Forms of Life

Ideology and Propaganda

By
Daniel Rueda Garrido

Contents

> *Our highest insights must –and should!– sound like stupidities, or possibly crimes, when they come without permission to people whose ears have no affinity for them and were not predestined for them.*

Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

---

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Fragment 30, pp. 30-31.

Introduction
Being and Language

From the outset, I must acknowledge that my view is sustained by the rejection of the long-standing position (at least since Humboldt, Herder and then Whorf-Sapir investigations) that says that we and our world are determined by our language, put it by Benjamin Whorf as 'that world which is "to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group"'.[2] Furthermore, I have a critical view of the milder version of the linguistic determination: I claim that we are neither mere interpretations (of interpretations), as Nietzsche suggested,[3] nor can we be revealed in our being through language as advocates of narrative identity such as Hannah Arendt and Paul Ricoeur seem to propose. However, I hold that those interpretations and narratives reinforce and justify who we are, what we want and what we do. In its representational mode, language is essentially a tangential phenomenon, no matter how

---

2 Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 1978), p. 137.

3 '"There are only facts" I would say: No, facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing (…) The "subject" is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.- Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis'. In Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1968), p. 267. My response, which is going to be developed throughout the book, is as follows: We are the adoption of a certain way of being and acting and only from it do we 'interpret' or arrange the world, but we are not an interpretation because we are the totality (or the incarnation of it), and only what is within a totality can be interpreted, or I should say, endowed with meaning. The adoption of this way of being and acting is also not an interpretation but the will to be a particular being. This particular being that we want to be could be an interpretation (to cut the linguistical implications I would prefer to say a particular understanding), but considering it as such seems to imply an already presupposed object and context of interpretation, that is, it presupposes a being that is interpreted, whereas the being that we want to be responds to an original and spontaneous identification by which the subject is constituted in his possibilities; the subject as such is born only from this pre-reflective identification. This means that the subject becomes aware of himself after having freely and spontaneously given himself a self through identification (and participation) with the way of being and acting of his community, i.e., the type of human being the latter incarnates. The subject is not a text to be interpreted and does not come from an interpretation as if from a lucid decoding of a work of art or manuscript; it is the constitution of himself as an incontrovertible fact through his actions and form of life as meaningful facticity reaffirmed for instance through discourses such as 'c'est la vie', 'c'est moi'. This will be developed in the following chapters and may be better understood by comparison with my previous work.

close it comes, it never touches being. In this introduction, I will derive the concept of the form of life from different philosophical conceptions –in particular from Wittgenstein, Ricoeur, Aristotle, Fichte, Sartre and the phenomenological tradition-, in each section the concept will be revealed in greater specificity as an onto-phenomenological unit that makes possible the being and acting of the subject and in which the traditional dualisms of philosophy, namely body and mind, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, reality and phenomenon are presented in a synthetic way and enables us to explore the relationship between being and language that is the main topic of this book. The following section is then devoted to the notion of the form of life as such, in its conceptual derivation from Wittgenstein's attempt to delimit the form or essence of the world through language.

Wittgenstein and Forms of Life

From the beginning, the main theme of Wittgenstein's work was the search for the essence of the world.[4] With his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he set himself the task of revealing the being of the

---

4 Some authors question whether the *Tractatus* seeks to show the essence or form of the world: 'According to Diamond, the point of the book is not to show or reveal some metaphysical structure of the language and the world, substantial in itself, that can be said or described; the point is, rather, to dramatize the non-existence of any such structure by showing that the attempt to describe it immediately results in nonsense'. In Paul Livingston, *Philosophy and the Vision of Language* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 140. The inconsistency of this interpretation lies in the fact that the impossibility of describing this essence or form does not imply the absence of its existence. This assumption derives from the surreptitious ontological conception of these authors, according to which only that which can be described exists, or, in other words, being is language or it is not. Not so with Wittgenstein, I think. The latter certainly does not describe the essence or form of the world and of language, because although both coincide, in order to describe the essence of language he would have to go outside language, which is impossible because *the limits of my language are the limits of my world*, or use language to refer to its essence, which is absurd. This explains why Wittgenstein considers the description of the logic of the world impossible and the propositions concerning it, such as those in the *Tractatus*, absurd: 'My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical (…) he must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright'. In Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1961), §6.54. However, at no point it is said that such a form or essence does not exist, only that to know it we would have to use language to go beyond language, that is 'throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it', and that, I would say, we do in fact know it, albeit not linguistically but reflectively, in the consciousness of our form of life.

world. David Kishik writes: 'Toward the end of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between two aspects of the world: how the world is and that it is. We can talk in language about the how, but that it exists is not something that we can speak about. That there is a world is what he calls "the mystical"'.[5] This was his fundamental concern. A concern with metaphysical roots that led him to postulate that this essence could only be shown indirectly through language. From the question of being, insofar as that which makes the world what it is, he moved on to the question of language. For, according to him (influenced by the emergence of mathematical logic and logicism), language had an isomorphic relationship with reality. So, the form of reality and language were the same. That is, being can only be known through language. There is no direct knowledge of that essence or form. And language can only express it indirectly, as that which makes language itself possible, but cannot make it explicit. Thus, for the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and only partially that of the *Philosophical Investigations*, the essence or form of the world led to alienation in language. This means that the Cambridge philosopher, faced with the impossibility of making this essence or being of the world explicit (his task as a philosopher), seems to pose two alternatives: either that of silence and, therefore, living life without asking the question of being/essence (and stopping doing philosophy for a decade as he did) or that of the analysis of the use of everyday language, in which, even a decade later, and even in *Philosophical Investigations*, he considers that the essence of the world and of life is expressed. In both alternatives, the path leads this philosopher to alienation with respect to the question of being. The failure to do philosophy was equally rooted in the impossibility of going beyond language. His insistence that it is only through language that we can reveal being/essence puts us in the position of presenting his philosophy as an attempt that ends up replacing being with non-being.

