

MAN'S UN-NATURAL LIFE

TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGY OF *RESSENTIMENT*

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Abstract

To grasp the true importance of *ressentiment* in Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*, animals and beasts of prey, of which Nietzsche speaks throughout the book, should not fall out of the focus of our interpretation. It is what generally happens in the reception history: when *ressentiment* is discussed, there is not much room left for animals. Once we bring back animals into consideration and take much more seriously Nietzsche's speculative naturalism, which has rarely been the case, the genealogy will appear in the light of a metaphysical quest for origins. In this radical, apparently metaphysical form of genealogy, *ressentiment* becomes a fundamental category. To reflect on the animality of human-animal is the task of genealogical thinking. If it turns out to be a business of metaphysics, it is because the difference

between *healthy* and *sick beast* is the most fundamental difference that opens up the genealogical interrogation. This animal difference, animal *detour* from the animal, underlies all basic metaphysical differences. It is precisely there that *ressentiment* should be thought of, as it is neither fully personal nor it exclusively belongs to the horizon of human morality. It is *neither fully included nor excluded* from the morality. It is *neither quite inside nor quite outside*. It is swinging back and forth. Defined as a “repeated reliving” (Scheler), it refers to something neither fully alive nor dead. It seems to belong to what Derrida labels “undecidable”. *Ressentiment* marks that crucial point in the evolution of species when instincts and feelings enter into a twisting course, trace a bending curve (*Verinnerlichung*) that we recognize in the prefix “re-” - of *ressentiment*. It is that same process, “a flexion of *physis*, relation to itself of the Nature,” Derrida found in the genealogical explanation of arts in Kant.

128 *Keywords:* Friedrich Nietzsche, *ressentiment*, animality, humanity, morality, Jacques Derrida.

Človekovo ne-naravno življenje. Na poti k ontologiji resentmenta

Povzetek

Če želimo dojeti resničen pomen resentmenta v Nietzschejevem delu *H genealogiji morale*, pri interpretaciji ne smemo spregledati živali in zveri, o katerih v svoji knjigi Nietzsche nenehno govori. To se navadno dogaja znotraj recepcijske zgodovine: ko gre za obravnavo resentmenta, ni veliko prostora za živali. Če v diskusijo spet pritegnemo živali in resneje vzamemo Nietzschejev spekulativni naturalizem, kar se je redko primerilo, se genealogija prikaže v luči metafizičnega iskanja izvora. Znotraj takšne radikalne, očitno metafizične oblike genealogije resentment postane temeljna kategorija. Refleksija o živalskosti človeške živali je naloga genealoškega mišljenja. Če se takšen poskus izkaže za metafizičen opravek, je to posledica okoliščine, da je razlika med *zdravo* in *bolno živaljo* najbolj temeljna razlika, ki razpira genealoško raziskavo. Živalska diferena, živalski *detour* od živali, leži v temelju vseh osnovnih metafizičnih

razlikovanj. Natanko tukaj je potrebno premisliti resentment, ker ni niti popolnoma oseben niti ne pripada izključno horizontu človeške morale. Ni niti popolnoma vključen v moralo niti izključen iz nje. Ni niti čisto znotraj niti čisto zunaj. Niha sem ter tja. Če ga opredelimo kot »ponovljeno podoživljanje« (Scheler), se nanaša na nekaj, kar ni niti popolnoma živo niti mrtvo. Zdi se, da spada k tistemu, kar Derrida poimenuje »nerazločljivo«. Resentiment zaznamuje ključno točko v razvoju vrste, ko se instinkti in občutja podajo na vijugajočo pot, začnejo zasledovati upogibajočo se krivuljo (*Verinnerlichung*), ki jo razpoznamo v predponi »re-« besede resentment. Gre za enak proces, »za fleksijo *physis*, samonanašalnost Narave«, kakršnega je Derrida našel pri Kantovi genealoški pojasnitvi umetnosti.

Ključne besede: Friedrich Nietzsche, resentment, živalskost, človeškost, morala, Jacques Derrida.

