

A Non-Reductionist Physiologism

Nietzsche on Body, Mind and Consciousness

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ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE / RECEIVED: 25-01-12 ACCEPTED: 09-02-13

ABSTRACT: This paper addresses the following questions from the point of view of Nietzsche's philosophy: What is the mind, and which kind of relationship does it hold to the body? Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to show that Nietzsche's philosophy suggested a view of the mind that allows to outline an alternative stance to both mentalism and physicalism, as well as to both dualism and reductionism. It is argued that Nietzsche's rehabilitation of the body as the specific seat of the mind in opposition to the Cartesian supremacy of the Ego still is of a great interest for contemporary philosophy, since it is not equivalent either to a reversed form of Cartesian dualism or to a physicalist reductionism. It is argued that Nietzsche did not restrict the concept of the mind but in order not to eliminate it, rather to "de-substantialise" it. As the body is described as "*Leib-Organisation*", the mind becomes the course of various and manifold mental states that depend on a bodily basis.

KEY WORDS: Body, conscious and unconscious mental states, dualism, dynamic processes, mind, Nietzsche, organization, physiologism, reductionism.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the following questions from the point of view of Nietzsche's philosophy: what is the mind, and which kind of relationship does it hold to the body? Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to show that Nietzsche's philosophy suggested a view of the mind that allows to outline an alternative stance to both mentalism and physicalism, as well as to both dualism and reductionism. It is argued that Nietzsche's rehabilitation of the body as the specific seat of the mind in opposition to the Cartesian supremacy of the Ego still is of great interest for contemporary philosophy, because it is not equivalent either to a reversed form of Cartesian dualism or to a physicalist reductionism. It is argued that Nietzsche did not restrict the concept of the mind but in order not to eliminate it, rather to "de-sub-

stantialise” it. As the body is described as “*Leib-Organisation*”, the mind becomes the course of various manifold mental states that depend on a bodily basis.

It is maintained that these arguments point to a non-reductionist physiologism. Mental states are argued to be not *causa sui*, in striking contrast to the form of dualism that considers the mind to be causally independent and separated off from the body. At the same time, mental states are not fully reducible to the physiological processes from which they emerge, since they are evolutionarily specific.

In this connection a distinction is put forth between conscious and unconscious mental states, in order to see how Nietzsche gave a new interpretation of the concept of consciousness by means of it. The consciousness is considered to be neither the unique seat of the cognitive functions, nor the mind *tout court* anymore. Rather, it is argued that unconscious mental states with non-conceptual content have to be admitted of existing along with conscious mental states, whose content is conceptual instead.

On this ground, it is argued that unconscious mental states constitute the dimension of singular perceptions referring to what is such complex, fine grained and subtle that it avoids any sort of conceptualization and categorization that characterize conscious mental states.

The specification of these unconscious cognitive states allows to point out the connection between the mind or, more appropriately, some mental activities and the body, that is those sensory organs and physiological processes that bring about determinate states which are endowed with a physical and yet a mental nature.

2. The Mind and the Body as *Leib-Organisation*

Nietzsche’s reflections on what is the mind (*der Geist*) and how cognitive functions work are carried out within a bold anticartesian view. Nietzsche criticizes the dualistic opposition between the *res cogitans* (the mind) and the *res extensa* (the body). Furthermore, he raises objections to the supremacy of the subject considered as a conscious mental substantial unity that governs human beings and presides over their actions, thought and will.¹

¹ Cf. JGB 17; Nachlass 1887, KSA 12, 10[158].

For the quotations from Nietzsche’s works, the following abbreviations will be used:

JGB = *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*;

ZA = *Also Sprach Zarathustra*;

WL = *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*;

FW = *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.

