

Articles

On *ressentiment*, Resentment, and Some of Their Uses

Part 1. Nietzsche

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Abstract. Since Nietzsche, *ressentiment* and resentment have been used in a number of philosophical, psychological, anthropological, historical, sociological, and political discourses. The aim of this contribution is not to propose a new interpretation of *ressentiment* and related feelings (such as envy, anger, and revenge), but rather, from a history of ideas perspective, to provide material for a history of how *ressentiment*, resentment, and the constellation of emotions associated with them have been employed by Nietzsche and other authors in their analyses of modern society. This contribution consists of three parts. The present one is devoted to Nietzsche himself and to some often conflicting interpretations that have been proposed of his notion of *ressentiment*. The second part, which will be published later in this journal, will address authors who used resentment, envy, and related concepts in interpreting society after the French Revolution. The third part will discuss more recent developments and uses of *ressentiment*/resentment.

Keywords: resentment, *ressentiment*, envy, Nietzsche, morality, modernity.

Dumas had truly a clear understanding of the human mind. What does everyone desire, and desire more fervently the more wretched and unfortunate they are? To earn money easily, to have power (the enormous pleasure in commanding and humiliating your fellow man) and to avenge every wrong suffered (everyone in life has suffered at least one wrong, however small it may be). And that is why in *Monte Cristo* he shows how to amass great wealth, enough to give you superhuman power, and to make your

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enemies pay back every debt. But why, everybody asks, am I not blessed by fortune (or at least not as blessed as I would like to be)? Why have I not been favored like others who are less deserving? As no one believes their misfortunes are attributable to any shortcomings of their own, this is why they must find a culprit. Dumas offers to the frustration of everyone (individual as well as countries) the explanation for their failures. It was someone else, on the Thunder Mountain, who planned your ruin.

Umberto Eco

Introduction. Enter *ressentiment*

The passage from Umberto Eco's novel¹ must ring a bell for readers familiar with Nietzsche. It describes a psychological attitude and a way of reasoning that recalls what he called *ressentiment*: a process in which the inability – or unwillingness – to recognize that your misfortunes stem from your own shortcomings or congenital weakness urges you to seek a cause, or a culprit, outside yourself. Feeling, in addition, frustrated and incapable of taking immediate action or revenge, sufferers who believe that someone is plotting against them dream of imaginary compensations in the future – and ultimately in another world – where the evildoers will be punished by a higher justice.

According to Nietzsche, this psychological syndrome originated in the hatred of the weak and the sick for the strong and healthy. It fueled “the revenge of Judea on Rome” and reached its acme in Christianity.² In Christianity, *ressentiment* was turned inward, redirected back into the sufferer, thereby generating “bad conscience” and a “sense of guilt.” It was the ascetic priest's “masterpiece” to discharge this “most dangerous deflagrating and explosive stuff” in such a way that it did not blow up the “herd:” he redirected *ressentiment* toward an alleged cause – or rather, a “*responsible* author” of the suffering – someone onto whom the sufferers could discharge their passions, effectively or *in effigie*, thereby finding relief for their pain, as if through a pain-deadening narcotic. For this is what all sufferers, “all sickly sheep”, instinctively seek – and all the more so, the more the “real cause” of their illness escapes them (GM III, 15).³

¹ Eco (2011, 77-78). A couple of commas have been omitted. The Thunder Mountain is the site where, in Dumas' novel *Joseph Balsamo* (1853), freemasons meet secretly to plan the overthrow of the French monarchy and the Catholic Church.

² Above all thanks to Paul, “the greatest apostle of revenge (*Rache*)” (*Anti-Christ*, 45). See the following footnote for citation conventions.

