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The Heart of Flesh: Nietzsche on Affects and the Interpretation of the Body

CHRISTOPHER FOWLES*

ABSTRACT Nietzsche's philosophical psychology draws on a rich and extensive terminology. Integral to this terminology is the concept of an "affect." Although less widely discussed than the drives/instincts, affects are arguably every bit as important to Nietzsche's mature writings. Little attention, however, has been paid to the question of what Nietzsche thought affects were, such that they could do the considerable explanatory work he required of them. In this paper, I argue that by focusing on his reflections on both the psycho-physiological states to which we apply affect-words, and the sub-personal processes putatively involved in such episodes, we can draw out Nietzsche's understanding of affect. The picture that emerges comprises a form of somatic account, paired with an interpretive account of the mechanisms that subsume affective states under folk-psychological concepts and categories. Such a view, I hope to demonstrate, underpins some of Nietzsche's most prominent psychological claims.

KEYWORDS Nietzsche, affect, somatic theory of emotion, interoception, interpretive accounts of self-knowledge

INTRODUCTION

IN A NACHLASS FRAGMENT OF 1888, Nietzsche refers to psychology as "Affektenlehre"—the doctrine or theory of the affects (NF 1888: 13 [2]).¹ Given his contention elsewhere that psychology represents the "path to the fundamental problems" (*BGE* 23), it should come as no surprise that Nietzsche makes reference to affects in numerous prominent passages, and throughout some of his most

¹Nietzsche's published works are cited using the abbreviations listed in the bibliography, followed by Arabic numerals. Quotations are from the translation, with occasional amendments. Where works comprise several volumes, books, or essays (such that sections are not numbered consecutively), either Roman numerals or abbreviated section titles precede Arabic numerals. For example, *GM* I.1 is *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Essay I, Section 1; and *TI* "Errors," 4 is *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Four Great Errors," Section 4. Citations to the *Nachlass* refer to year, group, and section/fragment number (NF year: group [note]) as given in eKGWB. Translations from the *Nachlass* are my own.

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important works.² Yet, as Peter Poellner has claimed, one might “feel that not much is gained by [Nietzsche’s] assertions in the absence of a detailed account of what ‘affects’ are supposed to be” (“Affect, Value, and Objectivity,” 229). Literature on the topic has focused predominantly on the roles ascribed to affects in his moral psychology and broader philosophy, granting less attention to what Nietzsche thought affective states were, such that they could play these roles.³

Indeed, the situation might be even more unhappy than Poellner’s remark suggests. The central explanatory concept employed by Nietzsche is that of the drive or instinct. In a recent, influential interpretation, Paul Katsafanas has argued that drives are, *inter alia*, “dispositions that induce affective orientations” (“Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology,” 740). This suggestion has much to recommend it, but it does make Poellner’s concern all the more pressing. If drives are dispositions that generate affective orientations, the explanatory efficacy of the concept of a drive is, in no small part, dependent on the understanding of affect we take Nietzsche to be employing. This places affects at the heart of Nietzsche’s often-celebrated moral psychology, but leaves us needing to say more about what they are “supposed to be” (Poellner, “Affect, Value, and Objectivity,” 229).

My principal aim in this paper is to do just that. More precisely, I intend to focus predominantly on some of the psychological claims that Nietzsche makes regarding affects. Such reflections are, I submit, more substantial (and, indeed, thought-out) than previously believed. Nietzsche pays considerable attention to the nature of the psycho-physiological states to which affect-words are applied, and, I shall claim, to the sub-personal processes putatively involved in such episodes. It is his remarks on these topics that will command our attention for the majority of this paper,⁴ for they reveal much about the understanding of affect with which he was working. Two distinct positions emerge. The first concerns Nietzsche’s account of affects themselves, which I shall argue is ‘somatic’ in character. The second concerns self-ascription, and the mechanisms that subsume affective states under folk-psychological descriptions. Nietzsche’s view here, we shall see, is an interpretive one.

²There are over 500 references to *Affekt* or cognate words/variations thereof in the published works and notebooks, as well as around ninety instances of *Passion* etc., and over 900 uses of *Leidenschaft* etc. Of the eighty-five passages in the published works that refer explicitly to affect etc., fifty-four appear in just four books: *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *On the Genealogy of Morality*. There are places (predominantly in the *Nachlass*) where Nietzsche appears to treat affect and passion as subtly distinct, with the latter sometimes seeming to refer to enduring (affective) orientations of love/hate for particular things (e.g. for justice; see NF 1882: 3 [1], aphorism 40). His general usage, however, suggests the terms are broadly interchangeable.

³Much of the work on affects has focused predominantly on their relation to values (see Poellner, “Affect, Value, and Objectivity”; Brian Leiter, “Sign-Language”; and Paul Katsafanas, “Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology,” and “Value, Affect, Drive”). Christopher Janaway (in *Beyond Selflessness*) emphasizes the importance of affects in relation to both the interpretation of the *Genealogy* and to Nietzsche’s broader philosophy. For work that touches on the question of what affects are for Nietzsche, see Leiter, “Sign-Language”; Poellner, “Affect, Value, and Objectivity”; and Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche’s Dynamic Metapsychology*, 126–29.

⁴This paper exhausts neither Nietzsche’s interesting thoughts on affects, nor his psychological reflections on such states. He offers insightful remarks on the relationship(s) between affects and pleasure/displeasure, valuations, and judgments, as well as on the phenomenology of affective experience—all of which I shall studiously avoid for the most part here. (For some brief remarks, see n. 31.)

Nietzsche often discusses these positions together as they present his picture of the psychological processes that take us from exposure to a stimulus through to reflective awareness of our being in a particular state. Reconstructing this account provides us with something to say in response to Poellner's worry, of relevance to both the exegesis and evaluation of Nietzsche's philosophical psychology. But this is not all. Nietzsche's remarks present us with a reason to reassess some of the features commonly attributed to his view in the literature. His considered position, I shall argue, is somewhat less orthodox (and more emendatory) than has been appreciated. Nietzsche draws heavily on the physiology of his day, affording a prominent role to the body in affective states. He also develops a picture on which affects pervade mental life, with the majority of such episodes being non-conscious. In addition, the interpretive account of self-ascription that Nietzsche favors raises the possibility of being radically mistaken about the affects one undergoes. As I hope to bring out in the course of unpacking his somatic and interpretive views, these positions are related in important ways to claims found in works such as *Daybreak*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

The core of this paper comprises three stages. In the first of these (section 1), I lay out some of the claims made about Nietzsche's account of affects in the contemporary literature. I move on, in the second stage, to draw out his somatic and interpretive views, and to consider them in detail (section 2). The third stage is an examination of the process of affective states becoming conscious (section 3). I conclude by summarizing the fleshed-out picture of Nietzsche's account (section 4).

I. SYMPTOMS AND ILLNESSES

Our first task is to highlight some features commonly attributed to Nietzsche's understanding of affect, and to sketch out roughly how the account I am proposing diverges from such views. If we look to contemporary work on affects (both philosophical and psychological), we encounter a wide range: emotions, moods, various pleasures and displeasures, as well as states like hunger and more abstract desires, are all described as "affective." As I suggested earlier, attention to what affects were for Nietzsche has been reasonably limited. One possible explanation for this relative neglect is a skepticism about whether he had any substantial thoughts on the topic. Nietzsche's references to affective states are generally to straightforward moods and emotions, which seems congenial to the suggestion that he was working with a reasonably common-sense conception of affect.

Since one could hardly accuse Nietzsche of peppering his readers with necessary and sufficient conditions for the terminology he employs, commentators have looked to draw out a position from his usage of "affect." Poellner's own response to the concern quoted at the beginning of the paper is that affects, for Nietzsche, should be understood as "any mental episode which constitutively involves a pro- or con- attitude," with "a distinctive phenomenology—some experienced attraction or repulsion." This would include "a feeling of shame, an occurrent *desire* for something absent, as well as a *bodily sensation* experienced unqualifiedly as painful or pleasant" ("Affect, Value, and Objectivity," 229).

If we look elsewhere, Rex Welshon claims that “affective character is, typically at least, *consciously experienced* as a particular feeling with a distinctive phenomenology” (*Nietzsche’s Dynamic Metapsychology*, 127; cf. 128). Indeed, “all affects,” he suggests, “have distinctive default phenomenologies” (*Nietzsche’s Dynamic Metapsychology*, 129). It is this conscious qualitative character that purportedly provides the “incentivizing and appetitive aspect” of the drives, acting as “a stimulus, an impetus, a spur” (*Nietzsche’s Dynamic Metapsychology*, 120). Similarly, Brian Leiter suggests that affects and feelings refer “usually to the same kind of mental state for Nietzsche” (“Sign-Language,” 239).⁵ Nietzsche’s position, Leiter argues, is “basically *noncognitivist*: he thinks our basic affects of inclination and aversion are marked by a distinctive conscious, qualitative feel” (“Sign-Language,” 242–43), and involve a conative element, or “*motivational oomph*” (“Sign-Language,” 240).

Despite differing from one another in certain (occasionally substantial) respects, these interpretations share some ground. Poellner, Welshon, and Leiter each argue that occurrent affects are a broad class of phenomenally rich, (at least typically) conscious mental states, intimately related to feelings, inclination and aversion, and perhaps conative “oomph.” This picture (hereafter, the ‘extant view’) certainly qualifies as reasonably common-sense, and surely gets much right. There is ample evidence that Nietzsche sees some connection between affects and states of feeling, and I have no objection to claims about inclination and aversion, or conative “oomph.” Nevertheless, I have reservations about whether even this minimal position gets things completely right. Attention to Nietzsche’s affect-psychology, I shall claim, suggests a more revisionary picture than the extant view.

Nietzsche in fact contends that we could well misunderstand affects, as he thinks we do other mental phenomena. He writes in the *Nachlass*, for instance, that we “take ourselves to *know*, in the sensation of envy, hatred, etc., *what* envy, hate, etc., *is*—an error!” This is followed by a comparison: “Just like with thinking: we believe we know what thinking is.” In reality, however, “we experience some *symptoms* of an illness significantly unknown to us, and opine that the illness simply *consists in this*” (NF 1880: 6 [444]; cf. D 119).⁶ This is a suggestive remark on which Nietzsche does not really elaborate. The note itself is brisk and greatly condensed, with Nietzsche gesturing toward a number of distinct concerns. The comparison should, however, be taken seriously. Nietzsche’s view, I submit, is that thought and affect are alike not simply in being misunderstood, but are misunderstood in many of the same ways.

