

HUMANS, LANGUAGE, AND TECHNOLOGY

THE INTERPLAYS BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND TECHNOLOGY
ACCORDING TO HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

Author: Laura Del Vecchio Lança

Director: Pau Bori

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Universitat de Vic – Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

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Introduction

It is no matter of coincidence that Martin Heidegger's philosophy was roundly ignored during the 20th century. His commitment to the German National Socialist Party and the philosophical conceptualizations he developed that were utilized by the Nazi regime seriously limited the spread and popularization of his work. It is discomfoting, on a personal level, to endorse his thinking considering his past. Yet Heidegger manages to go further than both his predecessors and successors in regards to the philosophy of language and technology, and reveals ideas and principles that are to a certain extent opposed to the totalitarian thinking characteristic of the Reich. It is not the intent of this work to excuse the atrocious crimes that were committed during the Second World War; the goal is to elicit ideas that might change our ways of perceiving reality, and Heidegger's proposal may help in this regard.

Throughout my studies in Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Languages, I have seen how language can transmit more than meaning, giving rise to infinite questions concerning its ontology. In this attempt to understand the nature of language, and through accessing the theories of linguists and philosophers, I have been struck by the notion that language and technology are very much alike. We use phones to make calls; we need an internet connection to send emails. These technologies require words and meaning in order to exist. You would not know an email is an "email" were it not named or imbued with a purpose, sense, and meaning. From smartphones to low-tech objects (for instance, a wooden table or a fire cooker), these technologies are only perceived as such because we give them meaning through language. Language, in this sense, interferes in the precise use of technology and their semantics, but it is not otherwise noticed, because we take language for granted. Language is only recognized when it is problematic (e.g., hegemonic ways of expressing and using language) or in its absence (e.g., developing new languages for people with disabilities). The same happens with technology. Someone may choose to commute by taking the subway, but the subway is not perceived; it too is taken for granted. The subway only happens to be perceived as a technology when it does not work as intended (e.g., when it is broken, delayed, etc.) or does not exist (e.g., in developing countries lacking public transportation).

If we expand this notion to language and technology as elements that interfere in our social construct of reality and how we interact with it, they can also be understood as matter that only exist only through humans; changes in technology will lead to changes in language (e.g., communication by letter vs. communication by SMS), and changes in language will lead

to new relations between humans and the technologies we use (e.g., speaking with a chatbot or using deep neural software for translation purposes). It is through Heidegger that we can find an explicit connection between language and technology, which is precisely the motivation for situating his philosophy as the axis of the present text.

What is groundbreaking in Heidegger's philosophy is his attempt to bring forth the idea that technology and language are not merely tools. Heidegger's work is intricate in its approach, and has necessitated the dedication of an entire chapter of the present text to elucidate on his ways of thinking and provide a consistent framework which encapsulates the idea that language and technology are more similar than we might commonly believe. The following chapters disclose the complex theoretical lines present in the first chapter and shed light on the undertaking of justifying why language and technology should not be considered merely as instruments. The second chapter lays the foundation for critically analyzing the ways of thinking that consider language and technology as instruments, and compares them with Heidegger's philosophy in order to further develop a framework that places language and technology together.

In the third chapter, the role of language and technology as world-makers is expanded upon and used in reference to other philosophers and thinkers in order to build upon the idea that we make and use technologies to interact with the world. In the last chapter we analyze the fundamental relation between language and technology as part of human subjectivity, bringing into play examples and ideas developed by thinkers that are not strictly related to the philosophy of language and technology. Overall, the theoretical framework presented holds to Heidegger's view that language and technology are not independent of humans and should not be perceived merely as instruments, but rather are elements that are experienced through us; that is, the "use" and "experience" of language and technology on a daily basis changes us and changes the world we inhabit.

The objective of this text is to explore the ontological and epistemological value of language and technology and its subsequent interplays with human essence.

1. First steps towards Heidegger's philosophy of language and technology

Martin Heidegger is widely known for his contributions to the fields of philosophy of language and philosophy of technology, influencing later thinkers such as Don Ihde and Peter-Paul Verbeek (despite their divergences from Heidegger's approach) regarding the hermeneutics and phenomenological perspectives of these two topics. He was majorly interested in the thinking (*Denken*) issues, especially in relation to notions of *Being*, with his thought rooted in the Western philosophical tradition.

Heidegger's work cannot be defined by simply confining his thinking to the categories of phenomenology and hermeneutics in relation to philosophy of language and philosophy of technology. Although any attempts to shed light on Heidegger's view for readers not familiar with his thinking would require more space than the present text provides, offering at least a glimpse into his work is necessary to further advance understanding about the relationship between language and technology and their subsequent interplays. This introductory chapter is not intended as a shortcut to Heidegger's thinking, but seeks to provide an overview of his later views on language and technology.

The following section outlines Heidegger's thought in relation to language and technology, as well as providing an appraisal of the origins of his philosophy, with the aim of drawing a line between this and subsequent chapters of the present text which highlight the lack of contextualization of contemporary and modern philosophy of language and technology in examining the relationship between these two ways of thinking.

1.1. Heidegger's philosophy and perception about the role of words in true thinking

Heidegger's thinking is traditional, with its roots firmly established within the Greek tradition, phenomenology, scholastic theological principles, and German idealism. He was chiefly concerned with the aspects of and the relations between humans and *Being*, that is, humans as the matter in which *Being* is expressed, takes presence, and is known. Being is hereby capitalized because Heidegger treats *Being* as a noun. In the German language, all nouns are capitalized. By capitalizing Being instead of treating it as a verb, susceptible to conjugation, *Being* is also conceived as something that lives through *whatever is*; it manifests itself continuously as *whatever is*. I will return to the concept of Being later on, as this matter is crucial to further proceeding, but we clearly see that the change from the verb to the noun is

vital while engaging with Heidegger's thinking. Readers must be sensitive to *how* he says things, not just merely to *what* he is saying.

Heidegger's hints to his own thinking often lie in word construction and how words are treated in a single sentence instead of the accepted and official version of grammatical rules in traditional written texts. Indeed, each piece of syntactic construction is an opener towards the meaning of his thoughts. By decoding and recoding language, Heidegger calls on readers to actively contemplate the challenges of his work, word by word. According to Heidegger, "[...] all ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary" (QT 27)¹. Thus, the task of understanding Heidegger's thought will always be undertaken through his texts in the form of a pursuit to transform our relationship with language, that is, to critically confront the tenor in which language is uttered and expressed. The very possibility of approaching Heidegger's semantics lies in the ability to switch our experience and thoughts about language. The philosopher Krzysztof Ziarek (2013 : 115), interested in analyzing Heidegger's writing as a means to decode his thinking, makes a stimulating conceptualization about Heidegger's word construction, and, therefore, thinking:

[...] from *Er-eignis* and *Da-sein* to *An-fang* and *Ge-stell*. The hyphen and its enacting of the origivative in-between (word to sign: saying to meaning; *Stimmung* to *Stimme*) is coupled in its workings to the nexus of prefixes, which from the start play a pivotal role in how Heidegger thinks and writes. It is possible to quickly sketch out Heidegger's approach to language precisely by way of paying attention to four strings of words he uses to give the particular resonance to his remarks: *Wort* (word); *sprechen* (to speak) and *Sprachen* (language); *Sage* and *sagen* (saying); *Stimme* (voice) and *Stimmung* (tonality, pitch, mood). [...] the various ways in which the event "events," resonant in how the sheaf of words with the root *-eignen* is diffused through Heidegger's texts, take explicitly the tone of language, that is, the event transpires by way of *sagen*, *sprechen*,

¹ The abbreviation "QT" makes reference to some of Heidegger's essays. This abbreviation system is commonly used in philosophical texts, especially those referencing Heidegger. The following abbreviations are related to some of Heidegger's work I use throughout this essay, including "QT:"

BT: "Being and Time"

E: "*Das Ereignis*" (translated by Krzysztof Ziarek (2013) in the article *Giving its Word: Event (as) Language* by the same author).

NL: "The Nature of Language" (present in the book *On the Way to Language*)

OL: "On the Way to Language"

QT: "The Question Concerning Technology"

T: "The Turning" (present in the book *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*)

WN: "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" (present in the book *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*)

stimmen, in short as the relational momentum associated with the word (*Wort*). While there is no exact mapping, word for word or prefix to prefix, of the way the event 'gives' onto the cluster of words explicitly moving language (from *sagen* to *sprechen* and *stimmen*), what strikes one is the precise and sustained deployment of the hyphenated prefixes, which animate much of Heidegger's writing.

It seems clear that the emphasis on terms, words, and derivatives of language – word (*Wort*), to speak (*sprechen*), language (*Sprachen*), saying (*sagen*), voice (*Stimme*), or tonality (*Stimmung*) – are the very motor of Heidegger's thinking about language. It is no matter of coincidence that they act with other words related to the movement of Being, in tune with the hyphenation of *Er-eignis*; German for occurrence, happening, incident. This incident, or better referred to as "the event" as per Ziarek, is the turning of Being. This turning or rotating, is the continuous movement of thinking or, as Heidegger remarks, "*Das Ereignis..., als welche die Kehre des Seyns sich stimmend sich ereignet und das Zeigen des Zeichen gewärt,*" which translates (E 173) to "[...] the event is the turning of Being, which, eventing in a tonality, grants or accords the showing/display of signs." The intentional hyphenation onto prefixes is, as a matter of fact, the very turning of Being; the movement toward true thinking, which happens when we truly think about words.

For Heidegger, words are the material that allows signs, which he references as concepts and ideas, to appear; that is, for language in the sense of human languages to exist. Hence, this movement towards the way-making of language, scrutinized under hyphenated prefixes, is that which is not otherwise figured out by propositional statements or concealed descriptive forms of language, which subsequently sets boundaries to language, to Being, to true thinking. According to Heidegger, the route to real thinking is located in the passing of language, in its movement, in "the event." Responding to Being means being responsive through language, as "language is the primal dimension" in which the correspondence between humans and Being transpires (T 41).

1.2. The relationship between language and Being

Being, for Heidegger, only *is* when thinking is exercised, which is at heart related to language, in the way humans experience and undergo their relation to language. As Heidegger states, "[...] scientific and philosophical information about language is one thing; an experience we undergo with language is another" (NL 59). According to William Lovitt (1977: xv):

Being is the Being of whatever is, yet transcending and governing the latter in the particularity of its presencing. Being may perhaps best be said to be the ongoing manner in which everything that is, presences; i.e., it is the manner in which, in the lastingness of time, everything encounters man and comes to appearance through openness that man provides. For Heidegger, Being is the very opposite of an abstraction fashioned by human thought. Rather it is “what is given to thinking think.” True thinking should not concern itself with some arcane and hidden meaning, but with “something lying near, that which lies nearest,” which, in virtue of that very nearness, man’s thinking can readily fail to notice at all (WN 111).