[...] it is the meaning of all culture to breed a tame and civilized animal,
a household pet, out of the beast of prey "man" [...]
Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Our question today is about animals. Or it is not. It is more about beasts. Perhaps this is not true, either. What is certain is that our topic today is *ressentiment*, resentment in Nietzsche's philosophy. And still, I am going to speak about animals and beasts in Nietzsche. However, it is true that I have promised I would speak about the topic, have my word about "Nietzsche and the culture of *ressentiment*." Promised? Promise is an important concept in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, in his late work where the concept of *ressentiment* was introduced for the first time in his thought. It is there that Man was defined as an animal able to make promises. Am I myself an animal able to keep my promises? Speaking of animals, and beasts, of course, I promise I will keep my promise—to speak about *ressentiment* in the first place. All that to be considered in Nietzsche's thought, of course. And beyond.

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I am going to speak on *ressentiment*, and will not avoid animals and beasts. I believe it is the only way to grasp the true nature of *ressentiment*, as conceived by Nietzsche. The true nature—is there any true nature in Nietzsche's genealogy of morals? Particularly, when it is about *ressentiment*? Is it rather the most unnatural thing one can imagine, if it is true that Western morality started with the generalized feeling of *ressentiment*, and that it is morality that alienates us from nature? Still, if there is something like a natural condition, or rather precondition, of human morality, of the unnatural world of culture and morality, then it is *ressentiment*, according to Nietzsche. It can be remarked that it is the most natural felling, but certainly not a healthy one, which is to say: it is against nature.

It is notoriously evident that *ressentiment* plays a crucial role in each of the three treatises in the *Genealogy of Morals*. But it is not at all clear *how crucial* this concept actually is. My point is that it is far more important to the whole project of genealogy than it has been usually thought in the reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) of the text. Surprisingly, *ressentiment* remains undefined, at least as a term, in Nietzsche's text in spite of its importance. It is surprising that Nietzsche, the philologist, who borrowed this French word to play

a key role in his genealogical vocabulary, did not find it worthwhile to clarify the re-appropriation of the word, the specific capacity of its use and meaning. It is all the more surprising given the fact that genealogical critique of Western culture undertaken here by Nietzsche relies heavily, if not decisively, on linguistic, primarily etymological analyses. These analyses actually provide the basis for genealogical clarifications. A great number of words, considered to be highly relevant in our understanding of morality, were put under the scrutiny of the philologist. Nietzsche demonstrated how important etymological derivations from Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Old German roots can be in revealing the major stages in the evolution of morality. The etymological account is perhaps more than a principal tool of Nietzschean genealogy: one may wonder if it is this what genealogy is all about! Heidegger, one of the most influential followers of Nietzsche, may be called upon to testify to this.

The question is: why the word *ressentiment*, as it was used in the context of the *Genealogy of Morals*, did not deserve any particular attention of its author-philologist? Let me notice in passing that the French word *ressentiment* is etymologically quite interesting, as its meaning has, over a period of time, gone through a remarkable metamorphosis.¹ How foreign, in Nietzsche's time, was that French word and to whom? Was it so well appropriated, at least to a certain social class, that no clarification was needed? Still, what was so specific to this word that it was not and perhaps could not be exchanged for some synonymous word or words in the German language? However, a clarification of the imported word, as it turned out, was required. The translators and interpreters of the *Genealogy of Morals* have rarely neglected to tackle with the word. Here are two instructive examples:

[...] it is a mistake to think that when Nietzsche originally used *ressentiment* he was using a word insulated from ordinary German conversation. Although German has words of its own roughly equivalent to "resentment," such as *groll* (most literally translated as "rancor") and *ver-*

1 According to the "Robert" dictionary, the development of the term extends from the obsolete meaning *souvenir reconnaissant* dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries to its modern meaning synonymus to *rancœur*, *rancune*, *animosité*.

stimmung, even before Nietzsche's time *ressentiment* was the word most Germans would use when they wanted to express this concept. Borrowed during the Enlightenment vogue for all things French (and, as Walter Kaufmann points out, Nietzsche's reaching for the French word can be seen as an instance of his aspiration to be a "Good European," a deliberate repudiation of Hegel's nationalistic attempt to "Germanize" the philosophical lexicon), the word would not necessarily have been spoken by the man in the street. But it was part of the general diction of the educated, cultured German, who, when they said it, reached for it with no strain, no affect. (Birns 2018, 4–5)

