

## LANGUAGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRADITION IN HEIDEGGER

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In *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*,<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger argues that the opposition between technological language, the “language that is technologically determined by what is most peculiar to technology,”<sup>2</sup> and traditional language, the “non-technologized everyday language,”<sup>3</sup> concerns our very essence. This paper examines Heidegger’s argument in the light of his general reflections on language.

Heidegger proposes that the reflection (*Besinnung*) that ponders the sense (*Sinn*) of the words “language,” “technology,” and “tradition” marking the opposition between technological and traditional language demands a rethinking (*Umdenken*) or a reorientation of our current conceptions of what these words signify today, in the age of modern technology. By rethinking the prevalent notion of technology as an instrument that is invented by humans and that serves human ends, we come to see that what is most peculiar or is ownmost (*das Eigenste*) to technology is the positing that challenges-forth (*herausfordern*) and speaks-forth a demand (*ein Anspruch sprechen*) upon us to challenge nature forth into preparation (*Bereitstellung*).<sup>4</sup> Technological language is thus determined by the essence of technology, that is, by framing or the gathered positing of all that is (*Ge-stell*).<sup>5</sup> The question is, then, what is

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache* (St. Gallen, Erker, 1989). All English translations are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-20.

<sup>5</sup> See Martin Heidegger, “Die Frage nach der Technik” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954).

language that it remains exposed in a special way to the dictate (*Herrschaftsanspruch*) of technology?<sup>6</sup> According to the current view of language, speech is:

- (1) A faculty, an activity and achievement of humans... (2) The operation of the instruments for communication and hearing... (3) The expression and communication of emotions accompanied by thoughts in the service of information... (4) A representing and portraying of the real and unreal.<sup>7</sup>

In the metaphysical conception, language is defined in terms of thinking, and thinking is defined in terms of the human activity of representing objects. Hence, language is conceived as a means for conveying information about objects. Metaphysics sees thinking as the determining factor in the relation between language and thinking. This is deemed evident in our current notion of language as an "instrument of expression" in the "service of thinking,"<sup>8</sup> and in the common view, which believes that thought uses language merely as its "means of expression."<sup>9</sup>

Heidegger claims that the metaphysical conception of language as a mere means of exchange in our modern technological age is expressed in the definition of language as information. Analytic philosophy offers a prime example of a "metaphysical-technological explanation" of language stemming from the "calculative frame of mind." According to the "technical-scientific" conception of language, thinking and speaking are exhausted in objectifying.<sup>10</sup> Speaking is thereby "only an instrument that we use to work on objects,"<sup>11</sup> and thus serves as a tool of "scientific-technological representing," which "must establish its theme in advance as a calculable, causally explicable...object."<sup>12</sup> One of Heidegger's assessments of the metaphysical and technological character of analytic philosophy is especially noteworthy:

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<sup>6</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?—Was ist das-die Philosophie?*, trans. W. Kluback and J. Wilde (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 92-93. All English translations from this text are by Kluback and Wilde.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Was Heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), 87.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Das Problem eines nichtobjektivierenden Denkens und Sprechens in der heutigen Theologie" in *Phänomenologie und Theologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970), 39, 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

Lately, the scientific and philosophical investigation of languages is aiming ever more decisively at the production of what one calls “metalanguage.” Scientific philosophy, which seeks the production of this super-language understands itself consistently as metalinguistics. That sounds like metaphysics—not only sounds so, also *is* so. Metalinguistics is the universal technicalization of all languages into the sole functioning interplanetary instrument of information. Metalanguage and sputnik, metalinguistics and rocketry are the Same.<sup>13</sup>

Heidegger also associates modern mathematical logic (*Logistik*) with metaphysics in its “decisive form of domination.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, it is a matter of grave concern for him to see that *Logistik* is being considered everywhere “the only possible form of strict philosophy” on the grounds that its procedures and results are deemed productive for “the construction of the technological world.”<sup>15</sup>

The negative characterizations of *Logistik* abound in Heidegger: It is a “logical deterioration” of traditional categorical logic,<sup>16</sup> and its development is a sign of the “decay of philosophy,”<sup>17</sup> an indication of its dissolution and ending.<sup>18</sup> The negative force of these depictions is proportional to the weight he assigns to the general role of logic in metaphysics. As the doctrine of *logos* interpreted as assertion (*Aussage*) or statement (*Satz*), logic is the doctrine of thinking and the science of statement, that is, it provides the authoritative interpretations of thinking and speaking that rule throughout the oblivion of being in metaphysics. More specifically, *Logistik* has as its basis the modern interpretation of statement or assertion as the connection of representations.<sup>19</sup> It is in this sense that Heidegger regards it as another manifestation of the “unbroken power” of modern thinking itself.<sup>20</sup> Correspondingly, he depicts the connec-

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Das Wesen der Sprache” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 160. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 226.