The complexity of the temporal relation presented by Lovitt, in particular regarding Heidegger’s far-ranging view of the *whole*, refers back to Being existing and presenting to us in whatever *is*, in the continuous relation of approaching and concerning humans and Being through language. It is in the *is* that “Being is uttered” (T 46). Although dramatically complex, Being approaches and concerns us in *whatever is*, but for perceiving Being, a transformation in our relation to language is demanded. For Heidegger, Being is concealed in itself, and thinking cannot readily uncover it if language is not perceived in a manner different to that in which it currently is, principally because modern humans are distant from opening their relation to language, which is necessary for untrapping Being. Yet before moving forward, it is necessary to focus on the matter of Being, and why Heidegger was concerned with unfolding the nature of Being and its subsequent relations to language.

For Heidegger, there is an issue, a problem, between language and Being. In 1927, Heidegger planned to scrutinize the nature of Being through the analysis of its intrinsic temporality in the book *Being and Time*. He did not reach this goal, since the book was never finished, with only the first part being published. In *Letter to Humanism*, Heidegger argues that his work was not destined to be finished, since “[...] the adequate execution and completion of this other thinking that abandons subjectivity” fails to represent “the adequate saying of this turning and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics.” (Heidegger 1993: 231). All at once, Heidegger’s former conception of the transcendence and temporality of Being was no longer appropriate for naming the relation between time and Being. That is, thereafter, it became clear that the issue, the problem of Being, was not entirely entangled with time but with language. It became explicit to Heidegger that another language other than

the one used in philosophical tradition, that is, the metaphysical language², was required to think of Being. According to Heidegger, instead of employing the “doctrines of categories” – the elaboration of a new set of words or vocabulary, that is, “[...] the usual name of the discussion of the Being of beings and ‘theory of meaning, ’[meaning] the *grammatica speculativa*, the metaphysical reflection on language and its relation to Being” (BT 6) – the transformation of language requires an *experience* that we would undergo with language for untrapping Being.

Let us assume that, in order to experience language and Being, we were to change the structure of our way of using language and giving names to things and to the world we live in, different from the one we currently conceive of. If this were the case, we would remain imprisoned by the very logic of metaphysical language, which is precisely what Heidegger proposes to change. According to Françoise Dastur (2011: 226-227) the transformation to experience Being through language demands that we “[...] give up our usual understanding of the relation between word and thing as a connection between two already constituted objects.” This conception of language ruled by logicist and grammatical forms is commonly referenced as the Augustinian³ image of language, which, in plain terms, and as first criticized by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, is the view that words are merely nominalistic instruments used to attribute meaning to the world and that language is solely a lexicon.

1.2.1. Words and things

By 1934, Heidegger had begun to make a clear distinction of the accepted understanding between words and things, such as that conceived by Augustine. That year, he delivered a lecture-course⁴ in which he questioned the logicist conception of language that makes words

² One of the most critical issues in modern philosophy is the relation of language to its subject-matter, which is directly related to metaphysics as an analytic route of thinking. If metaphysics is analytical at heart, it follows that it is analytical in discourse. According to philosopher John Herman Randall (1967: 591), “metaphysics is reflection on the world as intellectually experienced, and this means, on the world as known and formulated and expressed in language or discourse.”

³ In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein uses a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions* to build his theory that Augustine’s perception of language was overly simple. Augustine’s passage was “I am investigating...not making assertions” (*Confessions* XI, xvii p. 233; Oxford: OUP 1992 edition. transl. Henry Chadwick). According to Wittgenstein’s criticism of Augustine’s work, the choice of “making assertions” puts words in a position of only being able to name things, and everything that surrounds us is only a combination of names.

⁴ Some fragments of Heidegger’s lecture-course delivered in 1934, originally named as *Logik als Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache, Gesamtausgabe*, were translated by Françoise Dastur in her article

and things separated objects with independent ontological meanings. He emphasized that word (*Worte*), terms (*Wörter*), and language (*Sprache*), “can only be found where there is a saying, i.e. amongst human beings.” Since then, this distinction subsequently affected his work and consequently the concept of language and Being for him. By making this distinction, Heidegger sought to highlight that words are not the same as terms, which are merely graphemes and phonemes and cannot hold the ontological value of the things they designate. Words, on the contrary, are what gives Being its presence, and saying is the source of Being. That is, only by experiencing language, saying language, that Being is untrapped from metaphysical forms of language that have prevailed in the philosophical Western tradition.

This definition is not limited to human ability to speak, the act of producing vocal sounds *and* as a means of communication. Rather, it displays Heidegger’s aim to let Being present itself to the world as an experience of language. For Heidegger, according to Dastur (2011: 228), “the subject-object relation is secondary, since what allows a subject to meet an object is the preliminary establishment of a soil common to both of them. World is this common soil; it comes before the object, since it is not, as says its traditional definition (human being as *zoon logon ekhon*), the totality of beings but a structure of Dasein.” Dasein, commonly perceived in German philosophy as “there-being,” that is, the uncanny experience of Being to human beings, is the form by which existence is therefore experienced and ultimately defined as the meaning of life itself. In this sense, for Heidegger, words are the matter of significance, in which there is an intentional relation between subject and object. In *Being in Time*, Heidegger began to build the route of thinking that Being opens us to the world of Dasein not as the outcome of an intellectual performance or achievement, but as the human disposition (*Befindlichkeit*) to find oneself and feel oneself in the world (BT 29). That is, to experience Being, language should not be restricted to the domains of phonetic utterance of words – nor should words be perceived on the basis of phonemes and graphemes – but rather as a discourse, accounting for saying.

This conception of language, in which it is not concealed to phonetic processes of communication, first emerged from Heidegger’s understanding of the Greek *logos* as discourse in *Basic Writings*, giving it the meaning of the “[...] manifest [of] what is in question in discourse” (Heidegger 1993: 32). From that point on, Heidegger’s thinking regarding the

originally published in French under the title “Heidegger et la question de ‘l’essence ’du langage” in *Alter. Revue de phénoménologie* 19 (2011). The fragment later used in English was translated by me from the original French article. The original quotation of Heidegger in German translated into French by Dastur was: “*ne peut être trouvé que là où il est parlé, c’est-à-dire parmi les hommes.*”

traditional logic of *logos* underwent a paradigmatic shift, leading him to believe that language is the very advent of Being. In fact, in *On the Way to Language*, he built his thinking on top of the verse from Stefan George that states “Where word breaks off no thing may be,” and in which he stresses that the relation between language and the world, between words and things, is “among the earliest matters to which Western thinking gives voice and word.” Word and thing, in Stefan George’s verse, according to Heidegger, “assaults thinking in such an overpowering manner that it announces itself in a single word;” the word *logos*. Accordingly, the word *logos*“ speaks simultaneously as the name for Being and for Saying” (OL 80).

Inspired chiefly by Greek philosophy regarding the word *logos* and its subsequent interplays with Being and language, Heidegger began to develop a route of thinking about language that, in contrast Aristotle’s definition of language as *phone semantike* – that is, the nature of language based solely on phonetic processes, a definition that is also present in Husserl’s *Logical Investigation*, “Expression and Signification” – suggested that, to experience Being, humans must dwell in language, which is a capacity that is only experienced in true thinking. To this, Heidegger adds that “Being speaks everywhere and always through all languages. The difficulty is not so much to find in thinking the word for Being, but it is rather to purely retain the found word in proper thinking” (Heidegger 1950: 338)⁵.

Instead of perceiving the Greek *logos* as superior to any other word from any other language, Heidegger believed it was the closest form from any other idiom to saying Being. The reason why Heidegger decided to use *logos* is because the Greeks possessed a different relation towards language, one that was not instrumental, one that could open itself up and let Being present to us. For Heidegger, this is precisely the reason behind why the Greeks invented philosophy: they could dwell in their language without aiming to control it, the opposite of metaphysical forms of language.

Thus far, we can attempt to understand the model on which Heidegger built his thinking about the relation of Being and language, but it is necessary to move forward with conceiving

⁵ This quote was extracted from Françoise Dastur article originally published in French under the title “Heidegger et la question de l’essence du langage” in *Alter: Revue de phénoménologie* 19 (2011). The fragment used in English was translated by me from the original French article. The original quote in German translated into French was: “L’être parle partout et toujours au travers de toute langue. La difficulté n’est pas tellement de trouver, dans la pensée, le mot de l’être, mais bien plutôt de bien maintenir le mot trouvé dans la retenue d’une pensée véritable.” According to Dastur, the original German text was written by Heidegger with the former title “*Holzwege*” (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950: 338).

what metaphysical forms of language that are key in order to understand the interplays between language and technology.

1. 3. Metaphysical forms of language

Western philosophy was traditionally influenced by logical thinking in the Aristotelian sense of the world. As previously mentioned, in the Greek philosophical tradition, language is ruled within the realm of *phone*, the presence of sound, in its material manner. In other words, the explanation that language is constituted by language's ability to be used as means of communication and expression, rendering language merely as a tool. Heidegger shows that, when language is conceived as an aggregate of given elements, similar to the classical theory of truth – characterized as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, that is, the adequation between thing and intellect – Being cannot present to us. In other words, true thinking cannot take place.

For Heidegger, metaphysical forms of language are responsible for setting the tone of control operations, always assessed relatively to their degree of effectiveness as a way of information processing. When language becomes information, it turns out to be an effective tool. Indeed, we can see this clearly nowadays, as language is reduced to a means of decoding and recoding information under the operations of power, e.g., data produced on social media which is then shared, stored, and manipulated by those who control platforms of information, such as Meta, Instagram, etc. But, in doing so, according to Ziarek (2013: 112), “[...] Being does not happen here as the event that gives but instead opens up into an informational code, intrinsically predisposed to manipulation, that is, predisposed to be at the disposal of power. Being here has no words, only signs, which, in spite of the multiplicity of languages, appear to be reducible to two, to the binary code of informational operations.” This means that Being is concealed, coded in terms of power, and susceptible to the ubiquity of information, to codes. When Being is enclosed in terms of power, it cannot present as the event. In other words, if information is power, and if Being becomes a robust carrier of information, language thus merely transmits information and loses its capacity of saying anything beyond codes.