---

5 David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 46.

The key to this alienation, I suggest, lies in the understanding of what constitutes the limits: 'The limits of the language (the language which I understand) mean the limits of my world'.[6] To establish this aspect, I will return to what I said above. For Wittgenstein, essence is form. Thus, he will say that language can represent reality, the world, because it shares with it its form. He has in mind a *picture theory of meaning*, according to which each meaningful proposition represents a fact. The set of all the propositions with meaning would, therefore, represent the world. It would be a great painting. Now, language can only represent because it shares with the world its form, and that form is not something substantial or rigid but the totality of possibilities. Form is understood as totality. The totality as the sum of all its possibilities.[7] The latter seems to be what prevents Wittgenstein from understanding a totality if it is not by understanding each of its possibilities one by one. That is, for him, understanding that form or totality implies being outside of it. It implies having embraced each of its possibilities from the outside. This is derived from his postulate that the totality is the sum of its parts, 'all that is the case'. Which is why he could not conceive the understanding of the totality from itself, let us say, from within. The latter is obvious if one is within the pictorial theory of language as it was laid out in the Tractatus which he partially maintains later: 'the essence of language is a picture of the essence of the world'.[8]

---

6 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1961), §5.62.

7 I acknowledge that understanding the form or logic of the world and of language in Wittgenstein as a totality is controversial, and authors such as Paul Livingston explicitly reject it by associating the Cambridge philosopher with Kant's critical attitude towards metaphysical totalities: 'If Wittgensteinian reflection on meaning is not the drawing of a stable line of critique, but rather an ever-renewed process of reflecting on the shifting and unstable boundaries of sense, then one result of Wittgenstein's method, like Kant's own critique of reason, is to call into question the totalizing view that any such line can be drawn at all.' Livingston, *Philosophy and the Vision of Language*, p. 139. And yet Wittgenstein himself, in *Philosophical Investigations*, seems to understand both the form of life and language games as unitary totalities, the latter at least as the totality of possible speech acts, as Kishik himself argues in his research, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), pp. 25-26.

8 From Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks,* quoted in David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 85.

The painting of the world is a puzzle, and to know its ultimate form one must know all its pieces. But it is never seriously considered that to complete that puzzle right from the start one must have a certain knowledge of the form that determines the position of the pieces and that also determines the possibility and content of each piece. That is to say, that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and also that each part presupposes and is determined by the whole. According to the latter, to know a part is to have a sense of the whole. Or in the part, the whole can be known. That is, the whole or form does not require being outside of it. Put it another way, the limits of the world do not have to be crossed in order to know the form of the world.[9] For one can only know its possibilities by knowing the whole. And this is not the sum of its possibilities but what is required for those possibilities to exist. That is to say, the necessity to which those possibilities point. The issue of the limits of the world and of language, therefore, is a problem produced by the Cambridge philosopher's own conception of truth and language.

In what follows, we will go into why the impossibility of knowing being or form beyond language also has its roots in Wittgenstein's conception of truth: being only in language can be expressed or shown, either as a (linguistic) representation or as a (linguistic) function. If the

---

9   Paul Livingston also recognises as impossible to establish boundaries between what is meaningful and what is not by stepping outside the totality, or by setting foot outside the totality; he interprets that, for Wittgenstein, meaning would come exclusively immanently, in the very contingent use of expressions, without the need to posit in each one of them the totality of language in its ultimate form: 'For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, the critical line is not to be drawn between two regions of thought that are independently identifiable; this would involve thinking on both sides of the limit, which would be impossible. Instead, immanent reflection on the uses of terms and propositions in ordinary language is itself to provide the basis for any possibility of critically distinguishing between sense and nonsense'. In Livingston, *Philosophy and the Vision of Language*, p. 139. I, however, believe that usage requires a total apprehension of language as such and of the language game in particular, so that when we play at being ironic the meaning of words does not depend exclusively on their previous use but on the principle that governs that series of expressions within the language game, where the words uttered must be understood ironically, thus the totality as the constitutive principle make possible and governs particular utterances. For, as Wittgenstein himself says, the elements of language never float in a void. They always have a certain place in a logical space, see *Tractatus*, §3.42.

form is the totality of possibilities, and life is the world, then the form
of life can be considered the totality of the possibilities of life. But this
form of life, in *Philosophical Investigations*, will also be comprised and
expressed by the various uses of language, what he calls 'language
games', because 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form
of life'.[10] For Wittgenstein, at all times, the form of life is reduced to
language. And it seems that is only through this that we can conjure
up being (the essence of the world).

