On the place of consciousness within the will to power

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8 On the Place of Consciousness within the Will to Power

> **My intention:** to demonstrate the absolute homogeneity of all events [...]. (NL 1884, KSA 12, 10 [154] (260))
>
> The moral i.e. the affects—as identical to the organic; the intellect as "stomach of the affects." (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[93])

Nietzsche's hypothesis of the will to power as a universal explanatory principle implies *some form* of monism.[1] Like all monistic theories, the will to power challenges any ontological, dualistic distinction of bodies and minds, which, as we shall argue, puts it in a better position with regard to what is traditionally referred to as the problem of mental causation (a problem that non-monistic theories run into due to the principle of incommensurability, whereby only objects that share a common essence can interact). However, the monism Nietzsche proposes runs into the opposite problem, namely, to account for the status of the *perceived* distinction between mental and physical aspects. For Nietzsche, this perceived distinction is most obvious in our experience of agency where it seems *as if* our mental states motivate or cause physical action.

Nietzsche grapples with the problem throughout his writings beginning with his Schopenhauer-inspired critique of agency in the notebooks of 1874 as well as his *Untimely Meditation* on Schopenhauer. His early writings seem patently indecisive in their treatment of this question and his indecision and the correlative contradictions in his writing have fuelled a long and widespread debate in the Nietzsche scholarship. The current naturalistic trend in the scholarship intends to do away with any distinction between the mental and the physical realm by reducing all mental acts to physically observable phenomena, of the sort that are "open to empirical study" (Risse 2003: 144). Less prominent in recent years has been a certain post-modern interpretation which, inspired by Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," regards the thought of the will to power as a failed ontological attempt on Nietzsche's part, whose shortcomings allow us to dismiss the question altogether as being inessential to Nietzsche's thinking (see Conway 2000: 136).

In our opinion the problem shared by both interpretations is that they does away with Nietzsche's passion for goals and its correlative appeal to agency: not only does

1 Given Nietzsche's frequent rejection of monism, the crux of the matter will lie in the kind of monism one wishes to attribute to Nietzsche. It seems to us that when Nietzsche rejects monism, it is largely when he regards monism as a principle of indifferentiation. In this paper, I wish to argue for a monism of the will to power, which includes differentiation. Indeed, it seems to us that the will to power is Nietzsche's attempt at proposing a monism that does not preclude difference: indeed, the will to power is the unique element of differentiation. On Nietzsche's rejection of monism, see NL 1885–86, KSA 12, 2[117], 2[133], and NL 1887–88, KSA 13, 11[99].

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Nietzsche place goals for himself, for us his readers and for the future human beings; but also, his highly self-aware mode of writing is replete with metaphors that attribute physical features to his own writing and ideas. For Nietzsche, ideas, even as they appeal to consciousness, must be reckoned with: they are supposed to have a transformative power not just over our minds but over reality in general. They (and in particular the thought of the Eternal Recurrence) are, for example, "hammers" and "disciplinary doctrines" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[227]) that are "strong enough" to "dominate the earth" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[211]), and "the words" used to express them can "annihilate" some types of humans (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[290]). Indeed, Nietzsche posits one objective for himself: to "*fight with language*" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[337], Nietzsche's emphasis).[2] Nietzsche's insistence on the strategic importance of ideas and acts of consciousness for his task gives consciousness an importance that no naturalistic account has been able to acknowledge in a satisfactory manner.

In my view, Nietzsche's mature position on this issue only emerges with the formulation of the will to power as a universal explanatory hypothesis in 1885. In this paper, my aim is thus to propose a viable characterization of the will to power fit to explicate Nietzsche's attempts to recast the distinction between the mental and physical in representational, phenomenological terms. This does not by any means suggest that one must take the hypothesis to be more than just that, a hypothesis, but it also refuses to dismiss the will to power on the basis that it is a mere hypothesis. Taking the hypothesis of the will to power seriously will enable us to account for Nietzsche's reliance on agency whilst maintaining the will to power as a unified and universal explanatory principle. Our first task (Section 8.1) will be to map out Nietzsche's conception of agency in order to determine what the will to power is intended as an explanation for. The second section (8.2) will be devoted to a characterization of the will to power as a psycho-physical principle which is not a synthesis of the mental and the physical so much as a weakening of both concepts (and of their incompatibility). It is based on Nietzsche's remarks on phenomenology from the *Nachlass* of 1885 and 1886. Finally, (Section 8.3) shall examine how Nietzsche's new conceptions allow him to do away with causation, and to propose an alternative account of interactions within the will to power.

2 The ambiguity of Nietzsche's expression (der Kampf *mit der* Sprache) leaves open the question of whether Nietzsche wishes to fight against language or use language as a weapon. In fact, the context of the fragment makes it clear, in my view, that Nietzsche means both, insisting all the more on the fundamental importance and consequentiality of language.

8.1 The Problem: Vs. Epiphenomenalism and Will as Secondary Cause

In his article entitled "Nietzsche's Theory of Mind: Consciousness and Conceptualization," Paul Katsafanas proposes to characterize Nietzsche's concept of consciousness as "conceptualization" (Katsafanas 2005: 1–31). The merit of this characterization, which explains consciousness not as a substance but as a process, is that it takes stock of Nietzsche's repeated refusal to reify consciousness. First of all, as Katsafanas recognizes, we must avoid talking of consciousness in the traditional language of faculties. As is common in Nietzsche, his most complete definition of consciousness is provided by way of a genealogical account. Consciousness, he writes in GS 354, is "a network of communication between humans," which has appeared, been informed, and therefore been defined exclusively as a response to the need to verbalize those affects that have come to be regarded as "internal states." Katsafanas's characterization of consciousness as conceptualization (the necessary condition of verbalization, according to Nietzsche) takes this into account in a satisfactory manner that is of good use to our present purposes.

