Heidegger objects to Descartes’ way of looking at the Being of the world because he rejects Descartes’ claim that space is a priori since “even when we analyze space and spatiality, we must have already understood the sense of worldhood from the start” (171). Instead, Heidegger believes it is the structure of Dasein that is a priori. Since Dasein is temporal (i.e., is time), its being-in-the-world cannot be described spatially (i.e., Descartes is not a particular being; rather it is temporal [Zeitigung]). Dasein is temporal in the sense that it is in the world in the way that it is because its historicity (i.e., the facticity of its past) is constantly “throwing” Dasein ahead of itself and conditioning its possibilities for the future. Dasein is also temporal as a result of the characteristic of its structure known as care (sorgen) (i.e., “Dasein...temporalizes itself...[by] being preoccupied with the world...[and] always already finding [itself in the] world” (168)). When we look at the world spatially, as Descartes does, and therefore approach it theoretically/objectively/scientifically, we are actually “unworlding” the world, or disregarding the worldhood of the world, Heidegger argues. “When we ask about the phenomenal structure of the world,” Heidegger says, “we are asking about the how of the being in which the entity we call the world shows itself” (169). Heidegger sums all of this up well when he says that “worldhood, the being of the entity with which the caring, concerned preoccupation of Dasein first dwells, should not be understood in a primarily spatial sense” (170).
Furthermore, Heidegger notes that the world should be “interrogated in regard to its worldhood as it first shows itself and thence...spatiality [should be determined afterward, rather than vice versa]” (182). He is quick to admit, however, that when Dasein experiences the worldhood of the world, it is “nothing special” (i.e., it is not immediately explicit that this is what is taking place) because one of the defining features of Dasein is simply to experience the worldhood of the world (i.e., to be-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-sein), however the world is). In Heidegger’s words, “The original way of encountering the environing world evidently cannot even be directly grasped...this phenomenon is instead typically passed over. This is no accident, inasmuch as Dasein as being-in-the-world in the sense of concern is absorbed in its world in which it is preoccupied, is so to speak exhausted by that world, so that precisely in the most natural and the most immediate being-in-the-world the world in its worldhood is not experienced thematically at all” (185). In short, Cartesian space levels down the world to a set of coordinates, one in which the cares, concerns, and the solicitude of Dasein literally have no place (that is, dwelling, as opposed to space) and no ontological significance. This “space” is typically put in quotation marks (“world”) to oppose it to the world in which Dasein dwells.

--Breyn Hibbs