

CONSCIENCE AND WILL TO POWER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION¹

CONSCIÊNCIA MORAL E VONTADE DE PODER: UMA RECONSTRUÇÃO FENOMENOLÓGICA

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ABSTRACT *This essay argues for an interpretation of Nietzsche's concept of conscience (Gewissen) based on a phenomenological reconstruction of its characteristics, as indicated by texts in which Nietzsche attempts to describe experiences related to conscience. From this point of view, conscience plays an essentially cognitive role, in the sense of being an opening to a dimension of preconscious experiences, especially listening, strangeness, love, freedom and time, that yield epistemological and ontological value. These varied experiences reveal conscience as constituted by a myriad of nuances rooted in three basic modes, corresponding to the threefold typology of the slave, the noble and the priest. They also form the basis for a consideration of the role of consciousness (Bewusstsein) in cognition, as the modalities of conscience mobilize human intellectual capability according to different measures and limits. Lastly, the analysis of conscience provides a foundation for a phenomenological reconstruction of the concept of will to power, characterized primarily by the possibility of human freedom in the face of the power of time and secondarily*

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by the potential for an analogical application of the concept as a heuristic principle of calculability.

Keywords: *Love. Conscience. Consciousness. Freedom. Time. Will to power.*

RESUMO *Este ensaio argumenta a favor de uma interpretação do conceito nietzschiano de consciência moral (Gewissen) baseada em uma reconstrução fenomenológica de suas características, tal como indicado em textos nos quais Nietzsche procura descrever experiências ligadas à consciência moral. Deste ponto de vista, a consciência moral tem um papel essencialmente cognitivo, no sentido de ser uma abertura para uma dimensão de experiências pré-conscientes (especialmente: escuta, estranhamento, amor, liberdade e tempo) que possuem valor epistemológico e ontológico. Essa gama de experiências revela a consciência moral como constituída por uma miríade de nuances enraizadas em três modos básicos, correspondentes à tríplice tipologia: escravo, nobre e sacerdote. Ela também forma a base para uma consideração do papel da consciência (Bewusstsein) na cognição, uma vez que as modalidades da consciência moral mobilizam a capacidade intelectual humana de acordo com diferentes medidas e limites. Por fim, a análise da consciência moral proporciona um fundamento para uma reconstrução fenomenológica do conceito de vontade de poder, caracterizado primariamente pela possibilidade da liberdade humana ante o poder do tempo, e, secundariamente, pelo potencial de uma aplicação analógica do conceito como princípio heurístico de calculabilidade.*

Palavras-chave: *Amor. Consciência. Consciência moral. Liberdade. Tempo. Vontade de poder.*

1. Introduction

The thesis argued in this essay can be summarized in two points: 1) Conscience (*Gewissen*) plays, for Nietzsche, an essentially cognitive role, in the sense of being an opening to a dimension of experiences - specifically, of listening, strangeness, love, freedom and time - that yield epistemological and ontological value. This principle provides a framework for understanding the multiplicity of phenomena related to conscience. 2) Conscience is the source of a particular ontological insight that forms the basis of the thought of the will to power. The will to power is best interpreted as primarily pertaining to

the ontological dimension uncovered by conscience, with all of its variations rooted in this insight.

This thesis, however, is only possible on the basis of a previous methodological decision: to attempt to reconstruct Nietzsche's concepts from a phenomenological point of view. Nietzsche's texts offer various different perspectives and approaches on several themes. Some texts intend to describe first-person experiences and create concepts to comprehend their essential features. Those same concepts may appear elsewhere in more abstract applications or with different meanings. Therefore, a phenomenological reading of Nietzsche, in the sense we intend, means to privilege the former type of texts as a key to interpret the latter.²

Some classical and comprehensive studies of Nietzsche's thought endeavored little to no direct analysis of the concept of conscience³, and when they did, they tended to focus almost solely on the bad conscience⁴. More recent literature has attempted to situate the bad conscience within the horizon of a broader and more polyvalent concept of conscience⁵, whose latest development may be overall represented by the statement that "Nietzsche characterizes 'conscience' in general as self relating ability, i.e., the ability to take oneself as an object of reflection and modification" (Guay, 2022, p. 206)⁶. This point of view is grounded mainly in the approach of conscience undertaken in the *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, which is not a text mainly concerned with describing experiences, but with offering a naturalistic and developmental account (e.g. Snelson, 2019) of phenomena, that is, an account of an abstract chain of events. The book starts with the characterization of the conscience of the sovereign individual, who develops the ability to make promises: "To have the power to make promises, then, the power which the 'sovereign man' calls his 'conscience,' is to have developed, through repression, the capacity for self-reflection and the potential for self-transformation." (Ridley, 1998, p. 19). In order to be able to make promises, one would have to become capable

2 Our view of phenomenology is inspired by Marion's definition: "conceiving the appearing itself no longer as a 'given of consciousness', but indeed as a givenness *to* consciousness (or even *through* consciousness) of the thing itself, given in the mode of appearing and in all of its dimensions [...]. The phenomenological breakthrough consists [...] solely in the unconditional primacy of the givenness of the phenomenon" (Marion, 1998, p. 32).

3 E.g. Jaspers (1981), Heidegger (1961a; 1961b), Foucault (1971), Kaufmann (1974), Müller-Lauter. (1971).

4 Notably, Deleuze (1962) greatly developed the analysis of bad conscience. On the other hand, Nehamas (1985; 1998) hinted at a possible relation between conscience and the imperative "become who you are", but did not give the concept a more thorough analysis.

5 Some early efforts in this direction can be found in Ridley (1998), Murray (1999) and Allison (2000).

6 The same idea is also presented, in a slightly different formulation, in: Ridley, 1998, p. 15-16. Snelson's definition reduces conscience to an earlier stage of the development of consciousness: "In its broadest capacity the conscience is understood by Nietzsche to be a 'consciousness of' one's obligations, or a kind of 'memory' that takes as its object two distinct forms of obligation: rules and debts" (2019, p. 311).

of repressing one's own instincts and thinking about one's actions and status as a responsible agent⁷. It has even been suggested that "the sovereign individual names the modern ideal of individual rational autonomy." (Hatab, 2008, p. 76)⁸. Nietzsche's originality would then reside in the analysis of this capacity, not as taken for granted in the structure of human cognition, but as a product of a development entangled with the dangerous possibilities of bad conscience. In Ridley's formulation⁹, it means that: "The pregnancy, the repression, which the 'bad' conscience is in its beginnings, can go either way: it can become the bad bad conscience of slavish resentment resentment; or it can become the good bad conscience of that affirmative, joyous, form-giving activity which Nietzsche, when he's straight with himself, calls nobility and mastery. (1998, p. 22). On Miyasaki's interpretation, however, only bad conscience is essentially repressive, since "for Nietzsche, conscience is primarily related to affirmation, memory, individual sovereignty, and the feelings of pride and power" (2010, p. 435). In any case, this line of interpretation of conscience equates it with the development of forms of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) and even self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*). We shall argue that conscience, on the contrary, has a cognitive value of its own, distinct from this other dimension of cognition called consciousness (albeit connected to it in important ways).

It is necessary to clarify from the start in what sense do we intend to establish a relation between conscience and will to power in the second point of our argument. As a first step in tracing such a relation, it is useful to notice that, overall, "it is actually unclear in the *Genealogy* what the will to power is, but Nietzsche gives indications of its importance: he identifies it with the 'instinct of freedom' and the 'essence of life'" (Guay, 2022, p. 208). Particularly, the instinct of freedom (*Instinkt der Freiheit*) is, indeed, directly indicated twice in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: one time in connection with the development of conscience (GM II, 17), and subsequently as synonymous with the will to power (GM II, 18). It is clear that, in general, conscience can be thought of as some sort of manifestation of the will to power. Kaufmann, for instance, claims that "Nietzsche proposed to explain all human behavior in terms of the will to

7 Accordingly, Leiter considers that conscience is "the result of the conflict between man's animal nature and the constraints imposed by civilized intercourse with other human beings" (2002, p. 173), and adds later, more explicitly, that "'conscience' – a capacity to remember one's promises – arises from the 'social straitjacket'" (p. 229).