In his "Nietzsche's Theory of the Will," Brian Leiter exposes two possible views of the causal efficacy of consciousness, or of conscious representations, acts, or ideas (this is left unspecified by Leiter). The first, which Leiter favours insofar as it offers the possibility to match Nietzsche's doctrine with current trends in empirical psychology (Leiter 2007: 12 ff.), is what he calls the "epiphenomenalist" reading. In this reading, consciousness is, in Nietzsche's own terms, only a "symptom" or an "expression" of acts of the will whose essence is considered to be essentially unconscious. Leiter however acknowledges that another view, which he calls "the will as secondary cause" (2007: 13) is equally supported by Nietzsche's writings. According to this reading, the conscious stage plays a causal role in the chain that leads to an action, but this role is neither primary nor final.

It is not our goal to examine closely Leiter's interpretation of Nietzsche's passages or of how he is led to conclude that these two views are equally warranted by the text, and that one should favour epiphenomenalism. But it may suffice for the present purpose to point out that if Nietzsche does indeed emphasize repeatedly that consciousness is "merely" a "symptom," "a *sign*" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[92]), or an "appearance" even (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[313]), it is usually in the context of a critique of the traditional reification of consciousness or of its moralistic appraisal, and not in contexts dealing directly with its causal role. Regardless, it seems that the epiphenomenalist view runs into serious conceptual difficulties if one takes Nietzsche's proposal of the will to power seriously.[3]

3 It seems Leiter would defend his position by calling into question the importance of the hypothesis of the will to power for Nietzsche himself. "First, in the works Nietzsche chose to publish, it seems

In his article, Leiter places (rightly in my view) great emphasis on the idea of "drives" but he makes no attempt to relate his interpretation to Nietzsche's hypothesis of the will to power. However, as Richardson points out, the drives are best understood as "the unit of the will to power" (Richardson, 1996: 20). Will to power as an ontological principle presented itself to Nietzsche as a principle for the "interpretation of all events [*alles Geschehens*]" (39[1], 40[2], 40[50], 1[35]), or for a "new interpretation of the world [*einer neuen Welt-Auslegung*]" (2[73]). It is therefore apparent that even if one does away with the will to power and replaces it with "drives," the result obtained shall be informed by the ontology of the will to power which is the only way Nietzsche succeeds in affirming the "homogeneity" of all events (10[154]). In his earlier *Nietzsche on Morality* (2002) Leiter has made the case for construing Nietzsche as a methodological naturalist as opposed to a substantive or metaphysical naturalist. In line with Risse's naturalism mentioned above, the methodological naturalist holds the world to be composed of natural or physical things, which are to be understood through the methods and results of science. However, in spite of the rejection of anything supernatural, this naturalist is not a reductive materialist since s/he can allow for the fact that not all events are physical and that the existence of *qualia* (of what it feels like to experience something as a sentient being) needs to be acknowledged. It is, however, not clear at all that such a distinction between the methodological and substantive naturalist is applicable to Nietzsche once we take into account his philosophical commitment to the will to power which appears everywhere as the identity of method and substance (as we shall discuss, the will to power is no different from its own *modus operandi*). Second, Nietzsche has a specific appreciation of "quale," which arguably differs from the kind Leiter attributes to him. With reference, for example, to GS 373 Leiter assumes that Nietzsche is concerned with "the qualitative or phenomenological aspect of experience, e. g., what it is like to experience a piece of music as beautiful" (Leiter 2002: 25). This is an invitation to examine further what Nietzsche means by qualia, and especially, what kind of distinction he draws between qualia and quanta. The conception of qualia we find at work in Nietzsche emerges from how he himself conceives his philosophical descent. He writes of this in the following note, which he drafted in the summer/autumn of 1884:

> When I think of my philosophical genealogy I feel I am related to the anti-teleological, i. e. the Spinozistic movement of our age but with the difference that I consider "purpose" and "will" *in us* to be illusory, as well; likewise, I feel related to the mechanistic movement (all moral and aesthetic questions traced back to physiological ones, all physiological ones to chemical

clear that he did not, in fact, accept the doctrine in the strong form… (namely, that it is only power that persons ever aim for or desire). Second, it is simply not a plausible doctrine in its strong form." Whether this is a credible description of the will to power hypothesis "in its strong form" is dubious, and it does not seem to us necessary to accept this "form" of the hypothesis in order to object to the epiphenomenalist reading. Indeed, as we shall see, *any* account of the will to power that does not dismiss it entirely, suffices to reject the epiphenomenalist reading.