For the author of the *Tractatus* 'the world is all that is the case'.[11] In
this sense, that something is the case is a true proposition. Language
seems to be the net with which we catch the world to know it. For to
say that a proposition is true means that it is within the limits of the
logical form of language. Or in other words, that the position of its
elements (names and links) describes the world. That is, it is a good
picture of the world. For language and the world share the same logical
form.[12] That form is a shared essence. So, it makes it possible for our
propositions to be about the world and for the world to be expressed
by our propositions. This bidirectionality has not ceased to be a source
of controversy. For it can be understood as the realistic painting of an
objective world or as the impressionist painting that only takes the
world as a subjective stimulus. That is to say, it entails the problem of
to what extent our propositions reflect the world in its internal logic or,
on the contrary, our language with its internal structure imposes itself
on how we understand the world. The latter has led to developments
in linguistic relativism associated with Sapir-Whorf's well-known
hypothesis. The truth is that between the world and language there is
a relationship of co-dependence bordering on identification. Finally,

---

10 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), §19.

11 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §3.01.

12 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §2.0141.

in a further step, his work assures us that the world and life are one.[13] So, what has been said so far about the world can also be applied to life. That is to say, based on the previous statements, it seems that it must be concluded that language and life share the same logical form or essence. Thus, the essence of life is expressed through language. Life is not a fact or an object, but the totality of its possibilities. That is, all life is a form of life. There is no life without its form. Therefore, what is expressed through language is the form of life.

As stated above, the form of life has a lot in common with language, there is an almost identification between the two; an identification in which Wittgenstein proves to be very ambiguous. Kishik's work shows that even before *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein conceived the concept of form of life.[14] The question is to what extent does the Cambridge philosopher consider the form of life or the world without language? And to what extent is it the form of life/ the world that is shown in language or is it language that imposes its form? How do we know that it is the form of life or the world if only through language we can show it? How is it that language shows the universal form of the world or the particular form of a life? If all we have is language (effective and known parts) to reach the being or form of the world, then it will not be the being or form of the world also language?

To these should be added other ambiguities such as whether there is one or multiple forms of life, or if there is one that identifies with humanity and multiple differences within it. It is also necessary to add the ambiguity of whether the form of life is imposed or acquired spontaneously, and so on. From our cursory analysis of the forms of life as it was conceived by Wittgenstein, it seems then that we

---

13 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §5.621.

14 Kiskik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life*, pp. 25-26.

must conclude the following: Taken in relation to his last work, where it appears explicitly, it is an ambiguous concept that, on the one hand, refers to the totality of the possibilities of life, in terms of its activities, and on the other, to the foundation of language games as linguistic functions. That is, although it suggests in a concise and isolated way that 'the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life',[15] the work focuses on the analysis of everyday language, affirming that philosophy has as its task that the use of language does not come out of its own language game. Language games in their linguistic functions express the form of life to which they belong. The latter cannot be known if not through the analysis of everyday language and its language games. In this last sense, language continues to be seen as the means to show the essence of the world or, in this case, of its form of life.

Here, I think lies the crossroads that leads either to a linguistic approach focused on the uses of everyday language or the approach to human activity in relation to its form of life. In the first case, the form of life as the ultimate foundation can only be expressed indirectly through the analysis of language games, which, in a certain sense, show the essence of that form of life. This is the case in which the form of life is inseparable from its linguistic expression to the point of being undifferentiated, just as it happened in the *Tractatus* with language and the world. The form of life is, in this case, assimilated to language. In the second case, which is the one that interests me most, the notion of form of life is not subsumed in language, but language is subsumed in it. So, language would not be considered from a linguistic point of view but rather as an activity. Thus the use of language is part of a praxis. And it does not merely express the form of life. But it is the very form of life. When

---

15 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 23.

considering language as an activity, we can no longer consider that it is a linguistic expression, but rather it is the very form of life, since this is nothing other than the totality of possible actions, and the totality determines its parts. Consequently, language does not obtain its meaning from the context or from language games (as Wittgenstein seems to imply) but its meaning is in itself as an action made possible by the form of life, the totality from which it emerges.

Returning to the previous section, if we take language as an activity, its meaning can no longer be established as a representation of reality or world, as it was in the *Tractatus*. But neither can it be claimed that the meaning of language as an action (as a speech act) is its mere pragmatic function, that is, the use we make of it in social communication. In the latter case, we would still be treating language as the concrete linguistic expression of a language game, that is, as the type of expressions that are coherent in a given context. Language continues to take its meaning from the interpretation we make of it as the expression of something else, in this case, the language game in which it occurs. For Wittgenstein, understanding a linguistic expression seems to be the understanding of that expression in a totality that he calls a language game. This language game refers approximately (although there is no a single definition) to its relationship to other expressions and to the context in which such expressions usually appear or are said. In other words, it requires a pragmatic knowledge of how it is used in a form of life. If we connect these elements, we can infer that the meaning of a linguistic expression is found in the form of life. However, here seems to me to be the key to understanding the bifurcation into a linguistic or ontological interpretation of this aspect of Wittgenstein's thought. For, as I said, if the linguistic expression is understood from the form of life as a whole, the latter becomes a linguistic totality. That is, the form of life is identified with the language we use in the various

language games. Thus, to know the form of life is to know how we use language, to know the different language games that are given as a possibility. The form of life would be the totality of possible language games. This keeps us in a purely linguistic field, where life is assimilated to language. And where the latter is the expression of the essence of the former. In this way, we remain within the same limits of the Tractatus, by which only through language can we show or express –but not describe directly- the essence of the world or of the form of life, both sharing a certain logic or essence with language: 'what any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it—correctly or incorrectly— in any way at all, is logical form'.[16] This is the path by which the understanding of language as activity becomes the understanding of activity as language. And the form of life thus becomes equally that which is expressed linguistically.