<sup>15</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Nachwort zu ‘Was ist Metaphysik?’” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 308.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Hegei und die Griechen” in *Wegmarken*, 427.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969), 63-4. Cf. “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten” (1966) in *Der Spiegel* 23 (1976), 213.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), 122.

<sup>20</sup> “Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41),” 226.

tions between logic and modern technology in dramatic tones: "The world would look different without the *logos* of logic."<sup>21</sup>

For Heidegger, metaphysical thinking becomes a "scientific-technological manner of thinking" that threatens to "spread to all regions of life" thereby "magnifying the false appearance, as if all thinking and speaking were objectifying." This form of objectifying thinking has the "fatal tendency of representing everything only technologically-scientifically as object of possible control and manipulation," and language itself is "deformed into an instrument of reporting and of calculable information."<sup>22</sup> However, Heidegger insists that while language is instrumental for technological thinking, it exerts its own influence insofar as it is "handled like a manipulable object to which the way of thinking must conform."<sup>23</sup>

Heidegger also refers to the metaphysical manner of thinking in our age as a "one-track thinking," a term that he explicitly associates with technology.<sup>24</sup> In a similar spirit, he calls it a "one-sided thinking" that tends toward a "one-sided uniform view" in which "[e]verything is leveled into one level," and "[o]ne has opinions on everything, and each in the same way of thinking."<sup>25</sup> There is, to be sure, a kind of language that, as the expression of this form of thinking, is itself one-track and one-sided. Our increased use of designations consisting of abbreviations of words or combinations of their initials is an indication of the growing power of the technological form of thinking.<sup>26</sup> It is a technological form of language in the sense that it heralds that order in which everything is reduced to the univocity of concepts and precise specifications. These technological interpretations of language are a given only "insofar as technology is itself understood as a means and everything is conceived only according to this respect."<sup>27</sup> If our current way of thinking values only that which is immediately useful, then language is conceived and appreciated only in terms of its usefulness for us. More importantly, this

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<sup>21</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> "Das Problem eines nicht objectivierenden Denkens und Sprechens in der heutigen Theologie," 44-5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 55-6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 22.

suggests that it is the essence of technology as framing that somehow determines what Heidegger calls the “transformation of language into mere information.”<sup>28</sup>

We can assume that, if the essence of modern technology is framing, then there is also a “language of framing.” Indeed, Heidegger claims that

all ordering sees itself channeled into calculative thinking and so speaks the language of framing. Speaking is challenged-forth to correspond in all directions to the orderability of what is present.<sup>29</sup>

It is within framing, then, that speaking turns into information. Heidegger also speaks of the “language machine” (*Sprachmaschine*) as “one way in which modern technology disposes over the mode and the world of language as such.”<sup>30</sup> We can infer that the language machine is one crucial way in which this language of framing speaks.<sup>31</sup> The language machine is made possible with the construction of electronic brains, calculating, thinking, and translating machines whose activities take place in the element of language. However, the term “language machine” should not be construed as if Heidegger were talking merely about calculators and computers. He refers to machine technology itself as “the most visible off-shoot of the essence of modern technology,”<sup>32</sup> and he insists that the fact that ours is the age of the machine is due to the fact it is the technological age, and not vice versa.<sup>33</sup> More importantly, framing itself is not anything technological in the sense of mechanical parts and their assembly. Thus, the language of framing cannot itself be reduced to anything technological in this narrow sense. Moreover, Heidegger explicitly characterizes the language machine as the “technical structure of calculating and translating machines.”<sup>34</sup> He also distinguishes it from what he calls *Sprechmaschine*, the “speaking machine” or recording apparatus. The distinction is important because he does not see the latter as “interfering into the speaking of language itself.” The language machine,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Der Weg zur Sprache” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 263.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hebel-der Hausfreund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 35.

<sup>31</sup> In “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 263, footnote #2, Heidegger refers the reader to his *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 34ff.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950), 73.