> ones, all chemical ones to mechanical ones), but with the difference that I do not believe in "matter" and think of Boscovich as a great turning point, like Copernicus; that I consider unfruitful everything that takes the self-reflexion of spirit as its point of departure, and believe that no research which does not take the body as its guiding thread can be good. A philosophy not as *dogma*, but as a provisional regulative of *research*. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[432])

In another notebook entry we find a specific treatment of qualia that stems from his concern with "life" understood as qualitative growth, movement, expansion, and so on:

> Might all quantities not be signs of qualities? A greater power implies a different consciousness, feeling, desiring, a different perspective; growth itself is a desire *to be more*; the desire for an increase in quantum grows from a *quale*; in a purely quantitative world everything would be dead, stiff, motionless.—The reduction of all qualities to quantities is nonsense: what appears is that the one accompanies the other, an analogy— (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[157] = WP 564)

For Nietzsche the problem centres on the limits of any mechanistic world-view, which he thinks stands victorious for us. Mechanism leaves notions of "reason" and "purpose" out of the picture as far as possible, assuming that given sufficient time anything can evolve out of anything else, for example, accounting for evolutionary phenomenona in terms of "pressure and stress" (*Druck und Stoß*). But then Nietzsche notes that we are unable to "explain" pressure and stress themselves and that ultimately the mechanists cannot get rid of what he construes as a non-mechanical concept of "action at a distance" (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[34]; cf. WP 618). It is this kind of anti-reductionistic insight that leads Nietzsche to argue that the victorious concept "force" might need to be completed by ascribing an inner *dynamis* or will to it (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31] = WP 619). In BGE 36 he appeals to a "conscience of method" to justify his hypothetical claim that the world seen from inside is "will to power." The concept of "force" must be supplemented and "[...] one is obliged to understand all motion, all 'appearances,' all 'laws,' only as symptoms of an inner event and to employ man as an analogy to this end" (NL 1885, KSA 11, 36[31] = WP 619). In the case of "life" Nietzsche notes that mere differences of power (*Machtverschiedenheiten*) could not feel themselves to be such and thus, "there has to be something that wants to grow, interpreting every other something that wants to grow in terms of its value" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[148]). Although this seems to make room for a limited teleology into our understanding—one that is necessary to our understanding the world in terms of phenomena of "life" such as growth and expansion—Nietzsche recommends that we beware of "superfluous teleological principles," such as positing the instinct of preservation as the cardinal drive (he holds that a living thing desires above all to discharge its force) (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[63] = WP 650). On this model, then, mechanism and matter are to be "*excluded* absolutely" as expressions of "the most despiritualized form of affect (of 'will to power')" (NL 1887, KSA 12, 9[8] = WP 712).

Nietzsche thinks that it is such a "dynamic" interpretation of the world, with its denial of empty space and little clumps of atoms, that will come to dominate physics and it is in this context that his interest in the example of music needs to be appreciated. In a note entitled "*Against* the physical atom" he writes:

> The calculability of the world, the expressibility of all events in formulas—is this really "comprehension"? How much of a piece of music has been understood when that which in it is calculable and can be reduced to formulas has been reckoned up?—And "constant causes," things, substances, something "unconditioned"; *invented*—what has one achieved? (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[56] = WP 624; see also GS 373).

Nietzsche's concern, then, is not simply phenomenological in the sense of a concern for what something feels like to me as subject of experience, but an ontological one about our comprehension of the world and the need for a dynamic principle to account for its "life" aspects. Nietzsche's commitment to monism means that he does not need to operate with a distinction between methodological and substantive naturalisms, and their correlated distinction between subjective experience and physical objects. Instead, his focus is on degrees of difference amongst material and spiritual forms of life (e.g., differences of complexity and concomitant differences in qualia in the organisation of living systems). The difficulty, therefore, becomes apparent: the epiphenomenalist view, whilst firmly rooted in the ontology of the drives, which we regard (with Richardson) as the unit of the will to power, not only dismisses any talk of the will to power, but further *requires* that the will to power be completely disregarded, as it affirms the existence of events that cannot be accounted for with reference to the will to power, namely, the epiphenomenal events of consciousness.[4]

The view of the "will as secondary cause" on the other hand seems to avoid the above contradiction and by and large, it appears to be a more acceptable solution. However, it does run into difficulties of its own. These are, in our opinion, of two sorts. The first is the vagueness of the view: unlike the epiphenomenal reading, the "will as secondary cause" reading does take stock of the host of passages where Nietzsche talks of conscious acts as efficient, be it only (as we mentioned above) the thought of Eternal Recurrence, and all other "persuasive definitions" to use Stevenson's (and Leiter's) expression. According to this view, conscious acts are causal. However, there is a restriction: they are causal only as intermediaries,

4 It should be added that Leiter defends the epiphenomenalist view against attacks from Clark and Dudrick (2009) and Gemes (2009), by borrowing Charles Stevenson's concept of "persuasive definitions" (Leiter 2010: 534–535), thereby acknowledging that language and meaning have effects that go beyond the mere mental or linguistic realm. If we define consciousness as the verbal state of ideas (and Leiter provides nothing against that, even in his discussions of Katsafanas' definition of consciousness as conceptualization), then there are conscious states that are performative (those that persuasive definitions rely on), therefore, epiphenomena are phenomena, and consciousness is not epiphenomenal.

and are never *primary* or *final* causes. The crucial question this raises is what a "primary" or "final" cause would look like for Nietzsche. Obviously, they wouldn't look like much, as the thought of Eternal Recurrence forbids any talk of ends (and beginnings) whether teleological or logical: indeed, Nietzsche explicitly calls "contradictory" any idea of "primary causes" in 25 [377] and calls an "illusion" any idea of "ends"—even in the "antiteleological" sense of 26 [432]. Admittedly, this is not the same sort of ends as the proponents of the will as secondary cause have in mind. Rather, what they have in mind are primary and final causes *of a given event*. This distinction, however, is of little import for Nietzsche's view. Any talk of an event being "given" is only a play on words resulting from the equalizing activity of our consciousness:

> There is no event in itself. What happens is an ensemble of phenomena, *chosen* and gathered by an interpreting being (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[115]).