On the other hand, separating ourselves from this previous path, if we emphasize the second element of the expression 'language as activity', what we obtain is one activity among others of a form of life that is not linguistic but precisely the set or totality of all the actions (and not only the language games) that are possible in it. To understand a linguistic activity or speech act (an expression forged by Austin and Searle) is to understand it as an activity made possible by its form of life. The being that was assimilated to the world is now assimilated to the form of life as a whole. To understand an activity (even if it is a speech act) is to understand it as part of a form of life, as an actual possibility of it. As Kishik writes interpreting Wittgenstein's notion of life: 'As a form, life will be perceived as a totality of possibilities'.[17] It is in it that the activity obtains its own

---

16 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 2.18

17 Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life*, p. 12.

meaning. And for the same reason, to understand our activities – which implies performing them- is to understand our form of life. That form of life is the being that we are. This second path, therefore, leads us to the recognition of the form of life as a way of being and acting. In our own actions, we can grasp who we are.

Language and the Revealing of Being

We could ask naïvely: is the biographical narration of a life really that life? And then we could reflect on whether narrative identity is not a mere discourse independent of events and actions, i.e. self-referential, which seeks to self-persuade and reinforce the will to be or to continue to be and act in a certain way. Ricoeur would seem to agree on the fundamental role of language in affecting the will over and above its representational function, at least as it relates to ethics: 'Literature is a vast laboratory in which we experiment with estimations, evaluations, and judgments of approval and condemnation through which narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics'.[18] In the same way, referring to the being of all that exists presupposes a linguistic homogenisation, a type of homogenisation that from the point of view of narrative identity Ricoeur calls the synthesis of the heterogeneous or *discordant concordance*: 'To extend the validity of this concept of narrative configuration beyond Aristotle's privileged example (…) I propose to define discordant concordance, characteristic of all narrative composition, by the notion of the synthesis of the heterogeneous'.[19] Being as a universal concept is language, it is also a sort of discordant concordance.

---

18 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 115.

19 Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 141

As this book attempts to show through its pages, the Heideggerian 'concealed' (*Verborgenheit*) must be understood not as Being but as the principle inherent in the actions: the unconcealed (actions) and the concealed (principle) are identified and constituted as a unitary form of life (the true particular being), which is the foundation of itself through the praxis (it is not founded by Being or language) of its subjects, what we could assimilate to the *life project* that Ricoeur referred to (and to which Sartre also refers in *Being and Nothingness* as fundamental or original project): 'this sense, what MacIntyre calls "the narrative unity of a life" not only results from the summing up of practices in a globalizing form but is governed equally by a life project'.[20] No doubt he would agree to take the form of life as the ontological unit to which narrative discourse is related. However, for the moment it is enough to point out an abysmal difference: the narrative unit cannot be the one that gives unity to life, since narration by definition is a progressive sequence that presupposes a unity from the outset, namely, the unity of the object that narrates, in this case 'life', so that the ontological unity has to be prior to the narration (especially in historical and biographical accounts), and on the other hand, the narration as such cannot be taken as the development of that unity either, since both refers to two different ontological levels, that of being and that of language, therefore, the only thing that can be taken as the development of the unity are the actions themselves that unfold and realise the ontological principle that drives the subject's life. Thus, it will be important to distinguish later between ideology as praxis and discourses of praise and justification (propaganda and ethics).

Beyond these contemporary cases, to confuse life with language is what has been done partially in that great tradition of the Western

---

20 Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 158.

thought since Aristotle. To ask oneself about Being is to put life between question marks, to separate it from its incessant movement and to present it dissected into words. The conceptual Being is conveyed by language and that is why it entails the maximum abstraction. As Nietzsche once wrote, 'Being' as much as 'God' are products of our grammar: '"Reason" in language: oh, what a deceptive old woman this is! I am afraid that me have not got rid of God because we still have faith in grammar…'[21] Without language, Being (in the abstract) it is not conceivable; rather, I claim, what exists is the being of our form of life, that is to say, of the way in which we live -our principled activities and habits-. So, inversely, only because of language, Being (in the abstract) is possible. But that which is, the existent, can only be in relation to a form of life. Again, Being, confused with language since very early in the history of the West, gave rise to the famous dictums of Aristotle that 'Being is said in many ways'[22] and that 'man is a rational animal or an animal with logos (rational discourse)'.[23]

The first of the dictums, 'Being is said in many ways', clearly expresses that linguistic turn of the form of life in which it is inserted. For, what is said is not a being. That is, two obvious levels can be distinguished in the dictum, namely, that of Being and that of language. The first

---

21 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 170.

22 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003a33: 'Το ον λέγεται πολλάχως' (To on legetai polachos).