Nietzsche’s main contention is that (in both cases) we are led astray by considering only those things of which we become conscious. He follows the remark about experiencing the symptoms of an unknown illness with the claim that we “gauge and name all moral states according to *what* we consciously sense

⁵Cf. Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, 214; John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s System*, 37; and R. Lanier Anderson, “What is a Nietzschean Self?” 221.

⁶Nietzsche’s complaints about how we conceive of thinking are broadly two-fold: first, that we present it as the activity of a substantive subject (see *BGE* 17; NF 1887: 11 [113]; 1888: 14 [122]); and second, that we take thinking to consist in conscious thoughts standing in causal relations to one another (see NF 1885: 1 [61]; 1887: 11 [113]; 1888: 14 [152]). (The latter concern is plausibly the basis of the above comparison.)

thereof [was wir dabei bewußt empfinden]" (NF 1880: 6 [444]). Nietzsche's writings on thought suggest a number of errors purportedly consequent on this shortcoming, two of which I shall mention here. The first is the error of failing to appreciate the *non-conscious* processes involved in a phenomenon such as thinking. Nietzsche insists that "thinking" refers to a process more extensive than just the concatenation of thoughts experienced consciously. The "events which are actually linked," he writes, "play out beneath our consciousness," with conscious thoughts and feelings merely "symptoms of the actual event" (NF 1885: 1 [61]; cf. 1885: 1 [28]).⁷ The second error I wish to highlight concerns the *pervasiveness* of thinking. Nietzsche writes that "man, like every living creature, is constantly thinking but does not know it; the thinking which becomes *conscious* is only the smallest part" (GS 354). In considering just the symptoms (e.g. conscious thoughts), we fail not only to note the non-conscious components of the psychological phenomenon in question, but also its ubiquity.

Nietzsche, I believe, takes us to be guilty of the same errors in the case of affects. We misunderstand such states, at least in part because we conclude that they consist simply in their symptoms. In doing so, we arrive at a conception of affects that overlooks the non-conscious elements of such episodes, and which is based on broadly unrepresentative instances (i.e. those of which we become conscious). If this is correct, one might worry that, even if the extant view succeeds in characterizing conscious affective experience, it would be hasty to conclude that it provides a full answer to the question of what affects, for Nietzsche, are "supposed to be" (Poellner, "Affect, Value, and Objectivity," 229). The features ascribed to conscious affects might not hold for all components of the broader psychological process to which "affect" refers, or generalize to all (or even most) affective episodes. Understanding Nietzsche's view requires us to consider the illness in addition to the symptoms. The latter will plausibly include conscious feelings and thoughts. The former, I propose, refers to the broader psychophysiological process in toto. It is in relation to this that Nietzsche's reflections on affect-psychology, sub-personal processes, and physiology come into play—to which we shall now turn.

2. THE SOMATIC THEORY

Much philosophical work on emotion in the century or so after the end of Nietzsche's creative life relied predominantly on introspection and conceptual analysis, with great weight placed on the intuitions of competent speakers as to the meanings and referents of emotion words.⁸ By contrast, Nietzsche's approach is far more naturalistic in character, both in regard to affects and to psychological concepts more generally. The label 'naturalistic' (in the context of discussions of

⁷A similar picture to this emerges from Nietzsche's remarks on willing. See, for instance, *D* 129: "we are accustomed not to touch on all [the] unconscious processes, and to think of the preparation for an act only to the extent that it is conscious" (cf. NF 1886: 7 [1]; GS 360). In the note where he claims that we believe we "know what thinking is," Nietzsche compares our folk-psychological understanding of affects to our understanding of willing, claiming that we "misunderstand" willing in terms of "purposes" (NF 1880: 6 [444]; cf. n. 27).

⁸See, for example, Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will*; and Robert Solomon, "Getting Angry."

emotion) simply conveys that the approach engages with the relevant contemporary sciences, perhaps constructing a theory from empirical evidence or integrating scientific results into philosophical theorizing. Such approaches might well offer correctives to folk-psychological conceptions of given states, or to the usage of particular psychological terminology.⁹ For modern naturalistic theorists, the relevant sciences are generally psychology and neuroscience. For Nietzsche, and his like-minded contemporaries, it was physiology.

If we look to the *Nachlass*, we find a wealth of fascinating remarks on affects that reflect Nietzsche's interest in examining the psychological terms he employed in light of an understanding of the body gleaned from physiology. He writes in 1880, for instance, of the "heart of flesh," insisting that "the viscera are active in the affects," and that this "roughly corresponds to Schopenhauer's 'Will'" (NF 1880: 4 [218]). Nietzsche elaborates on this line of thought in a passage from the following year, which clearly betrays the influence of the material he was reading. In this case, the work in question is Wilhelm Roux's *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (published that year). As part of an attempted explanation of the appearance of purposiveness in nature, Roux posited a struggle between the parts of the body, with complex organic structures emerging through competition between the cells, tissues, and organs for nutriment and space in cycles of excitation (at a stimulus) and (over-compensatory) response. Nietzsche notes that now "one has rediscovered the *struggle* everywhere, and speaks of the struggles of the cells, tissues, organs, organisms." He goes on to write that "one *can* find all of our conscious affects" in these struggles, and that on such a picture, "what's really going on during the activity of our human affects are those physiological movements, and the affects (struggles etc.) are only intellectual interpretations." Toward the end of the passage, Nietzsche states that science is "now on the path to making clear the smallest processes" and providing a "*kind of language* for those processes" (NF 1881: 11 [128]).

Such passages evince Nietzsche's conviction as to the relevance of physiology to our thinking about affects. Thankfully, his thoughts on the role of the body go beyond noting that physiological arousal is "what's really going on" (whatever we take that to mean). The remarks we are going to examine in the coming sections present to us an idiosyncratic form of somatic account. As the name suggests, somatic accounts afford a prominent role to the body in affective states. More precisely, advocates of somatic theories are interested in the role of the body beyond the brain (to which "body" etc. will refer hereafter). Of course, countenancing the involvement of bodily states in emotional episodes is hardly the preserve of somatic theorists. A common way of incorporating the presence of physiological perturbation into accounts of the emotions has been to claim that emotions *cause* bodily states. On such a view, some stimulus *S* is encountered by the individual in question and causes an affective state *A*, which in turn causes a physiological state *P*. My perception of a bear causes the emotion of fear, which causes a series of bodily changes such as increased heart rate or shaking. People often claim that

⁹The term 'naturalistic' is borrowed from Paul Griffiths's *What Emotions Really Are*.

they are shaking *because* they are scared, or that their heart is beating forcefully *because* they are excited.

Somatic accounts contest this order. The claim characteristic of the somatic approach is that bodily perturbation makes “a causal contribution” to the generation of affective mental states (Barlassina and Newen, “Impure Somatic Theory,” 640). Instead of *S, A, P*, somatic theories claim the correct order to be *S, P, A*: my perception of the bear, *S*, causes a series of bodily changes, *P*, which are then causally related to the affective mental state, *A*. This is what we find in Nietzsche’s writings. As above, one’s encountering a stimulus, *S*, triggers a range of physiological changes, *P*. So far, so good. The idiosyncratic element of Nietzsche’s picture appertains to *A*. The somatic causal claim leaves room for disagreement among theorists on a number of fronts, including which part of the process should be properly identified as the emotion (or “affect”).¹⁰ As we saw briefly in section 1 (and will see again in section 3), Nietzsche is deeply skeptical about the adequacy of our conception of affect, and appears reluctant to identify a single point in the process as the affect proper, to the exclusion of all else. Instead, his preference is to amend and revise our conception of affect to cover a broader psycho-physiological process. This reflects not only his naturalistic approach to the topic, but also his doubts about whether language and our intuitions about the extension and application of particular concepts offer much insight into the phenomena themselves.

On the view I ascribe to Nietzsche, an occurrent affect, *A*, is a complex psycho-physiological process, comprising one’s bodily state (standardly one of perturbation in response to a stimulus or stimuli¹¹) and the subsequent modulation of specific psychological processes resultant on the sensation of said bodily state.¹² This is what I take him to have in mind when he writes, for instance, of “*Passions*” as

¹⁰Somatic accounts can be ‘pure’ or ‘impure,’ a distinction that hinges on the acceptance (pure) or rejection (impure) of what we could call the somatic restriction claim—the claim that emotions are exhausted by the bodily element or its perception, broadly construed (cf. Luca Barlassina and Albert Newen, “Impure Somatic Theory,” 640). Examples of pure theories are William James’s “feeling” theory (see “What is an Emotion?,” *The Principles of Psychology*; and “The Physical Basis of Emotion”), and Jesse Prinz’s view, on which the emotion is the perception of bodily perturbation (see *Gut Reactions*). On the above construal of the restriction claim, Antonio Damasio’s account would also be a pure theory. Damasio identifies the “*essence*” of emotion as the “collection of changes in body state,” which is separate from the perception of “all changes that constitute the emotional response” (*Descartes’ Error*, 139). (Hence my use of the phrase “affective *mental state*” [emphasis added] to characterize *A*.) Barlassina and Newen argue for an impure account on which emotions are multi-modal states (see “Impure Somatic Theory”). Nietzsche’s view, on my reading, would be a form of impure somatic theory. One distinctive feature of Nietzsche’s position is that he resists the restriction claim both in relation to the multiple elements synchronically occurrent during emotional episodes (*à la* Barlassina and Newen), and in relation to the components of the temporally extended psycho-physiological process to which “affect” refers.

¹¹I say “standardly” since Nietzsche is sensitive to the possibility of affective states (most probably mood-like) that are *not* responses to proximal stimuli, but are instead the result of a physiological state (such as tiredness or hunger) modulating one’s psychology in the appropriate fashion.