Strictly speaking, in fact, there are no single and discrete events. It is therefore remarkable that it is in a discussion of Nietzsche's denial of free will that Leiter offers the reading of the "will as secondary cause," when, according to Nietzsche, it is exactly for the same reasons that free will must be denied and that any idea of primary or final causes must be denied, namely, that there never strictly is the *initiation* of any single event (TI Errors 7). Thus, we must think of ends and beginnings only in relative terms (or as Nietzsche says, in "symbolic terms" in NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [68]), and the distinction between conscious acts and others therefore collapses. As a result, all the "will as secondary cause" reading affirms is that conscious acts must be understood as part of a causal chain, nothing more. This is, of course, far too vague to offer anything more than a correction to the most obvious shortcomings of the epiphenomenal reading.

The second difficulty that this reading encounters is of more philosophical import. The "will as secondary cause" reading assumes that there is a difference *in kind* between conscious acts and other acts or events (some can be primary or final, and others can't), and yet, that although different in kind, they can be causally articulated. This strict distinction between conscious acts and other events is, in our view, the crux of many of the shortcomings of the recent scholarship on Nietzsche's theory of mind, and probably also of the ambiguities of Nietzsche's text itself. It is therefore this distinction that we shall seek to re-examine in the rest of this paper.

As is now well known, thanks largely to the recent naturalistic readings of Nietzsche by Schacht (1983), Richardson (1996), Leiter (1998), Risse (2003) and others, whether Nietzsche uses the body (*Leib*) as an explanatory concept or whether he seeks to take a stand in favour of the body in its traditional rivalry with the mind, Nietzsche constantly reaffirms the importance of the body. It is clear that for Nietzsche, the body as an explanatory principle has been given up far too soon. The consequences of this are of the most extreme importance as, according to Nietzsche, the mind, which has become the traditional explanatory principle, is

far from offering the level of clarity that the empirical observation of the body does. Nietzsche reminds himself:

> Essential to start from the body and use it as a guiding thread. It is the far richer phenomenon, and can be observed more distinctly (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[15]).

This should not lead us, however, to uncritically submit all those phenomena hitherto considered "mental" to the dominion of the body. Instead, the revision of the notion of mind must coincide with a reformation of the concept of the body itself. For Nietzsche, it is the naïve notion of the body that makes mental explanations necessary, and in order to do away with the latter, we must conceive of the former in a new way. A note from the summer of 1884 insists on the failure of mental explanations, but it also affirms that the physicalist explanations have failed too:

> Hitherto, *none* of the two explanations of the organic life have succeeded. Neither the mechanistic explanation, nor *the explanation by the spirit*. I insist on this *second* failure. The spirit is more superficial than we think. The governance of the organism takes place in such a way that both the mechanistic world and the spiritual world can explain it only symbolically. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[68])

Any valid account of organic life will now need to be neither mental nor mechanistic. The will to power could be seen as Nietzsche's most developed attempt at establishing a general explanatory principle that would avoid the problems of both mentalist and mechanical explanations. For him, the will to power does not do away with all "mental" events. It is a concept sufficiently malleable to provide a unified explanation for both mental and physical acts. Nietzsche defines the will to power by its *modus operandi* (it is nothing outside of its "doing," or as Nietzsche says, "every power draws its ultimate consequence at every moment" (BGE 21; WP 634), and this *modus operandi* is incorporation (*Einverleibung*) (NL 1885, KSA 11, 38[10]; NL 1887, KSA 12, 5[64], 5[65], 5[82]). Nietzsche finds incorporation at work both in the mental realm and in the physical realm, or as he says (the equivalence is self-evident here), in the "organic" and in the "inorganic." He writes:

> What is generally attributed to the *mind seems to me to constitute the essence of the inorganic:* and even in the highest functions of the mind, all I find is a sublime variety of the organic (assimilation, selection, secretion etc.)
>
> But the opposition between "organic" and "inorganic" itself belongs to the realm of the phenomena! (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[356])

This entry may be too rich to be fully unpacked here, but it may be enough to point out that Nietzsche emphasizes that the opposition between the physical and the mental, or as he terms it here, the "organic" (or the realm of the "mind") and the "inorganic," is only a "phenomenal distinction," and also, that Nietzsche defines both not by finding an *essence* common to them, but by showing that they *operate* in the same way, and it is this common *modus operandi* that he refers to as the will to

power. This is consistent with the general movement of Nietzsche's views on physics in the years 1884 – 86 where we witness a weakening of the notion of physical matter, which coincides with an effort to dethrone the mind from its privileged position as an explanatory principle. In the note from the second half of 1884 cited above, Nietzsche distances himself again from the mechanists insofar as he does "not believe in matter and [he holds] Boscovich to be the great turning point" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[432]). Just like Boscovich did away with any concept of "matter" by replacing it with the concept of "force," Nietzsche conceives of matter in terms of the will to power as activity of incorporation and discharge, which he characterizes as "*Einverleibung*," a concept which he finds illustrated in mental and physical things alike, to the point that he defines the mind as a "stomach" starting in the drafts of *Zarathustra*, and consistently since (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[377], 26[141]; see also BGE 230). This is because the mind, like the body, is defined mainly by its incorporative activity.