23 I follow Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle, who in turn seems to be following the scholastic tradition. That means that the dictum regarding human beings as rational animals is not found in Aristotle's work as such, but it is a synthesis of his thought on the nature of human beings as ζῷον λόγον ἔχον (zoon logon echon), which conveys what Aristotle wrote in *Politics*, '**λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων**' (1253a1-18) and in other works such as *Nicomachean Ethics* (1098), where he defines human beings for their rationality as opposed to other animals. However, some authors like Hannah Arendt rejects this interpretation in her *Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958/1998), chapter II, p. 27. This means that the identification between the logos (the reason) and the language is also through Heidegger. It is Heidegger's Aristotle that I am referring to here, and in particular to his lecture on Plato's *Sophist*, as appears in his *Gesamtausgabe* (GA19), which opens with an introduction on the notion of logos with respect to Aristotle.

level refers to a universal being, that is, to all that is, and for that reason, it cannot be more than an abstract Being, not concrete, which tantamount to non-being. The being of language, however, carries with it a certain plurality, for Being is said in 'many ways'. In short, the plurality, in the dictum, is not of Being, but of language; that is, Being is not in many ways, but it is 'said' in many ways. So, Being in its possibility of referring to a more concrete level has been substituted by language, which is what truly makes possible the unity of that plurality: a concept. According to the dictum, Being in itself is not plural, the plurality comes from the ways in which it is said. But it is the same to be and to be said? Does the saying refer to any particular being? Thus, in Aristotle, the question of Being cannot but become a question of language, and this is how his Scholastic followers and even certain currents of contemporary philosophy understood it. The question of Being becomes the question of discourse. But (rational) discourse is not being, nor does it reproduce or affect it. This dictum paradigmatically points out the divorce between language and life or what it truly is.

Heraclitus and some modern authors such as Nietzsche can serve here as an illustration at this crucial point in our reflective work. Pre-Socratics like Heraclitus did not ask about Being in the abstract, the being of daily life had not been dominated by language and forced into a universal concept yet.[24] The language with which this thinker expresses himself is paradoxical, that is, contradictory. It is as such not because the being, what it is, was contradictory, but because that

---

24 The Logos of Heraclitus was not an all-encompassing abstract being but was the order in which each particular thing related to the other. And the so-called school of Miletus and its search for the first cause of reality was based predominantly on their experience. The most abstract account was that of Anaximander who thought of an unlimited and undefined element as the first principle or archetype (*archê*): to apeiron. The latter, as the cause of all forms, was, in reality, the unspeakable, as it was itself lacking in form. It was not a linguistic concept, but precisely the expression of the impossibility of expressing through language the understanding of the ultimate cause.

is the way of expressing what cannot be expressed by language and, even less, made universal concept. For this tradition of thinkers, who were later considered vitalists, being is pure flow, transformation and movement. Being, in any case, is seen as an irreducible plurality, without there being a superior universal concept that includes all that plurality. Being cannot be expressed linguistically because it is plural and changeable, not homogeneous, linear and unique. Therefore, not Being, but beings. That is also why, contrary to Heidegger, one should not look for the general meaning of Being, but for the meaning of each being. In short, Being is not SAID in many ways, but it IS in many ways. And the difference here is crucial. There are many ways of being, which are similar only insofar as they ARE. Insofar as they are, they share an ontological structure which, however, can only make full sense as the structure of a particular being, because the structure itself is not the being, although to grasp the being that we are as a form of life requires the apprehension of its structure. Or what I have termed the assumption of *the form of life as truth* in order to obtain *the truth of each form of life* (as being). By this I mean that the truth of each form of life rests on the truth that they are a form of life, and therefore similar as such, but with a principle and habits different from and irreducible to those of other forms. Now, this truth and this structure is not a concept as it is Being for Heidegger but a series of actions and the principle that drives them, which is diverse according to each form of life. The structure is apprehended and perceived or realized in the world.

In the dictum that asserts that 'man' is an animal with rational discourse (*λόγος*), on the one hand, we are given a universal definition of human being. And, on the other hand, that definition points to rational discourse as its essential meaning. That definition can be taken as the constitutive principle of the form of life within

which authors like Aristotle wrote.[25] It projects in it that image of the human being that has replaced life with language, the customary rules with universal norms. However, are not lives, as ways of being in the world, the only things that can be affirmed as substratum to any further enquiry to which everything else relates? Man as an animal with rational speech or language was the foundation of Greek political life; and by political life, Aristotle meant life in community, that is, a society organized through laws and discourses. That is, a life where the word was Being, creating harmonic realities and setting limits against nature.[26] The Being for which one asks is the *nomos*, not the *physis* or nature. That is, Being as a principle or general norm of human life diverts the question of life to its universal concept, which is language. Metaphysics according to Aristotle is the first philosophy because it deals with the Supreme Being in the hierarchy of beings.[27] That is to say, it deals with the necessary Being on which all other beings depend in order to come into being. That higher ontological degree is a universal Being or Being qua Being (esse). This first cause that would explain all that exists is, however, a linguistic concept. As universal and omnipresent, this Being is

25 Here I follow Nietzsche in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, for whom it is precisely the time of Aristotle, the time of the Athenian philosophers, that signifies the end of the world of tragedy and the beginning of a new, reasonable and scientific life, namely, the scientific-rational form of life: 'If the Greeks were pessimists and had the will to tragedy precisely when they were surrounded by the riches of youth, if, to quote Plato, it was precisely madness which brought the greatest blessings to Hellas, and if, on the other hand and conversely, it was precisely during their period of dissolution and weakness that the Greeks became ever more optimistic, more superficial, more actorly, but also filled with a greater lust for logic and for making the world logical, which is to say both more "cheerful" and more "scientific" - could it then perhaps be the case, despite all "modern ideas" and the prejudices of democratic taste, that the victory of optimism, the predominance of reasonableness, practical and theoretical utilitarianism, like its contemporary, democracy, that all this is symptomatic of a decline in strength, of approaching old age, of physiological exhaustion?'. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 7-8.

26 Here the definition of the rational animal as an animal with logos fits perfectly with Aristotle's understanding of human beings as political animals based on their capacity for language or speech, which '(speech) is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong' (*Politics*, 1253a).