Nietzsche tries to de-substantialise the subject (“*Ich-Geistigkeit*”) as well as the mind. Accordingly, he talks deliberately of a plurality of subjects (“*Subjekt-Vielheit*”) (JGB, KSA 5, 12; Nachlass 1884–1885, KSA 11, 40[42]) inside the same individual, since he claims that what we usually call the “I” is nothing but the complex and dynamic whole of manifold mental states. To Nietzsche, the subject, if construed as a *res cogitans*, correspond to something that does not exist (cf. Nachlass 1887, KSA 12, 9[98]). In complete contrast with the model of substantialism, Nietzsche works out a dynamical model, according to which the human being is like a continuous course of intertwined mental and bodily processes, which are not dualistically opposed although they differ from one another in the functions they play and the degree of complexity they support. To be sure, Nietzsche’s view on this subject matter is influenced by the new physiology of the nineteenth century, which focused on the relations between physic and psychic phenomena. This is the connection of the definition of the psychophysics by Theodor Fechner, whose books *Über die physikalische und philosophische Atomenlehre* (1855) and *Elemente der Psychophysik* (1860) are present in Nietzsche’s own library. One of the main theoretical issue of Fechner’s psychophysics is the description of psychic phenomena as the inner side of one and the same process, rather than as mere transformations of processes in the brain. Accordingly, the psychic or mental and the physiological or bodily dimensions are no more considered as two separate and distinct things, rather as two sides of one and the same matter (cf. Nachlass 1885–1887, KSA 12, 5[56]). Furthermore, they are just acknowledged as two different degrees of one and the same process, since Fechner and his master J. Müller (in his *Über das organische Leben*) refused the traditional idea of substance, be it material or spiritual, and instead reasoned in terms of forces and energy that may acquire a subjective, that is psychic, nature according to their intensity. Hence, to Nietzsche the psychophysics, or the psychophysiology as he dubs it, requires rejecting the question about the seat of the Soul, since there is no reason to conceive of the existence of a specific permanent seat of the consciousness, because its presumed unity rather emerges only from an integrated system of dynamic psychophysical processes. In fact, Nietzsche’s interest in the psychophysiology arises from the need to couple the physiological-bodily dimension to the psychic-mental dimension to emphasize their interdependence, rather than reducing either of them to the other one. It is this concept of interdependence that justifies the view of Nietzsche’s thought as a non-reductionist physiologism.

In “Von den Verächtern des Leibes” Nietzsche defines the body as the “grosse Vernunft” and refers to the Self not in Cartesian terms but as something that “sucht auch mit den Augen der Sinne” and “horcht auch

mit den Ohren des Geistes" (ZA 1, KSA 4). The body is regarded as being so complex as to include both the sensory bodily part and the intellectual part, since it is just their interaction that gives rise to the subjectivity of the Self. Hence, it can be argued that Nietzsche meant to rehabilitate the body against what he denounced as its "Mißverständnis" just to build a more extensive and comprehensive concept of the organic matter as the organised and complex unity of manifold bodily and mental activities, by means of whose organisation and development the organism is allowed to be as such, that is to live.²

Therefore, it is not possible to prescind from the body, that is the physiological dimension, since life develops from within a body by means of its physiologic processes. Nonetheless, life is not reduced to physiologic processes, since each body sets the boundaries within which the psychic and intellectual activities are bound to occur. Consequently, the Self amounts to the continuous interaction between and interdependence on one another of the physiologic or bodily and the psychic or mental characteristics. Indeed, Nietzsche maintains that "das physiologische Centrum" is "das psychische Centrum" as well (cf. Nachlass 1885–1887, KSA 12, 5[56]).

Therefore, it can be argued that there is no dualistic opposition between the physiological, bodily dimensions and the psychic, mental dimensions. Rather, as it will be shown later, a difference between their activities and characteristics has to be acknowledged. The I, the Ego, the Self point at a subjective unity that develops from within the body as the force, intended as an ever changing activity, that prevails momentarily over a multitude of other forces with which it keeps bearing relations (cf. Nachlass 1880, KSA 9, 6[70]).

Consequently, Nietzsche replaced the opposition between the body and the mind, that is the physiological and the psychic dimensions construed by dualism as two static and monolithic entities, with the continuous interaction between different manifold activities, be they characterized as physiologic or psychical, bodily or mental, which takes place in one and the same body.

The claim is thus justified that Nietzsche's thought lays bare a non-reductionist physiologism. A physiologist stance can be ascribed to Nietzsche, because he maintains that it is not possible to prescind from the body, that is the physic and physiological basis whence everything else stems. At the same time, a non-reductionist stance can be ascribed to Nietzsche, because he allows such concepts as the I, the Ego, the Self, the

² Rosciglione (2005: 150). Cf. Nachlass 1885–1886, KSA 12, 2[102]; Nachlass 1884–1885, KSA 11, 40[21].

subjective unity, and finally mental states to maintain a meaning by being however thoroughly changed into new concepts according to a definition that depends on a distinctly anti-cartesian interpretation.