It seems clear therefore, that Nietzsche's criticism of mental explanations of life are not intended for us to reduce life to the physical realm, at least not in the traditional sense. On the contrary, Nietzsche endeavours to establish an explanatory ground where the distinctions between mental and physical explanations are obsolete. Further, the introduction of the psycho-physical concept of the will to power allows Nietzsche to place all events on a psycho-physical ground, where the problem of incommensurability within a causal chain made of essentially distinct mental and physical elements no longer exists. In the remainder of this paper, I would like to draw on Nietzsche's remarks on the concepts of meaning and of phenomenology in the *Nachlass* of 1884 – 86 to elaborate a psycho-physical characterization of the will to power.

8.2 Nietzsche's Phenomenological Ontology

> The image-maker [*der Bildner*] (refusal of the "idealism" of hitherto, with the little games it plays with images [*Bildern*]. It is a matter of the *body* [*Leib*]. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 25[233])

In the years 1884 – 86, Nietzsche sought to develop an account of meaning and images based upon the thought of the will to power. His starting point offers distinct echoes from the effort of classical figures from Descartes and Spinoza to Kant and his doctrine of the schemata, insofar as their efforts to explain what they called "imagination" were occupied entirely with establishing whether or not the existence of our faculty of imagination was any proof that the mind should be conceived as necessarily embodied. As is well known, the verdict offered by the classical idealists was decidedly opposed to the idea of embodiment. In the note quoted above, Nietzsche takes over the same problem in an explicit polemic against his predecessors and asserts that it is the body (*Leib*) that is behind our faculty to imagine (*der Bildner*).

Nietzsche's brief reprise of the traditional question of imagination reveals his interest in placing the body at the root not only of our affects but also of our representations. This indicates that the body must be understood as responsible also for conscious perceptions and, therefore, that the distinction between the physical and the mental is not necessarily an essential (or "real") distinction. Indeed, Nietzsche goes further and affirms that meaning, too, is created and should be understood in terms of the will to power, as it arises from the experience of interest:

> Being and appearance, psychologically considered, yield no "being-in-itself," no criterion of "reality," but only grades of appearance measured by the strength of the *interest* we show in an appearance. (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[49])
>
> The struggle fought among ideas and perceptions is not for existence but for mastery: the idea that's overcome is *not annihilated* but only *driven back* or *subordinated. In matters of the mind there is no annihilation* … (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[53]; parts of both notes were published as WP 588)

If interest, therefore, is the name of the structure of the will to power, it seems that it is from interest itself that the world arises: the subject (be it the body-subject "Leib" or the spiritual subject of the idealists) like the object become constituted only by the workings of an interest that *pre-exists* both of them. As such, interest is neither physical nor mental or conscious. On the contrary, taking his cue from Boscovich, Nietzsche sees interest as pure force, and the arousal of a world as an equilibrium between opposing forces:

> The world which matters to us is only illusory, is unreal.—But the concept "really, truly there" is one we drew out of the "mattering-to-us": the more our interests are touched on, the more we believe in the "reality" of a thing or being. "It exists" means: I feel existent through contact with it [*ich fühle mich an ihm als existent*].—Antinomy. (NL 1886, KSA 12, 5[19])

Phenomena, Nietzsche explains, result from the intensity of the opposition between two forces. Their clarity, or as Nietzsche says, their "degree of consciousness," is proportional to the degree of intensity of the contact: "the genesis of 'things' is wholly the work of the imaginers, thinkers, willers, inventors—the very concept of 'thing' as well as all qualities" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[152]). This signifies (a) that the distinction between the conscious and the non-conscious—a distinction instrumental to the "will as secondary cause" reading—is not a difference in kind but merely one of degrees, and (b) that neither is the distinction between the physical and the mental as they both pertain to a "homogenous force" (see NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[38]), and finally (c), that the rejection of this distinction implies neither a reduction of all phenomena to the physical realm, nor to the mental realm, but instead, that it requires a critical reappraisal of both notions. This is not to say that we must read Nietzsche as proposing a form of parallelism *à la* Malebranche or Leibniz. Instead, it is the very distinction between the realities covered by both notions which Nietzsche seeks to reject and replace with a unified middle ground he calls phenomena or representations.

At first sight, it seems as if the will to power is introduced *in opposition* to the very concept of phenomena. However, as Nietzsche makes it clear, his rejection of phenomena must be interpreted as the rejection of the implication that phenomena involve noumena, which he finds in "recent philosophers [*neueren Philosophen*]":

> There are fatal [*verhängnissvolle*] words that present themselves as the expression of some knowledge but which really *hinder* our knowledge; the word "phenomena" [*Erscheinungen*] is one such example. May those phrases I am borrowing to various recent philosophers show what degree of confusion is contained in "phenomena." (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40[52])
>
> He continues:
> against the word "*phenomena*". [*Erscheinungen*]
>
> N.B.: *Appearance* [*Schein*] to my mind, is the genuine and only reality of things. [...] Therefore, I do not posit "appearance" in opposition to "reality," on the contrary, I consider that appearance is reality, [...] a precise name for this reality would be "the will to power, designated by virtue of its internal structure and not of its proteiform, elusive and fluid nature." (NL 1885, KSA 11, 40 [53])

