

Beyond He and She: On the Temporality of Queerness¹

—An Alternative Imagination about the *Genealogy of Morals*

[W]e need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called into question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed (morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison), a knowledge of a kind that has never yet existed or even been desired.²

Morality as a form of human knowledge lives in the cross-referencing of defining, and it introduces certain expectations. Consequently, it provides a roadmap for moral beings: how to be a moral ideal. The reconsideration and reconstruction, *critique* in Nietzsche's word, of what we believe or not how we should live is a form of *eternal return*, which strengthens our life force but also challenges the status quo.³ This is a process of self-overcoming because it indicates the transformation from an era to another and involves rewriting grammar manuals rather than simple editing jobs. To demand is to create. The idea of moralizing beings is undoubtedly a

¹ Reading Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* is a not-too-serious but mostly challenging expedition, especially when I was educated to hold firmly a belief to live in a "moral" manner. This perspective of discussing gender values to decipher Nietzsche's texts came as no surprise to me because the development of the moralized concept of gender has been one of the greatest achievements in the history of "human knowledge." However, the biggest difficulty for me in writing this essay is how I feel about writing it. You can never be too serious when reading Nietzsche; you cannot be too serious to write about Nietzsche's thoughts. Keeping a goal of pursuing my childish joy, I find a sense of relief and ecstasy at the same time while playing with Nietzsche's thoughts while practicing *exegesis* on his fine art.

² Preface, Subsection 6. Nietzsche, Friedrich, and Walter A. Kaufmann. 2011. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. New York: Vintage Books.

³ I see Nietzsche's concept of *critique* unifies both Apollonian and Dionysian energies and eventually drives the (re)occurrence of overcoming in a form of Nietzsche's "eternal return," which indicates an internal temporality—an infinite ongoing journey of self-overcoming.

profound creation but alas, such a creation abandoned its own will to grow—or to become ripe again—after it celebrated the birth of moral values, landing on endless revision and repetition.⁴ The membership of moralists denies the freedom to generate new genres but only permits the reproduction to redeem the true color of moral values. Thus, morality often offers a sense of hominess where people can build up its foundation over time and allows sharing a nostalgia for good old-time sakes. This image of morality is merely an architecture of mirage drawn from a false future because the status of being in the future engenders a hopeful force to be, to overcome, and to create. By pursuing a human future, we ask for new possibilities.⁵ However, the maintenance of moral values always remains ancient in terms of time since it idealizes a lifestyle that has no risk of being immoral. In this context, being future is being immoral. Thus, we are too afraid of being non-human to be human; in Nietzsche's words, we are "all too human"—an illness that prevents us from overcoming ourselves.⁶

In this essay, reflecting on my encounter with Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, I focus on discussing the interplay between temporality and the reimagination of gender through a queer perspective. I argue that the genealogy of morals comprises how queer temporality acts as a life force that transforms our lifestyles from being lived by the definition of morality into being alive through the affirmation of will to power.⁷ I use temporality to describe a non-genealogical

⁴ I see morality as a comfort zone where people stop creating new possibilities but start to cultivate the ideal of morality.

⁵ These new possibilities represent Nietzsche's calling for "new demand" and indicate a sense of resentment from a slave-like position to revolt master morality both internally and externally in a creative manner.

⁶ I see being "all too human" as a symptom to eliminate any risk to guard our moralized humanness. Similar to masking ourselves, this "all too human" being alienates us from becoming ourselves. This "all too human" syndrome reminds me of what George Orwell once said in his "Shooting an Elephant," seemingly describing a confrontation between master and slave moralities: "He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives,' and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant."

⁷ The idea of this topic was inspired by my coloring experience during this pandemic semester. With limited color pencils, I tried to make my garden sketch into a colorful landscape. Then, I started to color my plants in an abnormal