³ *On the Genealogy of Morals* (hereafter GM), III, 15, in Nietzsche (1967-), hereafter KSA. Other works by Nietzsche in KSA will be cited by title (with the exception of *Beyond Good and Evil*, hereafter BGE), followed by part (if any) and section, or aphorism, numbers. NF

This “internalization” has since pervaded, intoxicated, and devitalized the (Western) world. The result has been *décadence*. *Ressentiment* manifests itself in the belief in the equality of human beings and universal rights, and in the democratic and socialist enmity toward everything that bears the flavor of distinction and privilege. On a metaphysical level, it nourishes belief in the intrinsic wickedness of the body – as opposed to the supposed superiority of the spirit – and the depreciation of this world under the pretext, or delusion, that true reality lies beyond it.⁴

Nietzsche introduced the French word *ressentiment* in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). Here is the relevant passage:

The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself [*das Ressentiment selbst*] becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings that are denied the proper reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant Yes-saying to oneself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is ‘outside’, what is ‘different’, what is not ‘oneself’; and *this* No is its creative deed. This reversal of the value-positing eye – this *need* to direct oneself outward instead of back onto oneself – is specific of *ressentiment*: in order to come about, slave morality always first needs an opposing, external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all – its action is fundamentally reaction. (GM I, 10)

As can be seen, Nietzsche gives no definition of the term here; nor does he provide one elsewhere in the work, although it plays a key role throughout. Why? Nietzsche’s addition of “itself” to the term in the above passage – as if he had already used and explained it, or as if it were self-explanatory – suggests that he did not consider himself to be introducing anything new or unfamiliar to the reader. The present essay takes its cue from the question: why no definition? My aim here is not to propose my own interpretation of *ressentiment* (there are many, perhaps too many, as we shall see), let alone to trace a history of what philosophers and moralists have said about it and related feelings (for instance, envy, anger, indignation, and revenge), but to contribute some materials for a history of the way *ressentiment*, resentment, and the cluster of emotions related to or coalescing around them were *used* by Nietzsche and other authors in their analysis of modern society.

will denote the *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, and BVN the *Briefwechsel*, both in the same edition. I will use Walter Kaufmann’s translation of GM (Nietzsche 1989); Carol Diethe’s translation (Nietzsche 2007) will also be considered. Other abbreviations will be explained in the notes. In addition to the studies on GM mentioned below, two key reference works are Brusotti (1992 and 2001).

⁴ Cf. Nietzsche (1968, 579): “To imagine another, more valuable world is an expression of hatred for a world that makes one suffer: the *ressentiment* of metaphysicians against actuality is here creative”.

Since Nietzsche, *ressentiment* and resentment have been used in a number of philosophical, psychological, anthropological, historical, sociological, and political discourses – including “psychopolitical” and “cosmopolitical” (van Tuinen 2011). These discourses address the most diverse subjects: shopkeeper protest in nineteenth-century Paris (Nord 2005); Nazi antisemitism (Burrin 2004); recent developments in British and American social and political life (Wehner 2012; Maslen 2013; Mishra 2016, 2017); the protest movements of “enraged citizens” (*Wutbürger*) in Germany (Mannweiler 2016); relations between Western and non-Western cultures; the consequences of Muslim communitarianism in Europe (Grjebine 2011); populism from Marx to Arafat (van Tuinen 2014); the “globalization of resentment” as a possible driver of “global terrorism” (Brighi 2016); resentment in Confucian ethics (Nelson 2016); critiques of old and new liberal discourse (van Tuinen 2020); and proposals for a new Left grounded in a “pedagogy” of resentment (van Tuinen 2024). Other works examine distinctions and connections between “*ressentiment* and dissensus” in academic life (Riou and Gallagher 2016 – an essential feature of that world, and a never-ending source of satire or moral loathing, depending on one’s tastes); the place of *ressentiment* in “the politics and ethics of moral emotions”; its role in history (Ball 2003; Ferro 2010), nationalism (Greenfeld 1990, 1992), revolutions (Fitzpatrick 2001), ideologies (Angenot 1997), and contemporary society – perhaps a society of resentment? – as both a source of malaise (Tomelleri 2005, 2009, 2013, 2015, 2023) and moral concern for fairness and/or justice (Stocker and Hegemann 1996, 265-322; La Caze 2001; Ben-Ze’ev 2002) in contexts marked by inequality and competitiveness. The same holds true for envy, anger, hatred, and similar emotions, which function not only as evaluative markers but also as sources of moral and political claims. Matters become even more complicated – and sometimes confused – when the discourse extends to such authors as Jean Améry, René Girard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gilles Deleuze (van Tuinen 2014, 2016, 2017), or to literary figures ranging from Hermann Hesse to Albert Camus and Primo Levi. In a word, *ressentiment* and resentment – now distinguished from one another, now used interchangeably – have become a pair of jacks-of-all-trades.

