

BGE §19:¹

Philosophers tend to talk about the will as if it were the most familiar thing in the world. In fact, Schopenhauer would have us believe that the will is the only thing that is really familiar, familiar through and through, familiar without pluses or minuses. But I have always thought that, here too, Schopenhauer was only doing what philosophers always tend to do: adopting and exaggerating a *popular prejudice*. Willing strikes me as, above all, something *complicated*, something unified only in a word – and this single word contains the popular prejudice that has overruled whatever minimal precautions philosophers might take. So let us be more cautious, for once – let us be “unphilosophical.” Let us say: in every act of willing there is, to begin with, a plurality of feelings, namely: the feeling of the state *away from which*, the feeling of the state *towards which*, and the feeling of this “away from” and “towards” themselves. But this is accompanied by a feeling of the muscles that comes into play through a sort of habit as soon as we “will,” even without our putting “arms and legs” into motion. Just as feeling – and indeed many feelings – must be recognized as ingredients of the will, thought must be as well. In every act of will there is a commandeering thought, – and we really should not believe this thought can be divorced from the “willing,” as if some will would then be left over! Third, the will is not just a complex of feeling and thinking: rather, it is fundamentally an *affect*: and specifically the affect of the command.

What is called “freedom of the will” is essentially the affect of superiority with respect to something that must obey: “I am free, ‘it’ must obey” – this consciousness lies in every will, along with a certain straining of attention, a straight look that fixes on one thing and one thing only, an unconditional evaluation “now this is necessary and nothing else,” an inner certainty that it will be obeyed, and whatever else comes with the position of the commander. A person who *wills* –, commands something inside himself that obeys, or that he believes to obey.

But now we notice the strangest thing about the will – about this multifarious thing that people have only one word for. On the one hand, we are, under the circumstances, both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys, and as the obedient one we are familiar with the feelings of compulsion, force, pressure, resistance, and motion that generally start right after the act of willing. On the other hand, however, we are in the habit of ignoring and deceiving ourselves about this duality by means of the synthetic concept of the “I.” As a result, a whole chain of erroneous conclusions, and, consequently, false evaluations have become attached to the will, – to such an extent that the one who wills believes, in good faith, that willing *suffices* for action. Since it is almost always the case that there is will only where the effect of command, and therefore obedience, and therefore action, may be *expected*, the *appearance* translates into the feeling, as if there were a *necessity of effect*. In short, the one who wills believes with a reasonable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one; he attributes the success, the performance of the willing to the will itself, and consequently enjoys an increase in the feeling of power that accompanies all success.

“Freedom of the will” – that is the word for the multi-faceted state of pleasure of one who commands and, at the same time, identifies himself with the accomplished act of willing. As such, he enjoys the triumph over resistances, but thinks to himself that it was his will alone that truly overcame the resistance. Accordingly, the one who wills takes his feeling of pleasure as the commander, and adds to it the feelings of pleasure from the successful instruments that carry out the task, as well as from the useful “under-wills” or under-souls – our body is, after all, only a society constructed out of many souls –.

L'effet c'est moi [The effect is I]: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy community: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the community. All willing is simply a matter of commanding and obeying, on the groundwork, as I have said, of a society constructed out of many “souls”: from which a philosopher should claim the right to understand willing itself within the framework of morality: morality understood as a doctrine of the power relations under which the phenomenon of “life” arises. –

1. Translation taken from: *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by J. Norman, edited by R. Horstmann and J. Norman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

LN §38[8]:²

The will

– Every willing unites a multiplicity of *feelings*: the feeling of the state to be *left*, the feeling of the state to be *reached*, the feeling of this 'leaving and reaching' itself, the feeling of the duration of the process, then lastly an accompanying feeling of the muscles which begins its play through a kind of habit, even without our moving arms or legs, as soon as we 'will'. Feeling, then, in fact many ways of feeling, must be recognised as an ingredient of the will, and so, secondly, must *thinking*. In every act of will, a thought commands – and it would be a great mistake to believe we could separate this thought off from the willing itself, as if willing would then remain behind. Thirdly, the will is not only a complex of feeling and thinking, but above all also an *affect*: that affect of command.

What is called freedom of the will is essentially a feeling of superiority over the one who must obey: 'I am free, he must obey' – this consciousness is present in every will, and it's that tense alertness, that clear gaze focused on one thing only, that exclusive valuation: 'this and nothing else is now necessary', that inner certainty of being obeyed, how all this belongs to the state of the one commanding. A man who *wills* – commands a something in himself which obeys, or which he believes will obey. Now, however, notice what is the most essential aspect of 'will', of this so complicated thing for which the common people have a single word. Because in a given case we are simultaneously the commanders and the obeyers, and as obeyers know the feelings of resisting, harassing, pushing, *moving*, which usually begin immediately after the act of will; because, however, in using the synthetic concept 'I' we habitually disregard, *disguise from ourselves* this duality, willing has become encumbered with a whole chain of erroneous conclusions and consequently false valuations of will itself — so that the willer believes in all good faith that his will itself is the actual and sufficient motor for the whole action. And because, in almost every case, willing only happened where some effect of the command – obedience, thus some action – was to be expected, the appearance has translated itself into the feeling that there is a *necessity* of effect. Enough: the willer believes with a fair degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one – he ascribes the success of execution to the will itself, enjoying a growth in that feeling of power which all commanding brings with it.

'Freedom of will': this is the word for that very mixed state of the willer, who commands and at the same time, as executor of the command, enjoys the triumph of superiority over resistance; who, however, judges that the will itself is what overcomes the resistance. He takes the pleasurable feelings of the successfully executing tool – the ministering will and sub-will – and adds them to his pleasurable feelings as the giver of the command. – This tangled nest of feelings, states and false assumptions, which the common people designate with one word and as one thing, because it is there suddenly and 'at once' and is among the very most frequent, consequently most 'well-known' experiences: *the will*, as I have described it here – who can credit that it has never been described before? That the common people's clumsy prejudice has kept its validity and remained unexamined in every philosophy? That philosophers' opinions have never differed on what 'willing' is, because they all believed that precisely here one had an immediately certainty, a fundamental fact, that precisely here there was no room for opinion? And that all logicians still teach the holy trinity of 'thinking, feeling, willing' as if 'willing' did not include feeling and thinking? – After all this, Schopenhauer's mistake of taking the will to be the best-known thing in the world, indeed as the genuinely and solely known thing, seems less crazed and arbitrary: he only adopted a tremendous prejudice of all previous philosophers, a prejudice of the common people – adopted it and, as philosophers generally do, *exaggerated* it.

2. Translation taken from: *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, translated by K. Sturge, edited by R. Bittner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.