¹²It should be stressed that, in articulating the view this way, I do not mean to suggest an overly hard distinction between the psychological and the physical for Nietzsche. Indeed, I take it that the complex interaction of psychological processes and the body proper in affective episodes partly underpins Nietzsche’s ready application of physiological language to psychological topics. (Thanks to Paul Katsafanas for raising this issue.)

“states of our organs and their retro-active effect on the brain—with a *search* for *release* [Auslösung]” (NF 1882: 4 [219]).¹³ Nietzsche’s writings reveal a number of ways in which he thinks such sensations modify or stimulate mental function (to which we shall return in section 2.2). One mechanism in particular that he claims is triggered by the sensations of bodily arousal is the mechanism that seeks a “cause” for one’s condition. As we shall see, this plays an important part in Nietzsche’s affect-psychology, and it is on this feature of his account that much of our attention shall rest.

Nietzsche’s view is in fact more nuanced still, as in addition to *S*, *P*, *A*, he also addresses the points at which one becomes aware of one’s state through bodily feeling, A_p , and at which one can represent oneself as in a given state at the level of reflection, A_R . Entwined into this complicated picture is his account of the psychology of self-ascription, on which certain episodes and conditions are interpreted as being particular affects. It is in relation to this issue that points A_F and A_R arise. Naturally, there remains much to be done to elaborate on these suggestions, and to show that they do indeed represent Nietzsche’s view. It is to this that we now move.

2.1. *The Form of Nietzsche’s Somatic View*

Our starting point is a *Nachlass* passage entitled “**The belief in ‘affects’**” (hereafter, ‘BA’). Nietzsche writes that

Affects are a construction of the intellect, a *fabrication of causes* which do not exist. All bodily *general feelings* that we do not understand are interpreted intellectually, i.e. a *reason* is sought for feeling one way or another, in people, experiences, etc., so something adverse, dangerous, alien, is *set* as the cause of our malaise [*Verstimmung*]: in fact, it is *sought* in *addition to* the malaise, for the sake of the *conceivability* [*Denkbarkeit*] of our state.—Frequent blood-flows to the brain, with the feeling of suffocation, are **interpreted** as *anger*: the persons and things that rouse us to anger are *releases* for the physiological state.—Subsequently, after a long habituation [*Gewöhnung*], certain occurrences and general feelings are themselves so regularly connected that the sight of certain occurrences produces the state of general feeling, specifically any congestion of the blood or excitation of the semen etc. it brings with it through close association: we then say, “the affect is aroused.” (NF 1883: 24 [20])

Nietzsche makes several interesting (if admittedly confounding) claims here, and prompts a number of questions. What, for instance, does he mean in saying that affects involve a “fabrication” of causes, or that a reason is sought for feeling a certain way, in “addition to” to the state? And how is the seeking of a cause related to the interpretation and “conceivability” of the state? Before addressing such questions, it is worth highlighting a few pieces of technical terminology that might otherwise evade detection, and which will be important to bear in mind as we unpack Nietzsche’s view. The first appears in the suggestion that the “persons and things that rouse us to anger are *releases* for the physiological state” (emphasis added). The German word here translated as “releases” is *Auslösungen*. Nietzsche’s references to *Auslösung(en)* suggest a rather particular application of the term,

¹³I take the idea of a “search” to be figurative here, conveying that the affective disposition is sensitive to the constant stream of sensory information, and responsive to stimuli. This will become clearer in §2.1, where we will also discuss *Auslösung*.

and almost certainly reflect his engagement with Julius Robert Mayer's "Über Auslösung" (1876), which Nietzsche had read by April 1881.¹⁴ Mayer, a physician and physicist, conceived of *Auslösungen* as unleasings or outbursts of force (*Kraft*) under the right conditions, which is mirrored in Nietzsche's employment of the concept.¹⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche writes explicitly of "physiological processes" as "releases of force [*Kraftauslösungen*]" (NF 1884: 27 [3]). His references to *Auslösungen* (including in BA) almost always occur alongside *Reiz*, *reizen*, and so on, in relation to the thing that has stimulated, elicited, or (as above) roused the unleashed "force."

If we look at what Nietzsche says about *Kraftauslösungen* in the aforementioned note, he writes that they bring with them "a certain increase or strengthening" when they "reach the sensorium commune" (NF 1884: 27 [3]). The idea of a *sensorium commune* appeared in both philosophy and physiology, although it was more closely associated with the latter by Nietzsche's day. Roughly speaking, it denoted the hypothetical point in the brain at which there occurs a confluence of sensory information (both interoceptive and exteroceptive) from various sense-modalities.¹⁶ This fits neatly with the second piece of terminology that I wish to flag. If we return to BA, Nietzsche draws our attention, in the second line, to an unusual phrase, referring to "*general feelings* [*Gemeingefühle*]." The idea of *Gemeingefühl(e)* was also borrowed from physiology; Nietzsche writes elsewhere (in a letter to Franz Overbeck) of *Gemeingefühl*, "as the physiologists say" (NF/BVN 1887: 870 [30/06/1887]). The concept referred broadly to the interoceptive representation of the body.¹⁷ Those bodily changes Nietzsche has in mind when

¹⁴Nietzsche received Julius Robert Mayer's *Die Mechanik der Wärme* (1867), a collection of papers including "Über Auslösung," from Heinrich Köselitz. On a postcard to Köselitz, Nietzsche writes of "Über Auslösung" as "for me the most significant and most useful [paper] in the book" (NF/BVN 1881: 103 [16/04/1881]). Capturing Mayer's use of *Auslösung* in English is difficult. Both "trigger(ing)" and "trip(ping)" represent possible translations, as does "ignition" (sometimes used in work on Mayer). Walter Kaufmann's translation as "means of relieving" conveys a Nietzschean sentiment, but does not comport with Nietzsche's employment of *Auslösung* more broadly (*WTP* 670; cf. *HH* "Man in Society," 370; see also my remarks on practical-psychological necessity). I believe "release" fits those passages in which Nietzsche uses the concept sufficiently well, while avoiding some of the difficulties that accompany the other translations.

¹⁵Mayer gives, inter alia, a gas explosion and the lighting of a match as examples of *Auslösung*. *Auslösungen*, he claims, "play not only a great and essential role" in events such as these, "but also in the living world, and especially in physiology and psychology" (*Die Mechanik der Wärme*, 12). If we look to Nietzsche, he of course describes *ressentiment* as "that most dangerous of blasting and explosive material" (*GM* III.15). He also writes in the *Nachlass* of the commanding affect in willing as "a sudden explosion of force" (NF 1884: 25 [436]), and of "pleasure and displeasure, the play of affects, the feeling of discharge, explosion, freedom . . ." (NF 1888: 14 [185], ellipses in original). One particular claim made by Mayer was that movement was based on *Auslösungen* (which were accompanied by pleasant sensations). Not long before BA, we find Nietzsche writing that "each action builds on its affect-system" (NF 1883: 7 [121]), and later of pleasure "connected with an activity itself as the release [*Auslösung*] of a bound and pent-up force" (NF 1885: 1 [77]; see also §2.2, and n. 27).

¹⁶Cf. Anthelme-Balthasar Richerand: "All impressions perceived by the sense organs, by the percipient extremities of nerves, are transmitted to one point in the cerebral substance. It is here that exists the *sensorium commune*" (*The Elements of Physiology*, 284).

¹⁷*Gemeingefühl* can be traced in scholarly work to Johann Christian Reil's *Rhapsodien* (1803), but is more widely associated with Ernst Heinrich Weber's *Der Tastsinn* (1846). Nietzsche's usage is consistent with the physiology of his day. Indeed, his linking of general feelings to affects was not unprecedented. See, for example, Ernst von Feuchtersleben: "Self-feeling . . . provides the ground

talking of the viscera being “active” in the affects (NF 1880: 4 [218]), as we saw earlier, come to be conceived of as releases, which we become aware of as states of general feeling.

With these terms in place, let us move to the rest of BA. To help us understand Nietzsche’s remarks therein, it is worth attending to several further passages. Although BA represents a good starting point, offering as it does a succinct sketch of the position I take Nietzsche to hold, the claims made therein can almost all be found in the published works. *Daybreak*, for instance, offers some nice examples. In comments deeply redolent of the physiological content of BA, Nietzsche writes that the “act of violence as a consequence of passion, of anger for example, is to be understood physiologically as an attempt to prevent a threatening attack of suffocation. Countless acts of wantonness vented on other people have been discharges [*Ableitungen*] of a sudden congestion of blood through a strong muscle-action” (D 371; cf. D 83 and 86). Regarding the seeking of a cause for one’s state, he writes elsewhere in *Daybreak* of the tale of a “Danish king . . . wrought up to such a degree of warlike fury by the music of his minstrel” that he killed five courtiers, despite there being “no war, no enemy, if anything the opposite.” The explanation proffered is that “the force which *infers from the feeling to the cause* was strong enough to overwhelm appearance and reason.” The “state of feeling into which music transports us,” Nietzsche goes on, “almost always contradicts the appearance of our real situation and the reasoning powers which recognize this real situation and its causes” (D 142).

There are several passages, however, of particular value to our attempt to reconstruct Nietzsche’s view. In a number of sections, entitled “*The logic of the dream*” (HH “First and Last,” 13), “*Experience and invention*” (D 119), and “*The error of imaginary causes*” (TI “Errors,” 4), as well as in a late *Nachlass* passage (NF 1888: 15 [90]), Nietzsche discusses the idea that dreams are interpretations of states of stimulation while asleep. The psychological picture presented in these passages changes very little across the period in which they were written, and we can draw from these discussions four key elements: (a) that our nervous system is stimulated while asleep; (b) that this is interpreted—which will involve the mind seeking, variously, “grounds,” “reasons,” “causes,” or “motivations” (employed interchangeably here) for one’s condition; (c) that this process of interpretation involves (by no means necessarily conscious) recourse to memories regarding similar states and the interpretations that were employed; and (d) that cause and effect have (in some sense) been reversed. Nietzsche is clear in these passages that it is not merely exteroceptive sensory information with which he is concerned. As he wrote of seeking a reason for one’s “malaise” in BA, the dream passages discuss positing a cause for finding oneself “feeling bad” (NF 1888: 15 [90]; TI “Errors,” 4) or “feeling good” (TI “Errors,” 4). Interoceptive sensation, on Nietzsche’s view, is processed in a similar manner to the exteroceptive sensation reconstructed in episodes of dreaming.

for all other feelings and emotions. Within self-feeling, the *Gemeingefühl* takes on a human character. The pleasantness of the latter is transformed into cheerfulness, displeasure into sadness, the changing and interplay of these states is called mood” (*Lehrbuch*, 137–38). (I know of no evidence that Nietzsche was familiar with this work.)