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Although *ressentiment* is a French word (and thus missing from the Grimms' dictionary), the German educated elite had used it since the 17th century. The word was presumably adopted because German lacks a good word for the English "resentment" and the French "*ressentiment*." (There is the word "*Groll*," which, however, does not characterize a frame of mind or an attitude, but tends to arise with regard to a specific event or person.) // De Gruyter's notifies in his *Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch* that these words serve reasonably well as translations of each other, except that the French word seems to possess a stronger connotation with memory. Rüdiger Bittner goes even so far as to claim that *ressentiment* in French expresses "a more straightforward annoyance, less of a grudge than *ressentiment* in German does." (Risse 2003, 146 –47, footnote 11)

Another intriguing issue was how to render into English the French word from German, how to make the double transfer. Here are two opposite opinions whether *resentment* is an appropriate English word for *ressentiment*:

Nietzsche uses this French word, which since his writing, and largely because of it, has entered the English language as an important term in psychology: a short definition is as follows: "deep-seated resentment, frustration, and hostility, accompanied by a sense of being powerless to express these feelings directly" (*Merriam-Webster*). *Ressentiment* is thus significantly different in meaning from *resentment*. (Nietzsche 2009, 25, footnote 1)

Before we get to the history of the concept of *ressentiment*, we should look at the word itself. Why, when we are discussing a German philosopher in English, do we use a French word? All *ressentiment* means in French is *resentment*. If a French person had heard the word used, all they would have understood is the garden-variety connotation of “resentment” in English. It has no original idiomatic meaning in French. (Birns 2018, 4)

When Scheler writes a book in 1912 that is exclusively devoted to *ressentiment*, he refers to the *word* as a technical term in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Thereafter, the meaning of the word has become connoted by the colors Nietzsche brought to it.² Let us listen how Scheler defines its meaning:

We do not use the word “ressentiment” because of a special predilection for the French language, but because we did not succeed in translating it into German. Moreover, Nietzsche has made it a *terminus technicus*. In the natural meaning of the French word I detect two elements. // First of all, *ressentiment* is the repeated experiencing and reliving [*das wiederholte Durch- und Nachleben*] of a particular emotional response reaction against someone else. The continual reliving of the emotion sinks it more deeply into the center of the personality, but concomitantly removes it from the person’s zone of action and expression. It is not a mere intellectual recollection [*bloß intellektualen Erinnerung*] of the emotion and of the events to which it “responded”—it is a re-experiencing of the emotion itself [*Immerwiederdurch-und-Nachleben der Emotion*], a renewal of the original feeling [*Es ist ein Wiedererleben der Emotion selbst – Nachfühlen, Wiederfühlen*]. // Secondly, the word implies that the quality of this emotion is negative, i.e., that it contains a movement of hostility. Perhaps the German word “Groll” (rancor) comes closest to the essential meaning of the term. “Rancor” is just such a suppressed wrath, independent of the ego’s activity, which moves ob-

² “Nietzsche was using *ressentiment* in a particular manner that, once he used it, was bound to become a term of art in later intellectual formulations [...]” (Birns 2018, 4)

scurely through the mind. It finally takes shape through the repeated reliving [*durch wiederholtes Durchleben*] of intentionalities of hatred or other hostile emotions. In itself it does not contain a specific hostile intention, but it nourishes any number of such intentions. (Scheler 1972, 39)³