The body and the Ego are accounted for as something fluid and dynamical, since they both have to be tuned to the environment with which they interact by means of manifold activities and their organisation. Mental states are accounted for as what emerges evolutionarily from the “*Leib-Organisation*” (cf. Abel 1984: 157–161), that is from the body.

On this ground, to acknowledge that within every individual there is necessarily and naturally a physical-physiological basis from which mental states emerge and develop does not imply to surrender unconditionally to some sort of deterministic reductionism, according to which every human being must be preordained by its physical features to embody a definite type of person.

For instance, Leiter (2001: 294) speaks of “type-facts”, that is physical facts which inevitably determine and characterise a person nearly as much as an unmodifiable mould would, because all her other properties, such as her conscious mental states, depend upon them. However, Leiter seems not to make clear which nature has to be ascribed to these facts, since they are defined at the same time as “physiological” and as forces or unconscious affects. Hence, one is allowed to ask whether these forces and unconscious affects have to be considered as mental states or not, and in the latter case what tells them from physiological facts.

Rather, Nietzsche’s argument of a natural causal dependence of mental states upon physical states does not imply any support to radical epiphenomenalism insofar as mental states would be unable to be causally effective. To be sure, Nietzsche sometimes seems to be inclined to deny the usefulness of the mind, which seems to be ascribed an almost unnecessary role. However in such cases he does refer to the conceptual Cartesian construal of the Ego, the subjectivity and the consciousness, according to which they are defined as unique, unitary, irreducible substances that have nothing to do with the manifold unconscious and conscious mental states Nietzsche just appealed to against just that very monolithic view of the mind.

Therefore, the rejection of the *causa sui* argument in favour of what Leiter dubs “the naturalistic argument” (ibid.) about the nature of mental states can be fully understood only once Nietzsche’s evolutionary stance is appropriately taken into account.

According to it, unconscious and conscious mental states are not *causa sui*, since they depend on and emerge from some physical states. At the same time, they play an evolutionary role that makes them necessary

for human beings' survival into the environment they happens to be in. That naturalistic argument accounts for Nietzsche's view only if it is not narrowed to claim merely the causal dependence of mental states upon physical states. This interpretation runs the risk of underestimating this evolutionary relationship by not paying the due attention to how mental states can emerge from physiological states. Undoubtedly, it is not a matter of direct and mechanistic causation. Rather, a gradual and complex process of organisation must be taken into account that takes place just within that physical and bodily world defined as "*Leib-Organisation*", which gives rise to mental states that are different from physical states even though neither opposed nor totally reducible to them.

The body is a collection of different manifold activities with various degrees of complexity (*Leib-Organisation*), which are bound to build such essential parts of the organism as its nervous system and its brain. In the same way, the mind is a collection of different manifold mental states. According to Nietzsche, countless *Individual-Geiste* do actually exist, whose guidance and "Centralisationsapparat" are provided just by the nervous system and the brain, which are all instances of the *Leib-Organisation* (cf. Nachlass 1884, KSA 11, 26 [36]).

According to this view, the mind is not opposed to the bodily, physiological, organic states, rather it develops in continuity with them and emerges in connection with them. This argument leads Nietzsche to claim that the essence of what is called the mind (*der Geist*) "scheint mir das Wesen des Organischen auszumachen". Mental functions are therefore the form in which the physiologic, organic functions can be sublimed (cf. Nachlass 1884, KSA 11, 25 [356]; JGB, KSA 5, 230). It is just this new definition of the body and the mind in terms of a manifold of continuous processes to allow for a choice to obtain that is alternative to the opposition between dualism and physical reductionism.³

3. Conscious and Unconscious Mental Phenomena

To Nietzsche, it is not the mind conceived of as the Cartesian *res cogitans* that exists, rather different manifold mental states. Then, which nature do they have, and do they have all the same features? Answering these questions requires to deal with another conundrum of the contemporary philosophical and scientific debate, that is consciousness.

Nietzsche differentiates unconscious mental activities ("Unbewusste geistigen Wirken") from conscious mental ones (cf. Nachlass 1884–1885, KSA 11, 40[15]; Nachlass 1888–1889, KSA 13, 14[144]). This is way off

³ On the Mind-Body problem in Nietzsche, see Schlimgen (1999: 164).

arguing that the mind, construed as a dynamic collection of manifold mental states, has to be identified with consciousness, as instead in his view the Platonic-Cartesian tradition did.

