserve: *time* (SO-SQ) as in Husserl’s adumbrations, *space* (RO-SQ) as in Heidegger’s tool-analysis, *essence* (RO-RQ) as in Leibniz’s monads, and *eidos* (SO-RQ) as in Husserl’s eidetic intuition. Here at last is a fourfold structure that can serve as bedrock for further constructions.

**B. Time, Space, Essence, and Eidos**

Every thoughtful person occasionally reflects on the nature of time and space, which form the permanent homeland of human action and of everything else. Is time reversible, and can we travel backward and forward through it? Does space have only the three dimensions that we see, or does it contain many more, some of them populated by other life forms? Are time and space absolute and empty containers as they are for Newton, or generated by way of relations as they are for Leibniz? Is it possible to consider time and space as a single four-dimensional space-time, as Minkowski famously asserts? Such questions hold an endless fascination for us. But in all of these cases it is simply assumed that space and time are peerless continua without friend or rival. Kant, for instance, sets them apart and alone in the Transcendental Aesthetic, consigning everything else to the table of categories. But instead of taking the primal status of space and time for granted, it might be asked if both are perhaps derivative of a more basic reality. And if the answer turns out to be yes, then we should also ask whether this more primal dimension might have other offspring than its two most famous children, space and time. For this reason it must count as a dramatic development that the metaphysics of objects sketched in this book provides a rare opportunity to reinterpret...
space and time in terms of something even more basic: the polarization between objects and their qualities.

When we speak of time in the everyday sense, what we are referring to is a remarkable interplay of stability and change. In time, the objects of sense do not seem motionless and fixed, but are displayed as encrusted with shifting features. Nonetheless, experience does not decay in each instant into an untethered kaleidoscope of discontinuous sensations; instead, there seem to be sensual objects of greater or lesser durability. Time is the name for this tension between sensual objects and their sensual qualities. When we speak instead of space, everyone will recall the old quarrel between Leibniz and Clarke over whether space is an absolute container or simply a matter of relations between things. But in fact it is neither: for space is not just the site of relation, but rather of relation and non-relation. Sitting at the moment in Cairo, I am not entirely without relation to the Japanese city of Osaka, since in principle I could travel there on any given day. But this relation can never be total, since I do not currently touch the city, and even when I travel to stand in the exact center of Osaka I will not exhaust its reality. Whatever sensual profile the city displays to me, even if from close range, this profile will differ from the real Osaka that forever withdraws into the shadows of being. This interplay of relation and non-relation is precisely what we mean when we speak of space, and in this respect Heidegger’s tool-analysis is actually about space, not about time as he wrongly contends. Space is the tension between concealed real objects and the sensual qualities associated with them.

We now leave time and space and meet with their two neglected sisters, still nameless for the moment. Husserl showed that the sensual realm contains not only a tension between objects and their accidental surface-qualities (which we have now called “time”). For along with this there is another tension between objects and their truly crucial qualities, which are revealed through a process of eidetic variation: we imagine a house from many different viewpoints, stripping away its shifting properties that arise and then vanish. The goal of this method is to approach an inner nucleus of the house, an eidos that makes it what it is for those who perceive it. Husserl is quite clear that these eidetic features can in no way be sensual, insofar as no sense experience can possibly grasp them. Instead, they can only be known through categorial intuition: the work of the intellect and not of the senses. Such intuition points at those vital and never-visible traits that differ from the purely sensual character of the object. And this entails an articulation into parts that is foreign to the sensual object’s unity. Here we find Husserl’s true kinship with Plato. As opposed to the philosophies of individual substance that place qualities on the surface of the world and view the object as a hidden substratum in the depths, both Plato and Husserl reverse this assumption: putting a multitude of eidetic qualities in the depths while the object unifies them on the surface of the world. This tension between sensual objects and their real hidden qualities is what Husserl calls the eidos. And finally there is the fourth and final tension, never accessible to human experience. I refer to the duel, underway in hidden real things, between the unified real object and its multitude of real hidden features. This tension between the real object and its real qualities has always been called its essence, though traditional realism lacks Heidegger’s remorseless sense that the real is entirely withdrawn from all access. And as a reminder, whereas the traditional model of essence treated real qualities as mobile universals able to be exemplified anywhere, qualities according to the present book are shaped by the object to which they belong, just as the moons of Jupiter are molded by their planetary lord.

In this way the monotonous age-old coupling of time and space is expanded into a new model encompassing four tensions between objects and their qualities: time, space, essence, and...
The Quadruple Object
eidos. These four terms can be stated in any order; this one is
preferred merely because it has the most melodious ring in my
ears. We have already determined that the world is apportioned
into exactly two kinds of object and two kinds of quality. Their
possible pairings lead to precisely these four tensions and no
others. The interaction of time, space, essence, and eidos is not
the play of four disembodied forces, but of four tensions
affecting every object that in some way is. Note that these
tensions already encompass both real and fictitious entities,
given that sensual objects join real ones as a basic feature of the
model. Reductionist, science-worshipping naturalism can never
accomplish or even appreciate this feat, since it is in too great a
hurry to exterminate all the millions of entities that do not flatter
its crude bias in favor of physical things.