8 The author also provides a broader link between will to power and morality (Hatab, 2013).

9 Welshon's recent formulation of the problem is similar: "Since promising, contracts, and customs worked together to create prudentially responsible agents, we can infer that conscience is being reflectively aware that one is a prudentially responsible agent. However, being reflectively aware of prudential responsibility is not the same as bad conscience, which is the reflective awareness of guilt and the accompanying qualitative affect of suffering, that is, feeling guilty." (2023, p. 150)

power” (1974, p. 216), and, in regard to that behavior, adds that “to become powerful, to gain freedom, to master his impulses and perfect himself, man must first develop the feeling that his impulses are evil. This recognition is the essence of the bad conscience.” (1974, p. 253). Accounts such as this present the will to power as an explanatory principle of the causes of the way humans behave, feel and comprehend things, or, at least, as an abstract descriptive principle¹⁰. Although to some degree that approach can indeed be found in Nietzsche’s writings, we shall argue that it is derivative from an originary access to the will to power as an ontological principle uncovered by the experience of conscience.

There have been attempts to develop phenomenological accounts of the Nietzschean concept of conscience, at least in some of its variations, and to relate it to certain ontologically revealing experiences. Babich, for example, claims that through a certain possibility of conscience, “one is called to come to one self by way of a return or a recognition consonant with what Nietzsche calls the eternal return of reflection or *amor fati*.” (2003, p. 20). This means that conscience, in one of its forms, would represent an insight into the temporality of human life, endowed with an ethical value. In a similar way, Visser (2004) also states that Nietzsche’s concept of conscience is rooted in an ontological experience of time. However, neither of these authors propose an explicit connection between these insights and the will to power, nor a broader concept of conscience, able to encompass its other possibilities. On the other hand, there have been accounts of the will to power that intend to root the concept in certain specific types of experience. For instance, in an access to reality previous to the opposition between subject and object (Chouraqui, 2013), or in the experience of “a will to the very activity of overcoming resistance” that functions as “a second-order desire (...) whose object is or includes another (first-order) desire”, therefore regulating it (Reginster, 2007, p. 36-37). However, these accounts do not explicitly connect the experiences related to the will to power with the theme of conscience.

10 Miyasaki makes such a distinction: “The manifestation of power is [...] a non-metaphysical description of the form of every instinctual aim (2010, 446)” because “the will to power cannot be an underlying unitary being, law, or force that causes and explains all mental phenomena”. (2010, p. 444). In this broad sense, an abstract account of the will to power can be found in Murray: “Will to power is the concept which Nietzsche uses to refer to the creative force which underlies all moralities, the force which underlies the formation of all tables of what is good and evil, and what underlies Zarathustra’s attempt to create “the meaning of the earth”. (1999, p. 288). Notably, a connection is later developed by this author between will to power and conscience through the notion of ‘philosophical companions’ that provoke each other’s development (2018, p. 187-188). Metzger (2020, p. 96), on the other hand, suggests an explanation of conscience as an “affective-intellectual power” whose “sense and direction” result from other instances of creation of meaning. None of these approaches are founded on a phenomenological reconstruction of the concepts from first-person experiences.

Henceforth, we shall proceed to an analysis of the experience of conscience, and subsequently develop an account of the will to power.

2. Conscience

A decisive and generally overlooked definition of conscience is found in Nietzsche's notes of the period when the *Also sprach Zarathustra* was being conceived: "die Mittel nicht um des Zwecks willen allein wollen! Gewissen ist das Gefühl, in dem uns die Rangordnung unsrer Triebe zum Bewußtsein kommt." (NF 1883, 15[51], KGW VII-1.517)¹¹. Here we have two apparently disparate phrases. The second one asserts: conscience (*Gewissen*) is the feeling (*das Gefühl*) in whose realm (*in dem*) an apparition comes into consciousness (*Bewusstsein*). The movement of apparition is emphasized by the verbal form 'comes' (*kommt*). That means that, first of all, the feeling itself is something distinct and irreducible to consciousness. It is a *preconscious experience*¹² that prompts a conscious apparition. What appears, then, is the order of rank of our drives (*Rangordnung unsrer Triebe*). Drives are the orientations through which not only do we act, but also perceive things as distinct from one another and as endowed with different values¹³. However, conscience shows drives, not as equally given in abstract, but as already appropriating one another or resisting one another. Indeed, if we consider the living experience of a number of drives, they must always be either in such an arrangement as to make the stronger ones organize the weaker, or in a rather paralyzing conflict. The order of rank of the drives derives from the preeminence of a single drive, or from the indecisive and tense concurrence of two or more drives. By bringing the order of rank of the drives to consciousness, conscience brings up the particular lived situation in which one is currently in, in the light of its current orientation or lack thereof and its possibilities of decision and indecision. Inasmuch as consciousness is presented with this insight, it becomes possible to plan actions, measure their feasibility or desirability, calculate consequences, but also to simply reflect upon experience in a broader sense.

11 Since we intended to discuss many German terms directly, we opted to quote the German original, providing subsequent close commentary and eventually paraphrasing the text in English.

12 We chose to use the term 'preconscious' instead of 'unconscious' here to avoid the misunderstanding that would take it as referent to the abstract construct of a reality absolutely inaccessible to experience. However, it is true that Nietzsche often uses the word 'unconscious' (*Unbewusst*) in particular contexts, although the exact meaning and intention of these texts is debatable.

13 "Ein Trieb zu Etwas oder von Etwas weg, ohne ein Gefühl davon, dass man das Förderliche wolle, dem Schädlichen ausweiche, ein Trieb ohne eine Art von erkennender Abschätzung über den Werth des Zieles, existirt beim Menschen nicht." (MAMI, 32, KGW IV-2.48),

The definition of conscience articulates three different cognitive dimensions: the feeling, the drives and consciousness. It identifies the feeling as a preconscious experience that brings up apparitions for a possible reflection. The drives are the content of such an apparition. But they emerge out of the realm of feeling, wherein they originally belong. The drives manifest both in the preconscious feeling and as conscious objects. Inasmuch as a feeling propels the drives to appear, it is in itself an experience of necessity. One feels compelled to think. The need to think and try to understand the conflict of the drives is itself something different from the possibility of using the operations of thought as tools to calculate the most effective way of satisfying the drives. That is attested already by the fact that thought can understand feelings and drives as preconscious experiences that, as such, cannot be entirely reduced to consciousness. By paying attention to the need to think in itself instead of rushing into calculations of utility, thought becomes conscious of itself as both limited and sustained by the measure in which feelings and drives happen to reveal themselves at each moment. Thought is then able to experience itself and reflect upon itself as that which is rooted in preconscious feelings and drives. They are met as a dimension of alterity and givenness that makes calculative thinking possible but that cannot be in itself anticipated by it. Feelings and drives propel apparitions by themselves, unpredictably and uncontrollably. They are a means by which calculative thinking is possible. However, they fascinate thought not just as means to this possibility, but as realities in themselves. Insofar as one feels compelled to think feelings and drives in themselves as preconscious realities that can propel apparitions - that is, compelled to think about conscience -, and this need itself calls for a particular way of thinking according to itself, it becomes evident that the means necessary to think are not desirable solely as means, but also in themselves as transformative experiences. That is the insight of the first phrase of the annotation: it had already envisaged the full development of the definition of conscience before the second phrase began to formulate it.

Another note from the same period attempts to describe more directly the issue:

Allein mit mir und meinem frohlockenden Gewissen. [...] Der Zweck ist es, der jedes Ding und Thun entheiligt: denn was ist Heiligkeit, wenn sie nicht im Herzen und Gewissen des Dings und Thuns sitzt! Ich will, daß du kein Ding thust mit 'um' und 'weil' und 'damit' — sondern jedes Ding um des Dings Willen und ihm zu Liebe. (NF 1883 22[1], KGW VII-1.639)

The first sentence - “alone with myself and my joyful conscience” - sounds like a title or at least sets the tone for the following texts. They seem to be mostly drafts for the *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Among them, we find the subsequent quote, the only one to address conscience directly. It states: the goal (*der Zweck*) is something that removes the holiness (*entheiligt*) of things and actions (*jedes Ding und Thun*). We may here interpret: it removes the holiness, in the sense of covering it up by deviating the gaze from experience in its preconscious form and onwards to appropriate its apparitions as calculable and useful. What does ‘holiness’ mean, though? We read: there is no holiness except in the very heart and conscience of things and actions (*im Herzen und Gewissen des Dings und Thuns*). Holiness names an element of experience.

