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CHAPTER XIX¹

On the Primacy of the Will in Self-Consciousness

The will, as the thing-in-itself, constitutes the inner, true, and indestructible nature of man; yet in itself it is without consciousness. For consciousness is conditioned by the intellect, and the intellect is a mere accident of our being, for it is a function of the brain. The brain, together with the nerves and spinal cord attached to it, is a mere fruit, a product, in fact a parasite, of the rest of the organism, in so far as it is not directly geared to the organism's inner working, but serves the purpose of self-preservation by regulating its relations with the external world. On the other hand, the organism itself is the visibility, the objectivity, of the individual will, its image, as this image presents itself in that very brain (which in the first book we learned to recognize as the condition of the objective world in general). Therefore, this image is brought about by the brain's forms of knowledge, namely space, time, and causality; consequently it presents itself as something extended, successively acting, and material, in other words, operative or effective. The parts of the body are both directly felt and perceived by means of the senses only in the brain. In consequence of this, it can be said that the intellect is the secondary phenomenon, the organism the primary, that is, the immediate phenomenal appearance of the will; the will is metaphysical, the intellect physical; the intellect, like its objects, is mere phenomenon, the will alone is thing-in-itself. Then, in a more and more *figurative* sense, and so by way of comparison, it can be said that the will is the substance of man, the intellect the accident; the will is the matter, the intellect the form; the will is heat, the intellect light.

We will now first of all verify, and at the same time elucidate, this thesis by the following facts appertaining to the inner life of man. Perhaps, on this occasion, more will be gained for knowledge of the inner man than is to be found in many systematic psychologies.

1. Not only the consciousness of other things, i.e., the appre-

¹ This chapter refers to § 19 of volume 1.

hension of the external world, but also *self-consciousness*, as already mentioned, contains a knower and a known, otherwise it would not be a *consciousness*. For *consciousness* consists in knowing, but knowing requires a knower and a known. Therefore self-consciousness could not exist if there were not in it a known opposed to the knower and different therefrom. Thus, just as there can be no object without a subject, so there can be no subject without an object, in other words, no knower without something different from this that is known. Therefore, a consciousness that was through and through pure intelligence would be impossible. The intelligence is like the sun that does not illuminate space unless an object exists by which its rays are reflected. The knower himself, precisely as such, cannot be known, otherwise he would be the *known* of another knower. But as the *known* in self-consciousness we find exclusively the *will*. For not only willing and deciding in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short all that directly constitutes our own weal and woe, desire and disinclination, is obviously only affection of the will, is a stirring, a modification, of willing and not-willing, is just that which, when it operates outwards, exhibits itself as an act of will proper.² But in all knowledge the known, not the knower, is the first and essential thing, inasmuch as the former is the *πρωτότυπος*, the latter the *ἐκτύπος*.³ Therefore in self-consciousness the known, consequently the will, must be the first and original thing; the knower, on the other hand, must be only the secondary thing, that which has been added, the mirror. They are related somewhat as the self-luminous is to the reflecting body; or as the vibrating strings are to the sounding-board, where the resulting note would then be consciousness. We can also consider the plant as such a symbol of consciousness. As we know, it has two poles, root and corona; the former reaching down into darkness, moisture and cold, and the latter up into brightness, dryness and warmth; then as the point of indifference of the two poles

²It is remarkable that Augustine already knew this. Thus in the fourteenth book *De Civitate Dei*, c. 6, he speaks of the *affectiones animi* that in the previous book he brought under four categories, namely *cupiditas*, *timor*, *laetitia*, *tristitia*, and he says: *voluntas est quippe in omnibus, imo omnes nihil aliud, quam voluntates sunt: nam quid est cupiditas et laetitia, nisi voluntas in eorum consensionem, quae volumus? et quid est metus atque tristitia, nisi voluntas in dissensionem ab his, quae nolumus?*

"In them all [desire, fear, joy, sadness] the will is to be found; in fact they are all nothing but affections of the will. For what are desire and joy but the will to consent to what we want? And what are fear and sadness but the will not to consent to what we do not want?" [Tr.]

³"Prototype"; "copy," "ectype." [Tr.]

where they part from each other close to the ground, the collum or root-stock (*rhizoma*, *le collet*). The root is what is essential, original, perennial, whose death entails the death of the corona; it is therefore primary. The corona, on the other hand, is the ostensible, that which has sprouted forth, that which passes away without the root dying; it is therefore the secondary. The root represents the will, the corona the intellect, and the point of indifference of the two, namely the collum, would be the *I*, which, as their common extreme point, belongs to both. This *I* is the *pro tempore* identical subject of knowing and willing, whose identity I call in my very first essay (*On the Principle of Sufficient Reason*) and in my first philosophical astonishment, the miracle *κατ' ἐξοχήν*.⁴ It is the point of departure and of contact of the whole phenomenon, in other words, of the objectification of the will; it is true that it conditions the phenomenon, but the phenomenon also conditions it. The comparison here given can be carried even as far as the individual character and nature of men. Thus, just as usually a large corona springs only from a large root, so the greatest mental abilities are found only with a vehement and passionate will. A genius of phlegmatic character and feeble passions would be like succulent plants that have very small roots in spite of an imposing corona consisting of thick leaves; yet he will not be found. Vehemence of the will and passionate ardour of the character are a condition of enhanced intelligence, and this is shown physiologically through the brain's activity being conditioned by the movement communicated to it with every pulsation through the great arteries running up to the *basis cerebri*. Therefore an energetic pulse, and even, according to Bichat, a short neck are necessary for great activity of the brain. But the opposite of the above is of course found; that is, vehement desires, passionate, violent character, with weak intellect, in other words, with a small brain of inferior conformation in a thick skull. This is a phenomenon as common as it is repulsive; it might perhaps be compared to the beetroot.