In fact it seems that, by placing appearance (*Schein*) above mere phenomena (*Erscheinungen*), and by defining the will to power in terms of the former, Nietzsche is performing a move very akin to the foundation of phenomenology in Husserl's first *Logical Investigations*. For Nietzsche, as for Husserl later, we must define being as appearance, and do away with any reference to the in-itself:

> Being [*Wesen*] is *lacking:* what is "becoming" [*Das "Werdende"*], the "phenomenal" [*Phänomenale*] is the only form of Being [*Sein*]. (NL 1886 – 87, KSA 12, 7[1])

Contrary to his early discussions of phenomena in BT and elsewhere, where he used the concept as inherited from Schopenhauer, the later Nietzsche takes his concept of phenomena from Kant (in order to better refute him). His first concern is to establish a phenomenal ground not only in external relations (he considers this to have been sufficiently established by transcendental idealism, or, as he says, "recent philosophy"), but also in what he calls internal relations:

> Critique of recent philosophy [*neueren Philosophie*]: erroneous starting point, as if there were any such things as "facts of consciousness"—and no phenomenalism at all in self-observation (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[204])[5]

Nietzsche's critique of inner immediacy in the name of "phenomenalism in self-observation" should not be simply categorized under the headings of his naturalistic critique of consciousness. It seems to me that Nietzsche's point works hand in hand with the establishment of mediation in our external relations. This is why, in

5 Note the repetition of the expression "*neueren Philosophie*" establishing a link with NL 1885, KSA 11, 40 [52] above, and presumably aimed at the Neo-Kantians of the mid- nineteenth century.

my view, Nietzsche characterizes consciousness not as a purely naturalized entity (which would establish some immediacy between consciousness and physical phenomena), but instead, he affirms: "consciousness always contains a double reflection—there is *nothing that is immediate*" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[54] our emphasis; see also 2[204] and 26[49]).

The positing of mediation in "everything" lays the ground for a phenomenological ontology understood as an ontology that defines being as *Schein* no longer opposed to any reality. And indeed, Nietzsche follows his remark by affirming that our world is made of representations and interpretations entirely (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2 [151]).

It is worth pausing here in order to gauge the implications of Nietzsche's assertion that nothing is immediate. Firstly, as I mentioned already, this means that our world is representational (or phenomenal) through and through. Secondly, and consequently, it means that self-identity is nowhere to be found. This is a point Nietzsche makes in several instances after 1885. Indeed, for Nietzsche, one must not posit beings (those entities that are constituted by the oppositional activity he calls will to power) prior to the will to power. Instead, the fundamental element in the arousal of the world is not the beings that are constituted and make up the phenomenal world, but rather, as Nietzsche writes remarkably: "it is not a being but a struggle that seeks to maintain itself" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 1[124]). In other words, the true "matter" of life is not to be conceived in physical terms but in relational terms, and these relational terms, as we mentioned above, are essentially representational for Nietzsche, that is to say, psycho-somatic.[6] Within Nietzsche's will-to-power phenomenology, nothing should be conceived as independent, everything is a condition of everything, and it would be unwarranted to introduce any separations in kind, whether between the physical and the mental, or between discrete events. As Nietzsche writes strikingly:

> —the world of the unconditional, if it existed, would be the *Unproductive*. But we must finally understand that existing [*Existent*] and unconditioned [*Unbedingt*] are contradictory attributes. (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[203])

8.3 Causation

We opened our discussion with a consideration of the two views of Nietzsche's concept of consciousness as laid out most eloquently by Brian Leiter. As we said, Leiter pronounces himself in favour of the epiphenomenal reading of consciousness, al-

6 This, of course, should not send us back onto the path of the "will as secondary cause" be it only insofar as this view relies on a robust distinction between the conscious (which is given causal efficacy) and the subconscious. The arousal of the world is gradual on the contrary and relies on the impossibility to establish a ground anterior to representation.

though he acknowledges that Nietzsche's text leaves room for another interpretation, which he calls the "will as secondary cause." We objected to the epiphenomenalistic reading insofar as it postulates epiphenomena which are of a different nature than phenomena, and which it describes as inefficacious. As we have tried to show, this reading would be incompatible with the will to power that Nietzsche proposes as an explanatory principle (which he develops more fully in his notes but clearly maintains in his published writings). We objected to the "will as secondary cause" that (like the epiphenomenalist reading) it created a problematic separation *between* phenomena (some are causally inefficacious and some aren't) and that its reliance on a language of "primary and secondary causes" led it to assume the existence of objectively determined events. We have tried to show that this would be inconsistent with Nietzsche's cosmological ideas as well as with the letter of his text where he rejects any idea of independent events and of primary or of secondary causes.

This set of objections constitutes a list of requirements for any fresh account of the status of consciousness and conscious acts, one of which I have attempted to outline here. According to the two requirements, as I understand them, an account of Nietzsche's concept of consciousness that is consistent with his idea of will to power must

(a) not rely on any distinction *in kind* between acts of consciousness and physical events (i.e. the will to power must be accounted for in psycho-physical terms, and it must be the only explanatory principle); and
(b) not rely on any final or primary causes, and avoid any separation between the links of a causal chain.