<sup>33</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 36.

on the other hand, does interfere by regulating and adjusting through its mechanical energies and functions how we can use language.<sup>35</sup>

If there is a transformation of language into the language machine that speaks the language of framing, then the next question is what is the essence of language itself that it allows for its transformation into a technological language, into information? Heidegger's answer to this question takes the *via linguistica* by focusing on "what language itself gives us to think" with the word *sagen* (to say).<sup>36</sup> The essence of language is thus defined from the essence of language itself: It is a saying that shows (*zeigen*), in the sense of letting-appear (*erscheinen lassen*).<sup>37</sup> The possibility of a technological language lies here, for it is itself a saying-showing that is limited to the mere making of signs for the communication of information. As is illustrated with Morse code signs, all that remains of language in information is "the abstract form of writing that is transcribed into the formulae of a logic calculus" whose clarity "ensures the possibility of a secure and rapid communication."<sup>38</sup> The principles transforming language are technological-calculative. Thus, Heidegger attaches much importance to the fact that "it is from the technological possibilities of the machine that the instruction is set out as to how language can and shall still be language."<sup>39</sup> This instruction spells out the absolute and overriding need for the clarity of signs and their sequences. The fact that the machine's structure conforms to linguistic tasks such as translating does not mean that the reverse holds true, for these tasks are "in advance and fundamentally bound up" with the language machine. With the "inexorability of the limitless reign" of technology, the insatiable technological demand for a technological language increases to the point that technological language comes to threaten the very essence of language as saying-showing. It is "the severest and most menacing attack on what is peculiar to language,"<sup>40</sup> for language is "atrophied" into the mere transmission of signals.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, "Der Weg zur Sprache," 254.

<sup>38</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 26.

Moreover, Heidegger claims that when information is held as the highest form of language on account of its univocity, certainty and speed, then we have a “corresponding conception” of the human being and of human life. To illustrate this conception, Heidegger quotes Norbert Wiener, a founder of Cybernetics, who says that language “is not an exclusive attribute of man but is one he may share to a certain degree with the machines he has constructed.”<sup>42</sup> This view is itself possible, Heidegger argues, only when we presuppose that language is merely a means of information. This represents a “threat to the human being’s ownmost essence.”<sup>43</sup> The interpretation and form of “language as information” and “information as language” is, in this sense, a circle determined by language and in language, within “the web of language.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, Heidegger has referred to language as “the danger of all dangers” that “conceals in itself necessarily a constant danger for itself.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, we are the stakes in the “dangerous game” that the essence of language plays with us.<sup>46</sup> Heidegger issues a similar warning with a specific reference to the language machine. The fact that language is interpreted and used as an instrument has lead us into believing that we are the masters of the language machine, but Heidegger urges that “the truth may be that the language machine puts language into operation and thus masters the essence of the human being.”<sup>47</sup>

Heidegger’s assessments of the metaphysical-technological interpretation and form of language are indisputably critical, and charged with dramatic and ominous warnings. His forebodings turn even gloomier when we consider the gripping, mastering effect that technological language has over our very essence. Moreover, language as such, insofar as it harbors the oblivion of being, makes “the step back out” of metaphysics difficult.<sup>48</sup> Language itself “denies us its essence” and instead

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Heidegger quotes from Norbert Wiener, *Mensch und Menschmaschine* (Frankfurt am Main: Metzner, 1952), 85. The English quotes are from Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings. Cybernetics and Society* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1950), 78.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>44</sup> “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 243.

<sup>45</sup> “Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung,” 36-7.

<sup>46</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 83-4.

<sup>47</sup> *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Die Onto-Theo-Logische Verfassung der Metaphysik” in *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 72.

“surrenders itself” to us as our “instrument of domination over beings.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, it is difficult for us even to “understand a non-instrumental concept of language.”<sup>50</sup>

However, in his own contrasts, Heidegger seems to offer a decidedly non-instrumental conception of language. In fact, in his reactions to the general metaphysical interpretations of language and thinking he issues his own counter-claims. Thus, while surmising that thinking and speaking form an identity belonging together to *logos* as the saying-showing of being,<sup>51</sup> he has proposed that “thinking is in the service of language,”<sup>52</sup> and that “only insofar as the human being speaks does it think; not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, in his “language is language” dictum<sup>54</sup> Heidegger has insisted that language as the primordial saying-showing of being cannot be explained in terms of or grounded in thinking or, for that matter, in anything. Evidently this saying-showing is not itself primordially an objectifying thinking and speaking, but rather objectification itself is only possible on its grounds.