Let us suppose the informational essence of language is primarily used to process and convey information. In this case, the informational coding of language presents humans with the ability to control and profit from this processing. Everything is thus at the disposal of humans' desire for power, informational or otherwise, in which the relations of benefit and profit are ever more apparent. The transformation Heidegger proposes is, precisely, a turning

away from the metaphysical tone of language in relation to power, which compresses language into information. As Heidegger argues, metaphysical language is the “[...] technicalization of all languages into the sole operative instrument of interplanetary information” (NL 58).

What is at stake in the transformation suggested by Heidegger is specifically a "re-tuning" with a type of tonality not suffused nor controlled. While signs, ideas, and concepts may be within the territory of controlled relations, including its reformulations, alterations, and subversions, the event, as Heidegger argues, "[...] is the turning of being, which, eventing in a tonality, grants or accords the showing/display of signs. As such the event is the treasure or wealth of words. This wealth of words is to be experienced as the origin of the vocabulary, that is, of signs or words in the usual sense" (E 172).

Heidegger's transformational view of language is the turning of Being and this turning has its origin in words. Following on from a previous quote, words are “[...] The soundless voice/tune of Being. What is called voice here? Not 'sound' but the tuning, that is, letting experience" (E 283). According to Heidegger, “[...] the word itself is the relation, by holding everything forth into Being, and there upholding it.” However, if we were to metaphysically evaluate the “soundless voice/tune of Being,” or the turning of “letting experience” to take place, what is intended as “words” would not be understandable. Indeed, human overconfidence – or possibly arrogance – about being able to act upon everything and to effectuate change over things is countered when we allow the transformation to occur without our need to act and to constantly “make it happen.” Perhaps, the metaphysical human reaction reinforced by the language we confined can presage what would need to be permitted to transform, although this would oppose Heidegger’s proposal to transformation.

To experience Being through language, to let it share its words, the prerequisite is to let language occur. As Heidegger states, “[...] we are, then, within language, and with language before all else. A way to language is not needed. Besides, the way to language is impossible if we indeed are already at that point to which the way is to take us. But are we at that point? [...] Do we in fact already live close to language even without or doing? Or is the way to language as language the longest road our thinking can follow?” (OL 113). Again, the motion, the way-making of language, present in Heidegger's *On the Way to Language*, keeps itself separated from power while unlocking its “essence,” allowing it to be unleashed, inapplicable to control, in a sense developed in *Besinnung*, or reflection.

Heidegger's thinking forces us to leave metaphysical thinking aside and to try to inhabit language, instead of merely understanding it as a simple tool or a means of communication and expression. We can indeed suppose that this turn from metaphysics brings us closer to the "essence" of Being and language, and therefore to the nature of technology. In the next section, we will develop the concept of essence introduced by Heidegger. "Essence" will play a pivotal role in the following sections, in which we define the relation between language and technology according to Heidegger's later view, and further illuminates our approach to the association between the routes of thinking of philosophy of technology and philosophy of language.

1.3.1. The question of "essence"

The concept of "essence", for Heidegger, gained greater importance in *Contributions to Philosophy*, in which he adopted the meaning of *Geschehnis der Wahrheit des Seins*, German for "the happening of the truth of Being," and opposed to the meaning of *koinon*, the matter that bind us in the common, as understood by the Greeks. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger develops this concept even further, and the word "essence" is attached to the understanding of *Wesen*, something that is present. Yet, even if the idea of "presentability" refers to the expression of permanence and staticity, for Heidegger, *Wesen* is the unfolding of Being of language. According to Dastur (2011: 225), "essence" should be taken "[...] in a nominal sense as the "essence" or "quiddity" of something, but in the sense of the old verb *wesen*, as the temporal unfolding of the being of something." On the same note, Heidegger brings forth what for him is the essence of technology, which is intrinsically linked to the unfolding nature of language. Accordingly, "What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. [...] Technology is no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm of the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth" (QT 12).

Both the essence of technology and language are permeated by the property of "making something known," of disclosing the reality of something. Regarding language, Heidegger argues that its essence is not a matter of definition, but of experience. He says, "no matter how we put our questions to language about its nature, first of all it is needful that language vouchsafe itself to us. If it does, the nature of language becomes the grant of its essential being, that is, the Being of language becomes the language of Being" (OL 72). The reversing of the phrase "the Being of language" to "the language of Being" stresses that the "essence" in both sentences (originally in German *Wesen der Sprache* and *Sprache des*

Wesens) do not behave equally. The first one is concealed under the terms of traditional meaning of *essentia*, of substance, while the second gains the meaning of “something that is present,” that is revealed. As regards technology, Heidegger argues that “*Technè* is a mode of *alètheuein*”⁶. It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another” (QT 13). The understanding of the “essence” of technology is disclosed as an advent, something that unfolds itself to us.

As previously mentioned, both language and technology, in terms of their *Wesen*, are perceived by Heidegger as something similar to a “world revealing.” This understanding of “essence,” according to Heidegger, is the thinking issue of *Ereignis*. According to Heidegger *Ereignis*, or the hyphenated form *Er-ignis*, is the advent of “appropriation,” that is, when Being and humans co-belong. *Eigen*, which means everything that is proper, that happens new to us, explains why Heidegger believes that *Ereignis* is the appropriation of Being to humans. This relation between Being and humans is not a simple relation of two matters that meet each other in separate ways, in the event of the appropriation, but relates to when both Being and humans are revealed to each, when the *Wesen* is unfolded. In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger expresses that *Ereignis* “[...] grants mortals their abode within the unfolding of their being (*Wesen*), so that they may be capable of being those who speak” (OL 128). Here, the issue is not related to the vocal expression of language, as a speech faculty, but to the phenomenon of language that surpasses the domains of metaphysics: when language is the unfolding which leads toward the *Wesen*.

The link of the *Wesen* to language and technology is now clear, as we can distinctly conceive that they are a pathway to the unfolding (language) and revealing (technology) of something, of Being. However, this unfolding and revealing is restricted within the domains of metaphysics, in a concept Heidegger coins *Gestell*, or enframing. This means that the *Wesen* of language and technology are only experienced when enframed.

In the following chapter, we shall continue to advance further into the philosophy of language and technology, and the impact of these on our perceptions of reality, in order to better capture this conceptualization

⁶ The term *alètheia* for Heidegger is signified as “revealing.” In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* he states, “We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at *alètheia*, at revealing” (QT 12).

2. Subject-object: unfolding the relation between language and technology

As previously discussed, Heidegger's idea or concept of "essence" (*Wesen*) is a way towards the Enframing (*Gestell*) of Being. Words, things, experience, and language enframe Being according to metaphysics and modern technology. Enframing – in German, *Gestell* – in Heidegger's terms is the approach through which Being presents to us in the age of technology⁷. Like ancient Greek τέχνη or *tekne*, it is a mode of revealing through which Being, in its manner of governing *whatever is*, manifests itself within Enframing. This is the reason why technologies, processes, knowledge, and the intent of manipulation are incapable of revealing themselves to us; these can only conceal the "essence," in other words, enframe it. The revealing of Enframing is the force that propels humans to order everything under the uses enframed by them, which, at the same time, prevents everything that *is* to appear as it is in itself. That is, humans have a calling to determine everything in a controlling manner.

For Heidegger, metaphysics and modern science are humans acting as subjects through their work. Humans, aiming to put nature and *whatever is* into concealed procedures and experiments, instrumentalize nature according to their goals. Furthermore, in putting nature into their own terms, humans do not relate themselves to nature: they are not open to *whatever is*. Metaphysical thinking only allows scientists and modern humans to objectify themselves. And, if we look at technology, it treats everything with objectivity. Modern humans are commonly confronted with the drive to process everything, even language. In order to make sense of reality, to uncover the reality in front of us, we need to make it safe for our need to regulate power. Moreover, to set the order of *whatever is*, process every sort of entity, and develop answers to every kind of problem, humans need to bring things under control. According to Lovitt (1977 : xxvi):

⁷ In Heidegger's words: "According to ancient doctrine, the essence of a thing is considered to be what the thing is. We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is. Everyone knows the two statements that answer our question, One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity. The two definitions of technology belong together. For to posit ends and procure and utilize the means to them is a human activity. The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is. The whole complex of these contrivances is technology. Technology itself is a contrivance, or in Latin, an instrumentum. The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology" (QT 5).

Through the prescribed procedures of experiment, modern man as scientist inquires of nature to learn more and more about it. But in doing so he does not relate himself to nature as the Greek related himself to the multitudinous presencing of everything that met him spontaneously at every turn. He does not relate to nature in the openness of immediate response. For the scientist's "nature" is in fact, Heidegger says, a human construction. Science strikingly manifests the way in which modern man as subject represents reality. The modern scientist does not let things presence as they are in themselves. He arrests them, objectifies them, sets them over against himself, precisely by representing them to himself in a particular way. Modern theory, Heidegger says, is an "entrapping and securing refining of the real" (SR 167). Reality as "nature" is represented as a manifold of cause and effect coherences. So represented, nature becomes amenable to experiment. But this does not happen simply because nature intrinsically is of this character; rather it happens, Heidegger avers, specifically because man himself represents nature as of this character and then grasps and investigates it according to methods that, not surprisingly, fit perfectly the reality so conceived.

Lovitt remarks that when humans intend to instrumentalize nature, language, technology, and life itself under the terms of science, humans become subjects. At the moment humans decide to claim power over everything that surrounds and pervades them, everything is objectified. In an age where everything is available to serve a specific end, which is, in itself, an objectifying means to get everything under control, reality culminates in an enframed perception conceived by humans, instead of allowing Being present to us through *whatever is*. In a technological period of history, according to Heidegger, the objectification of the environment is enhanced precisely by technology. This leads us to Heidegger's encounter with Nietzsche's work, which, through his reading, is the fulfillment of metaphysical thinking.

While upholding Descartes' rule concerning the reality of the real, Nietzsche found the complete metaphysical manifestation of power in self-consciousness. According to Heidegger, and fundamental for Nietzsche, the will to power is no mere human inclination; "it is the mode of being now ruling everything that is, which must find accomplishment through man" (WN 96-97). In fact, Heidegger stresses, "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological. Thus we shall never experience our relationship to the essence of technology so long as we merely conceive and push forward the technological, put up with it, or evade it" (QT 4).