It is noteworthy that conscience here is not located within consciousness as one of its properties. Conscience is the originary openness to givenness that allows consciousness to grasp drives as orientations that wrap up the living experience each time in a certain way. Here, it is explicitly stated that this dimension, for which we had only the label of a ‘feeling’, is inhabited by things and actions. This implies a preconscious experience of things and actions, given by feeling and organized by the preconscious level of the drives. This ontological dimension demands thinking and a language in accordance with its mode of being. Thus, proper discourse about them should not consist of abstractions or theorizations, but rather descriptions of experience. Elsewhere, Nietzsche seems to address the same linguistic problem through the notion of metaphor, that is, a special language indicative of the element of singularity that pervades experience and underpins the possibility of abstraction¹⁴. Singularity means the emergence of determinate beings that do not correspond exactly to any pre-existing set of concepts or meanings. They are themselves creations of meaning and may become the material for new concepts. Describing the mode of being of the becoming of singularity is the special, admittedly risky and difficult mode of thinking necessary here.

The realm of singular experience not only demands its own way of thinking and speaking, but correspondingly a way of acting, that is, living through the orientation opened up by the dominant drive. That’s why we read next that it is necessary to learn to “do things” (*Ding thust*) without regarding them merely as instruments (*um, damit*) within the nexus of an abstract calculation of causes and consequences (*weil*), but instead to do things for their own sake

14 We recall here the “intuitive Mensch” characterized by “Hohn über die Abstraction” and the “Glanz der metaphorischen Anschauungen” (WL 2, KGW III-2.383). Nevertheless, as abstraction may also to some degree signalize to the experience that originated it, it may itself also be taken as metaphor.

(*um des Ding Willen*), that is, to love them (*um ihm zu Liebe*). The need to will the thing for what it is in itself, rather than as a means for a calculable end, is precisely the insight that inspired the definition of conscience found elsewhere. We now learn that it demands not only a proper mode of thinking, but also of acting. That means: conscience is not only that which concedes an apparition to consciousness as material for the calculability of action, but also and most essentially a feeling that encapsulates a preconscious level of the impulses that attracts the human being into thinking it in itself and attempting to learn to act in a mode of orientation proper to this experience. That would be, then, a type of instinctive action or, to be more precise, an action guided by love. Encrypted within the experience of conscience is a call to think and act out of love. Only in this way “holiness” can be found in experience - and conscience can be fully “joyful”.

By taking into consideration the two aforementioned notes, we are prepared to uncover the question of conscience as the nucleus of texts in which it is not explicitly mentioned. That is the case of the following aphorism in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

Man muss lieben lernen. — So geht es uns in der Musik: erst muss man eine Figur und Weise überhaupt hören lernen, heraushören, unterscheiden, als ein Leben für sich isolieren und abgrenzen; dann braucht es Mühe und guten Willen, sie zu ertragen, trotz ihrer Fremdheit, Geduld gegen ihren Blick und Ausdruck, Mildherzigkeit gegen das Wunderliche an ihr zu üben: — endlich kommt ein Augenblick, wo wir ihrer gewohnt sind, wo wir sie erwarten, wo wir ahnen, dass sie uns fehlen würde, wenn sie fehlte; und nun wirkt sie ihren Zwang und Zauber fort und fort und endet nicht eher, als bis wir ihre demüthigen und entzückten Liebhaber geworden sind, die nichts Besseres von der Welt mehr wollen, als sie und wieder sie. — So geht es uns aber nicht nur mit der Musik: gerade so haben wir alle Dinge, die wir jetzt lieben, lieben gelernt. Wir werden schließlich immer für unseren guten Willen, unsere Geduld, Billigkeit, Sanftmüthigkeit gegen das Fremde belohnt, indem das Fremde langsam seinen Schleier abwirft und sich als neue unsäglich Schönheit darstellt: — es ist sein Dank für unsere Gastfreundschaft. Auch wer sich selber liebt, wird es auf diesem Wege gelernt haben: es giebt keinen anderen Weg. Auch die Liebe muss man lernen. (FW 334, KGW V-2.239)

The title is already quite eloquent and synthetic. It is necessary (*man muss*) to learn to love (*lieben lernen*). Where does this necessity come from? We already know it: from conscience. This text is a key description of what it means to correspond to the “heart” of things, as previously mentioned. The analogy with music emerges as paradigmatic of our relation with preconscious experiences. First of all, it is necessary to learn to listen (*hören lernen*). This entails engaging oneself in actively listening (*heraushören*) so that determinate differences begin to appear (*unterscheiden*) as certain figures and modes of being (*Figur und Weise*). This makes clear from the start that we are before an

experience in which reality moves from a rather indeterminate and obscure state into determination and clarity. That recalls the idea of a feeling that propels apparitions into consciousness, for it is thought that finds objects as determinate, clear and distinct entities, in contrast to the obscurity of feeling. Nevertheless, it is vital to remark that the feeling's obscurity is not a vague indifference: it suggests something, it draws attention. To be actively engaged in the pull of this obscurity, to try to listen to what it has to say, is similar to trying to distinguish particular notes and sounds within the polyphony of a musical composition: it means to concentrate on this experience in an attempt to think. But this mode of thinking is nothing like the calculative operation that engages an array of data. There are no clear data here, therefore there is nothing useful for consciousness. It finds something indeed, but something disruptive: strangeness (*das Fremde*). Why would consciousness somehow engage this useless and indeterminate experience of strangeness? It cannot be grasped beforehand, yet it is imperative. Hence, this imperative demands an engagement that asks for nothing in return (*Mühe und gute Willen*), a commitment to endure (*ertragen*) the strange character (*Fremdheit*) of things that progressively show themselves and are an instance of life in themselves (*ein Leben für sich*). That means: things appear for themselves as an independent dimension of alterity beyond human ability to previously anticipate them conceptually or instrumentalize them. In order to be able to witness this thoughtfully, it is necessary to forget about one's own life and interests in the ordinary sense: it's necessary to find patience (*Geduld*) to look at the unique face of things (*ihren Blick und Ausdruck*), to exercise (*üben*) warm-heartedness (*Mildherzigkeit*) so that strangeness can be not merely tolerated but embraced as wonderful (*das Wunderliche*). Corresponding to necessity is not only a matter of thoughtfulness, but also of an emotional exercise and self-discipline. It happens without regard for any extrinsic goal, it does not mean to obtain anything predetermined by it - but nevertheless, something does develop from it.

The temporality of this process happens beyond conscious measurement¹⁵. Suddenly, a powerful instant arrives (*kommt ein Augenblick*), when the strange turned wondrous now becomes familiar (*gewohnt*), but in a distinctive manner. It unveils itself as a magical thing, that exerts enchantment over us (*wirkt sie ihren Zwang und Zauber*). To be familiar with it is to be and remain charmed by it. Experiencing magic, consciousness still cannot calculate becoming and predict new apparitions. Human beings can only wait attentively (*erwarten*)

¹⁵ This confirms and develops the nexus between conscience and a special experience of time suggested by Babich (2003) and Visser (2004).

to collect such apparitions, and thereby become lovers (*Liebhaber*). The necessity that springs from conscience initiates a process of learning to listen to strangeness, and culminates in love as a mode of being towards a particular entity that reveals itself as a life in itself, displaying itself in its own rhythm and unpredictable ways. Consciousness transforms from merely suspending its calculative interests reluctantly into discovering a new and deeper mode of interest that organizes all others (*nichts Besseres von der Welt mehr wollen*). One drive ascended to dominance into consciousness, establishing itself as higher-ranking, thereby determining a mode of perception and action in accordance with itself. Conscience has consummated itself in its greatest development.