Nietzsche regards the human being as a complex and stratified entity, whose conscious phenomena are only the “End-Erscheinungen”, that is the latest but not the most important link of the organic evolutionary chain (cf. Nachlass 1885–1887, KSA 12, 7 [1]). According to him, the central and peripheral nervous systems are very complex and cannot be reduced only to consciousness. He claims that

there is no ground whatever for ascribing to spirit the properties of organization and systematization. The nervous system has a much more extensive domain; the world of consciousness is added to it. Consciousness plays no role in the total process of adaptation and systematization. (Nachlass 1888–1889, KSA 13, 14[144])

In fact, Nietzsche’s aim is ascribing a new place to consciousness within a wider and more complex domain characterized by a distinctly anti-cartesian interpretation.

At a general level, there exists something organic, that is the Body as “*Leib-Organisation*”, the seat of mental phenomena and what they emerge from. At a particular level, there exists the mind construed in such a way to include both conscious and unconscious phenomena. Since neither a unique thinking substance nor a unique bodily substance is given, because the human being is the complex collection of manifold organic and (conscious and unconscious) mental phenomena, the consciousness must be nothing transcendent, that is separated off from and superior to the organic and unconscious mental processes.

According to Nietzsche, the consciousness is neither *causa sui* nor *finis sui*, because it requires different kinds of manifold phenomena that bring about because of their complexity the occurrence of conscious mental states but only as one of many equally likely outcomes (cf. Nachlass 1884–1885, KSA 11, 34[124]). Conscious mental states do not exist for their own sake, rather they are part of the evolutionary chain to which human beings belong, who on their turn develop to attain the most likely equilibrium with the surrounding environment, according to Nietzsche’s opinion as well as to an evolutionary and Darwinist view.

In the history of ideas, the Nietzsche–Darwin relationship has given rise to a hard debated controversy, also because of the explicit criticism Nietzsche addressed to some implications of Darwin’s theory and, above all, to Spencer’s interpretation. The Darwinists are charged by Nietzsche with overrating the instinct of self-preservation, that which could suggest that man is bound to repress his own various potentialities for self-preservation and also imply the prevalence of “mittleren Typen”, even of “der

untermittleren Typen”, over “den höher gerathenen Typen”, “Glücksfällen” (Nachlass 1888, KSA 13, 14[123]). On the other hand, Nietzsche blames Darwin for explaining the evolutionary process almost only in terms of organisms fitting to the environment. On this ground, Nietzsche was inclined rather to adopt the biological theory of the self-regulation, which was formulated by the anatomist and biologist Wilhelm Roux (cf. Roux 1881). Roux acknowledged that the organism plays a role in the inner organisation and the subsequent new arrangement of the material incoming from the environment. Therefore, evolution is not limited to a fitting function.

However, this criticism does not bar Nietzsche from accepting Darwin’s paradigm. Rather, it is in connection with Darwin’s theory that he works up his own theory of self-regulation.⁴

As far as consciousness is concerned, Nietzsche argues that conscious mental states are part of the evolutionary chain, and consequently they are supposed to contribute to the man-environment equilibrium that allows man to survive and to preserve himself (cf. Nachlass 1885–1887, KSA 12, 2[95]). It is just this evolutionary explanation that justifies the naturalization of consciousness, whose role is narrowed in comparison with that played by the body and by unconscious mental states, but not to such an extent that it would be deprived of any evolutionary usefulness. Consciousness is what allows the body to achieve perfection by facilitating and satisfying its natural organic finality (cf. Nachlass 1884, KSA 10, 24[16]).

It can be argued that the interpretation of Nietzsche’s thought risks of underestimating this evolutionary account, if it is limited only to the criticism against the Platonic-Cartesian model of consciousness, which is accused of concealing the humble features of the body along with its instincts and unconscious processes. In fact, Nietzsche’s theory could be a promising starting point for a non-reductionist physiologism to provide a solution of the Mind-Body problem as well as of the problem of consciousness.