The will to power is concealed in the willingness to seek greater power and never fully obtain it. This, for Heidegger, is essentially the consummation of metaphysics, and this means the fulfillment of the essence of technology. Nietzsche's concept of "overman," for Heidegger, is the technological human at heart. Instead of perceiving it as an individual, the "overman" for Heidegger is humans in general, especially modern humans. Accordingly, Nietzsche's philosophy only brings to fruition metaphysical movements that were already in motion. However, it strikes as evident that the very manifestation of Enframing reality by means of power conveys the absence of Being in its true manifestation. According to the modern "Cartesian" way of science, humans represent the reality they wish for, refusing to let things appear as they are. Humans hold an imposed construction over reality, which enframes reality in a conceptual, methodical system that aims to improve, repair, and rectify everything before humans are prepared to see it all. Opposed to traditional views about technology having emerged later than science, Heidegger argues that technology precedes science. This statement concerns precisely the mode by which Being reveals itself in the Enframing that bears its essence, which is the crux of modern thinking. Science can only appear after technology because otherwise, we would not devise the meaning of science that enframes its essence as science. In Heidegger's words:

Man needs above all in our age to know himself as the one who is so claimed. The challenging summons of Enframing "sends into a way of revealing". So long as man does not know this, he cannot know himself; nor can he know himself in relation to his world. As a consequence he becomes trapped in one of two attitudes, both equally vain: either he fancies that he can in fact master technology and can by technological means —by analyzing and calculating and ordering— control all aspects of his life; or he recoils at the inexorable and dehumanizing control that technology is gaining over him (QT 24).

Both language and technology are confined under restricted forms of thinking, which enframes our ability to witness and experience reality in all its forms. In order to delve further into the relation of language and technology, we must consider the set of problems Heidegger posits in regard to how metaphysical forms of thinking can gain control over our ability to reach true thinking.

2. 1. True thinking versus metaphysics

Humans are enmeshed by a way of thinking that urges us to capture reality through controlled structures of thought. Modern philosophy does not allow Being to present to us and arrive at the point we can let what *is* to *be*, because we do not conceive a continuous way towards true thinking; descriptive forms of language, which intend to define meaning to things, is the very approach through which humans control the environment they inhabit.

True thinking, for Heidegger, always happens close to reality, in the *nearness* to reality. True thinking is, thus, humans 'most fundamental path towards being humans and approaching Being in full length, which never takes shape in logical terms or far from reality. According to Lovitt (1977 : xiv):

In true thinking man is used by Being, which needs man as the openness that provides the measure and the bounds for Being's manifesting itself in whatever is. Man in thinking is called upon to lend a helping hand to being. For Heidegger, thinking [...] brings forth into awareness and efficacy whatever is presented to it to know. It is the caretaking hand that receives and holds and shapes everything that truly comes to be and to be known. Through that receiving and shaping of whatever present, thinking, as belonging to and needed by Being, cooperates in the handing out of limits and the setting of bounds.

"The setting of bounds" runs counter to the witnessing of Being in its presence. Heidegger proposes a transformation from this position because, for him, true thinking only occurs when humans are not subject to control nor to assume dominion over things. For Heidegger, claiming dominion and while controlling, including language in metaphysical forms of language, prevents Being from presenting to us. That is, when "[...] bring[ing] about means to obtain results, effects" (QT 7), it "[...] gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as *standing-reserve*⁸" (QT 19), which continuously carries humans and things to occupy the ordering configuration of and for the use of all things. In other words, when subjecting the

⁸The concept of *standing-reserve* presented by Heidegger is the ordering of everything under meanings that only serve defined ends. In German *Bestand* denotes a supply as "standing by," and he uses the word (or expression in English) to define the way in which everything is ordered and controlled. In his words, "[...] everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for further ordering. Whatever is ordered about this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve (*Bestand*) (QT 17)."

environment to human control, humans become objects since, in objectifying everything, the meaning of everything is maintained to serve some end that will itself also be controlled.

This concept is essential for understanding the relation between language and technology insofar as modern philosophy and science, which have shaped current perceptions about these two routes of thinking, conceive of both technology and language as instruments, as tools, which is precisely what Heidegger intends to transform.

The transformation Heidegger raises is the turn, or the turning “ –the event” – away from propositional statements. The reference to propositional statements is precisely the transformation from the metaphysical determination of language; the impression that language is the encounter of power, that delimitates its territory of expansion and ability to present to us as Being when language is only perceived as a means to information. As previously stated, Heidegger’s use of hyphenated prefixes pushes in the direction of the nexus of the movement of Being as language, which defies the capturing and definition of language in the realm of signs (ideas, concepts). The conception of language becoming information reveals Being within informational code. By rendering language as the tonality of information and transposing Being into information, it leaves the door open to the acute and incisive deployments of power and manipulation. Heidegger’s proposition for transformation cannot be manufactured by humans but, by letting the transformation to occur, allows the transformation to transcend through us via language. To experience Being in language, through saying (*sagen*), through words (*Wort*), Being must give its words.

For Being to give its words, humans must completely invert the definition that has been assigned to language by Western tradition, wherein humans are believed to be the masters of language. In fact, the very definition posed by Western tradition is diametrically inverted, in the sense that language and technology now reign over humans. When humans decide to build an instrumental relationship with both languages and technologies, the metaphysical human is, thus, susceptible to be ruled by language and technology. According to Heidegger, this is exactly the metaphysical illusion, which takes human speech and the ability to reach proper thinking into the abyss of controlled manners of instrumentalization. When Being is no longer living aside from human experience, it becomes a “fantastic, self-sustained being which cannot be encountered anywhere as long as our reflection on language remains sober” (OL 129).

In concluding this second chapter, we will now address the question of instrumentality, essential to understanding the conflicts Heidegger raises in regard to the instrumentalization of technology and language.

2. 2. The question of instrumentality

As a society, we often take technology and language for granted. This “granting” takes place without us even thinking much about it. When we “make use” of language and technology, we do not think about their meaning beyond what is intended by us. For instance, when writing an email, we only think about the message we are writing, about what we want to achieve with that email. Both the language used and the technology employed in the front and back end of the software tend to be value neutral. This “neutrality,” only occurs because we see them as a separate matter from our intentions. As “users” of language and technology, these two elements are seen as instruments. They are only means to an end, used by us in order to accomplish a certain task or goal. According to metaphysical thinking, we could easily define language and technology as instruments. In fact, even Heidegger agrees, to a certain degree, stating “the instrumental definition of technology is... uncannily correct... the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology” (QT 5). However, Heidegger also insists that both language and technology are much more than instruments. As we have already seen, both language and technology shape our reality, either unfolding or revealing something to us.

The instrumental view of language and technology strips their nature of shaping or influencing the manner in which we think and understand the world around us. Let us take the email example once again. The instrumental conception, defended by metaphysical thinking, presumes that both language and technology are independent from human thinking and that human subjectivity is unrelated to the tools we create and “use.” If this was true, if modern society were to be stripped of emails and the internet, reality would still be the same as it is *with* the presence of emails. This is not only untrue, but is also counterproductive in terms of human subjectivity. These assumed “instruments” – language and technology – shape not only how we communicate, but also our perception of time and space (e.g., an email takes a fraction of seconds to move from the sender to the recipient, which years ago would have been deemed impossible) and how we position ourselves as beings in the world. Human subjectivity, therefore, is not impartial or independent from language and technology.

Accordingly, Heidegger argues, the revealing nature of technology (bringing forth the revealing of something), takes place through ancient crafts, which for him can be understood as mastery. This mastery, or better said, craftsmanship, is the revealing of *poiesis*; that is, whenever creating, a craftsman reveals something, helping to burst open true thinking and allow Being to present to us. Technology, therefore, is for Heidegger “the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technè* belongs to bringing forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poietic” (QT 13).

In contrast to this poietic nature, modern technology is the ultimate manifestation of metaphysics. As previously mentioned, the revealing of modern technology is presented as a standing-reserve. More specifically, this standing-reserve means, according to Heidegger, that the world is perceived merely as a resource susceptible to our desires and goals, a reserve for industrial production. This is especially the case if we analyze present-day society’s mindset of constantly taking advantage of nature to bring its wishes to fruition, even if this means suffocating and even extinguishing entire ecosystems.

What is at stake in Heidegger’s thinking is precisely the argument that the instrumentalization of language and technology does not suffix their entire nature, but also confines human ability to go beyond the instrumentalization of the world they inhabit. They are a way of thinking, and therefore, condition our speaking and perception of reality. This “sets upon man” (QT 19); “the merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is therefore in principle untenable” (QT 21), since, if we decided to dismiss technology without considering its entire impact on humans as beings, humans would relinquish the opportunity to experience its *Wesen*, that is, to experience Being. Similar to language, technology is deeply embedded in the human condition as thinking and speaking; much like language, it configures our understanding of the world.

According to Heidegger, language is responsible for disclosing the world. We can only express ourselves on the basis of the language we know, which directly precedes speaking and, thus, thinking. Heidegger surmises that “language is not a work of human beings: language speaks. Humans speak only insofar as they correspond to language” (OL 57). This leads to the issue that humans cannot completely control their language. Because language conditions human subjectivity, it cannot be understood as merely a means for expression and communication, nor as simply as human activity. This perception of language, but also technology, as both elements are conceived similarly by Heidegger, breaks with the eidetic

phenomenological thinking and gives to things more than an essence, but a vision that opens up ways that reveals and unfolds the world.

To this point, we have assessed the question of instrumentality according to Heidegger's thinking, and we have concluded that human beings can only experience things based on that which they know, revealed and unfolded by both language and technology. This assertion prepares us for the path toward a transformation in our relation with language and technology, one that can allow us to experience true thinking and Being and, above all else, to reach the conclusion that language can be understood, to some extent, as a technology, and technology can also be understood, to some extent, as a language. We are thus ready to approach other routes of thinking developed by other philosophers concerned with the interplays between language and technology. The next chapter introduces the aspects that make language and technology intrinsically entrenched, and explores how these interfere with our ability to understand reality and build the world we inhabit.