By enduring actively the appeal of conscience, a unique type of cognition happens: strangeness slowly unveils itself as a new and unspeakable beauty (*das Fremde langsam seinen Schleier abwirft und sich als neue unsägliche Schönheit darstellt*). A new order of meaning for existence arises. This is the experience of creativity. However, it is not the conscious mind that fabricates meaning, but rather receives it as a gift from the depths of preconscious experience. That's why the atmosphere of the eruption of meaning is that of gratitude (*Dank*) and hospitality (*Gastfreundshaft*). This magical givenness of meaning that transcends consciousness is the element of holiness in the heart of experience¹⁶. The holiness of gratitude is the full consummation of love.

The aphorism we just read thoroughly describes conscience's most appropriate development. It teaches us to identify other reflections as belonging to this development in a more concise manner. For instance, we read elsewhere: "Ein Gewitter war in unsrer Luft, die Natur, die wir sind, verfinsterte sich — denn wir hatten keinen Weg. Formel unsres Glücks: ein Ja, ein Nein, eine gerade Linie, ein Ziel..." (AC 1, KGW VI-3.60). Here, the experience of strangeness is called a "storm" (*Gewitter*) that takes over the atmosphere (*unsrer Luft*) and also as one's nature turning obscure (*die Natur, die wir sind, verfinsterte sich*). That attests to the disruptive character of obscurity and strangeness. These phenomena force a halt in the normal functioning of consciousness as determined by the calculus of available data and the projection of the most efficient utility. It may hurt both psychologically, as a feeling of vulnerability or waste, and prudentially, insofar as engagement in efficient self-preservation is diminished. Indeed, the disruption may become so powerful that existence becomes devoid of any determinate orientation (*denn wir hatten keinen Weg*). This is an extremely threatening experience, for any pain is bearable in the light

16 This is the element that demands "der Geschmack der Ehrfurcht vor Allem, was über euren Horizont geht!" (FW 373, KGW V-2.307)

of a strong decisive meaning¹⁷. Meaninglessness (*Sinnlosigkeit*) must not be understood literally as absolute absence of all meaning, as that is never found in experience. Such an idea can only be an abstract hyperbole indicating an experience of wounded, decadent meaning: the determinate character of things dilutes and decays progressively under the blows of thunderous strangeness and indetermination, making thinking and acting seem increasingly impossible and the realization of one's drives and needs appear hopeless. In this sense, the storm of meaninglessness is the essence of pain. Nevertheless, it is only by withstanding the storm with eyes wide open that one may witness the sudden lightning that illuminates things and concedes a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal (*ein Ja, ein Nein, eine gerade Linie, ein Ziel*). That happens as good fortune (*Glück*), an unpredictable and joyful event. Orientation of the strongest kind comes up and makes life possible again: its givenness is the essence of pleasure. However, it must be noted that this process is not teleological: meaninglessness itself in no way anticipates the determinate new meaning that may arise. Creation always happens necessarily as a surprise, a gift. Paradoxically, it is only possible when meaninglessness is embraced as it is, not as a tool for producing meaning, but as essential and necessary pain welcomed hospitably through a useless endurance¹⁸.

When one is found amidst a disorienting storm, practical decision-making becomes exceedingly difficult. Although one can and must take a number of concrete actions, they seem highly uncertain, confusing or pointless. However, when a bolt of illumination rips obscurity and shows a powerful determinate meaning organizing everything, a path of action and way of life becomes clear, and one is compelled to act accordingly. Decisions are sustained existentially by the givenness of orientation. Essentially, decisions are not arbitrarily made by consciousness¹⁹, but happen in the core of one's nature and align to the development of one's experience. In this sense, conscience's development from strangeness into love means a movement from indecisiveness to decisiveness

17 In Nietzsche's words: "Hat man sein warum? des Lebens, so verträgt man sich fast mit jedem wie?" (GD, "Sprüche und Pfeile", 12, KGW VI-3.54). Also: "Die Sinnlosigkeit des Leidens, nicht das Leiden, war der Fluch, der bisher über der Menschheit ausgebreitet lag" (GM III, 28, KGW VI-2.429).

18 That is the experience addressed on Z III, "Von der Seligkeit wider Willen", when Zarathustra speaks to his joyful conscience (*frohlockenden Gewissen*): "Gefährten suchte einst der Schaffende und Kinder seiner Hoffnung" (KGW VI-1.199). Creation is not aimed at as a final state of pleasure or happiness (see also GD, "Sprüche und Pfeile", 12), but rather aims only at itself as a process to be sustained thoroughly as it integrates both essential pain and essential joy.

19 Therefore Nietzsche criticizes the concept of will in psychology as a capability of making arbitrary decisions: "daß Wille der bisherigen Psychologie, eine ungerechtfertigte Verallgemeinerung ist, daß es diesen Willen gar nicht giebt, daß statt die Ausgestaltung Eines bestimmten Willens in viele Formen zu fassen, man den Charakter des Willens weggestrichen hat, indem man den Inhalt, das Wohin? heraus subtrahirt hat" (NF 1888, 14 [121], KGW VIII-3.93).

and a struggle through which a drive triumphs. One experiences decisiveness rather than decides, one becomes resolute, deeply compelled by love, not merely to an isolated decision but rather to a long-term course of action, a life-encompassing project. This decisiveness is felt as the most proper, intense and free. Nietzsche describes this phenomenon as the most appropriate sense of freedom of the will:

Drittens ist der Wille nicht nur ein Complex von Fühlen und Denken, sondern vor Allem noch ein Affekt: und zwar jener Affekt des Commando's. Das, was 'Freiheit des Willens' genannt wird, ist wesentlich der Überlegenheits-Affekt in Hinsicht auf Den, der gehorchen muss: 'ich bin frei, 'er' muss gehorchen' — dies Bewusstsein steckt in jedem Willen, und ebenso jene Spannung der Aufmerksamkeit, jener gerade Blick, der ausschliesslich Eins fixirt, jene unbedingte Werthschätzung 'jetzt thut dies und nichts Anderes Noth', jene innere Gewissheit darüber, dass gehorcht werden wird, und was Alles noch zum Zustande des Befehlenden gehört. Ein Mensch, der will —, befiehlt einem Etwas in sich, das gehorcht oder von dem er glaubt, dass es gehorcht. (JGB 19, KGW VI-2.26)

This aphorism from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* famously describes the will (*der Wille*) as essentially related to feeling (*Fühlen*) and thinking (*Denken*). This aligns with our previous description of conscience, which indicated that, through feeling (*Gefühl*), the drives (*Triebe*) could arise into consciousness (*Bewusstsein*). However, this process of consummation of conscience we followed is just one among many possible modes of being through which the complex of feeling, thinking and will may be given. Decisiveness, for instance, is not the only possible mode of the will. On the contrary, it is rather extraordinary. It is described as the affection of command (*Affekt des Commandos*), the feeling of a rank of order between the drives: an affection of superiority (*Überlegenheits-Affekt*) by which one part of us commands all other parts to obey (*muss gehorchen*). The dominant drive, embodying love as we have previously uncovered, is felt as free (*frei*), and acting in accordance to it means freedom of the will (*Freiheit des Willens*). The dominant drive is free because it is most sincerely in accordance with meaning and orientation as revealed in the most illuminating instants. Therefore, it is attached to what appears as genuinely most desirable. Consciousness recognizes freedom through a certainty (*Gewissheit*) that is not theoretical, but a manifestation of conscience (*Gewissen*). Consciousness becomes aware that being free means the discipline through which all drives are made to obey that one which manifests itself as the singular orientation that has given itself through conscience. Therefore it exerts itself as concentration (*Spannung der Aufmerksamkeit*) that fixes one thing (*Eins fixirt*) to be remembered as a sign of necessity. The dominant drive expresses itself consciously as the sincerest promises. The formal linguistic expression

of the promise does not function as a parameter for a type of decision where consciousness represses all instincts. Instead, one instinct limits and integrates the others, with the promise acting merely as an eventual mnemonic sign to help steer consciousness towards obeying and serving the dominant instinct²⁰. This underpins the concept of the sovereign individual in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, characterized by the ability to make promises, the consciousness and knowledge of his own freedom and the identification of his dominant instinct as his conscience (GM II, 2-3).