It should come as no surprise, then, that the process described in the dream passages bears undeniable resemblance to the picture of affects offered in BA. If we return to that passage, features (a) and (b) are clearly present, and we find something related to (c) as well.¹⁸ Nietzsche claims that “persons and things” rouse a physiological state, as the sounds etc. stimulate the senses in the dream scenarios—(a). The sensations of one’s bodily perturbation are then interpreted, as part of which a “reason is sought” (NF 1883: 24 [20]) for one’s state, as it is in the dream case—(b). Regarding (c), if we look to *TI* “Errors,” 4, Nietzsche claims that memory often “swings into action in such cases without our awareness,” and “calls up earlier states of a similar kind and the causal interpretations which have grown out of them.”¹⁹ He writes, in particular, of a “habituation [Gewöhnung] to a certain cause-interpretation” (*TI* “Errors,” 4). This is not unrelated to his use of *Gewöhnung* in BA, regarding the concomitance of incidents and feelings over lengthy periods of time. Experienced co-occurrence produces the first interpretations positing a causal link between the event or person and general feeling. Once habituated, these explanations can be retrieved from memory almost immediately (without one’s being aware of any searching going on) and utilized to interpret subsequent similar feelings, and/or comparable concomitances of event and bodily change.

The remarks in BA elaborate on the relationship between interpretations and memory. Nietzsche claims that “certain occurrences and general feelings” are “so regularly connected” that the mere sight of the event produces the state of general feeling—“specifically” the physiological features it “brings with it” (NF 1883: 24 [20]). This claim resembles a fragment composed a few months earlier, in which Nietzsche writes, “Anger (and all affects), *first* a state of the body: which is interpreted.” “Subsequently,” he goes on, “the interpretation produces the state freely” (NF 1883: 9 [44]). It might appear, at first blush, that these claims—that the state of the body *precedes* interpretation, and that interpretation *produces* the state—stand in tension. When taken in conjunction with BA, however, a clearer picture emerges. Given the propinquity of the two fragments, they plausibly express a similar idea: once we have become habituated to an interpretation, this does not just result in memory deploying it automatically when we experience a familiar concomitance of putative cause and particular bodily response. In time, perceiving—or perhaps even just imagining or remembering—the interpreted, posited cause of one’s previous affective states can elicit the same condition.²⁰

The psychological process we have drawn out above clearly comports with the *S, P, A* order suggested by the somatic view. Nevertheless, certain facets of Nietzsche’s position remain unclear. In both BA and the dream passages, feature (a) seems

¹⁸Despite no explicit reference in BA to feature (d) from the dream passages, it seems of greater relevance to Nietzsche’s affect-psychology (and to BA) than this omission suggests. The gist of (d) is plausibly that interpretation usually occurs so rapidly that awareness of the putative reason for one’s state is effectively immediate, despite being (on Nietzsche’s view) the result (or “effect”) of a complex psychological process. (We will address this process later in the paper.)

¹⁹Cf. from the *Nachlass*: “When we enter into a certain physiological state, what we thought the last few times we were in that state comes to mind. There must be a release [*Auslösung*] in the brain for each state” (NF 1880: 1 [115]; cf. 1881: 11 [301]).

²⁰Cf. Nietzsche’s remark that affects “are symptoms of the formation of memory material” (NF 1884: 25 [514]). Nietzsche’s use of “memory,” in these passages, seems closely related to notions like association and proceduralization. (Thanks to Gudrun von Tevenar for raising this suggestion.)

reasonably straightforward, and the remarks on memory and habituation are compatible and complementary, providing a fuller picture of the relation between the two, as sketched in (c). The challenge is to make sense of Nietzsche's comments regarding (b). The claim that one's state is interpreted, and that this requires the positing of a cause, is intriguing. I suggested earlier that an occurrent affect, for Nietzsche, comprises one's bodily state and the subsequent modulation of specific psychological processes. If we are to understand interpretation, and the seeking of a cause in particular, we must look more closely at this modulation.

2.2. *Affective Interpreting*

The sensations of one's bodily condition trigger the search for a cause. As Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*, "Most of our general feelings [*Allgemeingefühle*—every sort of restraint, pressure, tension, explosion in the play and counter-play of the organs, the condition of the *nervus sympathicus* [i.e. the sympathetic nervous system] in particular—excite our cause-drive" (*TI* "Errors," 4; cf. "Errors," 5).²¹ If we look to his remarks concerning the causes sought, however, Nietzsche intimates that there is something problematic about them. He writes in the *Nachlass* of the "almost 'unconscious' distress of the viscera, the tension of the blood pressure in the abdomen, the unhealthy states of the *nervus sympathicus*" as all requiring interpretation. In those cases where one must endure "pain whose physical cause is unknown," he goes on, we place "a *false reason* behind the actual malaises of the body" (NF 1885: 38 [1]). Elsewhere, he claims that habituation to certain interpretations "obstructs and even prohibits an *investigation* of the cause" (*TI* "Errors," 4), and that the cause "sought and imagined" is "pitiably inadequate as the real cause" (NF 1888: 15 [90]).

But why, one might ask, are the putative causes (in some sense) inadequate? A line in the *Genealogy* offers a starting point. Nietzsche writes of the vengeful, suffering individual that the "*true* cause of their feeling bad, *the physiological one*, remains concealed" from them (*GM* III.15, emphasis added). The true, "physiological" cause, I take it, is the sort he discusses elsewhere in regard to Luigi Cornaro. "*Cornarism*," as Nietzsche dubs it (*TI* "Errors," 2), involves "*confusing the consequence with the cause*" (*TI* "Errors," 1).²² What Nietzsche has in mind is a *causal-explanatory* mistake: positing *X* as the cause of *Y* (and sufficient to explain *Y*) when this relation in fact fails to obtain, and both are explained by some further, deeper fact. Cornaro prescribes certain dietary habits as the *cause* of a long and healthy life, when they are in fact a *consequence* of those psycho-physiological features that Nietzsche takes to be genuinely explanatory of Cornaro's longevity.

Nietzsche approaches affects in a similar fashion. He writes in a discussion of *ressentiment* and weakness in *Ecce Homo* that one "does not know how to get rid of anything, one does not know how to get over anything, one does not know

²¹It is unclear whether Nietzsche is positing a distinct drive here. His claim in *D* 119 that drives "interpret nervous stimuli and, according to their requirements, posit their 'causes'" leaves open the possibility that by "cause-drive" he is referring simply to the drive (or drives) presently interpreting sensation.

²²One should note that this is distinct from feature (d) in the dream passages (the claim that cause and effect had, in some sense, been reversed). Unlike Cornarism, (d) concerns the order of *experience*.

how to repel anything—everything hurts. People and things obtrude too closely; experiences strike one too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound. Sickness itself is a kind of *ressentiment* (*EH* “Wise,” 6). The individual suffers an enduring psycho-physiological condition that disposes them to certain intense reactive episodes and protracted moods, as well as to patterns of thought and judgment.²³ This antecedent psycho-physiology is the “further, deeper fact” to be properly understood as the cause of particular affective reactions.²⁴ An object might elicit a response from one person but not another, a different response in each person, or different responses at different times in the same people. As in the case of Cornaro’s diet, Nietzsche holds that the deeper considerations explain both *X* (the extracted object) and *Y* (the affective response): one’s psycho-physiology is explanatorily primary regarding *why* the object in question was perceived qua stimulus, and why one had *that* response to it.²⁵

Nevertheless, one might still ask how we are to square the idea that our thinking about affects involves a causal-explanatory error with Nietzsche’s claim in BA that “persons and things” rouse affects²⁶ He does, after all, talk of interpretations eventually producing the state “freely” (NF 1883: 9 [44]), and of the conjunction of events and feelings being so regular that the mere “sight of certain occurrences” elicits the physiological state (NF 1883: 24 [20]). Given such remarks, Nietzsche’s point in talking of “inadequate” reasons clearly cannot be that the relevant objects fail to provoke affective responses (NF 1888: 15 [90]). Instead, his claim seems to be that such things are more properly thought of as *stimuli*, in contrast to the psycho-physiological *causes* of both one’s affective episode and one’s having been provoked by the thing in question.²⁷ The causal explanations Nietzsche deems

²³It is important to distinguish between *ressentiment* as a brief, intense affect, and *ressentiment* as an enduring affective condition. When one is inhibited or frustrated in the discharging of “released” states (including reactive affects triggered by an earlier frustration), this can result in an episode of vengeful resentment—*ressentiment*. Nietzsche imagines noble individuals undergoing this occasionally, but without its becoming pervasive, ingrained, or pathological. In the noble, *ressentiment* “runs its course and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction.” However, in the weak—those incapable of responding, for one reason or another—continual frustration turns instances of *ressentiment* into an extensive and complex psychological disorder. It is this group that Nietzsche refers to as the “human beings of *ressentiment*” (*GMI*.10). (Thanks to Ken Gemes for highlighting this distinction.)

²⁴Cf. from the *Nachlass*: a “person, a people, have suffered a physiological change, experiences this in *general feeling*, and interprets this in the language of their affects and *according to the degree* of their knowledge, without realizing that their physis is the seat of the change” (NF 1881: 11 [103]).

²⁵Cf. Schopenhauer, who writes that motives “never determine more than what I will at *this time*, in *this place*, and under *these* circumstances.” They determine the will’s “manifestation at a given point in time: they are merely the occasion [*Anlaß*] on which my will shows itself” (*ZA* 1:150/*WWR* 1:106). (Citations to this work are to the volume and page number of the complete works edited by Arthur Hübscher [*ZA*], followed by the volume and page number of the English edition listed in the bibliography. Quotations are from the translation, with occasional amendments.) In a similar vein, Nietzsche writes in the *Nachlass* that we speak of “the causes of affects, and mean their occasions [*Gelegenheiten*]” (NF 1882: 3 [1], aphorism 408).