C. On
Fission and Fusion
Although tensions are always interesting, they sometimes still
lead nowhere. The opposed armies of Korea have stared each
other down for over fifty years with only minor incidents, and
may well do so for another century or more. The same is true of
the tensions between the various forms of objects and qualities.
In order for something to change in the status quo, the bond
between object and quality must be dissolved and a new one
produced. To use a metaphor from applied physics, we need
fission accompanied by fusion. But fission and fusion are the
only two options, and they must always go hand in hand, since
objects and qualities never exist outside of some bond that must
be ruptured if another is to emerge. Now, we have just finished
naming our four kinds of tension: time, space, essence, and
eidos. It will be worthwhile to give a quick preview of what it
means when each of these tensions is ruptured or produced.

Time was described as the strife between a sensual object and
its numerous sparkling features. Dogs and trees display an
excess of carnal detail that shifts in each moment without our
viewing them as different objects. This is the very nature of
perception, and I will soon claim that primitive perception is
found even in the nethermost regions of apparently mindless
entities. But of course we do not remain focused forever on a
steady landscape of enduring sensual objects; rather, there are
intermittent changes in what we confront. This can happen in at
least two ways. Perhaps we identify something differently all of
a sudden: we find that the tree was in fact a gallows, so that its
surface qualities now shift into a far more sinister key. Or
perhaps we shift our attention from a sensual object to its
neighbors: from a strawberry to its seeds, or perhaps to the
strawberry patch as a whole. When this happens there is a
momentary breakdown in the former balance between sensual
objects and their qualities; the object is briefly exposed as a
unified kernel dangling its qualities like marionettes. This event
could be called recognition or acknowledgment, but these terms
suggest an intricate cognitive process that should perhaps be
restricted to more advanced animal entities. What we really
need is a term applicable to the primitive psyches of rocks and
electrons as well as to humans. I propose the term confrontation
as sufficiently broad for the task. Wakeful humans confront
strawberries and commando raids, a sleeper confronts the bed,
and a pebble confronts the asphalt that it strikes as opposed to
all the accidental details of that asphalt.

Space was described as the tension between real objects that
lie beyond access, and their sensual qualities which exist only
when encountered. Whereas sensual objects are conjoined with
their qualities in advance, such that fission between the poles is
required, the real object is absent from the sensual field; hence,
real object and sensual qualities will meet only when fused. In
such cases the sensual qualities are stripped from their current
sensual overlord and appear to orbit a withdrawn real object, an
invisible sun bending them to its will. The very invisibility of
the object makes it impossible to compress the object together
with its sensual qualities into a bland purée, as often happens in boring everyday experience. This fusion occurs for example in artworks of every sort, and I would suggest further that Heidegger’s “broken tools” also have an aesthetic effect, if not a strictly artistic one. Instead of the direct sort of contact that we have with sensual objects, there is an allusion to the silent object in the depths that becomes vaguely fused with its legion of sensual qualities. As a general term for the fusion of withdrawn real objects with accessible surface qualities, we can use the word _allure_. As I define the term in my book _Guerrilla Metaphysics_, allure is a special and intermittent experience in which the intimate bond between a thing’s unity and its plurality of [specific qualities] somehow partially disintegrates.

In Husserl’s case we noticed that sensual objects not only have accidental surface profiles. They also have an eidos, or qualities crucial for the object to be acknowledged as what it is. These qualities do not press against us like sensual ones. Grasped only by categorial and not sensuous intuition, they are never fully present. The sensual object has a vague and unified effect on us, not usually articulated into its various eidetic features. It is always fused in advance with its own eidos. Only theoretical labor can disassemble or reverse-engineer the bond between them. The word _theory_ can serve as our term for the fission that splits a unified sensual object from the real qualities it needs in order to be what it is. We will have to decide later whether animals, plants, and airplanes are also capable of theory in some primitive sense. But for now, we can already see that theory is a kind of fission between a sensual object and its multitude of real traits.

Finally, we spoke of essence as the tension between a real object and its real qualities. This relation never enters directly into any experience, since both of its poles are withdrawn from all access. Leibniz was correct in noting the following paradox: to be is to be one, since a real object must be unified; however, a mere unit would be interchangeable with any other, and thus no two monads would be different. Thus, each real object must have a _multitude_ of real traits. I will now suggest is something strange: namely, the object itself does not have its own essential features. We saw already that the real object has no contact with its sensual qualities, and is attached to them only through allure. In similar manner, the real object and its real qualities do not have a pre-existent bond in need of being split. Instead, they must be brought together through _fusion_, by way of some mediating term. This process, strangely akin to the allure of aesthetic experience, can be called causation. There is a precedent for this claim in the masterful treatment of efficient causation by Suárez. For him, direct causal relation between entities is impossible, and things interact only by means of their “accidents,” by which he actually means their real qualities.