In 1966, Bernard Williams criticized analytic moral philosophers for neglecting emotions. Things have changed since then (Bagnoli 2011), mainly due to the rise of cognitive sciences. The study of emotions – or feelings, sentiments, or passions (call them what you like; no need to quibble over words for the moment) – in their historical, cultural, social, and political aspects is receiving new or renewed interest. It is now the subject of a growing literature,⁵ with specialized journals and book series devoted

⁵ For a review of the field, see Rosenwein (2001), Rosenwein and Cristiani (2018), and Barclay (2021). As for Nietzsche, see Solomon (1993, 2015) and Yunus (2021).

to it. Hopefully, such studies will interact with those in moral philosophy, which too often tend to neglect the history of words and concepts and the contexts in which they have been used. It is important to take into account not only the “historicity of emotions” (Rorty 1987) but also their political sources (Rorty 1988a, b).

A historian of ideas must take variability and differences in meaning and usage into account, even at the cost of rummaging through what might, at first sight, seem to be rubbish (Pagel 1985). Words are like trawl nets, dragging along not only fish but all sorts of other things, while some slip through holes in the net and disappear. Tracing a long-term, linear history of concepts is possible only when concepts are clearly defined by those who use them – which is hardly ever the case. This is especially true of resentment and *ressentiment*, which have often been used as if their meaning were clear to everyone.⁶ Consequently, any attempt to simplify the historian’s task by summarizing many authors’ ideas to fit them into a narrative inevitably risks distorting those ideas or neglecting aspects, ramifications, implications, or tacit assumptions behind the concepts considered. The only remedy is to give the authors the floor as much as possible. Therefore, I will include long – often very long – quotations, both in the text and in the footnotes. I apologize for this, but I fear most (or at least many) of them are necessary.

What’s in a word

Needless to say, a number of Nietzsche scholars have dealt with *ressentiment*. However, it is not always easy to distinguish what they think Nietzsche actually said from what they take him to have said – or from what they argue he implied, or ought to have said. Some have displayed considerable ingenuity in, as it were, substituting themselves for him, filling gaps in his argument, or explaining his apparent ambiguities and contradictions by imposing consistency even where there may have been none. Others have revised or rejected his view of *ressentiment*, particularly in relation to the notions of justice and responsibility. In doing so, they have sometimes gone so far as to rewrite him in the idiom of contemporary analytic philosophy.⁷ As a result, Nietzsche’s *ressentiment* often fails

⁶ On the history and uses of these terms, see Brahami (2012), Jarrige (2012), Koch (2012), Sévéric (2012), Taranto (2012), Minou (2013), Ferlito (2013), Derminaur (2013), and Bertolini (2023).

⁷ Babich (1999, 22 note 8) forcefully rejects Arthur Danto’s claim that the focus of Nietzsche’s thought coincides with the analytic concerns of mainstream philosophy. She adds: “This bluntly unreconstructed view continues to operate as the analytic assumption shared by [Richard] Schacht and [Maudemarie] Clark and many other scholars and which same presumption constitutes the privilege of the mainstream.”

to coincide with what these scholars mean when they discuss ‘resentment’. In other cases, so many clever and important qualifications, distinctions, and sub-distinctions have been introduced around both resentment and *ressentiment*⁸ that one cannot help but recall the dictum of that old and now largely forgotten German philosopher – that “thought dies in the midst of too many qualifications”. That is quite normal in philosophy, but the historian is often left with the impression of witnessing a lively discussion following a provocative paper read by Professor Nietzsche of Basel at a conference being held in New York City.⁹

In an enormous – and still growing – literature that would deserve an analysis of its own, Nietzsche has been explained, commented on, contextualized, criticized, revised, rejected, vindicated, integrated,¹⁰ straightened up, ‘updated’, and brought in to answer questions he never asked – sometimes even defended against the charge of being a ‘villain’, at the cost of rescuing him from, or turning him against, himself. As van Tuinen (2024, 13) remarks, “the attempts to break with Nietzsche’s partiality and offer a more systematic theory of *ressentiment* so far have been nothing but ways of licensing one’s own point of view”.¹¹ He has also been used as a source of inspiration for independent diagnoses of modernity – attempts that have sometimes ended up over-Nietzscheing or even out-Nietzscheing him. However, it is one thing to ask what Nietzsche actually said, it is another to ask whether he was right in saying it and yet another to take a word or concept from his work, extract it from its context, and treat it as a self-standing or self-explanatory object of reflection. As Solomon (1994, 96) observed, “traditional [?] moral theorists and Nietzsche expositors [...] often talk past one