²⁶Thanks to a referee for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* for pressing me on this.

²⁷Nietzsche writes explicitly in the *Nachlass* that we should speak not of the “causes of willing, but the stimuli [*Reizen*] of willing” (NF 1884: 25 [436]). A similar picture emerges in the published works in a discussion of the causes of action in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche distinguishes two “*kinds of cause that are often confused*.” The first is the “cause of acting,” which he identifies as a “quantum of damned-up energy waiting to be used somehow.” The second, the “cause of acting in a certain way, in

inadequate are those that treat the occasioning element as a direct mental cause,²⁸ sufficient to explain our reaction without reference to the individual's psychophysiology (some features of which might well relate to their experiences and habituation to various associations and causal explanations).

Instead of seeking causes of the explanatorily primary, "physiological" kind in instances of perturbation, Nietzsche claims that we extract something to set as the reason for our state from the "surroundings" of our "disagreeable experiences and fears" (NF 1885: 38 [1]). Later remarks suggest he understood "surroundings" sufficiently broadly as to include mental items such as thoughts, and so on.²⁹ If we look to his remarks on the function of affective states, it becomes clearer why the cause is plucked from one's environment. Affects, Nietzsche suggests, developed as a means of producing useful, beneficial behaviors.³⁰ The psychological mechanisms set into motion by bodily perturbation are driven (at least in part) by what we could call practical-psychological necessity—the need to discharge one's state of released arousal, through the "proper reaction, that of the deed" (GM I.10).

For affects to perform the beneficial function Nietzsche envisions, the cause-extracting mechanism must identify the relevant feature(s) of the environment (e.g. possible threats).³¹ This process represents a central part of what I shall label 'affective interpretation.' The sensations of one's bodily state (which trigger the cause-extracting mechanism) are interpreted as related to elements of one's surroundings. As we saw in our discussion of (c), this will draw on the stock of etiologies stored in memory, which have been forged through experience. Once habituated, interpretations are employed in new situations (often automatically) to identify relevant features, with the extracted cause providing the intentional object for the affect (and perhaps further reactive responses) in relation to which one's behavior can be modified, and subsequent actions directed.³²

a certain direction, with a certain goal" (including "so-called 'purposes'" and "'vocations'" [cf. n. 7]), is "something quite insignificant," a "small accident in accordance with which this quantum 'releases' [*auslöst*] itself in one particular way." The passage has deeply Mayer-esque overtones, with Nietzsche writing of the second kind of cause as the "match in relation to the powder-keg." The error which he is concerned with is that of treating as "the *driving* force" that which is "only the *directing* force"—of understanding a stimulating and directing element as the "cause of acting" (GS 360).

²⁸I borrow 'mental cause' from G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*; cf. Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will*, 71.

²⁹See e.g. *TI* "Errors," 4, 5, and 6.

³⁰See NF 1881: 15 [69]; 1881: 11 [241].

³¹The generation of beneficial behavior of course requires not only that the relevant feature(s) of the environment be identified, but also that an appropriate affect be roused (e.g. fear, in the case of a threat). Nietzsche is certainly sensitive to this issue. "Pleasure and displeasure," he insists, are "never 'original facts': instead, he countenances a form of pre-conscious appraisal of "*overall usefulness*" and "*overall harmfulness*" that has "*will-reactions (affects)*" as its output (NF 1887: 11 [71]). Nietzsche often links this process to valuations, judgments, and power. If we look to BA, for instance, beneath the paragraph I have quoted are two further, separate lines in which he writes, "In 'pleasure' and 'displeasure,' *judgments* are already embedded: the stimuli [*Reize*] are discriminated according to whether or not they are conducive to the feeling of power" (NF 1883: 24 [20]).

³²Nietzsche was not familiar with the language of intentionality. His use of "cause" should not mislead one, however, into thinking that he was insensitive to the possibility of cause, stimulus, and object coming apart (indeed, quite the opposite is true). Something's being a cause of the sort posited in affective states does not, of course, occlude its being an intentional object: I can say both that "I am angry *about* the football," and that "the football *made* me angry." Cf. Jesse Prinz's remarks about "emotional attitudes," which he claims establish "a causal link between an emotion and the representation of

Although the referring of sensation back to putative cause is the feature of affect-psychology on which Nietzsche focuses most closely, his picture of affective interpretation is plausibly richer than just this. The modulation of psychological processes consequent on sensations reaching the *sensorium commune* is suffusive: “even the sense-perceptions and thoughts,” he writes, belong among the “revelations of affect” (NF 1882: 4 [126]).³³ But what does this mean? One of the dream passages is instructive here. In *D* 119, Nietzsche discusses the role of drives in the interpretation of sensory information. He considers how the sensations of bodily processes, bedclothes, sounds, etc., which remain “very similar on one night as on another,” can be interpreted so differently in dreams from night to night. His conjecture is that these “*very free*, very arbitrary interpretations” occur under the influence of drives: the “inventive reasoning faculty,” he suggests, posits “*causes* so very different” from one night to the next “for the same nerve-stimuli,” since the “prompter of the reasoning faculty” was a different drive in each instance (*D* 119).

Despite waking life not having this “*freedom* of interpretation,” Nietzsche asks whether he has to add that there is “no *essential* difference between waking and dreaming?” Our everyday experiences, he insists, are similarly altered by occurrent states. This interpreting will plausibly involve not just the positing of causes, but also the generation of perceptual saliences.³⁴ Indeed, Nietzsche’s remarks suggest something akin to affordance. The affordances of a particular environment are “what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill” (Gibson, *Ecological Approach*, 127; cf. “The Theory of Affordances”). Nietzsche writes in *D* 119 that a drive that “desires gratification—or the exercise of its strength, the discharge of this strength, the saturation of a void . . . regards every event of the day with a view to seeing how it can employ it for the attainment of its purpose.” An interpreting drive highlights opportunities and interactions presented by the environment. As a result, objects, events, and individuals are ascribed a function and meaning from the perspective of the drive.³⁵

The relation between drives and affects in Nietzsche’s psychology is somewhat opaque.³⁶ He clearly sees an intimate link between the two and ascribes many

an object or a state of affairs.” On Prinz’s view, when certain causal links between representations and emotions obtain, “we say that the emotion has the content of those representations as its intentional object” (“Are Emotions Feelings?”, 20).

³³Cf. Schopenhauer: “let us picture to ourselves how much every affect or passion clouds and falsifies knowledge . . . every inclination or aversion twists, colors, and distorts not merely the judgment, but even the original intuition of things” (ZA 4:442/WWR 2:373).

³⁴See Katsafanas, “Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology,” 740.

³⁵See e.g. NF 1885: 1 [58].

³⁶Although there is not room here for a full discussion of drives (or their relation to affects), I can offer a few remarks. It is not abundantly clear that Nietzsche’s references to drives present a picture overly worked-out in its details. Drives seem to be dispositions that are individuated by a characteristic activity toward which they incline the organism; an activity that proved beneficial to the organism’s forebears, resulting in the drive being inherited (broadly construed). His comments in several places suggest that drives are forms of “multi-track” affective disposition (see Julien A. Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, *The Emotions*, 7)—specifically, ones that incline the organism, either directly or indirectly, toward a characteristic, individuating activity. Nietzsche writes, for instance, of drives as the “*after-effects* of long-cherished valuations which now work instinctively, as if a *system* of pleasure- and pain-judgments. First coercion, then habituation, then need, then natural inclination (drive)” (NF 1884: 25 [460]). Although I doubt that any single reading will account for *every* reference to drives in Nietzsche’s

of the same roles and capacities to both,³⁷ including interpreting. Indeed, he insists that one “may not ask: ‘*who* interprets?’—rather the interpreting itself . . . has existence (but not as a ‘being,’ rather as a *process*, a *becoming*) as an affect” (NF 1885: 2 [151]). If we consider that Nietzsche envisions affects as a means of generating beneficial behaviors, and the connection he posits between affects and evaluatively-laden perception and judgment,³⁸ it is overwhelmingly likely that affective interpreting bears considerable resemblance to the process described in *D* 119. Nietzsche writes of “sense-perceptions” as among the “revelations of affect” (NF 1882: 4 [126]), I propose, as he takes the sensations of bodily arousal to both prompt the cause-extracting mechanism and modulate the interpretation of exteroceptive sensation. Under the pressure of practical-psychological necessity, affective interpretation identifies the putative cause, but also highlights features of the environment that are (directly or indirectly) conducive to the performance of the deeds that will discharge one’s state. This perspectival interpreting is evaluative, with elements of one’s surroundings valenced positively or negatively as objects of inclination or aversion, attraction or repulsion.

This adds flesh to the claim that an occurrent affect, *A*, for Nietzsche, involves the modulation of specific psychological processes. As one might expect given his ascription of affects to a wide range of species, there is little in the above-described affective process that requires those cognitive skills we tend to attribute only to human beings. This is not to say, however, that Nietzsche overlooks the elements of affective experience that are distinctly human. Although affects (as a psychological kind) are putatively present across a great many species, the capacity to reflect consciously on one’s state is taken by Nietzsche to be unique to human beings. We do not just form affective interpretations connecting our state and surroundings and valencing the contents of our experiences, but can also bring this connection (as well as our states and their contents) to a point of reflective awareness. Humans produce linguistically articulated etiologies for their conditions and subsume states under affect-words. This psychology of self-ascription is an integral part of Nietzsche’s writings on affects,³⁹ and it is this form of interpretation, which I shall call ‘linguistic interpretation,’ that we shall now examine.

2.3. *Linguistic Interpretation and Self-Ascription*

In the particular cases Nietzsche discusses, the process of interpreting one’s occurrent state as this-or-that affect starts with bodily perturbation experienced

writings, something along these lines would capture an awful lot he says, and would neatly explain the overlap between drives and affects. Cf. Paul Katsafanas’s suggestion that drives are dispositions that “induce affective orientations” (“Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology,” 740). (Thanks to a referee for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* for raising this issue.)