What has been said so far regarding these requirements must suffice for the purposes of this paper. It should be apparent that Nietzsche conceives of the will to power in terms that are neither physical nor mental; instead, he presents it as the activity which gives rise to the phenomenal world of representation. In so doing, he affirms that (a) the will to power is a common origin, the *modus operandi* for both consciousness and the physical world; and (b) that the world of consciousness and the physical world are separated by a difference of degree and not a difference in kind. Indeed, for Nietzsche, the representational nature of the world means that any entity that would be purely physical and therefore mind-independent would never be brought to our attention (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[35])[7] and that the same would be the case for any purely mental act (NL 1886, KSA 12, 7[4]).[8] This is so, as we have argued, because for Nietzsche only the "conditioned" is "existent." As a result, both the physical and the mental realms are products of our consciousness solidified

7 "Alles organische Leben ist als sichtbare Bewegung coordinirt einem geistigen Geschehen."

8 "No isolated judgment is ever 'true,' is never knowledge, it is only within a certain context, in relation, between a number of judgments that any proof comes to light." Nietzsche goes on to criticize even pure contextualized judgment by showing that this context of other judgments ultimately relies, contrary to Kant's assumption, on experience.

into concepts and, Nietzsche writes, mere "symptoms" of desires and "the most fundamental desire (*Begierde*) is the will to power," which is of neither nature (NL 1885, KSA 11, 1[59]).

This brings us to the next criterion, regarding the question of causation within a world understood from the point of view of a will-to-power phenomenology Nietzsche proposes. In the psycho-physical view I propose, it is clear that the will to power does not allow for distinct entities of any kind. For Nietzsche, the will to power refers to the phenomenal world that exists through this unique activity Nietzsche calls "discharge" or "incorporation." This view runs into the obvious difficulty that it cannot account for causality, if causality means the relation between single phenomena. In both the "will as secondary cause" and the epiphenomenalist reading, it is acknowledged that there is a web of causal relations between different bodies and acts, whether mental or physical, with the difficulties we have mentioned. In the psycho-physical view on the contrary, which denies the distinction between entities, causation becomes problematic for opposite reasons. This is not necessarily in contradiction with Nietzsche's thought, however. As he declares in 1886 in BGE 21:

> one should not make the mistake of objectifying [*verdinglichen*] "cause" and "effect" as do the natural scientists [*Naturforscher*] (and whoever nowadays think in a naturalistic manner [*und wer gleich ihnen heute im Denken naturalisirt*]), in conformity with the prevalent mechanistic foolishness that pushes and tugs at the cause until it "has an effect"; "cause" and "effect" should be used only as pure *concepts* as conventional fictions for the purpose of description or communication, and *not* for explanation. In the "in-itself", there is nothing of "causal associations" [...] the effect does *not* follow "upon the cause," no "law" governs it. *We* alone are the ones who have invented causes [...].

Here Nietzsche acknowledges the fact that *it seems to us* that things are causally connected, and yet, he argues that this is an illusion. More importantly, Nietzsche's critique, which seems addressed directly to those epiphenomenalists and those who hold the view of the "will as secondary cause" be it then or now, is concerned with our "objectifying" (*verdinglichen*) causes and effects.

In his notebooks of autumn 1885 to autumn 1886, in which he is preparing the manuscript of BGE, Nietzsche's attacks on causation are made from two different angles. The first one is a critique of the idea of primary or final causes (which I alluded to above). Any talk of primary and final causes would be superficial and illegitimate if, as Nietzsche hypothesizes, all phenomena were interconnected (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2 [143]) and the process of the world had neither beginning nor end (NL 1887, KSA 13, 11 [72] = WP 708).

The second argument is a reprise of traditional Humean arguments according to which causation is a mental construct, which is not given in experience (NL 1885, KSA 11, 34[70]; NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83]). In his most developed critique of the idea of primary and final causes, Nietzsche rejects any talk of causation as being derived from the fiction of an active and intentional subject. He writes:

> All judgment contains the complete, full, deep belief in subject and predicate, or in cause and effect; and this latter belief (that is to say as the claim that every effect would be an activity and that every activity presupposed an actor) is even a special case of the former, so that the belief as fundamental belief remains: there are subjects (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83])

Let us stress at once that in all the passages where Nietzsche attacks the notions of "subject," "object," "cause" or "effect," he always assumes that what is apparent is none of the above, but their action, and that they are inferred retrospectively and, he thinks, mistakenly, by an entity driven by the will to power that has a vested interest not in truth but in intelligibility. For Nietzsche, indeed, no one has ever seen any cause, any effect, any subject or any object. If we must understand the belief in causation as a "special case" of the belief in subjects, it becomes obvious that the fallacy Nietzsche finds in causation lies in the assumption that causes and effects (like subjects and objects) are *external* to each other. This belief, Nietzsche writes, is based on two further assumptions: first, the solidification of causes and effects described in BGE 21, which makes them necessarily incommensurable, and therefore, external; and, second, our inability to think of actions (or, in this case, interactions) without assuming subjects and objects of actions (or of interactions). Nietzsche, on the contrary, asks:

> Question: is the intention cause of an event? Or is also this an illusion? Is it [the intention] not *the* event itself? (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[83])

This is not to say that we must place all the weight of the action on the side of the intention, or that we must think of the intention as an epiphenomenal expression of some internal event. On the contrary, we must conceive of the action and the actor as ontologically non-differentiated. Bearing in mind that for Nietzsche, only the action is apparent, his argument amounts not to reducing agent and action to each other, but to reducing the agent to the action. As Nietzsche affirms, just five entries earlier: "Separation of 'action' and 'actor': *utterly wrong*" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[78]). In the very same note, Nietzsche uses the verb *verdinglichen* (objectification) again, this time to characterize the action: "the 'lightning' glows—reduplication [*Verdoppelung*]—the action *objectified* [*verdinglicht*]" (NL 1885, KSA 12, 2[78]).