3. The role of language and technology in knowledge and experience

Our knowledge of and experience with the world relies on a larger whole in terms of the available information presented by the culture and the society we live in. Historical legacy, for instance, is intertwined with written language, but also with the tools we have developed over time, which are dependent on technological evolution and development. But this knowledge and experience does not necessarily include thinking about it, because neither language nor technology demand a "theoretical" attitude for us to gain an understanding of tools as tools, being both language and technology. That is, to use both language and technology, humans do not need to think about the specifications of a particular tool; if it is available for use, humans will use it either with or without specialized knowledge. This is especially true in the case of illiterate people that can still exercise communicative faculties without recognizing the value of signs such as words and grammar. We could also mention the example of modern children knowing how to play with tablets and smartphones without receiving proper training for handling these tools. Accordingly, for Heidegger, this means that, whenever we use these tools, the meaning acquired by language and technology are not "present-at-hand" (*vorhanden*) but "ready-at-hand" (*zuhanden*). In his words,

The less we just stare at the thing called hammer, the more actively we use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing. The act of hammering itself discovers the specific “handiness” of the hammer... When we just look at things “theoretically,” we lack an understanding of handiness... Handiness is not grasped theoretically at all... What is peculiar to what is initially at hand is that it withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness in order to be really handy (BT 65).

On the same note, Wittgenstein argues similarly regarding the argument presented by Heidegger in his comment on Augustine’s theory about “something that one knows when nobody asks one, but no longer knows when one is asked to explain it” (Wittgenstein, 1969: 89). This means that we do not look at things theoretically, rather, we are active players in the nature of language and technology, almost as if they are an extension of our knowledge of and experience with the world. In fact, knowledge of and experience with things can only be explicit through language and technology, because whenever we decide to display know-how in the handling and use of language and technology, knowledge of and experience with language and technology are solely witnessed through language and technology. Conversely, as much as they convey our knowledge of and experience with the world, they withdraw from human awareness when we handle and use them. We do not perceive language and technology theoretically: they are “ready-at-hand.”

Without being capable of explaining how language and technology works, illiterate people and modern children interact with language and technology nonetheless. As soon as we become increasingly intertwined with language and technology, they mediate our knowledge of and experience with the world around us. This leads to the topic that the knowledge we acquire and the experiences we absorb whenever using language and technology is not so much attached to the common agreement about their nature, i.e. what they mean or their essence, but rather to the uses we place on them. The theoretical nature of language and technology is diverse, because when utilized as tools, their functions are not attached to their meaning. Their functions evolve throughout time, and as this evolution continues with human history, their changes mutate the meaning we give to them.

Accordingly, in a interview⁹ conducted with Quentin Ladetto, head of technology foresight at Swiss DoD, concerning technologies for peacekeeping and other topics related to the dual use of emerging technologies, he shared an example of the multiple uses we give to technologies and how, just as we cannot simply control them, we cannot attach meaning to the tools once they are released into our reality. In Ladetto's words, "[...] ultrasound technology was used first to detect submarines during the First World War. After some progress and developments, it was used for medical purposes, allowing to detect if a fetus suffered from diseases of malformations. At the same time, the exact same device enabled the identification of the gender of children before birth, which, in some periods and some countries, resulted in forced abortion. [...] do you really think it was possible to imagine all the numerous uses of that technology and the different implications in politics and society?"

Similarly, Wittgenstein argues that language can change its functions depending on the uses given to it. By applying an instrumental nature to language, akin to that commonly linked to technology, he compares language to a toolbox, saying that it is an instrument that gains its meaning, or its diverse meanings, through the use humans give to that tool: "Think of tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, nails, and screws. The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities)" (Wittgenstein, 1953: 11). Therefore, both the meaning of language and technology is not so much coupled with metaphysical thinking, that is, to a name and or a definition predetermined according to a common agreement about the meaning of language and technology. Rather, when taking language and technology to the context in which they are used, these become responsible for feeding our knowledge of and experience with them and, in turn, humans are also responsible for endowing upon language and technology the extension of their uses; that is, the hermeneutics of the interaction of language and technology is what matters when attaching meaning to them.

In this brief introduction to the present chapter, we have considered the metaphysics of attaching fixed meanings to things, which does not suffix the nature of language and technology nor their manifold functions. We have also examined the implications of language and technology in extending our knowledge of and experience with the world we inhabit,

⁹ This interview was published in 2021 in the techDetector platform and written by me as part of the "Dual-use project" developed by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Envisioning. This project was created to pursue answers to the many questions regarding the application of emerging technologies related to peacekeeping and also to dual use research.

bringing to the table discussions held not only by Heidegger but also by Wittgenstein. In the following subsections we will explore the hermeneutics of language and technology and proceed toward the noninstrumentalization of these two routes of thinking. First, however, let us focus on language and discourse, before moving onto their relations with technologies and instruments and how we grant meaning to the world we inhabit.

3.1. Giving meaning to the world: language and discourse

According to Dastur (2011: 231), discourse is “[...] the condition of possibility of language and language is the worldly being of discourse, its vocal exteriorization,” which means that “significations expand into words” and not that “word-things are provided with significations.” In other words, discourse, different from language, is the basis upon which language lays its foundations; according to Heidegger, “to significations, words accrue” (BT 161). That is, the ordinary metaphysical thinking that language is confined to its grammar and vocabulary leads us to the conception that language is merely a conduit of signs. Discourse, on the other hand, can exist both in the world we inhabit through speaking and also in our inner world while we think, hear, or keep silent. For individuals who cannot hear or speak, hearing and speaking is not the resonance and processing of sounds, but the ability to allow imagining oneself to come forward. In fact, Heidegger puts increased attention to the relationship between silence and discourse in the sense that silence can say more than speaking (BT 164). According to philosopher Richard Polt (2013: 64), “[...] a discreet omission, a pregnant pause, a delayed reply. In context, these telling silences can be highly revealing—they can be appropriate ways to cut a situation along its joints.”

But what do silence and discourse have to do with language and technology? I would say: everything. As the matter at hand concerns how we attach meaning to the world, and insofar as we have assigned a world-forming feature to language and technology, it is necessary to focus on the advent of language and its entire revealing nature congruent with technology. And, for that, we need discourse to attach meaning to the world. If we are able to perceive ourselves in the world, that is, to be represented therein, such representation can only occur when oneself turns to oneself through discourse; the ability to remain silent and to hear. In *On the Essence of Truth*, a lecture-course¹⁰ Heidegger held in 1933, he draws

¹⁰ This lecture-course was first published in German as *Martin Heidegger, Sein und Wahrheit* in 2001 by Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main. The English edition was first published in 2010 under the

attention to this contingent difference between language and discourse and how it affects the unfolding of Being, since, in his words,

[...] speaking, discourse, is speaking with one another, public transaction, advising, assemblage of the people, judicial proceedings; speaking of this kind is having a public opinion and consulting, deliberating, and *thinking*. And in connection with the question of *what* thinking and opining and understanding and knowing are, contemplation arrives at *discourse*, speaking, as what is immediately accessible and in reach of the senses. Discourse is *given* and *is*, just as are many other things; it “is” as the Greeks understood the Being of beings: the available, stamped, durable presence of something. Language is something present at hand, and as such gets taken apart and put together in determinate parts and structures (Heidegger 1933, 2010: 81).

What Heidegger intends to draw our attention to is that notions that aim at granting language the mere status of a kind of sign that expresses thoughts, which is commonly expressed by linguistics, does little favor to the greater ontology of language and its ability to unfold the world to us. Similarly, from the Greek point of view, language is a *present-at-hand* predicate that holds dominion over a *present-at-hand* object in order to form assertions. This means that, for the Greeks, the ability to form assertions is the very ability to think, in which thinking is understood as a theoretical capacity. Modern thinking is pervaded by this logic to the extent that our interpretations of language are contaminated by the unquestioned and unbreakable Greek view of ascertaining what is *present-at-hand*. That is, everything is theorized through language, which makes thinking a theoretical faculty. If we decide to ask some Heideggerian questions to this matter, considering that language, on the basis of spoken and written words (mere signs) found within the world, that is, as *ready-at-hand* instead of *present-at-hand* defended by the Greeks, could language be deemed merely as an instrument of communication? Is instrumentality the true nature of language? Or, perhaps, is language a mere kind of sign, or do human signs exist because humans exist within language? Or, is not language rather a means of Dasein, similar to discourse? Does language only exist because humans can keep silent and, nonetheless, allow discourse to exist within the domains of language?

name *Being and Truth* by Indiana University Press. The present quote was extracted for the English edition. In the following pages, Heidegger's quotes from this lecture-course are referenced with the abbreviation “SW,” which corresponds to *Sein und Wahrheit*, German for Being and Truth.

It is clear that the answers to these questions are far beyond our capacity to answer them, but we can surely attempt to reach some reasonable ideas based on the understandings we have gathered so far. We have assumed that language is much more than a mere means of communication because it unfolds the world to us and through us. Discourse, on the other hand, by its ability to keep silent, gives words the capacity for revealing things. Hence, in Heidegger's words, "[...] the word breaks silence, but only in such a way that it becomes a witness to that reticence and remains a witness, as long as it remains a true word. The word can fade away into mere words, discourse can fade away into mere idle talk; this is *the non-essence of language*, whose insidiousness is as great as the miracle of language" (SW 88).

Let us not be mistaken. Although this clearly mystic perception of language and discourse could be easily misinterpreted as some sort of platonism, Heidegger wishes to bring forward that, when language is perceived in its entirety, it can reveal Being to beings and beings to Being, and not be bound as a subject in the domains of communication and instrumentality. In addition, Heidegger also tells us that, in silence, and by becoming "[...] a witness to that reticence and remains a witness," it takes us to human prelinguistic senses of, according to Polt (2013: 72), "[...] what things means as we try to find the words that best reveal what is in the moment." Indeed, and as Heidegger states in a decisive manner:

The ability to keep silent as reticence is the origin and ground of language. It must be noted that what has been said here can offer only a rough indication of the essential character of language. But this indication must do in order to make it clear that although the grammatical representation of language is not accidental, it remains superficial and inadequate; that above all, language and the question of its essence are very tightly interwoven with the question about the essence of the human being. The conception of language becomes a yardstick for how originary and broad the question of the human essence is. (SW 88)

Here, Heidegger notes that language should not be captured by standard views of sign-making, as its essence is entrenched in the essence of the human being. Words and language cannot be used to signify things only, because the distinction between signifier and signified does not account for the basic experience of humans in discourse and in language. This leads us to the matter that, in order to understand language, we should understand humanity too, because being able to speak and to exist within and through language means to be human. However, instead of coming to a standstill the question of "who are we

ourselves?,” which does not play a significant role at least in the issue at hand, the crux of this analysis should deal with another proposal, based on the things we have covered up to this point: how does language play a role in forming the world we inhabit? And, on the same note, does technology also assume the same world-forming ontology attached to language?