³⁷See, for example, *D* 109 and *BGE* 117 on the overcoming of a drive/affect, or *GS* 111 and *NF* 1885: 1 [75] on thinking and the power-struggle of drives/affects.

³⁸Nietzsche writes famously of moralities as a “sign-language of the affects” (*BGE* 187). If we look to the *Genealogy*, he talks of the “powerful” being “re-colored” when seen “through the poisonous eyes of *ressentiment*” (*GMI*.11). Such moral evaluation is “an *interpretation*, a kind of interpreting” undertaken by affects. Nietzsche describes the interpretation itself as a “*symptom* of certain physiological states, as well as of a certain spiritual level of dominant judgments” (NF 1885: 2 [190]; cf. 1880: 6 [445]).

³⁹It is important, here, to distinguish self-ascription from individuation. Nietzsche is deeply interested in the former, but rarely addresses the latter (to my knowledge).

as general feeling. He writes, for instance, of “feeling one way or another,” and the “feeling of suffocation” (NF 1883: 24 [20]). As with affective interpretation, the search for a cause is integral to linguistic interpretation. It “never satisfies us,” Nietzsche writes, “simply to establish the mere fact *that* we find ourselves this way or that: we only admit this fact—become *conscious* of it—*when* we have given some kind of motivation for it” (TI “Errors,” 4; cf. NF 1888: 15 [90]). The point here is not that we become, say, phenomenally aware of affects only once we know what caused them. Nietzsche’s remark plausibly expresses the same idea as his claim in BA that a “*reason*” is sought for the sake of the “*conceivability*” of our state (NF 1883: 24 [20]), namely, I propose, that we become reflectively conscious of our state *as a particular state* only once a cause is posited.⁴⁰

If correct, this rules out the possibility that Nietzsche understood the linguistic interpretation of particular general feelings as comprising identifying oneself as, say, angry, and then seeking an explanation for one’s anger. Such a reading would involve becoming conscious of one’s state prior to positing a cause. Instead, Nietzsche’s position appears to be that those things to which we can attend introspectively underdetermine the self-ascription of an affect. He talks in BA of a “feeling of suffocation,” and in the dream passages of someone finding themselves “feeling good” or “feeling bad” (TI “Errors,” 4; cf. “Errors,” 6; NF 1888: 15 [90]). These are presented simply as instances of arousal with positive or negative valence. This is not to say that the sensitivity to, or recognition of, general feelings plays *no* role (or even a minor role) in the identification of affects; just that identifying a state as one for which affect-words are usually deployed requires more.

At the broadest level—that of interpreting one’s condition *as an affect*—Nietzsche’s remarks suggest that the minimum requirement is to refer one’s state back to a certain *sort* of cause. On multiple occasions, he contrasts the “right class” of causes, to be identified by the “anatomically educated,” with the causes sought by those less well-versed. The latter group, we are told, seek “a moral explanation” for their state (NF 1884: 26 [92]; cf. 1885: 38 [1]; GM III.17). Such remarks leave open the possibility that an individual sufficiently habituated to this class of explanations could (in principle) be in a position to interpret themselves as experiencing an as-yet-unspecified, valenced affect, on the basis of believing the state to have been elicited by some as-yet-unidentified cause from the “psychological-moral realm” (GM III.17).

But what of interpreting one’s state as this-or-that affect (with which Nietzsche seems to be more concerned)? This will plausibly draw on those symptoms Nietzsche counts among the “revelations of affect,” including conscious thoughts and sense-perceptions (NF 1882: 4 [126]), as well as conscious feelings. His remarks in BA regarding the conjunction of “certain occurrences and general feelings” (NF 1883: 24 [20]) suggest a concomitance of certain events and *particular* states—broad, *sfumato* categories of (somewhat imprecisely) recognizable general feeling. This permits the possibility that the recognition of general feeling, once paired with an appropriate cause, could provide a means through which to

⁴⁰I am persuaded by Mattia Riccardi’s contention that Nietzsche’s writings evince a “pluralism” about consciousness (“Nietzsche’s Pluralism”). For our purposes, we need only distinguish phenomenal from reflective consciousness.

subsume occurrent states under affect-words.⁴¹ This might be limited to rather coarse-grained, basic states, however, given Nietzsche's somewhat dim view of our introspective faculties. Since even simple folk-psychologies will involve complex, fine-grained affective states, this does not get us terribly far toward understanding how Nietzsche envisions the subsumption of affects under particular concepts.

If we attend to his remarks on guilt and sinfulness in the late works, a fuller picture emerges that sheds light on the identification of states as fine-grained affects. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes of guilt as "a piece of animal psychology, no more" (*GM* III.20). This likely refers to its putative origin in the process of socialization. The question of how behaviors are modified and instincts curbed under conditions of social existence was of enduring interest to Nietzsche, and elicited some subtle and insightful reflections. Social restrictions and their corresponding punishments produce a range of complex psychological responses, including (perhaps most importantly) bad conscience. Nietzsche writes of drives being accompanied by "either a good or a bad conscience." These complex, compound affective episodes involve the drives co-occurring with an "attendant sensation of pleasure or displeasure," acquired as "second nature" in relation to drives "already baptized good or evil," or noted as "a characteristic of beings already morally determined and evaluated" (*D* 38).⁴²

The discussion of bad conscience in the *Genealogy* paints a subtly distinct psychological picture, placing greater emphasis on the phenomenon of aggressive self-punishment. Nietzsche writes of the "internalizing of man," where those instincts that "do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn themselves inwards*" (*GM* II.16). In cases of frustration and/or restraint, one might not just experience a depressive affect accompanying a particular motivation, thought, or feeling, but also a *reactive* affect. If we recall the practical-psychological necessity under which the cause-extracting mechanism operates, this pressure is most intense in the strongest states, and especially in the reactive affects that so interested Nietzsche. These demand both a cause-object in relation to which deeds can be directed, and the means for one to perform those acts that would alleviate their condition. The subjugated peoples in the *Genealogy*, saddled with the burden of curbing instinctive behavior, are presented as lacking both an obvious cause for their protracted condition, and the means to discharge their particular affects through suitable deeds. In such circumstances, almost any putative etiology will do to facilitate the relieving

⁴¹But what of moods, which are often claimed to be objectless? On my reading, Nietzsche would be committed to saying that states for which no "psychological-moral" cause-object (including an as-yet-unspecified, hypothetical one) had been posited, could only be described in terms of rather general bodily sensations—e.g. the "feeling of suffocation" (*NF* 1883: 24 [20]). Where particular moods are identified, Nietzsche would have to claim that an appropriate cause-object was sought and found. Suggestions made by representationalists (among others), such as that the world experienced might be the object (see Tim Crane, "Mark of the Mental"; cf. Solomon, *The Passions*, 172–73) or that moods involve a succession of changing objects (see Michael Tye, "An Intentionalist Theory"), could also be comfortably accommodated. (To be clear, Nietzsche's view would not entail that all moods must have an object, only that self-ascribing particular moods would require one.)

⁴²Elsewhere, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes of the "liveliest drives" of the "criminal type," which "quickly grow together with the depressive affects" in circumstances where their "*virtues* have been ostracized by society" (*TI* "Expeditions," 45).

of one's state.⁴³ Constrained by the confines of mores and custom, the disposition toward cruelty with whose satisfaction human history is perfused (according to Nietzsche) finds an outlet in punishing oneself.

It is this complex "animal psychology" that is exploited by the priest through the introduction of the notion of sin (*GM* III.20). Nietzsche's thoughts grow from the affect-psychology hitherto discussed. Recall the *Nachlass* note in which he writes of placing a "false reason" behind the "actual malaises of the body" (NF 1885: 38 [1]). It is there, and in an earlier draft from the previous year, that Nietzsche talks of the "right class" of causes. His remarks in these passages (the latter of which was written at most 18 months or so after BA) bear considerable resemblance to BA. Nietzsche identifies specific states of physiological perturbation and suggests that the sensations of these states are interpreted. Those experiencing "uncertain feelings of displeasure" (NF 1885: 38 [1]), as we saw earlier, seek a moral or psychological explanation. In the two passages that mention a "right class" of causes, however, a further claim is added. Nietzsche writes that, in regard to "pain whose physical cause is unknown," the "tortured individual questions himself in such a lengthy and inquisitorial manner, until he *finds* himself or others *guilty*" (NF 1885: 38 [1]; cf. 1884: 26 [92]).

By the time we reach the *Genealogy*, these thoughts are in full swing. Nietzsche talks of a "*feeling of physiological inhibition*," which, "from a lack of physiological knowledge, does not enter into consciousness as such, so that its 'cause,' its remedy, can only be sought and attempted in the psychological-moral realm" (*GM* III.17). Those experiencing tremendous suffering might be armed only with simple etiologies for their particular pains and frustrations, ingrained through the concomitance of event and state. Their enduring psycho-physiological condition, however, remains unassuaged. Man, Nietzsche writes, suffers "from himself in some way or other, physiologically in any case . . . uncertain why, to what end?" and is "desirous of reasons" since they "alleviate" (*GM* III.20). The afflicted individual "instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; still more precisely, a perpetrator; still more specifically, a *guilty* perpetrator" on whom "he can discharge his affects" (*GM* III.15).⁴⁴ It is through facilitating this discharge of affects, which temporarily anaesthetizes the sufferer to their pain, that reasons "alleviate."

The priests of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* volunteer etiologies that offer both object and means for the afflicted individual's reactive affects. Their message, in such abject circumstances, provides "the *first* hint concerning the 'cause'" of the sufferer's pain (*GM* III.20). The priest responds to the psychological needs of the afflicted by manipulating the psychology of bad conscience, directing the frustrated drives and (most importantly) the reactive affects and *ressentiment* of the slaves back onto themselves. This is done through the provision of a complex etiology

⁴³In *TI* "Errors," 5, Nietzsche offers as a "First [psychological] principle" that "any explanation is better than none." Elsewhere, he speaks of sufferers seeking something on which to discharge their affect, "on some pretext or other" (*GM* III.15; cf. *HH* "Man in Society," 370).