Heidegger also contests and inverts the anthropomorphic definition of language. He will propose instead, “that which is human is in its essence linguistic.”<sup>55</sup> Our ability to speak is what marks us as human beings, so that “being human rests in language,”<sup>56</sup> which is “the event that disposes over the highest possibility of human being.”<sup>57</sup> Hence, the instrumental relation of the human being to language, where the human being believes itself to be “the shaper and master of language,” is really an “inversion of the relation of domination,” where language “remains the master” of the human being.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Heidegger insists that language is

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Brief über den ‘Humanismus’” in *Wegmarken*, 318.

<sup>50</sup> *Was ist das-die Philosophie?*, 92-3. Cf. *Was Heisst Denken?*, 89.

<sup>51</sup> “Das Problem eines nicht objectivierenden Denkens und Sprechens in der heutigen Theologie,” 44.

<sup>52</sup> *Was ist das-die Philosophie?*, 92-3.

<sup>53</sup> *Was Heisst Denken?*, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. “Die Sprache,” 12; “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 249-50, 256.

<sup>55</sup> “Die Sprache,” 30.

<sup>56</sup> “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 241.

<sup>57</sup> “Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung,” 38. Cf. “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 258-9.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Heidegger, “...dichterisch wohnt der Mensch...” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 184. Cf. “Bauen Wohnen Denken” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 140.

what genuinely speaks,<sup>59</sup> so that “to say properly, i.e., to show, i.e., to let appear is something humans can only do with what shows itself to them, which appears from itself, manifests and grants itself.”<sup>60</sup> Our relationship to beings, including the beings we ourselves are, “rests” on the letting-appear, on the spoken and unspoken saying-showing of language.<sup>61</sup>

The definite conception of language that Heidegger issues forth in his counter-claims is not simply antithetical to the metaphysical-technological interpretations, as if he were merely propounding a non-anthropomorphic and non-instrumental conception of language. Rather, Heidegger is suggesting that language as a human instrument is merely an effect of the essence of language as saying-showing:

The essence of language does not exhaust itself in being a means of communication. This determination does not meet its most proper essence, but only leads to a consequence of its essence.<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, technological language is itself an effect of the essence of language as saying-showing. Neither language nor technology have shown to be anthropological and instrumental in their essence. Moreover, technology in its essence is nothing technological, in the sense of machines and their parts, and language in its essence is nothing linguistic, in the sense of human sounds or words.<sup>63</sup> The essence of technology, framing, and the essence of language, saying-showing, are not human doings. In fact, we are commandeered by framing, and founded on and mastered by saying-showing. Thus, in technological language there lies a convergence of these into the event that appropriates the human being to challenge-forth all that is and to speak about all that is in the terms of information. Moreover, framing dictates its mandate to saying-showing as it unfolds into technological language. In the language of framing, the essence of technology prevails over the essence of language.

Heidegger asserts the twofoldedness of framing as the danger and as the saving power. Neither as the danger nor as the saving power is it a

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<sup>59</sup> *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 34. Cf. “Das Problem eines nicht objectivierenden Denkens und Sprechens in der heutigen Theologie,” 41; “Die Sprache,” 31; “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 254-5.

<sup>60</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> “Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung,” 37.

<sup>63</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 114.

human undertaking. Yet, the human being is required for both.<sup>64</sup> While the surmounting of technology, whereby being would unconceal its own concealment, requires the human being's cooperation, such cooperation is that of a pious thinking that ponders the essence of being and remains open to the turning (*Kehre*) of being.<sup>65</sup> Heidegger explicitly envisions this thinking as accompanied by a "releasement (*Gelassenheit*) toward things," or a comportment of "the simultaneous yes and no to the technological world."<sup>66</sup> This comportment takes the specific form of letting technological objects enter our daily world while, at the same time, "letting them rest in themselves as something that does not concern us most intimately and properly."<sup>67</sup>

In principle, then, Heidegger's position on the language of framing is not simply refractory, though it is certainly charged with negativity.<sup>68</sup> However, technological language threatens to drown out all other forms of saying-showing, and thereby master our essence as the beings who dwell in the home of language. Thus, in our world of the language machine, Heidegger bemoans the lack of the poet or house-friend "who in a similar way and with similar strength is dedicated to the technologically constructed world-edifice *and* the world as the house for a more original dwelling."<sup>69</sup>

The possibility of also saying 'no' in our 'yes' to technological language seems to be related with a continued 'yes' to traditional language. However, in the information theory of language, "natural language" is itself defined negatively as the "not yet formalized" language, so that it conceives "natural" as "lack of formalization."<sup>70</sup> One of the proponents of this theory, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, has said that "any attempt to make a part of language clear (through its formalization into a sign system) already presupposes the use of natural language, also there where it

<sup>64</sup> See "Die Frage nach der Technik."