To appreciate Nietzsche’s view, it is worth quoting Gerard Edelman who claims that

an adequate theory of consciousness based on brain structure and function must be an evolutionary theory that is consistent with the principles of development. If we assume (as any such theory must) that the consciousness arose as a result of evolutionary processes affecting brain structures, we will

⁴ For Nietzsche–Darwin and Nietzsche–Roux relations see: Müller-Lauter (1978); Salaquarda (1978); Mostert (1979); Smith (1987); Stegmeier (1987); Richardson (2002).

not find it likely that such processes emerged precipitously [...]. (Edelman 1989: 11)

It is worth noticing that Damasio's theory, which is a prominent theory in the contemporary debate on the Mind-Body problem, resembles a kind of approach Nietzsche could have been taken to hold. Damasio takes Edelman's work into account and founds his theory on the evolutionary explanation of the origin of consciousness. According to him, the consciousness is "a device capable of maximizing the effective manipulation of images in the service of the interests of a particular organism", which by means of this very feature "would probably have prevailed in evolution", since the "survival in a complex environment, that is, efficient management of life regulation, depends on taking the right action, and that, in turn, can be greatly improved by purposeful preview and manipulation of images in mind and optimal planning" (Damasio 1994: 24).

In the same way, to Nietzsche consciousness does not exhaust the domain of knowledge, rather it only provides schemes in the form of concepts and categories that simplify the sense-data manifold, the sensory individuality and difference. As Nietzsche states in the aphorism 354 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, the consciousness occurs when a thought "in Worten geschieht, dass heisst in Mittheilungszeichen" so that "die Entwicklung der Sprache und die Entwicklung des Bewusstseins Hand in Hand gehen" (FW, KSA 3, 354). The function of the consciousness is to turn the individual nature of the "Sinneseindrücke" into what Nietzsche calls their "Durchschnittliches" (cf. FW, KSA 3, 354), the "Gemeinschafts- und Heerden-Natur" in which similar things, though different in many respects they may be, are reduced to identity by constructing concepts that retain only some common features, which are selected among many single representational contents, and remove the distinctive features for a successful communication to obtain (ibid.).

A much more dated back work than *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, though not so different as to theoretical content, such as *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, provides us with another example of that claim:

Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept "leaf" is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects. This awakens the idea that, in addition to the leaves, there exists in nature the "leaf": the original model according to which all the leaves were perhaps woven, sketched, measured, colored, curled, and painted – but by incompetent hands, so that no specimen has turned out to be a correct, trustworthy, and faithful likeness of the original model. (WL, KSA 1, 1)

The concept of the leaf is formed just by discarding the individual differences, because they are not conceptualizable, that is they fall outside the domain of concepts. Hence, on the one hand, Nietzsche suggests a genealogy of concepts, which – according to the aphorism 354 – are a characteristic feature of consciousness that is explained as a function of the primordial instinct of self-preservation of men, who must communicate with one other in the social dimension for needs of help and protection to be met. On the other hand, he denounces the consequence of that conceptualization, that is the thoroughly arbitrary and falsifying claim of the existence of primordial forms, for example “the Leaf”, on whose model all single leaves are conceived of being formed.

It is reasonable to argue that to Nietzsche the consciousness, that is the collection of different conscious mental states, is always conceptual or – borrowing this expression from the contemporary philosophical debate – has always a conceptual content (see Evans 1992). But since according to Nietzsche conscious mental states are only one part of human beings’ cognitive activity, it must be supposed that the complement of this activity, that is the manifold unconscious mental states, has a non-conceptual content.

It is no coincidence that in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* Nietzsche claims that consciousness is only an accidental feature of representation (*Vorstellung*), contending that Leibniz was the first to raise this claim (cf. FW, KSA 3, 357). This implies that the range of our mental representations does not coincide with consciousness, and that mental representations do not possess only a conceptual content, as McDowell would have it.⁵ Actually, Nietzsche holds that there are such too fine grained and subtle aspects of the world that cannot be represented by any conceptual and abstract semantic structure.

On the ground of this argument, Nietzsche’s theory can have significant implications for the contemporary debate about the mind, the consciousness and the structure of their content.

Katsafanas (2005) claims that in Nietzsche’s thought, conceptual features are the main characteristic of consciousness, while non-conceptual features are the main characteristic of unconscious states. However, he seems to dwell too little upon the fact that the fine grained and rich nature of contents is what makes the content of many unconscious states non-conceptual. According to Nietzsche, it is just that fine grained and rich character of contents that enables them to elude any form of classification. As Katsafanas construes Nietzsche’s thought, every mental state can be either conscious or unconscious, since the same perceptual experience

⁵ Cf. McDowell (1996). Nachlass 1887–1889, KSA 13, 11[145].

might turn from being unconscious or non-conceptual into being conscious or conceptual, as soon as it is given a structure by expressible concepts and then articulated into words. However, some objections can be raised against the view that the content of conscious mental states could be the same as that of unconscious states under the assumption that the only difference is provided by the conceptualization of consciousness. The specific feature of the content of unconscious mental states is just being so rich, fine grained and subtle that it escapes any form of conceptualization. If it can be said that we perceive a particular green shade only at a non-conceptual level, because this perceptual content is too fine grained and subtle, then it is not possible for it to be also the content of a conceptual experience, just because it is not liable to conceptualization. And if we try to conceptualize it by recording it into the categories of “bottle-green” or “olive-green” colour, we are going to simplify it or, as Nietzsche would put it, falsifying it somehow, betraying its being such and such a rich individual perception.