⁸ For instance, Bittner (1994), Wallace (2007a, b), Abbey (2009), MacLachlan (2010), Poellner (2011, 2015), Ure (2015), Aeschbach (2017) Merrick (2020), Olschanki (2021), and Neckel (2023).

⁹ It may be excessive to claim, as Losurdo (2019) does, that Nietzsche’s work exhibits a persistent “interlacement of political discourse and analysis of moral sentiments”, or that his analysis of envy and compassion in *Human, All Too Human* possesses an “eminently political character”. Yet many interpreters continue to discuss concepts such as envy, resentment, and *ressentiment* in this or that author as if these notions had emerged in a vacuum and could be analyzed *in vitro*. However, when one denounces political actors or agitators on the grounds that they are driven by *ressentiment*, and cites them as examples of *ressentiment* pervading society, one is inevitably engaging in political discourse. See also Detwiler (1990) and Ansell-Pearson (1991).

¹⁰ “I have tried to fill Nietzsche’s ideal with content”, says for instance Risse (2003, 168).

¹¹ An important instance of this is Solomon (1994). He argues that “resentment lies at the heart of democracy – Nietzsche was right about that – but that is not an argument against it. Resentment is no mere ‘reaction’ but a keen sense of injustice, which is, in turn, the foundation of our sense of justice and the interpersonal linkage [...] that ties our society together [...] Justice requires taking resentment seriously” (ibid., 116–117, 119, 126, note 27; see also Solomon 1990). One can easily imagine Nietzsche replying: “Quite so. That’s exactly what I meant: the modern sense of justice and democracy – yours included – is essentially rotten from the origin, and your reasoning shows that you and everyone else cannot escape this mental prison unless we go *beyond*...”

another". I am not quite sure what "traditional" means here, but the fact remains: faced with this undeniable intertwining – or overlapping, or mix – of history and theory, of reconstruction and deconstruction, one is often left perplexed. Let's then go back to Nietzsche himself.

Whatever Nietzsche's reason for introducing *ressentiment*, according to him it lies at the origin of current morality. It is the basis on which, and the material out of which, current moral values have been produced. They were generated by "the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned" (*die Missrathenen, die Verkleinerten, die Verkümmerten, die Vergifteten*). They fathered "the surfeit of ill-constituted, sickly, weary and exhausted people of which Europe is beginning to stink today (*Überfülle des Misrathenen, Kränklichen, Müden, Verlebten [...] nach dem heute Europa zu stinken beginnt*) (GM I, 11)". Throughout his writings Nietzsche refers to such ignoble, miserable, base, venomous and life-debasing human wretch by a panoply of disparaging terms that have been variously translated as the "misdeveloped", "mishappened", "needy", "bungled", "botched", "underprivileged", "inferior", "sickly", "ailing", "ugly", "suffering", "deprived", "afflicted", "impotent", "frustrated", "failures", "badly made", "misfits", "herd", in a word those suffering from an "impoverishment of life"... (*die Schwachen, die Armen, die Kranken, die Zerdrückten, die Niedergetretenen, die Leidenden, die Schlechtweggekommenen, die Niedriggestellten, die Entbehrenden, die Unterdrückten, die Beherrschten, die Unterstehenden, die Sklaven, die Herde, die Ausgestoßenen, die Niedriggesinnten, die Beraubten, die Misshandelten, die Weggeschleppten, die Verkauften, die Tschandala...*). To them Nietzsche opposes the "powerful", "dominant", "blooming", "happy", "beautiful", "noble", "self-secure", "superior", etc., in a word those characterized by an "overfullness of life" (*die Vornehmen, die Mächtigen, die Herrschenden, die Gutweggekommenen, die Gesunden, die Glücklichen, die Hoffenden, die Starken, die Wohlgeratenen...*).

