Self-deception at the Intersection of Friedrich Nietzsche and the Apostle Paul
Edwards, Brian
2017 Middlesex University PhD

ABSTRACT

Self-deception is a key component in Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of ressentiment. It also plays a significant role in Paul’s notion of the fall. This thesis explores issues of self-deception in the realm of Nietzsche-Paul discourse. Specifically, Nietzsche’s explication of self-deception inherent in ressentiment is used to elucidate Paul’s usage of self-deception in the context of the fall. Nietzsche’s work on ressentiment is set in historical context to identify circumstances, people, and events that influenced development of his overall thought. A literature review is also supplied to appreciate the development of ressentiment. The primary source for Nietzsche’s treatment of ressentiment are his late works. Analysis of Nietzschean ressentiment is conducted through them, first by means of a genealogical study of the castes of ressentiment, then in terms of an examination of the mechanism of ressentiment. This supplies a knowledge of the fundamentals and workings of ressentiment requisite to identify its crowning feature, self-deception. The resulting platform allows a fresh reading of Pauline fallenness, specifically concerning the notion of self-deception, in terms of the internalisation and moralisation of ressentiment. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, particularly Chapters 1 and 2, is the material for this reading. The correspondence between select contours of Pauline fallenness and those of Nietzschean ressentiment validates the hypothesised association, propelling the investigation of self-deception forward. This brings to light a congruence of self-deception between the Nietzschean ressentiment-man and the Pauline fallen-man. It also recommends a driving motive for self-deception, fear of death. Death as a theme for Nietzsche is examined both biographically and philosophically. Seminal conclusions from the thesis argument are reviewed, contributions to the existing literature are offered, and significance of the project for the psychology of religion is discussed.