Furthermore, it is time to ask alongside Nietzsche: how can such an account of conscience, that results in the sovereign individual, have anything to do with those other very different forms of conscience we may preliminarily label, in general, as bad conscience? One aphorism is decisively helpful in this regard:

Maass und Mitte. — Von zwei ganz hohen Dingen: Maass und Mitte, redet man am besten nie. Einige Wenige kennen ihre Kräfte und Anzeichen aus den Mysterien-Pfaden innerer Erlebnisse und Umkehrungen: sie verehren in ihnen etwas Göttliches und scheuen das laute Wort. Alle Uebrigen hören kaum zu, wenn davon gesprochen wird, und wähnen, es handele sich um Langeweile und Mittelmässigkeit: Jene etwa noch ausgenommen, welche einen anmahnenden Klang aus jenem Reiche einmal vernommen, aber gegen ihn sich die Ohren verstopft haben. Die Erinnerung daran macht sie nun böse und aufgebracht. (MAMII/VM 230, KGW IV-3.120)

The text addresses measure and mean (*Maas und Mitte*), two things of highest importance (*zwei ganz hohe Dingen*) that are perhaps better to leave unspoken (*redet man am besten nie*). This is an extraordinary warning, for the text is precisely about this subject. The tone is, therefore, of peril, as words can be easily misinterpreted and considered in regard to equivocal experiences. Properly understood, measure and mean refer to the forces that signal (*Kräfte und Anzeichen*) from the mysterious depths of experience, where pathways uncover themselves only through inner revolutions and adventures (*aus den Mysterien-Praden innerer Erlebnisse und Umkehrungen*). This refers to the journey of conscience that propels the rank order of the instincts into consciousness, through the engagement with a feeling that is initially obscure and disruptive like a storm, but conducts into a transformation that gives birth to love and decisiveness. This is the context of the genuine experience of holiness (*etwas Göttliches*) through the gratitude for the givenness of meaning

20 "Wie man am besten verspricht. — Wenn ein Versprechen gemacht wird, so ist es nicht das Wort, welches verspricht, sondern das Unausgesprochene hinter dem Worte. Ja, die Worte machen ein Versprechen unkraftiger, indem sie eine Kraft entladen und verbrauchen, welche ein Theil jener Kraft ist, die verspricht. Lasst euch also die Hand reichen und legt dabei den Finger auf den Mund, — so macht ihr die sichersten Gelöbnisse." (M 350, KGW V-1.241).

and orientation. Such experiences can barely (and only metaphorically) be translated into words, because they belong to a preconscious realm that is irreducible to consciousness. Nevertheless, they constitute the most proper knowledge of measure and mean. It is knowing one's own being as determined by rules and limited in its multiple tendencies by a primary superior necessity.

However, we are now informed that there are two other essential ways of relating to measure and mean. Firstly: that of those who barely listen (*hören kaum zu*). Nietzsche established that learning to actively listen is the first requisite imposed by the necessity to learn to love that is conscience. What happens if one simply refuses engagement in this activity? Instead of embracing its pull and allowing it to disrupt the ordinary dimension of prudential calculus, one may simply remain in an impervious inertia, minding one's normal businesses. However, the need to listen is not obliterated; it is still felt, but in a particular mode: barely, passively. Conscience then sounds like boredom and mediocrity (*Langeweile und Mittelmässigkeit*), an arbitrary and meaningless type of discipline that seems pointless. Engagement with actively listening can not happen as long as one's perspective is locked into the calculating gaze of consciousness in the mode of anticipating consequences and attempting to guarantee the outcome of actions. Secondly: there is also the possibility that, having been somewhat affected by the disruptive forces of conscience, one proceeds, neither to engage it, nor to ignore it, but to actively try to obliterate it. Conscience then sounds like a compromising noise (*anmahnenden Klang*), because ordinary interests are tainted with the weight of being the only acceptable reality. Any other possibility is deemed evil and deprived of any right to exist. However, conscience subtly suggests the alterity of other possibilities of reality yet to be discovered. This is felt as transgression and desecration. Becoming must be suffocated. Therefore, one has to metaphorically punch and clog one's own ears (*die Ohren verstopft haben*), denying one's own feelings and drives and inconvenient preconscious experiences that do not seem to match what consciousness has previously established as mandatory. To even remember having felt this inconvenience is a nightmare, for it is enough to trigger some sort of guilt or non-conformity to standards, and that produces an atmosphere of indignation (*böse und aufgebracht*) - an ontological indignation with reality itself for being different from what it should be.

We have uncovered three essential modes of conscience²¹, corresponding to three ways by which human beings may respond to it: actively listening

21 These three essential modes are the basis for the indefinite amount of possible nuances of conscience indicated in FW, 335.

to it, passively barely listening to it, and actively refusing to listen to it. In each case, *conscience itself appears differently*. For the one who listens actively to it, conscience means the mysterious paths (*Mysterien-Pfaden*) that gradually open up through the engagement in preconscious experiences and transformations (*innerer Erlebnisse und Umkehrungen*). For the one who barely listens, conscience means some alien and useless type of discipline that makes one vulnerable and less efficient in achieving goals, therefore resembling boredom and mediocrity (*Langeweile und Mittelmässigkeit*). For the one who actively refuses to listen, conscience is an implacable monster²² that imposes inconvenient, strange realities that should not have the right to even exist. Conscience becomes compromising (*anmahnenden*), it challenges one's conscious paradigms and suggests that the desire to fixate them against experience is harmful and futile. These three modes of conscience correspond to the three main characters of the *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: the noble, the slave and the priest. Several passages can further support this claim:

Die gemeine Natur ist dadurch ausgezeichnet, dass sie ihren Vortheil unverrückt im Auge behält und dass diess Denken an Zweck und Vortheil selbst stärker, als die stärksten Triebe in ihr ist: sich durch jene Triebe nicht zu unzweckmässigen Handlungen verleiten lassen — das ist ihre Weisheit und ihr Selbstgefühl. Im Vergleich mit ihr ist die höhere Natur die unvernünftigere: — denn der Edle, Grossmüthige, Aufopfernde unterliegt in der That seinen Trieben, und in seinen besten Augenblicken pausirt seine Vernunft. (FW 3, KGW V-2.48)

The common or vulgar mode of being is characterized by the intellectual, conscious pursuit of utility concerning self-preservation and comfort²³. The parameter of orientation is essentially some advantage (*Vortheil*), thought of as a calculable goal (*Zweck*). This conscious activity, structured in this manner, proves to be stronger than the strongest drives (*stärker, als die stärksten Triebe*), in the sense of ignoring them and, to a certain extent, repressing them. Consciousness and drives tend to be taken into antagonism. The demands of the drives - emanating through conscience - are initially strange and useless (*unzweckmässigen Handlungen*). For the common nature, the discipline of conscience expressed by promises and rules tends to seem always somewhat hypocritical, alien, and tolerable only as inescapable social conventions, often reinforced by society through punishment in order to become advantageous in

²² Nietzsche names it the "Höhlen-Minotaurus des Gewissens" (JGB 29, KGW VI-2.24).

²³ It is a synonym to slave-morality: "Die Sklaven-Moral ist wesentlich Nützlichkeits-Moral." (JGB 260, KGW VI-2.221).

contrast and therefore more acceptable to the common nature²⁴. Such an alien conscience may be internalized in the form of an ideally calculable (but maybe infinite) debt, once again reinforced by real or imaginary punishment (GM II, 4-5). At best, it is the crystallization of a once authentic love (for example, the love of parents in childhood) turned cold into a vague and distant authority²⁵. In all of these variations, conscience appears as a conscience that comes from and belongs to others (*Gewissen der Anderen*)²⁶. Nonetheless, there remains simultaneously a strange pull towards it - how disconcerting indeed for the common nature it is to feel attracted by something that cannot prove itself useful. On the other hand, the noble nature is, in comparison (*im Vergleich*), less reasonable (*unvernünftiger*), but also magnanimous and self-sacrificing (*Grossmüthige, Aufopfernde*), because its main interest lies in listening to conscience and following its transformative movement. The noble is not entirely reckless or irrational. Consciousness and calculability are overruled and limited by a primary concern with preconscious experiences that demand a degree of vulnerability, openness to risk and pain.