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Therefore, if the word includes all these layers of meaning, as Scheler claims it does, the word cannot be translated. Scheler tried, but he couldn't do it. So, the word became untranslatable for at least two prominent German philosophers. What one, the philologist, omitted, the other, his successor, has given—a linguistic explanation. The crucial term of *Genealogy* is required to be explained, *not only as a concept, but firstly as a word*, French, foreign, imported, re-appropriated, even re-made word. Scheler meticulously explains what makes this word so special. But someone may still object that this is not a linguistic analysis, but a thick conceptual interpretation. It is hard not to hear typical overtones of phenomenological discourse at work. Scheler can respond to this by saying that his conceptual analysis tries to grasp meanings inherent in the word itself. He says: "In the natural meaning of the French word I detect two elements." It is this "natural meaning" that holds the analysis by the word. What is its natural meaning? I emphasize the word "natural". Hence, the word *ressentiment* should be preserved in its natural (French) meaning. It cannot be translated into German, except at the cost of being denaturalized. It is a plant that is not to be transplanted. Is Scheler a philosopher who preserves the plant in its natural condition or shape, and, at the same time, denaturalizes it? Compared to Nietzsche who left it as it is, maybe from the fear not to devitalize it?

Nevertheless, I suspect that the proposed conceptual analysis of the natural meaning of the word would be opposed by Nietzsche. However, I believe that Nietzsche was more interested in preserving the naturalistic semantic charge of the word than Scheler, and not simply because Nietzsche remained silent on the issue. To support this claim, I will attempt to supply two corresponding arguments. First, the way the whole project of genealogy is conceived, suggests

3 Cf. the German original: Scheler 1915, 44–45.

that to preserve the naturalistic semantic charge of the French word is of crucial importance for Nietzsche. Second, there is considerable overlapping between Nietzsche's and Scheler's understanding of the notion of *ressentiment*, of the phenomenon if/when it is related to a personal attitude. This is to say that drawing out of conceptual implications from the natural word, as Scheler did it, will not be considered as a misinterpretation, provided that its supposed "natural content" is not distorted.

I wonder whether the strictly linguistic components in Scheler's clarification of the word, in both of the elements he found there, are helpful in paving the path for a better understanding of Nietzsche's genealogy. Let us take a tour through the already cited passage keeping our eye on certain words and particularly on certain prefixes. The word "*ressentiment*" is a compound word with a nonhyphenated prefix: *re*. Scheler has done a great job to elucidate the importance and function of this tiny morpheme having only two phonemes. It is important to see how he translated the prefix, the stem of the word, and their mutual combination, all that in a variety of forms through repeated attempts. Now I will just underline words in the passage translated in English, matching them with corresponding words in the original German text:

- *ressentiment* is the repeated experiencing and reliving (*das wiederholte Durch- und Nachleben*);
- it is a re-experiencing of the emotion itself (*Immerwiederdurch- und-Nachleben der Emotion*);
- a renewal of the original feeling (*Es ist ein Wiedererleben der Emotion selbst – Nachfühlen, Wiederfühlen*);
- it finally takes shape through the repeated reliving (*durch wiederholtes Durchleben*).

What we have is the following: living, experiencing, emotion, feeling, which should be a package of synonyms, each time being preceded by a staccato of the two phonemes: R and E. In the German it is: *Leben, Emotion, and fühlen*, prefixed by: *wieder, nach, immerwieder, durch*. The interesting thing is that these German prepositions and adverbs are all compressed into a single unit RE, so that English language gives back to the French language its loanword from Latin. Thus, the prefix meaning "again" or "again and again" to indicate repetition was used repeatedly, again and again, in Scheler's definition of the

word. Not less worth noting is the second meaning of the morpheme RE, which is “back” or “backward” to indicate withdrawal or backward motion. So, in *ressentiment* there is this RE, after RE, after RE... As it happens in Freud’s *Wiederholungszwang*.

This repetitive operation at work here appears most condensed in a syntagm from the last quoted line: the *repeated reliving*. The repeated reliving of what? Are negative, hostile emotions, condemned to be repeated, because they must remain suppressed? Is Scheler describing, in his own phenomenological vocabulary, Freud’s mechanism of *Verdrängung*, when writing that: “The continual reliving of the emotion sinks it more deeply into the center of the personality, but concomitantly removes it from the person’s zone of action and expression”? What is actually this “continuous or repeated reliving” of a hostile emotion? It is its deeper and deeper sinking into the zone where no true action or expression is possible. It is not any sort of emotion, but an essentially reactive one. Scheler emphasizes that what is suppressed is “a particular emotional response reaction [*eine bestimmte emotionale Antwoortsreaktion gegen einen Anderen*]” (again we hear: RE, RE). It is actually a reaction that cannot be abreacted. Nor can it disappear. It is constantly *relived*, which is to say *revitalized* and *reanimated*, but never fully brought to life, *revived* (once again: RE, RE).