2. But in order not merely to describe consciousness figuratively, but to know it thoroughly, we have first to find out what exists in every consciousness in the same manner, and what therefore will be, as the common and constant element, that which is essential. We shall then consider what distinguishes one consciousness from another, and this accordingly will be the accidental and secondary element.

Consciousness is known to us positively only as a property of animal nature; consequently we may not, indeed we cannot, think of it otherwise than as *animal consciousness*, so that this expression

⁴"Par excellence." [Tr.]

is in fact tautological. Therefore what is always to be found in every animal consciousness, even the most imperfect and feeblest, in fact what is always its foundation, is the immediate awareness of a *longing*, and of its alternate satisfaction and non-satisfaction in very different degrees. To a certain extent we know this *a priori*. For amazingly varied as the innumerable species of animals may be, and strange as some new form of them, never previously seen, may appear to us, we nevertheless assume beforehand with certainty its innermost nature as something well known, and indeed wholly familiar to us. Thus we know that the animal *wills*, indeed even *what* it wills, namely existence, well-being, life, and propagation. Since we here presuppose with perfect certainty an identity with ourselves, we have no hesitation in attributing to it unchanged all the affections of will known to us in ourselves; and we speak positively and plainly of its desire, aversion, fear, anger, hatred, love, joy, sorrow, longing, and so on. On the other hand, as soon as we come to speak of phenomena of mere knowledge, we run into uncertainty. We do not venture to say that the animal conceives, thinks, judges, or knows; we attribute to it with certainty only representations in general, since without these its *will* could not be stirred or agitated in the ways previously mentioned. But as regards the animals' definite way of knowing, and its precise limits in a given species, we have only indefinite concepts, and make conjectures. Therefore understanding between us and them is often difficult, and is brought about ingeniously only in consequence of experience and practice. Here, then, are to be found distinctions of consciousness. On the other hand, longing, craving, willing, or aversion, shunning, and not-willing, are peculiar to every consciousness; man has them in common with the polyp. Accordingly, this is the essential and the basis of every consciousness. The difference of its manifestations in the various species of animal beings depends on the different extension of their spheres of knowledge in which the motives of those manifestations are to be found. Directly from our own nature we understand all the actions and attitudes of animals that express stirrings and agitations of the will; and so to this extent we sympathize with them in many different ways. On the other hand, the gulf between us and them arises simply and solely from a difference of intellect. The gulf between a very intelligent animal and a man of very limited capacity is possibly not much greater than that between a blockhead and a genius. Therefore here also, the resemblance between them in another aspect, springing from the likeness of their inclinations and emotions and again assimilating both, sometimes stands out surprisingly, and excites astonishment. This consideration makes it clear

that in all animal beings the *will* is the primary and substantial thing; the *intellect*, on the other hand, is something secondary and additional, in fact a mere tool in the service of the will, which is more or less complete and complicated according to the requirements of this service. Just as a species of animals appears equipped with hoofs, claws, hands, wings, horns, or teeth according to the aims of its will, so is it furnished with a more or less developed brain, whose function is the intelligence requisite for its continued existence. Thus the more complicated the organization becomes in the ascending series of animals, the more manifold do its needs become, and the more varied and specially determined the objects capable of satisfying them, consequently the more tortuous and lengthy the paths for arriving at these, which must now all be known and found. Therefore, to the same extent, the animal's representations must also be more versatile, accurate, definite, and connected, and its attention more eager, more continuous, and more easily roused; consequently its intellect must be more developed and complete. Accordingly we see the organ of intelligence, the cerebral system, together with the organs of sense, keep pace with an increase of needs and wants, and with the complication of the organism. We see the increase of the *representing* part of consciousness (as opposed to the *willing* part) bodily manifesting itself in the ever-increasing proportion of the brain in general to the rest of the nervous system, and of the cerebrum to the cerebellum. For (according to Flourens) the former is the workshop of representations, while the latter is the guide and regulator of movements. But the last step taken by nature in this respect is disproportionately great. For in man not only does the power of representation in *perception*, which hitherto has existed alone, reach the highest degree of perfection, but the *abstract* representation, thinking, i.e., *reason* (*Vernunft*) is added, and with it reflection. Through this important enhancement of the intellect, and hence of the secondary part of consciousness, it obtains a preponderance over the primary part in so far as it becomes from now on the predominantly active part. Thus, whereas in the case of the animal the immediate awareness of its satisfied or unsatisfied desire constitutes by far the principal part of its consciousness, and indeed the more so the lower the animal stands, so that the lowest animals are distinguished from plants only by the addition of a dull representation, with man the opposite is the case. Intense as his desires may be, more intense even than those of any animal and rising to the level of passions, his consciousness nevertheless remains continuously and predominantly concerned and engrossed with representations and ideas. Undoubtedly this is mainly