Although the use of the term “nature” might be misleading, the opposition between noble and common is not absolute. There is fluidity between these types, and attention to conscience can vary in degree, not only in different people, but also in the same person at different moments²⁷. Therefore by noble or common nature we must not understand something static, but dynamic.

On the other hand, the priest type exists only as derived from nobility (GM I, 7). This is a person who has experienced to some degree the transformation and creativity of conscience and the unveiling of the essence of pain as meaninglessness - but, on a second thought, became horrified and traumatized by this vulnerability. Thus resentment becomes the dominant force²⁸ and makes

24 That is the morality of customs: “‘Sittlichkeit der Sitte’, unter dem alle Gemeinwesen der Menschheit lebten” (M 14, KGW V-1.22).

25 “Der Inhalt unseres Gewissens ist Alles, was in den Jahren der Kindheit von uns ohne Grund regelmässig gefordert wurde, durch Personen, die wir verehrten oder fürchteten.” (MAMII/WS 52, KGW IV-3.214). This also includes the possibility of authority based not in love, but fear, which falls in line with the previous examples of conscience reinforced by punishment.

26 This is summed up like this: “eben unser ‘eigener Weg’ ist eine zu harte und anspruchsvolle Sache und zu ferne von der Liebe und Dankbarkeit der Anderen, — wir entlaufen ihm gar nicht ungerne, ihm und unserm eigensten Gewissen, und flüchten uns unter das Gewissen der Anderen” (FW 338, KGW V-2.247).

27 This is decisively made clear in the statement: “jene erste Natur irgend wann einmal eine zweite Natur war und dass jede siegende zweite Natur zu einer ersten wird.” (HL 3, KGW III-1.267). As for examples of it: JGB 263 states that simple folk like peasants may be *relatively* nobler than erudites because they have cultivated a feeling of respect towards holiness. Also MAMII/VM 26 analyses the development of a particular and noble variation of conscience and morality from a vulgar root.

28 “Der Sklavenaufstand in der Moral beginnt damit, dass das Ressentiment selbst schöpferisch wird und Werthe gebiert” (GM I, 10, KGW VI-2.284). However, resentment may also happen as a force that does not get to rule and is contained or extinguished by action (MAMII/WS 33).

it paramount to proscribe those experiences. The priest teaches that the alterity of nobility is not to be respected or feared, but hated; through this teaching, it now becomes true that “*différence engendre haine*” (JGB 263, KGW VI-2.227). The influence of the priest blocks the bridge by which the common nature could eventually approach nobility, by forbidding to listen to that which for the common type was initially just a distant realm of feelings. More important than the creation of any particular content to fulfill the form of prescriptions or proscriptions is the creation of a mode of being through which any moral content is instrumentalized for the denial of experience. Therefore, the priest creates slave-morality and poisons it with the element of a “no” to difference: “sagt die Sklaven-Moral von vornherein Nein zu einem ‘Ausserhalb’, zu einem ‘Anders’, zu einem ‘Nicht-selbst’: und dies Nein ist ihre schöpferische That” (GM I, 10, KGW VI-2.284). The degree to which this denial is felt and exercised as the driving force of a certain morality is the difference between the mode of being of the priest and those of the slave or noble, for the same objective set of rules may be appropriated differently by different modes of being and be further practiced and have its meaning interpreted or developed in different ways. Thus, under the priest’s influence, slave-morality tends to exacerbate beyond the inertia of mere custom and always further creatively radicalize into unbreachable oppositions between elements of experience that are originally connected and fluid. Therefore, all these oppositions are to some degree determined by an idea of ‘purity’ (GM, I, 6), of radical separation between poles. The pull of conscience into transformation and love is now interpreted as bad conscience, a natural propensity to act wrongly that is in itself already some degree of acting wrongly²⁹. Bad conscience is not to be taken as a mere recognition of mistakes or even the attachment of a disagreeable feeling to this recognition³⁰. Bad conscience means a denial of experience itself, and inasmuch as experience constitutes humans, it means a denial of human condition as well. The emergence of this resentment in consciousness expresses itself as consciousness of guilt (*Bewusstsein der Schuld*). It is taken almost as synonymous to bad conscience (GM II, 4), because it is its conscious expression and essential feature³¹. Consciousness becomes the instance through which

29 As Zarathustra puts it: “aber Scham ist in eurer Liebe und schlechtes Gewissen, — dem Monde gleicht ihr! Zur Verachtung des Irdischen hat man euren Geist überredet, aber nicht eure Eingeweide: die aber sind das Stärkste an euch! Und nun schämt sich euer Geist, dass er euren Eingeweiden zu Willen ist und geht vor seiner eignen Scham Schleich- und Lügenwege” (Z II, “Von der unbefleckten Erkenntnis”, KGW VI-1.152).

30 For example, we find a description of a possible train of transformations of perspective that entails pain, self-estrangement and fear, but not guilt, in M 538. It is also conceivable that shame or regret of failure may have nothing to do with guilt.

31 From a different perspective than ours (Janaway, 2007), this is, however, considered controversial.

reality and humanity should be reformed, becoming therefore overestimated and essentially repressive³². Such a conscious condemnation of one's own constitution as a being with non-calculable preconscious feelings and drives expresses itself theoretically through oppositions of values. Metaphysics is the theoretical expression of the slave-morality invented by the priest³³. It is pervaded by an intention to fixate - one might say, mummify - old meaning and protect it from the storms of meaninglessness and essential pain. That intentionality may be named: compassion (e.g. Z II, "Von den Mitleidigen"). Through compassion, however, all possibility of a rebirth of meaning through the love pertaining to noble conscience is blocked and *décadence* is turned from a natural, occasional possibility into an insurmountable norm.

There is much more detail, nuance and variability to be explored in regard to the concept of conscience. In Nietzsche's early writings, it already comes up related to the Pindaric maxim of becoming oneself (UBSE 1), and in late writings is again mentioned in the same perspective (FW 270). Besides, Nietzsche also mentions, for example: a scientific conscience, a conscience of method, a conscience of the artist, a conscience of the teacher, a conscience of the spirit, a collective conscience, an intriguing specific bad conscience of the speculative Stock Market, among other variations. Even abstraction addresses an intellectual conscience.³⁴ In a note, Zarathustra himself also relates the development of his own thinking to conscience: "Ich bin ein Seher: aber unerbittlich folgt meinem Schauen das Gewissen: also bin ich auch der Deuter meiner Gesichte." (NF 1883, 13[1], KGW VII-1.453). The criticism of morality and the work of its famous hammer in the transvaluation of all values, which is part of the task of the philosophers of the future, can be summed up as the forging of a new conscience and a new heart (JGB 203). These examples attest how wide is the extent to which the concept of conscience pervades Nietzsche's thought and connects deeply to a myriad of themes. In all cases, the development of any particular perspective and its way to apprehend and

32 That idea has a version previous to its development as part of the concept of bad conscience, in the critique of socratism: "Angesichts dieses praktischen Pessimismus ist Sokrates das Urbild des theoretischen Optimisten, der in dem bezeichneten Glauben an die Ergründlichkeit der Natur der Dinge dem Wissen und der Erkenntnis die Kraft einer Universalmedizin beilegt und im Irrthum das Uebel an sich begreift." (GT 15, KGW III-1.96)

33 Therefore, "Der Grundglaube der Metaphysiker ist der Glaube an die Gegensätze der Werthe" (JGB 2, KGW VI-2.10) and they become proponents of an ideal normative world opposed to experience (e.g. Z I, "Von den Hinterweltern"; Z I, "Von den Verächtern des Leibes"). Opposition, whatever its semiotics, is always between experienced reality and normative idealization. This is what Nietzsche calls platonism.