Heidegger argues that the totality of Being is announced *in the mystery* and *in the primal-event [Urgerschehnis]* of language. In his words, “[...] language is how the world-forming and preserving center of the historical Dasein of the people holds sway¹¹.” That is, considering that language is not a mere means of communication, it allows speakers to be exposed to the world and to Being. The poetic language mentioned in previous sections fits into this description given that the capacity of bringing forth *something* is the world-forming power of language appearing to us. Similarly, and according to Heidegger, “[...] the word is then not a replica and facsimile of things, but rather the binding formation, the bound holding-itself-together of that gathered disclosedness and of what is disclosed within it” (SW 88). As for technology, we have also learned that the meaning of technology cannot be asserted because of its infinite possible functions, which vary depending on how we use them. In fact, Heidegger even says something about technology that is quite similar to the mysterious nature of language. In his words, “[...] the essence of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth” (QT 33).

According to what we have grasped from Wittgenstein 's learnings, the uses related to the technologies we handle are woven into human activity as part of the world. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein (1969: 229) says that “our talk gets its meaning from the rest of our proceedings,” which means that the meaning of technology is as diverse as the culture and society it is inserted into and is not appended to a separate quality beyond its use. Hence, technology, similar to language, does not demand a theory to be used, but we trust them because they are part of everyday use. Don Ihde (1990: 144) calls this “multistability,” which refers to the elasticity of uses a given technology can garner without theoretical knowledge of and experience with it. He says that technologies “[...] may be variantly embedded; the ‘same ’ technology in another cultural context becomes quite a ‘different ’technology,” that is, “a

¹¹ This quotation is extracted from a modified translation performed by Richard Polt from Heidegger's original *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann). Richard Polt's article is featured in: Polt R (2013) *The Secret Homeland of Speech*. In: Powell J (ed) *Heidegger and language*. Indiana University Press, pp 63-85. The following references to Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* are noted as “GA,” and are followed by the page in which they appear in the original German article written by Heidegger.

technological object, whatever else it is, becomes what it 'is 'through its users" (Ihde 1990: 70).

What is clear up until now is that both language and technology only exist as they are because they exist through us. We now understand that the meaning of language and technology is not at stake when uncovering their nature, but their manifold uses and functions vary depending on the context in which they exist and are used. Although the aspect of use could deem both language and technology as some kind of instrument, what we have become aware of is that they are an extension of our own essence as human beings, and are what constitutes and forms the world we inhabit. To talk about the essence of language and technology is to talk about the essence of human beings, human language, and human technology. According to Mark Coeckelbergh (2017: 42), "[...] if we turn to that everyday speaking, we see that words are used in a particular way in the context of a particular technological activity. Use of language and use of (other) technologies are connected in everyday contexts, in which particular words and tools belong to larger wholes."

In order to proceed with further research, it is necessary to include humans in the equation to promote a noninstrumentalist framework of language and technology. In the present section we have come to see that neither language nor technology exist without human use. Human ability to build the world we inhabit is shaped by the discourse and the tools used in specific situations, which is when they become meaningful to us. In the following section we will examine the constitution of the world according to Greek logic and modern philosophy developed by Wittgenstein, as well as Heidegger, and how the conception of society and community is deeply rooted in the application of language and technology as an extension of our essence.

3.2. Human world, language, and technology

In *Politics*, Aristotle states that one who needs no *polis* is either a beast or a god. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger moves in a similar direction, delves into the ontological essence of politics and concludes that language is necessary for building a community. However, Heidegger still sustains the idea that silence and reticence are what allow humans to truly understand their meaning as part of a community. Conversely, Aristotle establishes a clear connection between *polis* and *logos*. In Aristotle's words (1984: 37):

That man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech [*logos*]. The voice indeed indicates the painful and pleasant, and hence is present in other animals as well; for their nature has come this far, that they have a perception of the painful and pleasant and indicate these things to each other. But speech serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust. For it is peculiar to man as compared to other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust... and partnership in these things is what makes a household and a city. (Aristotle. (1984). *Complete Works of Aristotle, Vol. 1 Bollingen Series Edition* (ed. J. Barnes). Princeton University Press.

In contrast to what Heidegger defends in terms of reticence and silence, here public discourse and political existence are bound by a shared world, which arises from debate, language, and clear communication. A public sphere cannot exist on the basis of poetic language, that is, in the hearts of solitary thinkers and poets only. It demands discussion and sometimes even disputes among dwellers because, as Aristotle points out, in a *polis*, individuals need to define both the just and the unjust. Indeed, according to Polt (2013: 78-19), the “[...] political being of a community does not consist in what goes without saying but on its members’ readiness to expose themselves through speech in the public realm. Such speech sets the truly political animal apart from pseudo-political animals,” such as those different from humans (in Aristotle’s example, bees).

Although this could dramatically disrupt what Heidegger intends to draw our attention to about the nature of language and technology, there are some key elements that we need to be aware of before moving on to the relation between humans, language, and technology. First, modern politics is pervaded by Greek logic, which demands everything be under predetermined terms for it to function; to be instrumentalized according to their objectives and goals. Secondly, Heidegger does not mean to exclude debate and communication from language nor society, nor does he aim for a silent society to exist in the place of a political one. We have already seen that Heidegger agrees that both language and technology can be instruments, but they are also much more than that. What Heidegger aspires is to recover our ability to truly think, and this is only possible when humans regain the ability to uncover a noninstrumental perception of both language and technology, different from the metaphysical thinking so defended by the Greeks and modern society.

The transformation Heidegger aims for is well-grounded in the role that true thinking has in fulfilling people's purpose in society as an active member of the world. Heidegger reflects on this matter in relation to cross-cultural relations and disputes, normally embroiled by linguistic distortions and misuse, which subsequently affect the quality of communication exchanges. For communication to occur in this context, speakers need some prelinguistic sensibilities for speaking. The "[...] fundamental attitudes and moods of peoples, which usually cannot be spoken at all in an immediate way," according to Heidegger, "[...] gain their definitive form and their power of enticement in great poetry, in formative art, and in the essential thinking (philosophy) of a people" (GA 16). Therefore, the poietic thinking taken up by Heidegger is, in simple terms, the individual turning to oneself in the use of language and discourse in order to add to the world what is not otherwise present in ordinary assertions. Poietic thinking, thus, allows the world to be built and grants humans the ability to reach Being. In other words, as much as language and discourse arise from communication in determined ways, the world only continues to be formed because humans are continually accessing poietic modes of thinking. That is, being part of the world consists of turning to the world and turning to oneself continuously. On the one hand, theoretical thinking helps us build institutions; they lay the basis for these institutions to exist, i.e., laws, regulations, ethics, and social codes. Poietic thinking, on the other hand, allows us to critically see these institutions, intervene with them. This is ultimately an endeavor in which humans could avoid instrumentalizing nature and, therefore, themselves. It could, somehow, place humans into the world as part of it, and not an independent being which is not embedded nor affected by the things proclaimed and established by these human institutions. Hence, the formation of the linguistic world we inhabit, in a sense, is extracted from the social, either collective or individual, through language. As for technology, rarely mentioned in this section, the connection is somewhat dispersed yet not lost.

What is *polis* if not a human creation, which could be seen also as a technology? In Heideggerian terms, technology is a revealing, and *polis* is a revealing of human society as a community in Greek terms. Both elements are equal in regard to their hermeneutics, but the former is defined as an instrument and the latter as the terrain we cohabit as a society. Technologies are not only embedded in the world but are also the world we inhabit, and their application in everyday use is constrained and influenced by humans. The poietic nature of technology is that of the language; it is influenced by the social, which is part of a larger linguistic and technological whole. Both things and technology, language and discourse,

cannot acquire meaning in isolation, as Wittgenstein remarks: they depend on the hermeneutics of their social and worldly contexts.

In order to understand the social context of language and technology and continue to advance towards the development of a noninstrumentalist framework that includes language and technology as something much more significant than mere tools, we shall now venture into the domains of social life as an inseparable part of this analysis.

3.3. The social context of language and technology

In 1929, John Dewey in *Experience and Nature* argued that language makes possible social institutions, similarly to the Greeks. He said (Dewey, 1929: 162) that language is “[...] the instrument of social cooperation and mutual participation.” Although clearly perceived as an instrument, language, for Dewey, opposes subject and object and is able to bridge the gap between the “existence and essence” (Dewey, 1929: 162). More in line with Wittgenstein than with Heidegger, Dewey understands language as having a bigger role in shaping our social construct, which is not linked to our inner world, as Heidegger would argue. However, Dewey also defends that language can transform our worldly interactions and even embody the relationship within it (Dewey, 1929: 173), thus being capable of shaping the social and acting as more than just an instrument. Language, for Dewey (1929: 175), does not present to us only “[...] by intent and mind but by overflow, by-products, in gestures and sound. The story of language is the story of the *use* made of the occurrences.” He continues, “[...] the heart of language is not ‘expression’ of something antecedent, much less an expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership” (Dewey, 1929: 179). Dewey’s philosophy leads us to the conclusion that humans use words to do things, that is, language is a social tool used by humans for interacting with the world, which is pragmatically rooted in metaphysical thinking. However, Dewey says something about instrumentalism that breaches the walls of linguistics and reaches the domains of technology. In his words (Dewey, 1929: 186), “[...] for other instrumentalities and agencies, the things usually thought of as appliances, agencies and furnishings, can originate and develop only in social groups made possible by language. Things become tools ceremonially and institutionally.” That is, technology, like language, is a by-product of society and is part of the worldly experience of humans.

Although this might be true to a certain degree, language and technology do not find their origins exclusively in society. If that was true, human subjectivity would be limited to social contexts, which could subsequently put into question the individual ability to think for oneself. What does become clear is that both language and technology extend to our social contexts and play an important role in shaping them, sometimes even revealing different types of realities and extending those already existing, e.g. virtual reality in terms of technology, and literary fiction in terms of written language. Nonetheless, it is by perceiving the presence of language and technology in everyday use, which is when they are usually noted as instruments of common life, that we are allowed to dwell on the question of their essence. In this sense, it would not be adventurous to say that the noninstrumentality of language and technology is linked to their instrumentality, insofar as their capacity to reach Being would depend on metaphysics. Perhaps this is human doing in achieving Being, and, possibly, human ability to experience language and technology in their essence is only attainable in connection with their instrumentality. It is too early to risk answering these queries – if we were ever to arrive at answering them – but we can at least assume that language and technology are a form of life, unseparated from human doing.