In the same way, Evans (1992: 122, 154) reasoned that there is such a fine grained level of the world that it eludes concepts, notwithstanding that it can be perceived in a non-conceptual way. Accordingly, Evans argued for the existence of a non-conceptual content, suggesting that our cognition is such to have a representational content that however is not conceptualizable.

Otherwise, McDowell defends the view that an experience endowed with a non-conceptual content could never constitute a true cognitive activity, since experience must always have a conceptual content. He reasoned that the fine grained features of, for instance, perceptual colour experiences can be accommodated by the recourse to demonstratives, which is grounded onto the occurrence of the individual colour sample to which we can always refer by such an expression as “that shade” (McDowell 1996: 57–58). Were that not the case, the experience would not be such at all, rather it narrows only to a blind intuition that would prove thoroughly useless for cognition (1996: 54–56). McDowell concedes that there could be concepts that show to have different degrees of determination, but they are still to be recognized as concepts.

Instead, it can be supposed that Nietzsche would have not accepted this argument. To him the concept as such has a simplifying function that is satisfied by removing the distinguishing features, that is the individual and unrepeatable particularities. Therefore, concepts cannot even retain the fine grained and individual characters of the intuitive impressions that qualify to be considered non-conceptual.

Nietzsche’s theory can be construed to agree with the criticism Crane addressed to the notion of conceptual content that is proposed by McDow-

ell. Crane claims that McDowell takes the conceptual content to be the same as the linguistic content, so that the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual contents would depend on having a language or not. On the contrary, Crane argues that it is possible to have a concept of X without having the related linguistic structure, rather merely having only an idea that individuates that kind of X. That being the case, McDowell's argument that the green shade is conceptually graspable by referring to it as "that shade" derives from the fallacy of identifying conceptual and linguistic contents. "That shade" is only a linguistic expression that does not possess any of those properties one can ascribe to a concept, such as being suitable for inference, being recalled or imaged as that particular content and becoming an argument of reasoning once its experience is gone. According to Crane, the "that shade" expression does not allow to accommodate and reprocess the content it refers to except when a subject is presented with it. Therefore, a "that-" expression is not conceptual and accordingly it does not imply that the experience of that particular green shade falls under the conceptual domain (Crane 2001: 152–155).

In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* Nietzsche's considerations about what he calls the "plötzliche Eindrücke" and the "intuitive metaphors" might be considered as suggesting the existence of unconscious perceptual cognitive states. Nietzsche claims that these intuitive metaphors are individual. Therefore they elude any form of recording or, literally, of registering into a repertoire ("Rubricieren") that is conceptual and shows to have a "starre Regelmässigkeit", a "Kastenordnung" and the "Reihenfolgen der Rangklasse" (WL, KSA 1, 1).

Nietzsche often refers to the consciousness as something to which the instinct is opposed. He suggests that the consciousness is made of trials, mistakes, fatigue, while the instinct realizes the perfection, the thorough naturalness of an action (see Nachlass 1888, KSA 13, 15[25]). Nietzsche seems to use elsewhere similar words for the unconscious that takes part in "jeder Art Vollkommenheit", as it does in the case of the perfect mathematician who "seine Kombinationen unbewusst handhabt ..." (Nachlass 1888, KSA 13, 14[111]).

According to these claims, conscious states are simply such states through which the subject learns something as the war craft for soldiers, the combination of symbols for mathematicians, the driving skills for young men. During her learning the subject cannot but pay attention to what she does every time she does it, making errors and learning hardly from her own mistakes. However, when she achieves a perfect learning, she will act without thinking about it, unconsciously or instinctively. Then the unconscious should be intended as something like an automatic process which

cannot take place were it not preceded by such learning by means of trial and errors, which is described by Nietzsche as the “Bewusstwerden”.