34 The mentioned variations can be found in the following texts: "Wissenschaftliche Gewissen" (NF 1882 4[1]; GM III, 23), "Gewissen der Methode" (JGB 36), "Gewissen der Künstler" (M 255), "Gewissen des Lehrers" (NF 1876 23[44]), "Gewissen des Geistes" (NF 1882 4[36]; Z I, "Von den Fliegen des Marktes"), "Collectiv-Gewissen" (NF 1883 16[33]), "schlechten Gewissen der Börse und Speculation" (M 204), "das intellectuelle Gewissen" (FW 2).

interpret reality is guided by a mode and nuance of conscience. Nevertheless, the argument in this section of this essay was limited to that goal we mentioned initially: to support the claim that conscience plays, for Nietzsche, an essentially cognitive role, in the sense of being an opening to a set of experiences, that constitutes the principle for comprehending the multiplicity of phenomena related to conscience. Next, we must move into considering the connection between conscience and will to power.

3. Will to Power

A late annotation on the concept of the will to power reads as follows:

Wille zur Macht psychologisch.
 Einheitsconception der Psychologie.
 Wir sind gewöhnt daran, die Ausgestaltung einer ungeheuren Fülle von Formen verträglich zu halten mit einer Herkunft aus der Einheit.
 Daß der Wille zur Macht die primitive Affekt-Form ist, daß alle anderen Affekte nur seine Ausgestaltungen sind. (NF 1888, 14[21], KGW VIII-3.92)

The title suggests the intent to regard the will to power ‘psychologically’. An obstacle is the conception of psychology as determined by unity (*Einheitsconception der Psychologie*). We are used to consciously representing (*halten*) our experiences through conceptual units (*mit einer Herkunft aus der Einheit*). However, experience is a vertiginous self-exposing of singularities in becoming (*ungeheuren Fülle von Formen*), a self-configuring movement (*Ausgestaltung*). We have established how the becoming of conscience within the realm of feeling reveals things in a way that consciousness can signalize to, but cannot grasp in a calculable anticipation. Now, we find that the “primitive affective form” (*primitive Affekt-Form*) of that very becoming of a self-exposing configuration is the will to power. This means that *the will to power is the “form” of preconscious experience discovered in the analysis of conscience*.

Another long note from the same period (NF 1888 14 [79], KGW VIII-3.49) develops this same theme. The title (*Wille zur Macht. Philosophie. Machtquanta. Kritik des Mechanismus.*) indicates the text’s intentionality: a philosophy of the will to power is compelled to criticize the idea of mechanism as a cosmological principle, placing in its stead the idea of quantities of power (*Machtquanta*). The text states that the concept of movement (*Bewegung*) is a translation (*Übersetzung*) of reality (*Wirkung*) into a world fit for the eye (*eine Welt für’s Auge*). It is clear that “reality” here means preconscious singular experience, and the eye means consciousness in the broadest sense,

not only as a capacity of conceptualizing and calculating, but also of signaling towards preconscious experience. The concept of movement presupposes therefore a fiction (*Fiktion*), an abstraction (*Abstraktion*): the idea of an atom (*Atom*) in the broadest sense, of any type of unit (*Einheit*) that is thought as preexistent to movement and responsible for it, so that it would be this unit the mover of something (*etwas bewegt wird*)³⁵. We need such conceptual units to calculate (*wir haben Einheiten nöthig, um rechnen zu können*), but they are an inversion of what preconscious experience shows: apparitions come up through a vertiginous and non-calculable becoming, they result from it instead of preexisting as its basis³⁶. If we proceed to a mental experiment and eliminate all conceptual units from our thinking (*eliminieren wir diese Zuthaten*) the result is not emptiness, but rather dynamic quantities (*dynamische Quanta*). Nietzsche seems to wrestle with language, since he names “quantities” that which one cannot count. The very use of an abstract noun is contradictory with the idea of a phenomenon that is not correspondent to any conceptual unity. This difficulty is nonetheless felt and addressed, for it is said that these dynamic quantities are all in a relation of tension (*Spannungsverhältniss*) to one another, and that their essence (*Wesen*) lies in their relation to each other (*in ihrem Verhältniss zu allen anderen Quanten besteht*). The keyword seems to be tension (*Spannung*) - which echoes the concentration (*Spannung der Aufmerksamkeit*) characteristic of the attunement of consciousness to the affection of command (JGB, 19). Tension increases or reduces, therefore meaning a sort of variation of quantities, but this refers to a non-calculable feeling. We may infer: such quantities are instants (*Augenblicke*)³⁷. Instants must not in this case be understood as points within the straight line of time. Rather, they change into one another in the blink of an eye (*Augenblick*), outside conscious control. Time is a preconscious abyss of transformations. This is why Zarathustra says: “wo stünde der Mensch nicht an Abgründen! Ist Sehen nicht selber — Abgründe sehen?” (Z III, “Von Gesicht und Räthsel”, KGW VI-1.195)³⁸.

35 About this theme see also GM I, 13 and GD, “Die vier grössen Irrthümer”, 3.

36 Such an inversion is also approached psychologically as an attribution of causality over actions to conscious motives in M 129.

37 This connection can be hypothesized with the aid of a note: “Es giebt also im Menschen so viele „Bewußtseins“ als es Wesen giebt, in jedem Augenblicke seines Daseins, die seinen Leib constituiren. Das Auszeichnende an dem gewöhnlich als einzig gedachten „Bewußtsein“, am Intellekte, ist gerade, daß er vor dem unzähligen Vielfachen in den Erlebnissen dieser vielen Bewußtseins geschützt und abgeschlossen bleibt” (NF 1885, 37[4], KGW VII-3.303). Prior to intellectual consciousness, there is a level of consciousness rooted in a multiplicity of instants. We are also indebted here to the hypothesis of the relation between will to power and time given in: Fogel, 2010.

38 Elsewhere, the abyss itself is mentioned in regard to the listening: “ich höre dich! Mein Abgrund redet” (Z III, “Der Genesende”, KGW VI-1.267)

Instants in tension with one another, with all others - that means present happening pre-consciously in an intrinsic tension with past and future. Present both passes by and arrives at once, it is intertwined with past and future. That means that the essence of the instant is tension - tension is the *givenness* of the instant, unfolding itself as a multiplicity of instants.

Being the primitive affective form, the will to power indicates both the form of temporality of experience and the givenness of the singular instant that springs out of tension into a self-exposing configuration. That is why it is a *Pathos* that responds for the ultimate facticity (*ein Pathos ist die elementarste Thatsache*), the fact of reality's self-exposure in whatever singular configuration. From temporal facticity emerges each time a particular being (*ein Sein*) - the use of the indefinite article refers to this particularity - and also the aspect of temporality inherent to that particular being, its becoming (*ein Werden*), in the sense of its becoming determinate. The will to power is not to be confused with any particular being of any kind, not even a being in regard to its becoming (*der Wille zur Macht nicht ein Sein, nicht ein Werden...*). Rather, it is the temporal facticity that makes it possible for such beings to be and become as such. Once established that the will to power is the source of all being and becoming, it is no longer ultimately correct (although it may be of heuristic value) to claim that one being causes another, in the sense that one is the source of the other's being. To that measure, a critique of mechanism is necessary.

One may be puzzled by the apparent leap from a psychological approach to the will to power into an apparent cosmology based on it, but it has been pointed out that the will to power belongs to a dimension of reality that indeed precedes any opposition between subject and object, doer and doing and deed (*Subjekt, Objekt, ein Thäter zum Thun, das Thun und das, was es thut*), and even causality³⁹. Nevertheless, there remains a need to establish a dialogue between the thought of the will to power and such derivative concepts. A note from the period of the *Also Sprach Zarathustra* reads:

Es kommt darauf an, die Einheit richtig zu bezeichnen, in der Denken Wollen und Fühlen und alle Affekte zusammengefaßt sind: ersichtlich ist der Intellekt nur ein Werkzeug, aber in wessen Händen? Sicherlich der Affekte: und diese sind eine Vielheit, hinter der es nicht nöthig ist eine Einheit anzusetzen: es genügt sie als eine Regentschaft zu fassen. — Daß die Organe sich überall herausgebildet haben, was die morphologische Entwicklung zeigt, darf als Gleichniß gewiß auch für das Geistige benutzt werden: so daß etwas 'Neues' immer nur durch Ausscheidung einer einzelnen Kraft aus einer synthetischen Kraft zu fassen ist.