<sup>65</sup> See Martin Heidegger, "Die Kehre" in *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1962).

<sup>66</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Gelassenheit" in *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 25-6. Cf. "Introduction" to *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), xxxii.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-5.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. William Lovitt and Harriet Brundage Lovitt, *Modern Technology in the Heideggerian Perspective* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 233-41.

<sup>69</sup> *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 31. Heidegger's emphasis.

<sup>70</sup> "Der Weg zur Sprache," 263-4.

is not clear.”<sup>71</sup> For Heidegger, this statement illustrates how natural language, which he understands as the “non-technologized everyday language,” represents a “limit” that “still survives...behind all technological transformation of the essence of language.”<sup>72</sup> Defined positively, the so-called “natural language” is what Heidegger calls *überlieferte Sprache*, traditional language. Since *Überlieferung* means, literally, “handing down over” or “delivery,” Heidegger distinguishes the “handing down over” in tradition from the “mere passing on” (*Weitergabe*). “Passing on” is perhaps compared best with what Heidegger characterized as *Tradition* in *Sein und Zeit*. It barely makes accessible what it “gives over” to the point of covering it up, “delivering over” to self-evidence “what has come handed down over to us” and blocking our access to the primordial sources from which it is “handed down over to us.”<sup>73</sup> *Tradition* is concealed in technological language. It is worth noting that Heidegger also insists that “even language as information is not language in itself, but historically according to the sense and limits of the present age.”<sup>74</sup> In fact, with the inauthentic form of thinking in our modern technological age, language itself flounders in inauthenticity as it

falls in the service of the communication exchange in which objectification as the uniform accessibility of everything for everyone spreads itself out by disregarding any limit. Language thus comes under the dictatorship of publicness [which] decides in advance what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible.<sup>75</sup>

Technological language is thus the language of inauthenticity. It is the modern technological idle talk (*Gerede*).<sup>76</sup>

Traditional language, in contrast, is the “preservation of what is original,” as the “safeguarding of the new possibilities of the already spoken language.” It “contains and grants” what remains “unspoken.” Thus, it harbors new ways of saying-showing that are potentially different from those of technological language. The poet’s task is that of “saying the

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<sup>71</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 26-7. Heidegger quotes from C. Fr. v. Weizsäcker, “*Sprache als Information*” in *Die Sprache, Fünfte Folge des Jahrbuchs Gestalt und Gedanke* (München: Oldenbourg, 1959), 70.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 21.

<sup>74</sup> “Der Weg zur Sprache,” 263-4.

<sup>75</sup> “Brief über den ‘Humanismus’,” 317.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Sein und Zeit*, 126-30; 167-70; 173.

world anew" and "to bring what is not-yet-seen into appearance" from this traditional language.<sup>77</sup> However, the function of technological language to provide clear signs and sequences of signs is at odds with this task. This is why poetry "does not, on principle, let itself be programmed."<sup>78</sup> With traditional language there is a special relation to language where humans speak only insofar as they "co-respond" (*Ent-sprechen*) to language, which is what "genuinely" speaks.<sup>79</sup> Following Goethe, Heidegger also distinguishes this as the "deeper" and "poetic," in contrast with the "commonplace" and "superficial," relationship to language.<sup>80</sup> The former is a relation to "the language that has grown historically...the mother tongue," the language to which the human being's essence is commended and within which the human being speaks. Thus, with regard to traditional language, Heidegger proposes considering the special character of "instruction in the mother tongue" in this age of the language of framing. In fact, he suggests that this language instruction might have to be, instead of an "education," a "reflection" on the danger threatening language and our relation to it.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, it must be a reflection on "the saving power that conceals itself in the mystery of language, insofar as it always brings us into the nearness of what is unspoken and what is inexpressible."<sup>82</sup>

The question of language, technology, and tradition is even more pressing for us today, in the era of information technology. Is there any longer an opposition between technological and traditional language?

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<sup>77</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 27.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>79</sup> *Hebel-der Hausfreund*, 34-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. Heidegger quotes from Goethe's *Werke*. 2 *Abt.* Bd. 11. (Weimar 1893), 167.

<sup>81</sup> *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, 27-8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

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