27 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1004a.

conceptual (for it cannot exist apart from beings or in all beings equally as a universal substance). Metaphysics thus deals with the most general Being, without its own characteristics. It is thus about a being that is possible only in language. This abstract object is thus a universal of language. Jacques Derrida observes that 'metaphysics is, for Heidegger, the name of the determination of the being in general or of the excellent eminent being par excellence, that is, God, metaphysics is onto-theology. Hegel's logic did indeed, moreover, present itself as Metaphysics'. [28] Hegel's Logic as well as the whole philosophical tradition since Aristotle is metaphysical, according to Derrida's interpretation, mainly because of what he calls the inherited 'conceptualist prejudice', that is, 'the prejudice that makes of being a concept, or of the thought of being a concept'.[29] This is the sort of criticism that Ockham's nominalism made of the metaphysics derived from Plato and Aristotle. Universals as abstract objects are neither ante rem nor in re, but linguistic concepts.

The rational man is also a creation of language as the universal definition of being human, concealing thus the differences between particular human beings. At the same time, however, it can be grasped as the principle that enacts a group of particular members living in common; that is, the form of life that is driven by it. In other words, it is the way of being of that human community insofar as its members share a form of life. Thus, taken as a universal definition of the being of all men and women it is a matter of language, but taken as the being of a certain particular community and a certain type of human being it is a constitutive principle of the practice and habits of those who identify themselves as members of that community. *Being ceases to be language only when it is understood as a principle inherent within the life of a community, group or human being*. What it is it is for someone, somewhere and in some respect.

---

28 Jacques Derrida, *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 33.

29 Derrida, *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History*, p. 32.

Thus, the Aristotelian definition cannot be taken as a universal definition but as a constitutive principle of the life of those men who identified with it. Aristotle conceived human nature in that way because that was the principle of his form of life: that of the community to which he belonged and with which he identified as a Greek male, born-free and with linguistic ability to communicate their ideas appropriately, i.e. to participate in the affairs of the city-state, as opposed to those who were not of that precise community, who were not fit to be citizens of it (e.g. foreigners or metics, slaves, women, children and elders).[30] This definition cannot be extended in the fullest sense to the members of another form of life.[31] For example, the *homo ecomomicus*, proper to the capitalist form of life (see my work),[32] although in a sense rational, would certainly not be an incarnation of the Greek form of life/being driven by the principle of 'rational man' or man with rational speech. If the first of these men has as an essential motivation to conjure up chaos and alienating ontological multiplicity through conceptual language and rational discourse, the constitutive motivation of the second man is to rationally maximize his profits. Both rational but in different ways, according to their different constitutive principles.

---

30 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1275a-b. The importance of the discourse or logos (rational discourse) is appreciated in that it was only attributed to the citizens of the polis, the non-citizens were dispossessed of the capacity of the discourse, therefore, also of the capacity to distinguish between good and evil, just and unjust, capacities proper to the human being. This insistence on the importance of discourse can be seen in Aristotle's prescription against playing the flute, for this activity arguably deprives children of their ability to speak and thus to be free men (*Politics*, 1341a).

31 This is precisely what Arendt transmits with great clarity when she assures that the Aristotelian dictums in relation to the human being as a social and rational animal referred to his own form of life: 'In his two most famous definitions, Aristotle only formulated the current opinion of the *polls* about man and the political way of life, and according to this opinion, everybody outside the *polls*—slaves and barbarians—was *aneu logon,* deprived, of course, not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other' (Arendt, *Human condition*, p. 27). This does not mean that Aristotle did not take it as universal but that he would be precisely universalizing what was the ontological principle of the particular way of being of his Athenian form of life.

32 Chapter 6 of *Forms of Life and Subjectivity*

What I am trying to convey is that the definition of the 'rational man' is precisely the ontological principle that constitutes, regulates and guides the actions of a particular form of life. Thus, the substitution of life (being) by language, in fact, is the principle of a form of life, and for that reason, in its recognition lies the revealing of the being of those men and women who identified (and still identify) themselves with it; Aristotle among others. Thus, to refer to Being (in the abstract) is a linguistic matter, a universal concept, that does not allow to reach the knowledge of the particular being of each form of life. For each form of life is a different way of being with different meanings. A classic example of the fusion of Being and language can be found in Schelling and his conception of the word as the revelation of God in terms of the ontological principle of light and intelligibility, i.e. as primordial Being assimilated to Logos or Reason: 'the light or the ideal principle is, as the eternal opposite of the dark principle, the creating word which delivers [*erlöst*] the life hidden in the ground from non-Being and lifts it from potentiality [*Potenz*] into actuality [*zum Aktus*]',[33] and further on, 'only in man, therefore, is the word fully proclaimed which in all other things is held back and incomplete. But spirit, that is, God as existing actu, reveals itself in the proclaimed word'.[34]

The being that is revealed in the above passage is linguistic reason (logos), for it is a word that illuminates nature and in a certain way takes possession of it. According to it, nature and the human being, insofar as they can be known are revealed in rational discourse, so

---

33 Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (New York, Albany: State University of New York, 2006), p. 66.