39 This also follows the insight found in Chouraqui, 2013.

Das Denken selber ist eine solche Handlung, welche auseinanderlegt, was eigentlich Eins ist. Überall ist die Scheinbarkeit da, daß es zählbare Vielheiten giebt, auch im Denken schon. Es giebt nichts 'Addirtes' in der Wirklichkeit, nichts 'Dividirtes', ein Ding halb und halb ist nicht gleich dem Ganzen (NF 1885, 40 [38], KGW VII-3.379)

Once again, Nietzsche wrestles with language. For there is a dimension of experience in which thinking, willing and feeling, as well as all affections (*Denken, Wollen und Fühlen und alle Affekte*) are intertwined (*zusammengefasst*) in a sort of unity (*Einheit*). This dimension of experience is more fundamental than the intellect, which grows out of it as its instrument (*ist der Intellekt nur ein Werkzeug*). That means that the aforementioned unity cannot mean a conceptual unit accessible to the intellect, though there is a type of thinking proper to it. The affections are a multiplicity that cannot be contained by conceptual unity (*sind eine Vielheit, hinter der es nicht nöthig ist eine Einheit anzusetzen*). They develop as non-calculable, unpredictable instants from which determinate realities self-configure. They are powers that rule over apparition (*eine Regentschaft*). That means that whatever appears in the most powerful instants tends naturally to remain as memorable and fascinating and thus to exert a continuous power of command. This is not to be confused with the priest's attempt to petrify meaning against becoming. It is a matter of timing: there is a natural dimension of permanence in experience that is integrated into becoming, not opposed to it. A particular configuration of meaning that fascinates through a certain duration proportional to the legitimate power of its originary instant is the truth⁴⁰. The priest, however, intends to control truth itself and fixate it beyond its natural durability rooted in experience⁴¹.

Furthermore, we read that it is possible to project a similarity (*Gleichniss*) between the development of the spirit (*das Geistige*) - the realm of meaning and orientation - and the physical organs (*Organe*). Just as creation (*etwas Neues*) happens when a determinate conscious object emerges from preconscious indetermination, all becoming in the visible world may be explained as a single force separating from a synthetic force. For it is thinking itself that is responsible for the being-determined of all beings (*Das Denken [...] auseinanderlegt*) and therefore also for the mode of apparition through which they become calculable (*die Scheinbarkeit [...] dass es zählbare Vielheiten giebt*). The mode of being of the preconscious experience is thus considered as a parameter projected

40 In the same sense developed in *Ueber das Pathos der Wahrheit* (FV).

41 That leads to the problem of the 'Wille zur Wahrheit' (e.g. FW 344; Z II, "Von der Selbst-Ueberwindung"; JGB 1-2; GM III, 24-27). In a sense, the priest's truth is a lie, because it blocks the possibility of learning to witness new truths (AC 55).

into thinking the derivative dimension of intellectual calculability, although it remains true that the sum of all calculable beings do not equal the type of unity pertaining to originary experience - the whole is more than the sum of its parts (*ein Ding halb und halb ist nicht gleich dem Ganzen*).

Through the thinking of the “similarity”, the will to power can be transposed from its originary experience into an abstract explanatory use. It may even dispute with mechanism the status of the most heuristically useful principle of calculability. Another note further elaborates:

Es läßt sich eine vollkommene Analogie führen zwischen dem Vereinfachen und Zusammendrängen zahlloser Erfahrungen auf General-Sätze und dem Werden der Samenzelle, welche die ganze Vergangenheit verkürzt in sich trägt: und ebenso im künstlerischen Herausbilden aus zeugenden Grundgedanken bis zum ‘System’ und dem Werden des Organismus als eines Aus- und Fortdenkens, als einer Rückerinnerung des ganzen vorherigen Lebens, der Rück-Vergegenwärtigung, Verleblichung. (NF 1885, 2[146], KGW VIII-1.137)

The similarity is here named: an analogy (*Analogie*). One of its terms is the cognitive process of simplification (*Vereinfachen*), of turning experience into a general proposition (*General-Sätze*). The other is the development of life, exemplified by that of a cell, which brings in its developed form all of its past (*die ganze Vergangenheit verkürzt in sich trägt*). In another version, the same analogy relates the artistic development of basic ideas into a system and the development of a complex organism capable of thinking⁴². Carrying the past within itself and under the optics of its own power is the essential trait of the singular instant in which a dominant drive becomes visible as orientation. This is the ground for every analogy like those.

The insight of the possibility of an analogical application of the thought of the will to power as an explanatory abstract principle is a theme suitable for further inquiry⁴³. However, in regard to our present objectives it suffices to ascertain that the use of the will to power as an abstract general principle is derivative. The source of the will to power is an attempt to describe experiences

42 All causality is similarly understood as a “semiotics” of the will to power: “das Unterste und Innerste bleibt dieser Wille: Mechanik ist eine bloße Semiotik der Folgen” (NF 1888 14[82], KGW VIII-3.54)

43 In order to further this inquiry, it would be beneficial to study the text of JGB 36, which states that one should take the world of affections as the starting point from which a similarity (*Gleichen*) with the world of mechanism could be thought. It is added that this procedure would be a command of the conscience of method (*Gewissen der Methode*). However, this essay’s argument only goes as far as to propose that the comprehension of that starting point, the world of affections, is determined primarily by the experiences related to conscience, and that the aforementioned experiences (particularly the one on freedom and its temporality), as opened up by conscience, are at the root of the concept of the will to power in all of its possible variations and different applications, whether at phenomenological level or as a principle of abstract calculability.

rooted in conscience. That supports our second claim in the introduction of this essay.

4. Conclusion

It has been shown that it is possible to reconstruct Nietzsche's concepts of conscience and will to power through a phenomenological account of texts that describe a set of experiences that relate them to listening, strangeness, love, freedom and time. From a phenomenological point of view, these seem to be the sources out of which later applications of the concepts can be made. It also means that conscience and its three main variations (actively listening, passively barely listening, and actively refusing to listen) are essential, universal possibilities of human beings, that may develop concretely in manifold ways in terms of historical, social, anthropological and psychological particularities. Conscience is the basic ethical character of human existence and plays at the same time a cognitive role, for it corresponds to the constant challenge to determine the attitude through which to engage and uncover reality, understood as the ontological process of the creative givenness of meaning. Depending on the mode of this engagement, the content of meaning develops differently and leads to different epistemological and moral results. The ontological process thus uncovered can be described in itself as the experience of the will to power, the facticity of instants that rule over apparition and make human decisiveness of will possible, inasmuch as it constitutes itself in accordance to the power of the instant. This experience can be later taken as the analogical ground for abstract applications of the concept.

Bibliography

Abbreviation Key for Nietzsche's Texts

On referencing we provide an indication of the work, the section in roman numerals and the subsection or aphorism in arabic numerals. When quoting directly, we also offer the volume and page in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW).

GT - Die Geburt der Tragödie

FV - Fünf Vorrede zu Fünf Ungeschriebene Bücher

HL - Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben

UBSE - Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen: Schopenhauer als Erzieher

WL - Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne

MAMI - Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I

MAMII/VS - Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II: Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche

MAMII/WS - Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II: Der Wanderer und sein Schatten

M - Morgenröthe

FW - Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft

Z - Also Sprach Zarathustra (supplemented by title of chapter)

JGB - Jenseits von Gut und Böse

GM - Zur Genealogie der Moral

GD - Götzen-Dämmerung (supplemented by section titles)

AC - Der Antichrist

NF - Nachgelassene Fragmente (supplemented by year and code)

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