⁴⁴This remark is related to the picture of the bodily changes etc. as *Auslösungen*. Nietzsche writes of "*Malaise as impeded release* [Verstimmung *als* verhinderte *Auslösung*]," claiming that "it was not the releases [*Auslösungen*], however violent they might have been, that did humanity the most harm, but rather the prevention of them" (NF 1881: 11 [28]).

in which suffering is *caused* by sin.⁴⁵ The concept of sin is embedded in a web of broader metaphysical, moral, and psychological views, involving notions such as *causa sui* free will, claims about the nature of moral norms, and so on. Within such a framework, habituation to this interpretation facilitates the identification of fine-grained affective states. Although the object of one's state—the target of reactive deeds and attitudes—might well remain a particular individual, group, or event, etc., the putative cause is more specific. With the introduction of “sin,” one's feeling bad, previously interpreted as caused by *someone* or some *event*, is identified as moralized guilt or sinfulness, or moral resentment, caused by an *aspect*, namely, the sin of oneself or another. This picture, it seems to me, provides the best illustration of how Nietzsche envisions the positing of (fine-grained) causes facilitating the identification of complex affects, and suggests a model that could be extended to cover the wide range of affects employed in his moral psychology.⁴⁶

3. CONCEIVABILITY AND NON-CONSCIOUS AFFECTS

This leaves us with a richer picture of Nietzsche's somatic and interpretive views, including both affective and linguistic interpretation. Nevertheless, our work is not quite done. The focus in this section is A_p and A_R —the points at which one becomes aware of general feeling, and at which one can represent oneself at the level of reflection as being in a particular state, respectively. Attention to Nietzsche's thoughts on affects becoming conscious, I shall argue, affords us a means of making sense of the last remaining feature of his view to be understood—namely, the “conceivability” claim. In addition, the complete picture of A_p and A_R suggests points of divergence from the extant view we outlined in section 1, especially in regard to non-conscious affects.

I claimed earlier that Nietzsche's approach to psychological terminology was naturalistic and might issue correctives to common-sense conceptions of given states. The view we have drawn out so far presents, for various reasons, a somewhat revisionary picture. Nietzsche's complaints, however, are not restricted simply to the idea that we have overlooked or misunderstood the involvement of the body in affective states, or that we are mistaken about our access to our own mental states. He refers to affects as “constructions,” “errors,” or more commonly, “interpretations,” of the intellect (NF 1883: 24 [20]; 1883: 24 [21]; 1881: 11 [128]). The point in such remarks is not that there are *no* introspectively

⁴⁵Nietzsche writes that the “*entire realm of morality and religion falls under [the] concept of imaginary causes.*” The “Explanation” offered for “*pleasant general feelings [Allgemeingefühle],*” he claims, is that they are consequences of such things as “faith, love, hope,” or “the consciousness of good deeds . . . the so-called ‘good conscience’” (which Nietzsche identifies as “a physiological state”) etc. One's “*unpleasant general feelings,*” by contrast, are explained by reference to (among other things) “actions we cannot approve of,” our deserving to suffer, and the feeling of sin “foisted on physiological discomfort” (TI “Errors,” 6; cf. D 83; A 15).

⁴⁶This bears some resemblance to Spinoza's treatment of affects. Spinoza analyzes a wide range of states in terms of three primary affects (desire, joy/pleasure, and sadness/pain), and their relation to particular causes. Love, for instance, is “titillation accompanied by the notion of an external cause” (Spinoza, *E* IVP44, proof; quoted by Schopenhauer in “The Metaphysics of Sexual Love,” *ZA* 4:623/*WWR* 2:533). (Citations to Spinoza's *Ethics* refer to part, proposition, and sub-section.) Nietzsche attributes to Spinoza the view that the *conscientiae morsus* is “a sadness, accompanied by the image of a past matter that has turned out in a manner contrary to all expectation” (*GMII*.15; cf. Spinoza, *E* IIIP18S2).

salient psycho-physiological episodes that we take to be instantiations of states corresponding to affect-words. Instead, the thought is that the carvings-up under which we subsume varieties of mental experience are generated under certain pressures, and (at best) reflect significant limitations.

Nietzsche highlights a number of factors that purportedly contribute to psychological terminology, and our application of it, falling short of carving nature at the joints. As I suggested in section 1, one thought underlying his insistence on the inadequacy of our conceptions of certain phenomena is that we derive these conceptions solely from the contents of consciousness.⁴⁷ Several distinct errors are purportedly resultant on this shortcoming. The first I highlighted was that of mistakenly concluding that psychological phenomena consist simply in their symptoms, ignoring the non-conscious components of the process. The second concerned a failure to appreciate the putative ubiquity of certain phenomena. If we look to *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes therein that “words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of . . . processes and drives”: we “*are none of us*,” he claims, “that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words.” Those “cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us *misunderstand* ourselves; we draw a conclusion on the basis of data in which the exceptions outweigh the rule” (*D* 115). The claim is that we misconceive of the states not just because we attend only to fragments of a broader process, but also because we are sensitive only to exceptional episodes.

The instances of which we become aware,⁴⁸ and which we identify as “Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire . . . joy, pain,” are in fact “*extreme* states.” Nietzsche writes that those “milder, middle degrees [of “processes and drives”], not to speak of the lower degrees that are continuously in play, elude us” (*D* 115). In contrast to the folk-psychological picture on which affects are presented as occasional, irruptive conscious states, Nietzsche maintains that they are near-constant, pervasive features of mental life. (This is not to say that *all* of one’s affects are constant, but that one is constantly experiencing at least one occurrent affect.) Nietzsche’s alternative picture is of a “struggle” between affects, the constituents of which might vary between given times and fluctuate in strength from one moment to another.⁴⁹ We are encouraged to see affects not as infrequent occurrences that interrupt, say, thinking (often deleteriously), but rather as integral, permeative psycho-physiological processes, ebbing and flowing in stronger and weaker manifestations

⁴⁷Nietzsche raises three further factors: i) that we carve up conscious phenomena “not *finely*, but completely coarsely” (NF 1880: 6 [444]; cf. 1881: 11 [128]); ii) that this shortcoming is exacerbated by a function of psychological terminology—namely, that of communicating with others—which Nietzsche takes to require coarse-grained concepts under which subtly distinct states can be subsumed; and iii) that we are not impartial theorizers regarding the mind: our folk-psychology is, in some cases, a product of motivated interpretation, and reflects moral pressures (see *GML* 13; NF 1880: 6 [444]).

⁴⁸Nietzsche’s rhetorical question, a few sections later, as to whether he really need query that our “so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but *felt* text?” (*D* 119, emphasis added) suggests the sort of awareness he has in mind here.

⁴⁹The remarks on milder states resemble what Antonio Damasio calls “background feelings,” which are “neither too positive nor too negative,” and correspond to the “body state prevailing *between* emotions” (i.e. between the “*superlative*” instances mentioned in *D* 115). Background feeling “can be perceived as mostly pleasant or unpleasant” and, when enduring, “probably contributes to a mood” (*Descartes’ Error*, 150–51).

in response to stimuli.⁵⁰ Hence affective interpreting being described as “a *process*, a *becoming*” (NF 1885: 2 [151]), in contrast to the picture of affects as strict, discrete states (or “beings,” in Nietzsche’s terminology).⁵¹

The significance of its being “only for *superlative* degrees . . . of processes and drives” that we have developed recognitional affect-words is owing to the intimate link Nietzsche posits between reflective consciousness and language (*D 115*).⁵² If we look to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes that conscious thinking alone “*takes place in words, that is, in communication-signs*” (*GS 354*; cf. NF 1886: 5 [22]). The folk-psychological category- and concept-words under which states and processes are subsumed allow us to represent mental phenomena (such as superlative affective episodes) at the level of reflection. These “signs,” once employed in natural language sentences, can be taken as the object of further mental attitudes and processes.⁵³ Once this occurs, the state in question reaches point A_R .

This picture, I contend, underpins Nietzsche’s insistence that the conceivability of our state depends on the provision of a reason for our feeling good or bad. As I suggested earlier, Nietzsche appears to be getting at the same thought when he writes in *Twilight of the Idols* that we become “conscious” of the state only once a “motivation” has been given (*TI* “Errors,” 4). The idea, I submit, is that a state is “conceivable” if one can think consciously about it.⁵⁴ Conscious thoughts, however, require content articulated *in words*. To represent an occurrent episode in natural language constructions of the sort, “I am in [state x],” “I feel [x],” and so on, linguistic interpretation must occur. As we have seen, subsuming one’s state under an existing affect-word involves more than simply attending to one’s state of feeling: it involves the positing of a cause for one’s state. The ability to think consciously about one’s state as this-or-that affect relies on its having been interpreted *as* a particular affect, which in turn rests on seeking and finding a cause. Once one can represent an affect in conscious thought, the state can reach point A_R and become conscious in the sense Nietzsche intends in *TI* “Errors,” 4. It is, accordingly, not just practical-psychological necessity that drives the cause-

⁵⁰On Nietzsche’s view, the near-constant struggle of drives and affects is partly constitutive of thinking (see *GS 111*; *BGE 36*; NF 1885: 1 [61]; 1885: 1 [75]). For discussion of Nietzsche’s views on thinking, see Christopher Fowles, “Nietzsche on Thought.”

⁵¹Nietzsche does, of course, use the word *Zustand* (state or condition) quite often in regard to affects. I take this to be reflective more of convenience than of Nietzsche’s thinking the concept ‘state’ to be wholly satisfactory in this context.

⁵²See *GS 354*: “the development of language and the development of consciousness (*not* of reason, but rather only of reason’s becoming conscious [*des Sich-bewusst-werdens der Vernunft*]) go hand in hand.”

⁵³Nietzsche claims in the *Nachlass* that “we summarize the capacity *to will, to feel, and to think* something of our willing, feeling, thinking *itself* with the word ‘consciousness’” (NF 1885: 34 [87]; cf. 1884: 26 [49]). For discussion, see Fowles “Nietzsche on Thought.”