Langdon Winner, in his article “Technologies as Form of Life,” published in 2014 in the book *Ethics and Emerging Technologies*, edited by Ronald Sandler, suggests that technologies are “[...] woven into the texture of everyday existence [and] [...] shed their tool-like qualities to become part of our very humanity” (Winner, 2014, 55). That is, similar to what we previously stated, by accepting that technologies (and language) have an instrumental role in the world, it is when we could potentially understand their noninstrumental nature. Moreover, if we were to come to terms with the fact that language and technology shape our realities and transcend their instrumental nature, we could ultimately abide by the concept that our world would not otherwise exist within the limits of what is currently accepted if language and technology did not exist. Compulsorily, this very statement leaves no other alternative than to believe that language and technology are much more than simple objects, instruments, or tools. As Winner (2014: 54) argues, “we do indeed ‘use’ telephones, automobiles, electric lights, and computers in the conventional sense of picking them up and putting them down. But our world soon becomes one in which telephony, automobility, electric lighting, and computing are forms of life in the most powerful sense: life would scarcely be thinkable without them.”

In this section, we have been able to confer language and technology with a bigger role in our world, that of the social, which has great implications. We have also built toward a better comprehension of the dimensions of language and technology as not merely as tools, but as a worldly extension or a form of life. Following Dewey, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Winner, we have established that language and technology can hold a bi-directional influence in social construction, shaping reality through instrumentality and enabling it through noninstrumentality. Both are equally complementary to and relevant for what we will explore in the following sections.

In concluding this third chapter, we now move forward to the final and most decisive chapter, in which we approach a clearer definition of a noninstrumental framework of language and technology. The following chapter is suffused with the learnings gathered up until this point, although it is not restricted to them. Readers must be sensitive to the formal and informal examples shared, as well as to other thinkers not entirely related to philosophy of language or philosophy of technology, but nonetheless essential for drawing a bigger picture of a mode of thinking that is constrained neither by metaphysics nor instrumentality.

4. World-making: the unfolding of language and the revealing of technology

I was first confronted with the idea that language and technology were more than just instruments when I started watching *James Burke Connections*, a BBC TV show that gained popularity during the late 70s in the UK. The show was directed by Mick Jackson of the BBC Science and Features Department and was presented by the science historian James Burke. The show was particularly interesting due to its atypical approach in revealing the nature of science and modern technology by demonstrating the interrelations between historical achievements and technological developments. The last sequel of the show was aired in 1997, meaning that it has not provided analysis of the further advances society has made from that moment onwards in terms of technological developments. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning some of the insights shared throughout the TV show in order to shed light on the intriguing relation of language and technology and their subsequent impact on human development and history.

The first episode, called *The Trigger Effect*, has greatly influenced the present essay. In terms of world-making, Burke summarizes in the first episode the core of all the theoretical

work considered thus far in a very simple manner. He draws attention to the influence of technologies in building the world we conceive, and also on the importance of language throughout human history in documenting the steps we have taken as historical beings. In fact, in one of his lines in the first minutes of the inaugural episode, Burke affirms¹² “[...] you will never believe the extraordinary things that led to us being the way we are today. Things like, for instance, why a 16th century doctor of the court of Queen Elizabeth did something that made it possible for you to watch this screen now or the fact that because 18th century merchants were worried about ships bottoms you have nylon to wear.” He continues, “[...] the story of the events and the people who over centuries came together to bring us in from the cold and to wrap us in a warm blanket of technology is a matter of vital importance. Since more and more of that technology infiltrates every aspect of our lives it becomes a life support system without which we cannot survive.”

I am forced to disagree that we would not otherwise survive if the technologies we have now at hand did not exist. However, I must admit that they are indeed a life support system. Also, Burke confirms that technologies are not only tools but are responsible for building the world we inhabit. Like language, which is responsible for documenting life as it happens through written and oral stories, technologies are permeated by history, which is in turn loaded with political, social, cultural, economic, and psychological implications that invade human subjectivity. Just as language is capable of acting upon humans, technology influences and ultimately becomes a lifeform; a way of allowing humans to inhabit the world. Burke also brings to the table another vital element for this debate. In order to help spectators understand his point of view that technologies hold a world-forming power, he performs an empirical experiment by asking spectators to observe the room that surrounds them. In his words, “[...] take a look at the room you are in and above all at the man-made objects in that room that surround you; the television, set the lights, the phone, and so on. Ask yourself what those objects do to your life. Just because they are there, [...] the things that surround you in the modern world, [...] they shape the way you think and behave.”

If we allow ourselves to follow the experiment suggested by Burke, we would easily see what he intends to impart; just as language is responsible for making our world, likewise, technologies make the world we live in. Past generations did not need electricity to continue to live their lives, and some communities nowadays do not need it either. Nonetheless, these

¹² James Burke's quotes present in this chapter were transcribed by me and modified to fit the purpose of this essay.

very same humans from the past, without the need for electricity, invented electricity regardless of the needs they had or had not met. The same is applicable to language: dialects and new languages, such as Esperanto, have emerged even when their users already had a language to communicate with. This means that the world-making power of language and technology is not so much attached to human goals, needs, and objectives while deploying their capacities as world-makers. Rather, both language and technology have the ability to influence human goals, needs, and objectives as life happens. That is, according to Coeckelbergh (2017: 39), “[...] ‘goals’ (and values, etc.) we say we have are themselves dependent parts of [human] patterns [...]; may themselves be shaped by our use of technologies.”

As world-makers, as Heidegger would suggest, language and technology are more than instruments or tools; language enables things to appear to humans, and technology makes these things reveal themselves to us through mastery. Moreover, as opposed to the intention of fixing meaning to language and technology, and as opposed to adhering an ontology to these elements, when assigning to language and technology a noninstrumental ability, we find ourselves in an already meaningful world. In other words, it is humanity which is meaningful and has an ontology; the world itself *is* the meaning. Winner (2014: 54) says human creations are forms of life; the fact humans take language and technology for granted means humans are only aware of them while using them. We do not need to understand them to use them, we simply adhere them to *us*. Burke could guide us in understanding this route of thinking. In the episode *The Trigger Effect*, and in this same direction, he states, “[...] since more and more of that technology infiltrates every aspect of our lives it becomes a life support system without which we cannot survive. And, yet how much of it do we understand? Do I bother myself with the reality of what happens when I get into a big steel box, press a button, and rise into the sky (Burke is referencing an elevator)? Of course, I do not. I take going up in the world [...] for granted [like] we all do, and as the years of the 20th century have gone by, the things we take for granted have multiplied way beyond the ability of any individual to understand in a lifetime.”

The modern human is so entrenched in technological objects and language as world-forming elements that they become invisible to our eyes and human perception. They exceed human goals and intentions, because they hold the ability to shape humans as we use them. We do not care about how they work, we simply take them for granted because they are part of human subjectivity. Yet, although we can now clearly see that both language and

technology can harness much more than instrumental features, we are still incapable of fully experiencing them beyond their instrumentality. That is, we still consider them instruments and we are continuously trying to attach meaning to them. Why is this the case?

It is evident that we need to rethink our relationship with language and technology in order to change human instrumental views about language and technology. It is through this “togetherness” between humans, language, and technology that we can “rewrite” and “remake” human perception of these world-forming elements. In the following section, we will address these concerns by exploring some world-forming praxis that interact with language and technology in ways that are noninstrumental.

4.1 Rethinking the human relationship with language and technology

We have seen in previous chapters that language, like technology, is something that is part of human activity, and both are a form of life. Language and technology constitute our world and shape our sense of reality. However, because language and technology are perceived by humans as instruments at the service of human will, we lose the opportunity to experience Being in its entirety. Metaphysical thinking has imprisoned true thinking, which is mediated by language and technology, which are in turn instrumentalized by humans. Nonetheless, although we are used to thinking of technology and language as belonging to a different dimension than that of humans, we often embody them as part of human subjectivity, sometimes even forgetting about their presence; for instance, using a smartphone for playing games and focusing so much on the game that the smartphone becomes invisible. The same can be applied to language: we use language to communicate with people, to establish bonds between equals, to perform transactions, seal deals, etc.. While performing these activities, although they are enabled through language, we forget language is used because we are primarily mindful of the operations we are carrying out. How have humans come to have such a dualistic relationship with language and technology? Coeckelbergh (2017: 258) argues that, in everyday use, language and technology “are neither embodied or they are [sic] experienced in a hermeneutic or an alterity way.” That is, since language and technology are such good instruments, and as Heidegger would suggest that the instrumental definition is “uncannily correct” (QT 5), humans are unsuccessful in moving beyond the instrumental thinking of language and technology. According to Heidegger, “[...] the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology” (QT 5) and to language. Yet, we previously argued that, possibly, for enabling a noninstrumental

viewpoint of language and technology, we must accept their instrumentality. And, by instrumentality, we mean metaphysical thinking.

In 1979, in a conference held in the New York University Institute for Humanities, Audre Lorde said that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Although Lorde’s statement hereby used is far removed from the context in which it was first uttered, it serves to indicate what we are going to analyze next. We have learned from previous chapters that the transformation Heidegger aimed for was related to a change in thinking, which is the only way towards the unfolding of Being. This change in thinking cannot take place by springing from metaphysical thinking; “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” According to Heidegger, language and technology are what brings forth Being, but humans are notwithstanding unable to reach Being in its entirety, since our current mode of thinking is pervaded by metaphysics, which imprisons true thinking. To liberate true thinking, humans must “de-instrumentalize” thinking about language and technology, and stop perceiving these elements as separate matters from human subjectivity. As previously stated, by instrumentalizing the objects we create and use, humans, in turn, become subjects of their creations.

Indeed, 20th century postmodern philosophy of language focused so greatly on grammar and the aesthetics of discourse and signs that technologies and humans became unrelated to language. The same occurs with poststructuralist philosophy of technology; the 20th century scientific and technological philosophies influenced by metaphysical thinking lack connection to the role of language in the nature of technology, as well as setting humans apart from an active function in these ties. The hermeneutics of technologies cannot take place apart from materiality – this would seem evident – but they cannot take place outside of language either. Whenever a technology shapes our perception of reality, it does so through and with language. Both language and technology, simultaneously and in cooperation, shape our sense of reality and form the world we inhabit. But this simultaneity and cooperative alliance between language and technology, this “togetherness,” cannot exist without human activity. Otherwise, both language and technology become dead elements; useless.