The whole argument of the *Genealogy* rests on this fundamental, original and natural difference between two types of mankind, a difference that is at the same time psychological *and* physiological. This is a key point, and Nietzsche is absolutely unequivocal on it: "every table of values, every 'thou shalt' known to history or ethnology, requires first a *physiological* investigation and interpretation, rather than a psychological one; and every one of them needs a critique on the part of medical science" (Nietzsche's Note at the end of GM I). Here a short digression is necessary.

Nietzsche's language might seem to bear a striking similarity to that of some authors belonging to that congeries which goes under the generic, and misleading, label 'social Darwinism'. However, only *to some extent* can Nietzsche be said to be a member of that composite population, which has been used to cover all shades of opinion and, what is more important, *influenced* the way Darwin's theory was interpreted and

applied to society.¹² By the same token, he can also be said to have shared eugenic opinions. For instance, in a manuscript fragment of Autumn, 1887, he invoked extreme measures, like castration, against pathological or hereditary criminals as a means of preventing their propagation (NF-VIII.2, 10 [50]).¹³ He manifested such opinions *before* becoming acquainted with the writings of Galton (Moore 2002, 134-137).¹⁴ Later, he was also influenced by authors such as Charles Féré (1888) in his reflections on *décadence* and degeneration.

Nietzsche, who saw himself as a “physician of culture” and spoke of “my physical way or thinking (*meine physikalische Denweise*)” (Nietzsche 1981, 325; letter 373), examined Western culture in terms of a “physiological dynamic” of exhaustion, decadence, sickness, and death¹⁵. He was adamant that inquiries into the nature of morality could not dispense

¹² Campioni (2016, 29) writes: “Certainly, Nietzsche’s strong distance from social-Darwinist ideology emerges from the themes of the *Genealogy*: the separation between evolution towards the superior type and the struggle for existence is absolute. Nietzsche defines *ressentiment* as reactivity, a polemical constitution of those who are incapable of affirmation and spontaneous activity, which is instead a surplus of plastic force. The superior type, creator of values and language, does not need the enemy and the struggle to define himself. Here, Nietzsche’s distance from the naturalistic ideology of conflict typical of social Darwinism is clear”. Nietzsche utterly rejected the ideology of progress through struggle for life, which is usually (but not rightly) considered to be the main feature of social Darwinism, because he rejected the notion of progress *as such*. According to him, Darwinists attached too much importance to external circumstances and to adaptation to them – a view which ran counter his titanistic and aristocratic vitalism, and to his notion that the struggle which matters is fought *against* circumstances in order to overcome them (Oudai Celso 2016). Nietzsche also thought of grouping his criticism of Darwinism under the heading “Anti-Darwin”. It should be remembered that many authors generally labelled as social Darwinists were not really Darwinian. The Swiss biologist Wilhelm Roux, whose theory of the “struggle of parts within the organism” was taken seriously by Nietzsche (see below, note 39), claimed to have extended, not revised, Darwin’s theory. On Nietzsche and Darwinism see below, pp. 45-46 and note 35.

¹³ See, for instance, *Beyond Good and Evil* – henceforth BGE – in Nietzsche 1990, 62: “Among men, as among every other species, there is a surplus of failures, of the sick, the degenerate, the fragile, of those who are bound to suffer; the successful cases, among men too, always the exception, and, considering that man is the animal *whose nature has not yet been fixed*, the rare exception”. The two main religions have sought to preserve and retain in life “too much of that which ought to perish”. They have worked “at the preservation of everything sick and suffering, which means in fact and truth, at the *corruption of the European race*”. Contrary to Strong (1975, 274-275), Schutte (1984, 160-169), and Detwiler (1990, 107-113), Schacht (1994, 326-340) minimizes the importance of Nietzsche’s eugenic statements as “rhetorical excesses”.

¹⁴ On Nietzsche’s reading of Galton see Haase 1989.