34 Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 32. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt explain the meaning of word as the revelation of God, which can be assimilated to the metaphysical Being: 'the word, the utterance of the logos or ratio, which is the self-revelation of the pure light, the pure principle of form and intelligibility that is God'. In 'Introduction' to Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. xx.

that what is, is identified only in discourse, namely, what is said to be. And it is the laws of discourse that serve as the ultimate criterion (divine laws of universal reason) of what is concluded to be the case. This being, however, is a concept dependent on a system of grammar and thought and is therefore self-referential. It represents nothing, it is nothing (non-being). For as the popular wisdom says 'from saying to doing there is a long way to go (I would say an unbridgeable one)'. The being that is has no more consistency than that which is given to it by the actions of the subjects in their practical life.

This is the philosophical path that must be rectified in relation to the search for being as a particular being. This also leads us to the distinction between two ways of doing philosophy: the one that seeks to reveal being qua particular being (through consciousness and self-knowledge) and the one that seeks to reveal being qua language (through discursive reasoning). The first gives rise to a tradition that seeks the particular being and the second the abstract being, that is, the distinction between ontology and metaphysics. According to the above, the question of Being only makes sense as a disclosure of the being that we are, our life. For Being in the abstract it is just a matter of language.[35] Heidegger, in his second philosophical period, got caught in the non-being by seeking to reveal Being through language (known as Heidegger's *kere*). He himself wrote 'that the word "to be" is empty and its meaning is evanescent'[36] and then added that, because – according to him- in language is revealed the Being of that which is, if we were not to have the word 'Being' or not to understand is evanescent meaning '*then there would be no language at all*. Beings

---

35 While in the former, ontology, its truth is inscribed in the self-reflective experience of our being and our actions, in the latter, metaphysics, the criterion is the force of the argument -and the laws of established logic-.

36 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 78.

as such would no longer open themselves up in words at all; they could no longer be addressed and discussed. For saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings -that is, their Being-in advance'.[37] Thus, it can be inferred that we understand Being through language or, what is the same, language through language, for Being as a concept is pure absence, abstraction, openness and interpretation, that is, non-being, whereas being is presence, particular and limited in the midst of the world. And in this sense, it can be said with Nietzsche that any linguistic judgment on life, rather than an unveiling of the real being, can only be considered a symptom of the particular form of life of the subjects: 'Judgments, value judgments on life, for or against, can ultimately be never true: they have value only as symptoms, they can be taken seriously only as symptoms, -in themselves judgments like these are stupidities'.[38] This is important to note because just as politics organises life, so the discourse (propaganda) is the symptom of the kind of organisation or form that has been adopted as constitutive of one's being. This differentiation between discourse or judgement and behaviour will be relevant throughout this book. They are co-dependent, but one cannot be confused with the other. Moreover, discourse or judgement is to be understood without value in itself, only with the function of praising or justifying established behaviour (as well as denigrating the behaviour of Others), and thus as the symptom or -to take the Nietzschean metaphor out of its medical-physiological context- as a spontaneous exercise of the will which thus persuades itself to persist in its conduct or form of life. The language of judgement is fundamentally rhetorical, aimed at persuading the will of the subject.

---

37 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 86.

38 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 153-230 (p. 162).

Here we must remember that Plato in his *Cratylus* (with that dialectical method of besieging with reasoning what has to be conquered through intuition, *nous*), already presents us with the difficulties of accepting language as revealing of being. And it does so in the form of paradox or contradiction. He asks himself how it is possible to know the being of things before they are named if it is true that it is through language that we know reality.[39] This leads him to the following dilemma: Language cannot show the being of reality because either reality is something constant and immutable and would then have to be known before it could be named (since only what is known can be named correctly), or reality is mutable and inconstant, so it cannot be known and neither can it be expressed linguistically. That is, after having defended throughout the work that language can express being, he concludes with the paradox that what is not known cannot be expressed and even if it were known it could not be expressed if reality is mutable and flows like Heraclitus' river, as linguistic expression could never fix its reference, which would always be something different from what has been said.[40] The latter was developed by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. For the idealistic philosopher, language is always universal and negative; it can never say the particular being, the existing being. What we mean is never what we say. For, according to him,

> They mean 'this' bit of paper on which I am writing -or rather have written- 'this'; but what they mean is not what they say. If they actually wanted to say 'this' bit of paper which they mean, if they wanted to say it, then this is impossible, because the sensuous This that is meant cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to that which is inherently universal. In the actual

---

39 Plato, *Cratylus*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 438 b-c.

40 Plato, *Cratylus*, 440 a-e.

attempt to say it, it would therefore crumble away; those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others, who would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something which is not.[41]

The important thing to emphasize in that paragraph is that Hegel recognizes that when we use language, we do so to refer unsuccessfully to something we mean.[42] What we mean is a particular being: the being that we intentionally present to our consciousness and even more so the being that we enact with our actions (actions are being only insofar as they are derived from the form of life they constitute). But, for that very reason, if we mean that being, then we know it, because we can only intentionally direct ourselves towards something that we already know in some way. That knowledge is not only pre-linguistic but also cannot be expressed by language, because language can only express the universal and negative, that is, what it is not.[43] But just because it cannot be expressed by language

---

41 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 66.

42 In this sense, there is an inescapable and persistent echo of the words of the classic *DaoDeJing* of Chinese thought with his 'Dào kě dào fēi cháng dào, míng kě míng fēi cháng míng' [道可道, 非常道. 名可名, 非常名] translated as the 'Dao that can be said is not the true Dao / the name that can be named is not its true name', especially if one translates 'Dao' as the real, beyond our linguistic conceptualisation.