feature in exploring the relationship between time and human knowledge. Queerness infuses a genealogical exploration of what makes it *queer*.⁸ If human moralization is comparable to the process of coloring, coloring becomes a means that executes will to power. A queer coloring does not reside with a definite blue, yellow or red. Instead, it is inarticulable but multifaceted, acting as a Dionysian power. On the one hand, queerness creates the fluidity of coloring by bridging the disconnection between numerous colors. The situatedness reveals the queerness by reacting to it. We see no queer for we are queer no more. Such a hybridity of queerness echoes the overfullness of human creativity. On the other hand, queerness relocates the aspect of coloring by becoming no color but colorist itself. This transforms the coloring from a passive tool into an active scale and traverses the domain of coloring. Queer coloring posits the sense of ambiguity and dwells at the crossroad of moral dilemmas. Thus, interpreting queerness spontaneously proposes challenges to our moral values. As a touch of human color, queerness serves as evidence of life force and witnesses the turning point of our being ripe. Meanwhile, queerness can be a solution to being “all too human.” Similar to an earthquake, queerness brings about waves of disruption to our moral norms and resets our mode of creating reality. If we queerize our so-called moral values, there will be no chance for this moralized realization (moral values) to continue to survive.

In line with the spirit of Nietzsche’s genealogical thinking of morality (to the best of my ability), I firstly discuss the origin of what we used to take for granted in thinking about gender and the conceptualization of queer emergence with regard to temporality. The challenge is how to respond to overcoming the long-term humanized way of thinking of the origin itself.

fashion. Suddenly, it occurred to me that coloring is a form of moralizing and each coloring has the potential to change the moralized reality.

⁸ I use *queer* to describe a destabilizing force that always brings a sense of strange and change.

Subsequently, I utilize Nietzsche's conceptions of master and slave morality to analyze the relationship between queerness and moral crises. The key is to recognize the function of *ressentiment* in making a human history of creating and knowing about morals.⁹ With these nuanced feelings, human emotional reactions, entangled with life force, coincide in the formation of questioning the evaluation of moral values. Finally, I explore the *beyondness* of human knowledge and queerness as they respond to an unknown future. The returning of asking once more what it means to be human reoccurs with Nietzsche's *eternal return*.¹⁰ Therefore, I use queer temporality to decipher the infinite meaning/meaninglessness in *eternity*.

A Genderless Origin of Morals

If we distinguish sex and gender by discussing their biological and social attributions of how we perceive these two ideas, the sex/gender assignment is a pure judgment that completely depends on how well we know ourselves. But how much do we know about ourselves? Nietzsche started his *Genealogy of Morals* by saying "We are unknown to ourselves... We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should *ever* find ourselves?"¹¹ This status of being unknown signifies the ignorance of human beings and opens a space for human creation to interpret such unknownness (beyond the matter of time). Genealogically speaking, neither sex nor gender is a discovery of humankind but merely a creation that allows us to master another creation—moral values. That is to say, we are the *origin* of human knowledges (we are more willing to react to one by creating new knowledges).¹²

⁹ Generally speaking, I think Nietzsche uses *ressentiment* to portray the battling between "master" and "slave" morality on his critique of moral values.

¹⁰ The idea of "beyondness" engenders the rise/hope of future in discussing the conjunction of and between "good" and "evil" from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. Eternity, as I understand, does not contradict the limited human life span but elicits the inexhaustibility of human creation fueled by life force—*will to power*.

¹¹ Preface, Subsection 1.

¹² I use the plural form of knowledge because I want to acknowledge and empathize the individuality in knowing.

The origination of morality requires an attention on the purposes morality may serve. The need for morality becomes visible when we start to call for a sense of community, which provides a kind of hominess allowing birds of a feather to flock together (and does not welcome ones of different feathers). However, every distinction is based on the scale of self-familiarization, and the identification of body features become obvious measurements taken into this consideration (perhaps by accident). Thus, the realization of “I” is the key to telling apart being “I” and being “not I.” Gender and sex then become some finely classified products created to deal with a growing population and categorization. In this process, a further-developed morality gains popularity to manage the order of community. Why? Moral values legalize the diversity through a community agreement on the expectation of how we are supposed to be and to manifest each kind of being to some extent, such as to be a “good” man.¹³ However, the legitimacy of these moral values is problematic because we never fulfill the realization of “I”—we only think we know us better. Thus, the conceptions of gender and sex are still semi-finished arguments.¹⁴ We did not start off being gendered creatures; indeed, it is the other way around: gender is a kind of human creation.¹⁵

If the creation of moral values simply provides an impression’s aspect, the failure of reaching what is expected can easily produce partiality—a gesture justified by moral values.¹⁶ With expectation comes preference. This expectation not only summons the continuity of progression but also demands obedience to conformity. Thus, the succession of the majority builds the authority of representation, which comes along with punishment in the name of moral

¹³ Make it sound like a serious deal, similar to the effect of a bloody contract.