Unconscious states stem from conscious and attention driven states, but they are also always able to change into conscious states as soon as what is done in an automatic and instinctive way changes from being implicit into being explicit.

It is necessary to emphasize that this kind of the unconscious has nothing to do with the unconscious mental activities that Nietzsche singles out at a mainly perceptual level, which elude any form of conscious conceptualization and categorization because of their individual and subtle characteristics (cf. Nachlass 1887–1888, KSA 13, 11[113]; Nachlass 1885–1886, KSA 12, 2 [95]). In that case it is not a matter of either internalizing something by learning until it becomes automatic or making explicit something that was implicit as it could be the case with the grammatical rules.

For instance, in JGB 20 Nietzsche refers to the “grammatischen Funktionen” as “unbewusste Herrschaft und Führung”, that is just something implicit which becomes conscious as soon as it is made explicit, for example, in grammar textbooks in which some experts, i.e. the grammarians, state explicitly the rules and the structures every subject implicitly complies with without the need of being aware of them. This kind of cases qualifies as the only one for which Anderson’s (2005) interpretation could be accepted, according to which to Nietzsche concepts are unconscious in the same way the grammatical functions are.

However this interpretation can not overlook that there are some inner and outer perceptions that could never be the content of conscious states since they are not conceptualizable and linguistically communicable. And the fact that these perceptions are not to be selected by any conscious mental activity does not imply their inexistence. They do exist, although at a non-conceptual unconscious mental level.

Nietzsche’s theory of knowledge allows for a non-conceptual perceptual level. If reference is made again to the aphorism 375 in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, it is possible to argue that the view that consciousness is only an accident of representations means to acknowledge the existence of unconscious representations, that is of mental states that have a content, which make them representations, although they must be qualified as unconscious for the non-conceptual characteristics of their content. This argument implies that perception, which is mainly an unconscious representation, is necessarily requested for cognitive processes to obtain (cf. FW, KSA 3, 333).

As far as this issue is concerned, Anderson (2005) goes as far as arguing for a “Nietzsche’s sensualism”, by claiming that Nietzsche’s theory of

knowledge acknowledges priority to the “unconscious sensory intuitions” that grasp the rich and fine grained nature of sensory matter, which otherwise just because of these two characteristics would be out of reach for conscious experience, whose content turns out to be an incomplete and limited rearrangement of what nevertheless experience attains by means of the sensory intuitions themselves.

In conclusion, not only the mind is construed no more as the Cartesian *res cogitans*, but also mental states cannot be said to share all the same characteristic features. In fact, there exist either unconscious or conscious mental states. The unconscious mental states have a non-conceptual content and are not liable to conceptualization because of the fine grained and subtle characteristics of this content. Instead, the conscious mental states have a conceptual content, since their function is to simplify and categorize. As a consequence, the manifold unconscious mental states are not reducible to conscious states.

4. Some Implications on Mind, Body and Consciousness

The argument – which was expounded in the above section – of a secondary cognitive role, which is played by consciousness by means of categorization and conceptualization, provides with a ground to consider the mind as something complex that consists in different layers, which is neither reduced to conscious mental states alone nor dualistically opposed to the physiological processes of the body. The way the body develops, as in the case of sensory organs, is a determining condition for the emergence of the unconscious perceptual processes with a non-conceptual content. This argument provided Nietzsche with reason to maintain that it is “wesentlich vom Leibe ausgehen und ihn als Leitfaden zu benutzen” (Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 40[15]). It is by means of the body that man can bring about a correct representation of the nature of subjective unity, which is actually nothing but a plurality of elements that follow one another continuously to guide the organism, which accordingly have all the same value for carrying out its functions.

The body is the starting point to understand that these “lebendigen Einheiten entstehen und sterben und wie zum ‘Subjekt’ nicht Ewigkeit gehört” (Nachlass 1885, KSA 11, 40[21]). If man paid the due attention to the body, he would likely become aware of the precariousness of his condition, because the conceptual and thought development of the intellect and the consciousness ends up to be founded onto the organic activities and affects, which are “eine Vielheit, hinter der es nicht nötig ist eine Einheit anzusetzen” (Nachlass 1884, KSA 11, 26[36]). That unity discloses

as consciousness only afterwards, because it is something man needs for evolutionary reasons to simplify, unify and give experience an order.