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Scheler depicts an amazing allegory: cut off from the ego’s activity—which is to say, from activity *tout court*, because for a phenomenologist, there lies the very source of life—the suspended re-action of *ressentiment*, the emotional reaction constantly renewed and postponed, “moves obscurely through the soul [*dunkel durch die Seele wandelndes*]”. For Derrida, who was obsessed with ghosts, this might be a challenge: neither alive nor dead, lifelessly living entity wandering in the soul of Western man.⁴

It is this double RE of LIVING, the *repeated reliving* (*das wiederholte Durch- und Nachleben*), that gives us a clue to the principal objective of Nietzsche’s genealogy. It traces a path to the very origin of human morality.

Let me now turn to the mentioned conceptual overlapping. There is at least a partial agreement between Nietzsche and Scheler concerning the concept of

4 Cf. Derrida 1967b, 108.

ressentiment. In his *Genealogy*, at different points, Nietzsche gives quite precise definitions. This passage is usually quoted:

[...] the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naive, nor honest and straight with himself. His soul *squints*; his mind loves dark corners, secret paths and back-doors, everything secretive appeals to him as being *his* world, *his* security, *his* comfort; he knows all about keeping quiet, not forgetting, waiting, temporarily humbling and abasing himself. (Nietzsche 2008, 22)

Is this a relevant definition of *ressentiment*? Relevant for what? What is actually defined here is “the man of *ressentiment*.” How he behaves, what he thinks, feels, and loves, what kind of character he is. This definition obviously belongs to Nietzsche’s psychology of *ressentiment*. But is it the sole and exclusive domain of his dealing with the phenomenon? The majority of interpreters do not go beyond the psychology of *ressentiment*. It is, therefore, not surprising that what follows after the last quoted sentence is usually omitted. It reads: “A race of such men of *ressentiment* will inevitably end up *cleverer* than any noble race [...]”

Nietzsche is also interested in a psychology of races, but the majority of interpreters are not. Many believe that it is not worth mentioning, holding that the author paid tribute to the prejudices of his time. A lot of efforts have been made to exonerate Nietzsche from his *Rassentheorie*. But what if it is a particularly important element of his theory of *ressentiment* and, therefore, fundamental to his *Genealogy*?

The very term of “ressentiment” appears for the first time in the First Essay, Chapter 10, of *The Genealogy of Morals*. There we find the following lines:

The beginning of the slaves’ revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of

a triumphant saying “yes” to itself, slave morality says “no” on principle to everything that is “outside,” “other,” “non-self”: and *this* “no” is its creative deed. This reversal of the evaluating glance—this *essential* orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself—is a feature of *ressentiment*: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, —its action is basically a reaction. The opposite is the case with the noble method of valuation: this acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say “yes” to itself even more thankfully and exultantly [...] (Nietzsche 2008, 20)

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Here, the concept of *ressentiment* is illuminated from the perspective of the slave morality and of the noble or master morality. These are considered to be two symmetrically-opposed classes or rather castes, as being hereditary, attitudes. Now we have the picture of the two mutually antagonistic groups whose morality has been defined in the terms of a specific *personal attitude* typical for each group. This class morality differentiation is thus achieved through a *psychological analysis*. However, its scope is not individualistic. It aims at reaching far beyond this scope, and that is the basic structure of *collective selves*. As it is implied that there are only two types of collective selves in general, the slave and the master, the psychology of *ressentiment* is not a psychology in the usual sense of the term, as it should capture basic traits of the human mind, the very ontology of mankind. This reflects Nietzsche’s use of broad metaphysical categories, actually the most basic conceptual oppositions, like *outside/inside*, *Self/Other*, *genuine reality/imaginary reality*, *action/reaction*, and the like.