What is at stake in this transformation toward a noninstrumental thinking about language and technology is the ambition of not setting aside the complementary poles of humans, language, and technology in their belonging to one another. Only by accepting that we belong to the one oneness of humans, language, and technology, will we eventually be able to critically evaluate the impact of both humans on language and technology and vice-

versa. If humans continue to see language and technology as instruments, society will keep extracting value from the things we create and keep pretending they are in themselves value neutral, which they are not. Language and technology both hold immense implications for the reality in which they are deployed: we should not ignore this. We have seen throughout history that the implementation of language and technology with dubious objectives can produce terrible outcomes. Language and technology do not occur in a void; they spring from human intellect, and human intelligence is shaped by how language and technology interfere in worldly contexts.

Let us take the Nazi propaganda as an example. In its quest to impose order, the Third Reich spent much of its time establishing a “pure” way of communicating, capable of distinguishing itself from the immoral German language used by those considered inferior. Nazism penetrated in the hearts of the German people through language. According to philologist Viktor Klemperer (1947: 15), “[...] the most powerful influence was exerted neither by individual speeches nor by articles or flyers, posters or flags; it was not achieved by things which one had to absorb by conscious thought or conscious emotions. Instead Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously. [...] Language does not simply write and think for me, it also increasingly dictates my feelings and governs my entire spiritual being the more unquestioningly and unconsciously I abandon myself to it. And what happens if the cultivated language is made up of poisonous elements or has been made the bearer of poisons? Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.”

Similarly, technology also shapes how we feel and behave and has extensive implications regarding its applications in social life. However, both language and technology are not a work of magic, but a human doing. As much as we may agree that humans are woven and driven by language and technology, language and technology are woven and driven by humans. By believing humans do not belong to language and technology, we abrogate our responsibility for the impacts both language and technology produce in social life. By instrumentalizing language and technology, humans become, absurdly, idle instruments of the capacities yielded by the things we create. Nowadays, people talk about the Hiroshima bomb as a technology with disastrous consequences, but the bomb was not created in isolation from human intellect.

In order to rethink the human relationship with language and technology, we must advance toward a noninstrumentalization of both routes of thinking, which should also complement one another. We should not understand human subjectivity independently from language and technology and language and technology ontology apart from human subjectivity. Otherwise, what do we have left? What is not so clear is how we reach this noninstrumentalization. We have some clues that might guide us in this aim, such as not separating human doing and subjectivity from language and technology. However, is this enough to reach a noninstrumentalization of language and technology?

In the following and final section we will raise some additional questions related to the noninstrumentalization of language and technology and aim to reach conclusions that will shed further light upon the work carried out until this point.

4.2 Towards a noninstrumentalist framework

Thus far, we have learned that human subjectivity and the essence of language and technology are intertwined. As we use, create, and interact with language and technology, humans become what they “are.” We have also seen that there is no such thing as “what is” language and technology, because their meaning is attached to that of human subjectivity. According to Coeckelbergh (2017: 259), “try to find a subject and it will be contaminated by objectivity. In use and performance, the human is already posthuman, contaminated, enmeshed, and entangled with words and things. But neither is there a pure object: words and tools – as words and tools – mean nothing outside human use.”

As soon as the belonging to the one oneness between humans, language, and technology becomes apparent, that is, when it becomes contaminated, objects and subjects emerge. This contamination of human subjectivity, even before we start thinking about or considering the existence of language and technology, is filled by language and technology. When we use words to describe tools, human subjectivity is entangled with language and technology. When we use tools that contain words in their making, human subjectivity is again entangled with language and technology. Thus, the essence of language and technology becomes apparent, because these are human too. And they are human because their essence is what makes it possible for humans to interact with and to build the world we are part of. If we decide to recapture the question of essence explored in previous sections, this belonging and contamination gains even more importance.

According to Heidegger, what is *proper* can only belong in the bringing forth of Being, which happens through language and technology; in Heideggerian terms, this is the thinking issue of *Ereignis*, or the hyphenated form of *Er-eyignis*. That is, *Ereignis*, the appropriation, in Heidegger's words, is what "[...] grants mortals their abode within the unfolding of their being (*Wesen*), so that they may be capable of being those who speak" (OL 128). In other words, to achieve a noninstrumentalization of language and technology, humans and these two routes of thinking belong to each other in the event of appropriation, since Being through language and technology is then able to reveal to humans and, therefore, their essence is finally unfolded.

This view of language and technology can take us far from instrumentality, in which we consider their role as meaning-making and world-forming elements inseparable from human doing. By belonging to each other, humans, language, and technology can shape forms of life. It is not because they are considered instruments that we can see their noninstrumental ontology, but because the subject-object duality unfolds in the appropriation of Being. It is precisely because the meaning of humans, language, and technology is not entirely stable, as Ihde (1990: 72) points out, that the relationship between humans, language, and technology can change as soon as life happens. This non-stability involves hermeneutics in human doing, as the praxis of exercising life through language and technology can only be interpreted through the words and things we use as life gains meaning. Meaning lies within life itself, because "[...] our experience of technology and language (including words and things as actants and as performing) is always an experience" (Coeckelbergh 2017: 261) of life. The hermeneutic role of language and technology is only appended because they belong to humans and humans belong to them and because, in the absence of any of these elements, language and technology are dead and humans would not be humans. The world as we conceive it would not emerge as it is.

Humans, language, and technology are enmeshed with and comprised of words and things; social and personal transformation can only transpire in promiscuity with language and technology. Humans will always be twisted by words and things, and without which, there would be no such thing as humanity. Coeckelbergh (2017: 263) states that "[...] with and through technology, we narrate and perform our world, and this also involves language: it can also be said that, with and through language, we narrate and perform our world. Both language and technology play a more active narrating role than is usually presumed; but humans retain a key role. With and through humans, *language and technology* narrate and perform our world." But more than narrating as an observing subject, humans, language, and technology

are the world we inhabit, and this world is constituted by the *one oneness* of belonging to each other.

To conclude, I would like to recall something James Burke raised in concluding the first episode of the *James Burke Connections* previously referenced:

Somebody said a few years ago about the way our modern world affects us all if you understand something today. [...] never have so many people understood so little about so much. So why are we in this position? Why is our modern, industrialized world the way it is and not some different way with different technology doing different things to us? [...] The plow and irrigation kicked us all off and that an invention acts rather like a trigger, because once it is there, it changes the way things are and that change stimulates the production of another invention which in turn causes change. [...] Above all, at some point, everybody is involved in the business of change. Not just a so-called great man given what they knew at the time and a moderate amount of what is up here. At no time did an invention come out of thin air into somebody's head.¹³

Things are as they are because the interaction between humans, language, and technology allow us to reach the present and will continue to transform worldly realities as long as we keep acting upon this world. The advent of Being, according to Heidegger, bursts open whenever the *Ereignis der Stille*, the advent of stillness, passes through us in the ever belonging, which is unstable, transformative, and temporal, such as life itself. Humans belong so much to language and technology (and vice-versa) that these elements continue to exist in this world even when their creators are no longer present as living beings. This is what allows the social to continue to build its fabric of values from the things we create and the words we resound. As history is dependent on human inventions and future inventions are triggered by those inventions of now and of the past, the belonging of humans, language, and technology is what unfolds Being and when Being is witnessed. The *Wesen* lies in whenever one of these poles are triggered and, therefore, is part of a continuous belonging. Although humans may cease to exist, language and technology will endure beyond the silence of death. Furthermore, they remain useful for those who come after their former inventor. This feature of outlasting human mortality is what grants language and technology their more-than-human status, even if their application may also have a temporality, because they can also become obsolete and,

¹³ Fragment transcribed by me from the TV show *James Burke Connections*, present in the episode *The Trigger Effect*.

therefore, die (e.g., dead languages and obsolete objects that are deemed useless). According to Dastur (2011: 58), “death as the shelter of being and the nocturnal source of all light is what grants to the world its realm and to the human being its existence.”

The fact that humans, language, and technology share a common fate and belong to a worldly commonplace, is what makes subject-objects no longer instruments but integrated within worldly ties. As long as we live surrounded by words and things, language and technology, we shall remain these strange species that counterfeit the natural flow of forgetting, thus letting history pass by us and through us. While time consumes everything, language and technology carry the *Wesen* of Being in the shadows of the things we have left behind.

Recapitulation and final remarks

After this journey through manifold routes of thinking that brought together philosophers such as Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Winner, Dastur, Polt, as well other thinkers such as Burke, Lorde, and Klemperer, we can start to think about the ontology of humans, language, and technology, and possibly begin to assimilate that they belong to the one oneness of worldly realities.

In the first chapter, we concluded that the link of the *Wesen* of language and technology is a pathway towards the unfolding (language) and revealing (technology) of Being. Nevertheless, we also saw that the unfolding and revealing of language and technology are restricted within the domains of metaphysics, meaning that the *Wesen* of language and technology are only experienced when enframed (*Gestell*). The second chapter allowed for a clearer capture of this conceptualization, and therein we assessed the question of instrumentality according to Heidegger’s thinking. The enframing previously dealt with in the first chapter gains its meaning through the understanding, explored in the second chapter, that human beings can only experience things based on that which they know, which is in turn revealed and unfolded by both language and technology.

In the third chapter, we looked at aspects that render language and technology as deeply rooted in human interactions with the world, thus becoming elements that interfere in the human ability to understand reality and build the world we inhabit. In assessing a noninstrumental framework of language and technology, the third chapter laid the groundwork for the fourth and final chapter of this text, which explored learnings not-entirely related to the philosophy of language and technology, but which are nonetheless essential for drawing a

precise framework that situates language and technology as world-formers. In this chapter, the notion of belonging was reached, in which humans, language and technology are intrinsically related and cannot be analyzed separately.

In this last chapter, we part with metaphysical thinking more definitively, reaching a more existential conclusion in which humans, language, and technology are constrained by their implications in the world as worldly beings. Hereafter, we looked back in part at the philosophical theories designed by Heidegger in relation to *Ereignis*, and their role in sustaining the conclusions reached on the appropriation of Being.

Ultimately, this text has concluded by evaluating the endurance of life through the persistence of the things we create, which makes them the shelter of Being and the source of *Wesen*, and which in turn grants to the world its meaning and, to humans, their existence.

In terms of next steps, this final degree project aims toward a continued elaboration of questions and answers concerning the ontology of language and technology in further studies, in particular, a Master's degree related to the cognitive sciences of language and technology. It does not intend to provide conclusions of any sort, but aspires to bring forth into the studies of Applied Languages and Linguistics the importance of evaluating the interplays between language and technology and how these impact human perception of reality. The present final project is a compilation of readings I had throughout my studies of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Languages and reflects my personal concerns related to the lack of conceptualization between the routes of thinking of language and technology.

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