For Nietzsche, indeed, there is nothing more to the "lightning" (note the inverted commas) than its glow, making the expression "the 'lightning' glows" a linguistic redundancy with ontological consequences Nietzsche seeks to warn us against. In the final version of this note, in GM I 13, Nietzsche concludes strikingly: "the 'doer' is invented as an afterthought,—the doing is everything." Interestingly, Nietzsche uses the verb *verdinglichen* again, in the same period,[9] this time to characterize the "will": "'Wille'—eine falsche Verdinglichung" (1[62]).

9 To our knowledge, he uses this verb in any of its forms only five times in his entire writings. First in

For Nietzsche, therefore, the concept of will has been mishandled just like the concept of action insofar as it has been "objectified." As I pointed out above, for Nietzsche, all that remains in the phenomenology of the will to power is the struggle itself, deprived of any ficticious agents. This leaves a world of pure representations, without subjects or objects, which are constituted within the complex will to power events only secondarily, as "*regulative* fictions" that might be "indispensible" but nevertheless "false" (NL 1885, KSA 11, 35[35]).

In this world, Nietzsche finds an alternative to causal thought, which takes stock of the impossibility to conceive of causes and effects as *partes extra partes:* in the tightly-knit universe Nietzsche describes repeatedly and where the only reality is will to power, no single entity can be individuated as the cause of another. Rather, everything is connected to and conditions everything else. Causation becomes therefore replaced with a new concept of concurrent or mutual dependence. Nietzsche writes:

> Supposing that the world had a certain quantum of force [*Kraft*] at its disposal, then it is obvious that every displacement of power [*Macht*] at any point would affect the whole system—thus together with sequential [*hintereinander*] causality there would be a contiguous [*neben(einander)*] and concurrent [*miteinander*] dependence [*Abhängigkeit*]. (NL 1885 – 86, KSA 12, 2[143] = WP 638)

The interdependence Nietzsche assumes is therefore directly related to the impossibility to individuate atomistically any chains of events, or any individual link within a chain of events, and to establish any primary or final causes. Instead, the interconnectedness of the world, entailed in the hypothesis of the will to power, connects all "parts" not successively (as in the conventional concept of causation), but "contiguously and concurrently." This interdependence is thus distinguished from causation insofar as it is neither sequential nor made of actions that comprise one active and another, passive, part. On the contrary, Nietzsche writes, the relation is "mutual," and does away with any differences in kinds, as Nietzsche said as early as the summer of 1884 in a laconic note: "Coordination in place of *cause and effect*" (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26[46]).[10]

HH II and then four times between Autumn 1885 and Autumn 1886 in BGE 21, in NL 1885 – 86, KSA 12, 1[62], 1[65], 2[78].

10 In the note immediately following (NL 1884, KSA 11, 26 [47]) Nietzsche first uses the term '*miteinander*' to characterize the bond that the struggle between opposing forces creates between them. Further down the same note, he makes a similar argument when he affirms the general interdependence of all events within the great event of the world: "In order to be joyous about anything, one must approve of *everything*." The consistency of the web of concepts Nietzsche uses between 1884 and 1886 is striking and corroborates our interpretation.

8.4 Conclusion

What does the idea of mutual dependency as an alternative to causality offer to those who, like us, remain dissatisfied with the traditional accounts of consciousness in Nietzsche? Within a philosophy that posits the "hypothesis" of the will to power (BGE 36) as a universal explanatory principle—provided one accepts as we do that Nietzsche is indeed serious about this proposal—asking about the status of consciousness amounts to asking how, or how well, consciousness may be accounted for in terms of the will to power. As I have tried to show, the two main accounts of consciousness in Nietzsche's philosophy proposed in the recent years are not compatible with the thought of the will to power.

We have argued that their shortcomings are all related to the fact that ontological or metaphysical divisions are impossible within the will to power. Whether these distinctions imply separating mental from physical events, conscious from unconscious events, causes from effects, or phenomena from epiphenomena—they are incompatible with and defeat the unifying purpose of Nietzsche's hypothesis. Following Nietzsche on his path towards a characterization of the will to power as I have tried to do here shows that he consistently challenges such distinctions and conceives of the will to power as a psycho-physical hypothesis, i.e. he attempts to characterize it as neither mental nor physical, but rather, he views the realms of the mental and the physical as phenomena that belong to one and the same event called the world.

Nietzsche's sustained attempts to elaborate a conception of the will to power that would satisfy these requirements led him to propose a unitary phenomenology that describes the world as composed of purely psycho-physical representations, driven by the same *modus operandi*, in which sequential causality is understood as a fictitious simplification of the real interconnectedness and interdependence of the whole. The introduction of the concept of the will to power in 1884 culminates in an ontology that refutes previous distinctions, characterizes the mental and the physical in representational terms, and offers a new ground for their relation.

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