¹⁴ If we human beings are living in between of a dynamic of two forces described by Nietzsche, our thinking should follow this “in-between” -ness.

¹⁵ A gendered morality seems an accident in human history.

¹⁶ I see moral value as a way of understanding things that prioritize individual perception whereas partiality as a publicly influenced prejudice that advocates “Moral” values. For example, I think Nietzsche’s proposal of genealogy is a moralized value that demonstrates the trajectory of humanization.

values. It is this punishment that occupies the violation of every inch of moral values by posing threats to the commonly protected hominess. The meaning of such a punishment recalls a powerful domination of the hunting for treasures. Yet this punishment is not so much gender-oriented as moral-centered to encourage the normativity.¹⁷ Nietzsche once observed that, “Our treasure is where the beehives of our knowledge are.”¹⁸ The convenience of moral values offers a repertoire that promises the storage of our creations. Accordingly, we tend to guard our treasures as we moralize our knowledges, which include creating gender to serve the purpose of moralization. We let morality convince us that we are “men of knowledge,” and of course, we also expect the valuation of our knowledges as if they are meaningful to us in a moral sense. Still, the idea of gender does not help moral values become more meaningful but remains a late-coming aspect of knowing about us.

A Gendered Crisis of Morals

If gendering our moral values does not guarantee a better knowing of ourselves, it does unfold a reflection of how we feel about ourselves: precisely, how we are supposed to understand our feelings. Moral values teach us to compare ourselves to a public expectation—an image that advertises normativity and addresses a sense of queer feeling.¹⁹ However, the status of this queer feeling is not generated from moral normativity but only seems salient in front of the appearance of morality. By accepting moral values, we tend to compare ourselves to each other in every aspect to navigate the queerness that morally contradicts our established hominess, a shared expectation that distinguishes “us” from “not us.”²⁰ When the focus of human discovery moves

¹⁷ I understand normativity as an advancement of hominess.

¹⁸ Preface, Subsection 1.

¹⁹ The etymology of word queer is associated with “strange, peculiar, eccentric,” and has the force “to spoil, ruin,” according to Online Etymology Dictionary (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/queer>).

²⁰ Morality shifts the focus from knowing “I” to “us.”

from “I” to “us,” moral values ultimately decentralize the position of human beings and suggest a presumption of the co-existence among all kinds of beings. This presumption is only allowed to respond to *ourness*.²¹ Thus, queerness not only alienates the belongings in addition to moral values but also marks an incommunicability. The first feature of queerness helps human knowledge enrich the context of the definition of what we are; the second gives a rise of superiority to what we have known about us.

Similar to Apollonian power, queerness has the ability to stabilize the knowing of ourselves through a morally structured familiarization. By making our gained knowledge superior, we consequently devalue our ability to sense, to create, and to demand new knowledges—we are living in the shadow of the knowledge. Morality is one kind of this knowledge, and it declares war against queer feelings but, alas, ignores how queerness essentially secures the longing of having the morality in the first place. Similarly, the ideas of gender and sex come into existence following our queer feelings. If we think of genealogy as a family tree and we don’t consult the predominance of moral values, gender and sex are rootless conceptions. That is to say, moral values are not always or necessary gendered, but gender issues are always moralized. To gender is to practice Apollonian power. Indeed, our knowledge of gender is not always associated with sex, nor a biological concept, but rather a moral dimension that feeds our partiality to expect a good image of “us.”

Facing these queer moments that challenge the moralized expectation of *us* as a being (a community), every such encounter names a crisis that demands a reconfiguration of knowing about ourselves.²² In Nietzsche’s words, this crisis reflects a sentiment of *ressentiment* as well as

²¹ I use *ourness* to describe a collective identity of human beings that shares a sense of community.