Therefore, it is reasonable to characterize Nietzsche's theory as a physiologicistic approach that puts aside abstract theoretical speculations and moves instead from human sensory organs, whose real working and functions provide as many as guidelines to investigate cognition. Nietzsche's non-reductionist physiologism requires a new view of the mind, according to which consciousness is supposed to play no longer a privileged cognitive role, allowing thus other activities, mainly of perceptual nature, to bring about cognition that develops without the need of being unified and homologated by a presumptive superior entity.

Furthermore, these activities emerge from and are founded on determinate physiologic processes, which are bounded to take place into specific bodily structures. As Nietzsche emphasizes becoming and complexity, both conscious and unconscious mental states do not have to be construed as something substantially different from the physiologic bodily processes. They are one of the outcomes of the activities that occur in the body itself. Indeed, Nietzsche maintains that the "Ich-Geistige selber" is given just when the cells are (see Nachlass 1884, KSA 11, 26[36]).

Nietzsche can be taken to point out that what Searle dubbed the "mystery of consciousness" has to be dissolved,⁶ since there is no thing to be called "consciousness", whose conceptual content is alleged to meet the requirement to be true or to conform to the reality itself. Rather there are manifold mental states whose content is conceptual, if they satisfy the function to simplify and categorize the things that are present in the world.

On this issue, a remark can be considered worthwhile on some points of Nietzsche's thought that could prove useful to contemporary debate. If consciousness is supposed to dissolve, that is true to Nietzsche's view only as far the Platonic-Cartesian model of consciousness is concerned. According to it, consciousness is construed as a unitary substance that grasps the reality in itself, but at the cost of denying the perspectivist nature of knowledge. Then it is crucial not to overlook what this dissolution comes to preserve. Consciousness turns out to be composed of series of conscious mental states endowed with the evolutionary function of creating concepts and words by which we give our knowledge of the surrounding world an order. Furthermore, these conscious states emerge through a continuous process from sensory impressions that are individual and non-

⁶ See Searle (1999: 201). Therefore, to Searle, we would be not facing an unavoidable metaphysical hindrance.

conceptual, which develop according to determinate sense organs, that is on the ground of determinate structures of the body.

In this regard, Nietzsche speaks of a “Verkennung des Bewusstseins” that coincides with its “lächerlicher Überschätzung” (cf. FW, KSA 3, 11). The use of the term “Verkennung” to refer to consciousness gives a reason to think that Nietzsche would accept a distinction between the consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) that is a natural outcome of the evolutionary development of human beings, and its misinterpretation as the “kern des Menschen: sein Bleibendes, Ewiges, Letztes, Ursprünglichstes”. Nietzsche calls “Bewusstheit” this misinterpreted consciousness, and takes it to be the cause of conceptual mistakes.

Nietzsche’s reference to consciousness either as “Bewusstsein” or “Bewusstheit” proves his intention to draw a distinction between what belongs by nature to a definite type of living being, which has the function of improving the fitness to the environment together with other peculiar processes and activities of different nature, and its degeneration. The latter is just the concept of consciousness as a pretended unity of the organism, which cause to make erroneous assumptions on its being the organism’s primary and highest level function.

Instead, it is possible to provide a new definition of consciousness as the series of conscious mental states that are not opposed either to the unconscious mental states or to the physiological bodily phenomena.

The claim for unconscious mental states in Nietzsche’s philosophy can give a contribution to a theory that considers the mind as something strictly tied to the sentience and the body. Indeed, to allow for representations that do not need to be conscious and conceptual means to recognize an embodied rationality that is not restricted to the intellect, which conceptualizes and categorizes, rather displays the feature of individuality that is a distinguishing feature of the non-conceptual and unconscious perceptions.

This anti-dualistic and anti-reductionist coupling of the body and the mind becomes part of the definition of an enriched relationship between man and nature, man and world, according to which human beings play no longer the privileged role of dominating the nature. To be sure, they keep on being held to possess concepts and languages that differentiate them from other living beings, by which they organize themselves into societies to gain self-preservation. However, these characteristics remain constructions that do not affect, or at least only to a limited extent, the course and development of the nature man is part of and interacts with along with many other elements, being thus not able to control it. Since nature eludes any simplification or schematization because of its fine grained structure and the complexity of its behaviour.

In conclusion, a model that emphasizes the features of organization and complexity, which is thought of by Nietzsche in terms of “*Leib-Organisation*”, could be very promising to account for the relation between the mind and the body and, within the mind itself, between conscious and unconscious mental states without resigning to the reductionism as it were our only reasonable choice.

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