It is not wrong to say that in order to give a comparative account of the two types of moral evaluation, Nietzsche draws on the psychology of *ressentiment*. But it is certainly not enough. The monumental task of metaphysics is at stake here. As the question of Being is posed in evolutionary terms—Nietzsche’s

genealogy is inspired by Darwin and evolutionists—,⁵ what has to be solved, is the enigma of the birth of human mind, culture, and moral values. Mathias Risse has rightly noted: “Nietzsche’s account constitutes the same sort of speculation about socialization and its impact on individuals that Rousseau develops in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Kant in his *Conjectures on the Beginnings of Human History*, and Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, despite all the differences.” (Risse 2003, 144, footnote 5) Of course, Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* should be on the list as well.

What we see from the first, introductory definition of *ressentiment* is a concern with *psychology*. It deals with: “beings who are prevented from a genuine reaction, that is, something active, and who compensate for that with a merely imaginary vengeance.” And then a huge machinery of metaphysics is put in operation! Already there, in the first account! It turns out that the personal attitude (towards the inner or outer world) has broad ontological implications. In order to understand the very sense of the genealogical project, the question of personal attitude should be in our focus. We need to ask: how personal is this attitude that explains *ressentiment*? Indeed, Nietzsche and Scheler agree in characterizing the general attitude of the person of *ressentiment*. Scheler has devoted a whole book to that topic. Indeed, who can better do the job of describing all sorts of personal attitudes (recall Husserl’s famous term *Einstellung*) than a phenomenologist? In Scheler, the morally harmful behavior of a person of *ressentiment* fully belongs to the horizon of morality. For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is *neither fully personal nor exclusively belonging to the horizon of human morality*. It is *neither fully included nor excluded* from morality. It is *neither quite inside nor* is it quite outside. It is swinging back and forth. It seems to belong to what Derrida labeled “the undecidable”. Which makes it a useful tool for deconstructive strategies.

Ressentiment has no proper place under the arches of metaphysics. However, it can be rightly reduced to a moral attitude when our ambition is to study

5 Concerning this well-explored topic, cf., for instance, Richardson 2004, 4: “Nietzsche appropriates the central idea of Darwinism, and his attacks on Darwinists really express the ways he tries to extend or build beyond it.” What can be labeled “Nietzsche’s anti-Darwinist stance” cannot undermine the circumstance that we can “see Nietzsche operating in the shadow of Darwin, not as his spiritual antagonist” (Johnson 2010, 214).

moral phenomena (not from the radical genealogical perspective, of course).

What appears here as a crucial distinction is that between Scheler's immanent moralism and Nietzsche's transcendental immoralism. The point of difference is Nietzsche's *transgression of the perspective of a personal attitude*. To see where their paths diverge, given their common concern with *ressentiment*, it is highly instructive, I believe, to read in Scheler's *Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, published in 1915, the last essay entitled "Zur Idee des Menschen," especially Chapter Two on *Homo naturalis*. There, Scheler explains why he is not at all interested in evolutionary arguments concerning the descent of man, while at the same time apparently accepting the animal nature of human beings. His central argument is that our human personhood is not a product of evolution but a God's creation. Man is "a new type of beings and things, a realm of persons, who have not 'originated' at all, very much like colors, numbers, space, time, and other true essences, they have not 'originated,' either." However, God's creation, whom Scheler calls "*Gottsucher*," is also an animal belonging to the natural world. Like the essence of personhood, it is not a product of the evolution: "Similarly, *homo naturalis* is not something developed from the animal world, as he simply was, is, and will remain an animal [*Tier*]." (Scheler 1915, 356–357)

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On the other side, Nietzsche is highly interested in the being of *homo naturalis* as well as in the origins of Man's personality. Similar to Scheler, he thinks that Man's personality is of a moral nature in the first place. However, the supposed origins are in the nature, where there are beasts, "wild beasts of prey." So if we start our interpretation of *ressentiment* from the class antagonism between masters and slaves, provided that the genealogical explanation is still our aim, we are already many millennia too late. What has been considered, in the history of reception, as pretty unimportant additions, derived from Nietzsche's *metaphysical naturalism* that used to be ignored, deserves to be taken seriously. One has to take a look behind the historical scene, towards "the other scene" hidden in the abyss of time, there where Nietzsche discerned the cruel world of "human animals." Then, prehistoric supplements of each and every major historical actor or category, supplied by Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morals*, gain importance. Behind the nobles and the common people there are "joyful monsters" and "sick, powerless human-animals,"

behind the two classes of masters and slaves, one finds two races: “the blond beasts—Aryans” and “the dusky, dark-haired non-Aryans,” etc. The so-called “logic of supplement” (Derrida 1967a) is probably required to compensate for the repression (*Verdrängung*), for the *repeated reliving*, of the protohistoric life-world.