what has given rise to that fundamental error of all philosophers, by virtue of which they make thinking the essential and primary element of the so-called soul, in other words, of man's inner or spiritual life, always putting it first, but regard willing as a mere product of thinking, and as something secondary, additional, and subsequent. But if willing resulted merely from knowing, how could the animals, even the lowest of them, manifest a will that is often so indomitable and vehement, in spite of such extremely limited knowledge? Accordingly, since that fundamental error of the philosophers makes, so to speak, the accident into the substance, it leads them on to wrong paths from which there is no longer a way out. Therefore that relative predominance of the *knowing* consciousness over the *desiring*, and consequently of the secondary part over the primary, which appears in man, can in certain abnormally favoured individuals go so far that, in moments of supreme enhancement, the secondary or knowing part of consciousness is entirely detached from the willing part, and passes by itself into free activity, in other words, into an activity not stimulated by the will, and therefore no longer serving it. Thus the knowing part of consciousness becomes purely objective and the clear mirror of the world, and from this the conceptions of *genius* arise, which are the subject of our third book.

3. If we descend through the series of grades of animals, we see the intellect becoming weaker and weaker and more and more imperfect; but we certainly do not observe a corresponding degradation of the will. On the contrary, the will everywhere retains its identical nature, and shows itself as a great attachment to life, care for the individual and for the species, egoism and lack of consideration for all others, together with the emotions springing therefrom. Even in the smallest insect the will is present complete and entire; it wills what it wills as decidedly and completely as does man. The difference lies merely in *what* it wills, that is to say, in the motives; but these are the business of the intellect. As that which is secondary and tied to bodily organs, the intellect naturally has innumerable degrees of perfection, and in general is essentially limited and imperfect. The *will*, on the other hand, as that which is original and the thing-in-itself, can never be imperfect, but every act of will is wholly what it can be. By virtue of the simplicity belonging to the will as the thing-in-itself, as the metaphysical in the phenomenon, its *essential nature* admits of no degrees, but is always entirely itself. Only its *stimulation or excitement* has degrees, from the feeblest inclination up to passion, and also its excitability, and thus its vehemence, from the phlegmatic to the choleric temperament. On the other hand, the *intellect* has not merely degrees of *excitement*, from sleepi-

ness up to the mood and inspiration, but also degrees of its *real nature*, of the completeness thereof; accordingly, this rises gradually from the lowest animal which perceives only obscurely up to man, and in man again from the blockhead to the genius. The *will* alone is everywhere entirely itself, for its function is of the greatest simplicity; for this consists in willing and in not-willing, which operates with the greatest ease and without effort, and requires no practice. On the other hand, knowing has many different functions, and never takes place entirely without effort, which it requires for fixing the attention and making the object clear, and at a higher degree, also for thinking and deliberation; it is therefore capable of great improvement through practice and training. If the intellect holds out to the will something simple and perceptible, the will at once expresses its approval or disapproval. This is the case even when the intellect has laboriously pondered and ruminated, in order finally to produce from numerous data by means of difficult combinations the result that seems most in agreement with the interests of the will. Meanwhile, the will has been idly resting; after the result is reached, it enters, as the sultan does on the divan, merely to express again its monotonous approval or disapproval. It is true that this can turn out different in degree, but in essence it remains always the same.

This fundamentally different nature of the will and the intellect, the simplicity and originality essential in the former in contrast to the complicated and secondary character of the latter, become even clearer to us when we observe their strange interplay within us, and see in a particular case how the images and ideas arising in the intellect set the will in motion, and how entirely separated and different are the roles of the two. Now it is true that we can already observe this in the case of actual events that vividly excite the will, whereas primarily and in themselves they are merely objects of the intellect. But, to some extent, it is not so obvious here that this reality as such primarily exists only in the intellect; and again, the change generally does not occur as rapidly as is necessary, if the thing is to be easily seen at a glance, and thus really comprehensible. On the other hand, both these are the case if it is mere ideas and fantasies that we allow to act on the will. If, for example, we are alone, and think over our personal affairs, and then vividly picture to ourselves, say, the menace of an actually present danger, and the possibility of an unfortunate outcome, anxiety at once compresses the heart, and the blood ceases to flow. But if the intellect then passes to the possibility of the opposite outcome, and allows the imagination to picture the happiness long hoped for as thereby attained, all the pulses at once quicken with joy, and the heart feels