⁵⁴The German word in BA is *Denkbarkeit*, which might be translated more literally as “thinkability.” Although I do not wish to put too much weight on a single word from an unpublished passage (particularly since I take the same thought to appear in *Twilight of the Idols* without reference to “conceivability”), Nietzsche’s use of *Denkbar*, *Denkbarkeit*, etc., supports the above reading. The notion is employed in relation to conceptual carvings-up such as the “I” (NF 1882: 4 [58]), or “affects, desires, willings, etc.” (NF 1883: 24 [21]) that facilitate our thinking about given domains. (Thanks to a referee for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* for encouraging me to be clearer here.)

extracting mechanism, but also cognitive-psychological necessity—the need to be able to bring one’s state to point A_R .⁵⁵

3.1. *Non-Conscious Affects*

A corollary of this picture of A_F and A_R , on which we become conscious only of “*extreme*” instances and can represent in reflection only those states for which we have words (*D 115*), is that many affective episodes will be non-conscious. In this section, I want to expand on this, and to suggest that some elements of the extant view require amendment. As we saw in section 1, affects, on Nietzsche’s view, are commonly presented as phenomenally rich, typically conscious states, intimately related to feelings. While this arguably gets some things right, the picture we have drawn out diverges from the above characterization. As we have seen, affects will not be typically reflectively conscious, but appear in reflection only in exceptional cases. It is uncontroversial, however, that Nietzsche takes most of our mental life (including affects) to occur without our being reflectively conscious of it. The claim of the extant view is instead plausibly that affects are usually experienced as rich, phenomenally conscious episodes, such that one *could* be reflectively conscious of them (though need not always be).⁵⁶ Yet, on closer attention, Nietzsche’s writings provide multiple ways in which affective episodes could be non-conscious, and depart even from extant view so construed.

If we look to *D 115*, talk of mildness and extremity therein makes clear that Nietzsche’s focus is the intensity of the states in question. Since affects are, for Nietzsche, near-constant saturators of our mental lives, it would be hasty to conclude that he understood weaker affects to be phenomenally unconscious (i.e. lacking in phenomenal character). If low-level affects are near-constant, the phenomenal character of such states could be partly constitutive of the phenomenology of the homeostatic interoceptive state against which extreme affects are to be distinguished. Nietzsche seems instead to be getting at the idea that weaker affects lack phenomenal distinctness or salience. These states would still modulate one’s psychological processes (as discussed in section 2.2) and be causally related to conscious valuations, as well as inclining or disinclining in regard to actions.⁵⁷ The near-constant, lower-level states that Nietzsche claims “weave the web of our character and destiny” (*D 115*), however, do not involve severe enough bodily changes to manifest in a state of general feeling qualitatively distinct from the

⁵⁵In addition to practical- and cognitive- psychological necessity, Nietzsche also claims that interpretation is driven by a desire to alleviate discomfort felt at being confronted with something seemingly unfamiliar, and that making sense of the experience in terms of something familiar has a palliative effect (see *TI* “Errors,” 5; *GS* 355).

⁵⁶Welshon, for instance, is sensitive to the possibility of unconscious affects, and denies “that Nietzsche’s view commits him to saying that unconscious affect does not occur.” As examples of states that “occurrently may be but need not be consciously experienced,” Welshon offers “suppressed, repressed, dissociated, dampened or displaced” affect (*Nietzsche’s Dynamic Metapsychology*, 127).

⁵⁷See *BGE* 187 regarding the relation of affects to conscious valuations, and *NF* 1883: 7 [121], for example, on affect and action.

homeostatic background hum to which their milder manifestations contribute.⁵⁸

Nietzsche thus holds, contra the extant view, that affects can (and indeed often do) generate phenomenally indistinct states of feeling. Those milder psychophysiological responses that suffuse our mental lives fail to reach A_p , operating beneath the level at which we notice bodily arousal. Furthermore, one faces an obvious challenge in bringing those lower-level affects that fall short of reaching A_p to point A_R . In many such instances, one will not be able to self-ascribe an occurrent affect through introspection alone (even if in possession of appropriate concepts) owing to one's being unaware of the affective episode's taking place.⁵⁹ In typical cases, these states are not only phenomenally indistinct, but also reflectively non-conscious as a consequence of being introspectively inaccessible.

There is a second way in which we can be unable to bring an occurrent affect to reflection, which follows from Nietzsche's remarks on conceivability. In the *Nachlass*, he writes that "inner experience" enters consciousness "only after it has found a language that the individual *understands* . . . i.e. a translation of a state into states *familiar* to him" (NF 1888: 15 [90], ellipses in original). This "translation" refers to linguistic interpretation, which (like affective interpretation) will usually occur automatically, utilizing material stored in memory. In some cases, one's state might defy straightforward explanation, requiring careful conscious thinking to deploy an interpretation. In certain instances, however—those where *no* cause can be found or envisioned, or where we lack applicable or adequate concepts—one's condition resists linguistic interpretation. As Nietzsche writes in *Daybreak*, "where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes uncomfortable" (*D* 115). Since one cannot think consciously about a given state without linguistic interpretation having occurred (even if one's bodily perturbation is sufficiently intense to have reached A_p), on those occasions where one's state cannot be subsumed under a "*familiar*" description,⁶⁰ it remains reflectively non-conscious in virtue of being inconceivable.⁶¹

⁵⁸Elsewhere, Nietzsche writes, "That weak sensations are estimated to be equal, are experienced *as the same*, is the fundamental fact" (NF 1884: 25 [168]). He notes in the following year "how much there is through the sensorium commune of which we have hardly a shimmer of consciousness!" (NF 1885: 38 [1]). The sense of non-conscious operative here suggests the influence of Leibniz (see *GS* 357). It also possibly reflects the influence of the idea of a "threshold" (*Schwelle*) of consciousness, which originated in the work of Johann Friedrich Herbart, and influenced (among others) Ernst Heinrich Weber, Gustav Theodor Fechner, and Hermann von Helmholtz. The threshold marked the point at which a stimulus (or difference between stimuli) became (or ceased to be) noticeable. It is unclear how much direct contact Nietzsche had with the relevant writings of the above figures, but it is highly unlikely that he was unfamiliar with the idea. Indeed, he uses the phrase "threshold of consciousness [*Schwelle des Bewusstseins*]" in *GM1.1*.

⁵⁹This would not, of course, prevent one from reporting affective dispositions.

⁶⁰The pressure of cognitive-psychological necessity is such that we sometimes employ words even though they are a poor fit. Nietzsche writes, "We always express our thoughts with the words that lie to hand. Or, to express my whole suspicion: we have at any moment only the thought for which we have to hand the words able to express it approximately" (*D* 257).

⁶¹It has been suggested that states which reach A_p but not A_R might be experienced as brute bodily feeling. There will surely be instances when this is correct (e.g. where we lack a putative cause of *any* sort [see n. 41]), but such cases would not exhaust forms of inconceivability. Plausibly, episodes of what we could call inexact thinking—say, where one finds oneself feeling bad about something, but cannot identify the *particular* affect one is undergoing, or where one is unsure about the underlying condition disposing one to particular outbursts—would qualify as instances of inconceivability (as

4. CONCLUSION

I suggested at the outset that Nietzsche understood occurrent affects to be complex psycho-physiological processes, comprising one's bodily state (standardly one of perturbation in response to a stimulus or stimuli) and the modulation of specific psychological processes, consequent on the sensation of one's state. In addition to this somatic account, I claimed, Nietzsche offers an interpretive account of self-ascription. We have now added some detail to this outline. Nietzsche's picture starts with an occasioning object, perceived qua stimulus owing to one's psycho-physiology. This rouses a pattern of bodily processes (physiological "releases of force"), the sensations of which merge with exteroceptive sensory information. These bodily sensations alter features of one's psychology, modulating exteroceptive interpretation, and exciting the cause-extracting mechanism. Affective interpreting makes a causal connection between one's state and surroundings, valences these surroundings, and makes salient certain features and affordances. This process occurs partly under the pressure of practical-psychological necessity, so as to provide an object in relation to which one's affects can be discharged.

Bodily perturbations span a range of intensities, with the modulation of psychological processes occurring in milder cases irrespective of whether one is aware of an occurrent affect. In "*superlative*" instances (*D 115*), we become phenomenally aware of distinct states of feeling, A_r . Those insufficiently intense to be discriminated against the normal interplay of low-level states and processes usually remain non-conscious. In those instances where arousal is sufficient to reach A_p , one's state can potentially be identified as this-or-that affect. This process is linguistic interpretation, through which one's state is subsumed under an affect-word. One might also bring the putative relationship of one's condition to a cause-object extracted by affective interpretation to a point of reflection, in the form of (often intricate) linguistically articulated etiologies. This is driven by cognitive-psychological necessity. Once linguistic interpretation has occurred, natural language constructions utilizing the relevant affect-word(s) provide the content of conscious thoughts, and one becomes conscious of one's state at the level of reflection, A_R . Those states that resist interpretation (which cannot be subsumed under appropriate or adequate terms) remain reflectively non-conscious.

This fleshed-out picture provides us with something to say in response to the question of what affects, for Nietzsche, are "supposed to be" (Poellner, "Affect, Value, and Objectivity," 229). It still leaves much work to be done, of course, including an examination of the merits and shortcomings of Nietzsche's reflections, which I have been unable to pursue here. Nevertheless, I hope to have made some progress in making sense of his intriguing (and sometimes perplexing) remarks on the subject. Nietzsche departs from the extant view in a number of ways, and presents to us a more substantial and less straightforward position than has often been thought. As we have seen in the course of unpacking the view, the above account underpins a number of significant claims found in Nietzsche's writings,

one could not think consciously about being in a particular condition), but would not necessarily be experienced simply as bodily feeling. (Thanks to a referee for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* for raising this suggestion.)

and, I hope, provides a basis for understanding how affects can play the roles he ascribes to them in his philosophical psychology.⁶²

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- D *Daybreak*. Edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter and translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- EH *Ecce Homo*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1979.
- eKGWB *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe*. Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Accessed at <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB>.
- GM *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swensen. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998.
- GS *The Gay Science*. Edited by Bernard Williams and translated by Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- HH *Human, All Too Human*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- NF *Nachgelassene Fragmente*. In eKGWB.
- NF/BVN *Nachgelassene Fragmente, Briefe von Nietzsche*. In eKGWB.
- TI *The Twilight of the Idols*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1968.
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