To think the animality of human-animal is the task of genealogical thinking. If it turns out to be a business of metaphysics, it is because the difference between *healthy* and *sick beasts*⁶ is the most fundamental difference that opens up the genealogical interrogation. This animal difference, the difference in life-power (for Nietzsche life is power, and power is life) underpins all basic metaphysical differences. It is precisely there that *ressentiment* should be thought of. Psychology, or even the speculative anthropology ascribed to Nietzsche, is not enough. The guiding thread might be his “animal psychology”⁷ if we take it not to be a mere psychology.

In the *Genealogy of Morals* it is *ressentiment* that illuminates the path towards the origin of Manhood, Personhood of persons. Man was born from the spirit of *ressentiment*. The nature does not know inner worlds, minds, thoughts... But there are instincts and feelings: *les sentiments*. It is there that genealogy should start from: from frustrated *sentiments* of the human animal, the beast of prey. The psychology comes too late as it discusses *the subject* of

6 One is a beast, the other a detour from it, a denaturalized being, tamed and sick animal. What is for our (Christian or today's post-Christian) morality “good” and “evil,” for Nietzsche, the supposed naturalist and immoralist, is “healthy” and “unhealthy.” Nature or rather natural life is the last instance of his value judgment. Can one say, therefore, that *ressentiment* is the most natural feeling which is nevertheless a counter-natural feeling, one that has the potential to go against the order of nature? It is “bad for health,” and far more than that! The health of mankind or the good natural condition of humanity is here at stake! That is what the good is all about! As Jacques Derrida put it: “The good can be eatable.” Cf. Derrida 1995, 255–287.

7 “For one significant goal of the *Genealogy* is to develop the kind of ‘animal psychology’ (GM III, 20) that explains why our emotions are what they are. Explanations must end somewhere, but Nietzsche's cease too early if he cannot ground *ressentiment* within his anthropology. The secondary literature has not yet offered an account tracing the origins of *ressentiment* within Nietzsche's anthropology and thus fails to investigate whether he is entitled to his claims about *ressentiment* and its importance for morality. This study attempts to close the gap.” (Risse 2003, 143) See also Risse 2007, 57–82.

ressentiment, the subject which is in itself a product of *ressentiment*.⁸ Hence, the privilege given, by Nietzsche, to the physiology of *ressentiment*. Once we see in *ressentiment* the *Ur*-phenomenon of the genealogy of morality, we shall see that this genealogy also covers the emergence of human mind, subjectivity, and personality. *Ressentiment* marks that crucial point in the evolution of species when instincts and feelings enter into a *twisting course*, trace a *bending curve* that we recognize in the RE of *ressentiment*.

In the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche gives the following account:

All instincts which are not discharged outwardly turn inwards—this is what I call the internalization of man: with it there now evolves in man what will later be called his “soul”. The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and gained depth, breadth and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man’s instincts was obstructed. (Nietzsche 2008, 57)

The *internalization* of man (*die Verinnerlichung des Menschen*)⁹ is an effect of the curve vector: what was supposed to be discharged to the outside is turned back inside. The human “soul” evolves from the arch of

8 To consider the phenomenon of *ressentiment*, implying already the genealogically accomplished “subject of *ressentiment*,” seems to be a common fallacy in reading Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*. For an illustrative example in this regard cf. Poellner 2011, 136. There one can read: “I conclude then, that Nietzsche’s account of *ressentiment* as intentional self-deception is coherent and does not require a reconstruction in terms of non-intentional or subpersonal processes. The theory is arguably a powerful tool for explaining various phenomena of individual and social psychology, including many manifestations of nationalism, chauvinism, and indeed some religious psychologies.”
9 Cf. the original German text: Nietzsche 1999, 322.