43 This observation goes beyond the mere arbitrariness of the linguistic sign as stated by Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Laussane: Payot, 1916), who merely states that there is no natural relationship between the concept (signified) and the word (signifier), just as there is no natural relationship between the word and reality, but rather that it is a matter of the inherent impossibility of language to refer to the world, to represent it, to transmit it, let alone to organise it; language only organises the discourse which is the bubble that protects and consolidates our will to act in/on the world in a particular way. According to the Swiss linguist, onomatopoeias would be an exception to the arbitrariness of the sign as they exhibit a purpose of imitating the natural sounds of the world, although numerous examples can be added against this natural relation which prove that onomatopoeias exist like all language through cultural mediation. Basic examples of animal sounds would suffice, if in Anglo-Saxon cultures the dog makes *wuuuff wuuuf*, in Hispanic cultures it makes *gua gua* and in Chinese cultures it makes *wang wang*, all different sounds for the same concept (meaning) and therefore both meaning and signifier do not have a natural but a cultural connection.

does not mean that it cannot be expressed. On the contrary, that is the knowledge we express when we act and live in a form of life. We only know it as we act. For the form of life as such is the being that all language tries to express unsuccessfully. It is the being of what we do and experience. Not through a conceptual thought (the only thought for Hegel) but a practical and intuitive thought of what is (pre-linguistic and pre-reflective consciousness), what makes up our form of life as our being. And this requires an ontology.

Outline of the Argument

Throughout these pages, I compile contemporary examples, empirical cases and data from history and the social sciences in order to make visible the transcendental structure of the forms of life and their phenomenological level. The focus is on language from the ontological perspective. The question implicitly intended to be explored is the following: If the form of life is what gives us being, what role does language play? In the first chapter, I make a first approach to the concepts of propaganda and ideology. I discuss in what sense we commonly speak of propaganda and ideology, and how it always refers to what Others say and do, never to our own actions and discourses.

In the second chapter, drawing on Aristotle, I argue that politics is the organisation and constitution of the life of individuals as a set of possibilities, so that the delimitation of possible behaviours for a community are understood as political actions, because they constitute a form of life. Furthermore, I define ideology in detail as praxis and not as discourse. Ideology, I argue, is what bridges the gap between praxis that is merely possible and praxis that is taken as necessary. If the political has to do with the framework of possibilities (which delimits and rejects what is not possible), ideology has to do with the way of being and acting that is apprehended as necessary,

and therefore common sense and proper to the criterion of normality. With ideology as praxis we integrate ourselves into the totality of possibilities offered by our form of life.

The third chapter is devoted to an analysis of language itself, and in particular propaganda. Although I review different approaches to propaganda and rhetoric, I always do so in order to delve deeper into the form of life as an ontological unit, and this chapter has four headings. In the first of these, which is of great importance for the argument, I establish what propaganda consists of, taking Fichte's theory of language. Propaganda is the coincidence between what is said and the saying. What is said refers to the content of the utterance or proposition (*Sagen*), and the saying to the act by which the utterance is written or uttered (*Tun*). To this end, I join the pragmatic theories of language of the 20th century. The opposite of propaganda is the contradiction between what is said and the act of saying. The latter is lying. So propaganda is rescued as a mode of discourse with which the subject asserts his will to be who he already is in some way. Propaganda is not a lie, but the opposite, what we say in order to continue being who we are. Taking Burke's term 'attitude' to refer to the tonality of discourse, I establish that the coincidence between saying and what is said is the coincidence between the will of the subject expressed in the act of saying (action) and the 'attitude' reflected in the discourse, which can be positive or negative with respect to what is said. Thus, what we say does not always reinforce our will-to-be -it does not fulfil us- because we do not identify with the principle that governs the attitude of the discourse, since our will-to-be, our way of being and acting, does not coincide with the one registered in the attitude. We must bear in mind that the discourse is propaganda that we sometimes utter out of coercion, social pressure or confusion. But, in general, we do so because through this propaganda we reaffirm our form of life and identity.

In the fourth chapter, I examine how propaganda is used by subjects within the ontological hierarchy of the form of life. To this end, in this section I extensively rework sociological and ethnological material on social hierarchies and the relations between the different members of this hierarchy. The aim is to be able to determine the role of propaganda according to who carries it out. I distinguish between elites and followers as constituent subjects of the community that shares a form of life. Within the elites I distinguish between the ruler and the lawmakers-guardians, and within the followers, I distinguish the imitators and the play-actors. When propaganda is used by the individual to affirm his own will-to-be, I call it rationalisation; and when the same propaganda is used to affirm the community in the persons of the followers, I call it populism. I distinguish between a populism whereby followers use propaganda to affirm themselves (through representatives) against an elite that is distant (inherently unattainable as a role model), and a populism whereby propaganda is directed by the elite towards followers who affirm their will against a threat incarnated in the form of life of Others. I call the first of these 'populism of integration' and the second 'populism of resistance' reformulating the so-called Right and Left populism.

In the fifth chapter, I deal with emotions. Based on Sartre and other authors, I take emotions as actions by which the form of life is also reaffirmed. Thus, every emotion, insofar as it is experienced as necessary in certain situations, must be taken as ideology. More concretely, emotions are the unity of an action and the consciousness we have of it; that consciousness is what we call feeling. The feeling is fixed by ideologising the action with which it is associated. In this section I deal with distinct emotions and distinguish them from dispositions, i.e. hope and fear, which predispose us to certain particular emotions. Among the other topics I deal with under this heading, I devote most space to racism and racist habits, discussing both with experts such as Helen Ngo.