An even simpler way to look at the four tensions is as follows. The basis of this book are the two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities: real and sensual in both cases. What was interesting was the realization that qualities need not marry objects of their own kind. A real object obviously needs real qualities, as Leibniz and some of the Scholastics saw. And a sensual object is always linked with shifting sensual qualities, as Husserl’s phenomenology convincingly established. But there were also the two cases of exotic mixture. For real objects are associated with sensual qualities too, as seen from Heidegger’s tool-analysis in which the real object hides behind its accessible surface traits. And with equal strangeness, sensual objects were also found to have real qualities, as in Husserl’s insight that sensual objects have an eidos made up of genuine real qualities, as opposed to the mere shifting perceptual adumbrations whose qualities are always sensual. In this way we were shocked to discover interbreeding underway between the real and sensual realms, as if metaphysics were a Caribbean region where proper relations between objects were corrupted by rum, parrots, and volcanoes.
However, any moral outrage at this mixing of real and sensual bloodlines is beside the point, since it misses the true paradox: the vastly different ways in which real and sensual objects relate to qualities of either kind. Any sensual object is already in contact with its qualities of both kinds. The watermelon or rabid dog we experience is barely distinct either from the flickering shades by which we observe it at each moment (which we called time) or the deeper non-sensual features that the melon or dog cannot lose without ceasing to be recognized as what it is (which we called eidos). Since both of these bonds already exist, their rupture requires a fission of previously linked parts. This may sound unusual enough, but the true paradox is still to come. For let us now consider the real melon or dog, withdrawn from the kingdom of experience. We cannot say that these real objects have any inherent bond with their sensual qualities (the distance between them is what we called space), since these are mere appearances for someone or something else. The watermelon itself is completely indifferent to the angle or distance from which it is seen, or the precise degree of gloomy afternoon shadow in which it is shrouded. There are times when these sensual qualities are placed into orbit around the ghostly withdrawn melon (allure), but this occurs on a purely ad hoc basis, and the melon could hardly care less even if it were a deeply emotional creature. Thus, it is a form of fusion between previously separate poles rather than a fission of already attached poles.

But an even more paradoxical situation arises when we consider the link between the real object and its real qualities, where a more intimate bond between the two would be expected. Yet here we find that the real object has no closer link with its own real qualities than with the sensual qualities that one would never dream of ascribing to it. Once more, this is an ad hoc relation arising only now and then. In other words, the relation between an object and its own real qualities (we called this essence) is a relation produced by outside entities. This is not the relativist thesis according to which nothing is real, hidden, or essential but only how it appears to us. Instead, it is a bizarre alternative to relativism in which the real, hidden, and essential do very much exist, but communicate only by way of the unreal, apparent, and inessential. It would be as if mushrooms communicated with their own qualities, not directly or through rhizomal networks, but via radio waves. A real object is real and has a definite character, but its essence is first produced from the outside through causal interactions. Since this would take too long to argue in detail here, I will only observe that this strange result is required by the symmetry of our diagrams, just as certain new particles are predicted by the models of physics and confirmed only later.

FIGURE 7: Broken Links

\[\text{Real Object} \rightarrow \text{Real Qualities} \]
\[\text{Sensual Object} \rightarrow \text{Sensual Qualities} \]
D. On Tension

Yet it is not entirely clear what a tension is, and this needs to be investigated. In the first place, it already turned out that a number of different kinds of relations are possible in the cosmos: ten of them, to be exact. But not all of these relations can really be called tensions, a term that implies simultaneous closeness and separation. For instance, multiple real or sensual qualities can exist in the same object, without this really being a tension in the sense I mean. Likewise, a perceiving agent is a real object in contact with sensual objects, and multiple sensual objects are contiguous in the experience of this agent, without any of these cases counting as tensions. What all four tensions share in common is that all involve an object-pole and a quality-pole. This section briefly considers some of the implications of this fact.

The first point, as we have already seen, is that two of the tensions can exist in something like a banal form, while the other two cannot. That is to say, a sensual object must always be accompanied by a swirling patina of sensual qualities and a not yet articulated core of real ones. Yet in both cases the tension between the object-pole and the quality-pole requires a sort of fission between the two, in which they are held side-by-side as both together and separate. It is quite different with the two tensions that involve a real object. Here, the real object is only brought together with qualities by means of fusion, so that there is actually no banal state of tension when a real rather than sensual object is involved.

The next question is why there is a “tension” in these cases rather than one of two other possible extremes. For on the one hand, two poles might be kept so entirely separate as to have no relation at all, and on the other hand they might be so fused together that a state of utterly banal attachment would be the result. We need to identify the conditions under which both extremes are able to pass into tension, whether through a fission of banality (as is the case with sensual objects) or through fusion of what was previously separate (as is the case with real ones).