

Ethics and Normativity Seminar Series

“*Ressentiment* and Self-deception in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*”



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Nietzsche's basic argument in the First Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* has become so familiar to philosophy teachers and scholars that we can easily lose sight of a couple of things about it. First, the First Essay includes a profoundly unnerving kind of argument; if Nietzsche is right about the originating features of slave or egalitarian moral values, and these features remain constitutive in the ongoing adoption of these values in our own times, then our basic contemporary moral intuitions require a fresh look. Secondly, though the broad contours of the argument are fairly straightforward, once you start trying to piece things together with more precision it turns out that the First Essay lends itself to many different kinds of readings. In this lecture, I am going to try to take on this second issue by asking whether we can settle on a psychologically plausible reading of the First Essay that accounts for most of what Nietzsche says. It is not clear that we can, but with a focus on the question of self-deception, I am going to try to bring out some of the main interpretive possibilities before gesturing toward my own way of thinking.

Friday, Oct 11th
Agnes Arnold Hall - 210
3:00 – 5:00

Everyone is invited to continue discussion at *Axelrad* after the talk.