ressentiment.¹⁰

It is a process occurring in the streams of LIFE. It is that same process Derrida found in the genealogical explanation of arts in Kant. In his essay on “Economimesis,” Derrida describes it as “a flexion of *physis*, relation to itself of the Nature.”¹¹

The *flexion* of Nature or Life. The *flexion* of Natural Life. Already “the animal is capable of auto-affection.” (Derrida 1995, 268) Is this *detour* from animal, animal *detour* from animal, still a challenge for contemporary thought, particularly after the racism of the 20th century? *If Life itself, the Nature of Life, is a crucial metaphysical question, can it be received, tackled, and examined without its “flexions” and “detours” which immediately make this question highly political and ethical?*

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has recently asserted that philosophy, throughout its long history, has never managed to define what

10 This is in line with what was stated in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 229: “Almost everything we call ‘higher culture’ is founded on the spiritualization and internalization of cruelty—that is my proposition; that ‘wild animal’ has not been killed off at all, it lives, it thrives, it has simply—made itself divine.” Included as “Supplementary material” in Nietzsche 2008, 164. Here, we can again see the “logic of supplement” at work. What was said in the earlier book is supplemented by the later. Nietzsche himself presented his *Genealogy* as “appended to the recently published *Beyond Good and Evil* as a supplement and clarification.” And even the earlier work is itself a supplement. Keith Ansell-Pearson writes in his “Introduction” to Carole Diethe’s translation of *On the Genealogy of Morality*: “*On the Genealogy of Morality* belongs to the late period of Nietzsche’s writings (1886-88). It was composed in July and August of 1887 and published in November of that year. Nietzsche intended it as a ‘supplement’ to and ‘clarification’ of *Beyond Good and Evil*, said by him to be ‘in all essentials’ a critique of modernity that includes within its range an attack on modern science, modern art and modern politics. In a letter to his former Basel colleague Jacob Burckhardt dated 22 September 1886, Nietzsche stresses that *Beyond Good and Evil* says the same thing as *Zarathustra* ‘only in a way that is different – very different.’” (Nietzsche 2008, xiii and xiv)

11 “[...] une flexion de la *physis*, le rapport à soi de la nature.” Cf. Derrida 1975, 59.

life as such is.¹² There always emerged some “detours” and “flexions” so that the major questions remained postponed and neglected. Agamben himself engaged in framing a genealogy of the present mis/understanding of the concept of life, starting with Aristotle and ending with Heidegger. It has been revealed that the question about the essence of life, the natural essence *par excellence*, has often invoked the idea of an animal-man and that of a human animal.

Once the perspective of life has been taken, whereby life as such is conceived as the greatest value, Nietzschean examination of morality becomes possible, the one in which the major figure of the story is a beast-man. The century of Darwinism has brought about an obstinate endeavor to finally separate and reconnect the human and the animal or the inhuman. The century of Holocaust has shown that racism is one of the most important philosophical and political-practical responses to the unprecedented experience of the proximity of man and animal-man. Nietzsche’s understanding of *ressentiment* remains today highly relevant as it masterfully describes what is at stake in the most puzzling contemporary issues, like “the unity of the human race”¹³ under the challenge of human bestiality. Agamben even goes to say that “the ethics of the twentieth century opens with Nietzsche’s overcoming of resentment.” (Agamben 1999, 99)

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12 “For anyone undertaking a genealogical study of the concept of ‘life’ in our culture, one of the first and most instructive observations to be made is that the concept never gets defined as such. And yet, this thing that remains indeterminate gets articulated and divided time and again through a series of caesurae and oppositions that invest it with a decisive strategic function in domains as apparently distant as philosophy, theology, politics, and—only later—medicine and biology. That is to say, everything happens as if, in our culture, life were *what cannot be defined, yet, precisely for this reason, must be ceaselessly articulated and divided.*” (Agamben 2004, § 4, 13)

13 Cf. Antelme 1957, 228–30.

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