²² A reorientation that redeems our position of knowing ourselves: a human centered way of thinking prioritizing individuality and independence.

represents *ressentiment* itself.²³ If moral values make us feel at home, *ressentiment* puts us in a homeless position—a reassignment of moralization. Similar to the sense of crisis that pandemic brings to us, queerness as a form of *ressentiment* aims to overcome a stabilized structure of power relations in which *ressentiment* discerns master and slave moralities. Nietzsche pointed out that “the slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values.”²⁴ Thus, slave morality announces a revolutionary manifesto against master morality— “a hostile external world.”²⁵

By revealing the mechanism of overcoming the master morality, Nietzsche guides us to embrace our individual feelings (often oppressed by the public morality) by proposing *ressentiment*. According to Nietzsche, the essence of *ressentiment* appeals to “direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself.”²⁶ First and foremost, this perspective prioritizes human thinking over moral values as it clarifies the relationship between the origin of morals and human creation. The *priestly class* utilizes moral values to gatekeep the royal coloring of what is noble and sentences the penalty of inferiority by civilizing the rest of human beings through moralization.²⁷ Engaging with *ressentiment*, the population that has been under the priestly mastery for a long time rebels against such a tyrannical moral king. Secondly, *ressentiment* recalls an eternal return of creating human reality by giving meanings themselves—an impulse of mastering the world of creation. That is to say, this liberation led by *ressentiment* is a process

²³ I see *ressentiment* as a queer feeling that demands a purpose of future and resets our mode of thinking about future. *Ressentiment* results from the interaction between Apollonian and Dionysian powers and functions as a transferer between these two powers.

²⁴ First Essay, Subsection 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ How dare they!

of self-overcoming by reacting to a beheld queerness—it mirrors our will to power and confronts us with a suggestion to reevaluate our once created reality.²⁸

The *Beyondness* of Queerness²⁹

If the key moment of self-overcoming necessitates the death of God, Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* would agree that God has never been born to our world. We are gods to ourselves. The golden treasure that hides behind God is our ability to create. Having the idea of God would be a queer thought if we think about how this God is different from us and how strange that could be. In this context, God guides us to be *his* followers. But who are the true followers? Aren't we the interpreters of God's will who shed a pitiful truth to make him God? Now, we silence ourselves by approving this priestly journey of following the path that God once favored.

What is wrong with us?

Seriously, what is wrong with us? With you? With me?

All the questions ring a bell of queerness.

It bites every bit of our finely ripe fruits of knowledge.

Like an illness, like a poison, like a nightmare

Burning, and only deeply burning³⁰

It ruins our priestly dreams,

Only to find that they were never our dreams.³¹

That react to our wonderings, and only did so

Because they had no human thinking,

²⁸ To reimagine the world that we used to know/not know.

²⁹ The *beyondness* thinking is an overcoming of genealogical acknowledging of creation.

³⁰ I guess that's how *ressentiment* makes us feel.

³¹ The purpose of master morality that acts as "external stimuli" seems a dreamy image in our life.

At least, no will to live like a human.

Genealogical thinking inspires us to relocate the origination of human knowledge, but queerness invites us to reimagine the future of human knowledge. As a *new demand*, queerness requires attention to reflect on what we don't know about ourselves and to create new perspectives to overcome our current limitations. The emergence of queerness is the collaboration of both Apollonian and Dionysian powers since they are constantly challenging each other. The queer feeling involved in this process also emphasizes the fluidity of time and unfreezes the boundaries between the past, present, and future.

To make a new demand reclaims the intimacy of our feelings of queerness. “How could it happen that we should *ever* find ourselves?”³² How could it happened that we should *never* feel queerness? The exploration of queerness in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* resets our realization of the modernized idea of queer. More importantly, this queerness celebrates individuality and confirms our life force by pursuing new possibilities. This sense of queerness also serves as a signal to address the returning to our life transformation—an affirmation of infinitely living. The *beyondness* of queerly thinking embodies *ressentiment* as this *beyondness* craves to be ripe again. When we critique the conceptions of this *beyondness*, we are actively unfolding the possibilities of our queer feelings—something too close to reach. This condition springs an “in-between” situation of our moralized knowledges. Therefore, the more we learned, the more challenges await us to overcome. Only when we envision a childish joy and innocence to live and to learn, will we hold on to a mode of navigating our *ressentiment* to become *Übermensch*—a being of temporality who reimagines the landscape of moral values through creation and self-overcoming—acknowledging one's will to live, to demand, and to power.³³

³² Preface, Subsection 1.

³³ If my goal was to find a destination before reading Nietzsche, now, I only wonder how to start my journey.