¹⁵ Ahern argues that Nietzsche’s perspectivism is rooted to the dynamics of instincts. We are the fighting field of instincts and their perspectives. Faced with the collapse of “truth”, the decadent organism reacts in a way similar to that of the ‘slaves’: it invents a new fiction by drawing on the survival instinct and resentment. The history of values is a history of interpretations, and behind all interpretations there is a struggle between instincts. To interpret is to falsify. “Interpretations are manifestations of the dynamics of power wherein multiple drive-perspectives fictionalize the world in whatever manner allows preservation and growth” (Ahern 1995, 155; cf. Stack 1991, 38; Cox 1999, 239–245).

with a “genuine (*eigentliche*) physio-psychology” (BGE, 23, in Nietzsche 1990; cf. 13, 20, 26, 202, 208, 209, 230, 231, 234, 242, 247). “Moral judgements and evaluations [...] are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us”, so that “it is always necessary to draw forth [...] the *physiological* phenomenon behind the moral predispositions and prejudices” (*Daybreak*, 119, 542). “Even behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, there are valuations, or to speak more plainly, physiological demands, for the maintenance of a definite mode of life” (BGE, 3).

In his typical, and not a little ostentatious, medico-biological language, Nietzsche says that the “real cause [...], the physiological cause” of the man of *ressentiment*’s feeling ill “may perhaps lie in some disease of the *nervus sympathicus*, or in an excessive secretion of bile, or in a deficiency of potassium sulphate and phosphate in the blood, or in an obstruction in the abdomen which impedes the blood circulation, or in degeneration of the ovaries, and the like” (GM III, 15). Conversely, he will say later, “sickness itself is a kind of *ressentiment*” (*Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I am so wise’, 6). The sick “cannot get rid of anything, cannot get over anything, cannot repel anything – everything hurts”, as “man’s remedial instinct, his *defense and offense instinct*, wears out”. Against all this, he went on to say, the sick person has only one great remedy: “*Russian fatalism*”, that “fatalism without revolt which is exemplified by the Russian soldier who, finding a campaign too strenuous, finally lies down in the snow”, and ceases reacting altogether, like a fakir who sleeps for weeks in a grave.

This fatalism is not always the courage to die; it can also preserve life under the most perilous conditions by reducing the metabolism, slowing it down, as a kind of will to hibernate [...] Because one would use oneself too quickly if one reacted in *any* way, one does not react at all any more: this is the logic. Nothing burns one up faster than the affects of *ressentiment*. Anger, pathological vulnerability, impotent lust for revenge, thirst for revenge, poison-mixing in any sense – no reaction could be more disadvantageous for the exhausted: such affects involve a rapid consumption of nervous energy, a pathological increase of harmful excretions – for example, of the gall bladder into the stomach. *Ressentiment* is what is forbidden *par excellence* for the sick – it is their specific evil – unfortunately also their most natural inclination. This was comprehended by that profound physiologist, the Buddha. His “religion” should rather be called a kind of *hygiene*, lest it be confused with such pitiable phenomena as Christianity: its effectiveness was made conditional on the victory over *ressentiment*. To liberate the soul from this is the first step toward recovery. “Not by enmity is enmity ended; by friendliness enmity is ended”: these words stand at the beginning of the doctrine of the Buddha. It is not morality that speaks thus; thus speaks physiology. Born of weakness, *ressentiment* is most harmful for the weak themselves. Conversely, given a

rich nature, it is a superfluous feeling; mastering this feeling is virtually what proves rich. (ibid.).¹⁶

One wonders how it has been possible for so many interpreters to belittle or ignore what Nietzsche said about “the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment*, vengefulness, and the like” (GM III, 15). His pervasive use of physiological and medical language must be taken seriously, as Moore (2002) has definitively shown, and not dismissed as merely metaphorical.¹⁷ Nietzsche wrote that “the instinct of the herd-animal man [...] has broken through and come to predominate and prevail over the other instincts and is coming to do so more and more in proportions to the increasing physiological approximation and assimilation of which it is the symptom” (BGE 202). He used his physico-psychological method of analysis over and over again, to pass disparaging judgements on “anarchist dogs” as well as “placid” industrialist democrats and revolutionary ideologists”, “stupid philosophasters and brotherhood fanatics” (ibidem), and... women (for instance, BGE 234). “Moral judgements and evaluations”, he wrote, “are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us”, so that “it is always necessary to draw forth [...] the *physiological* phenomenon behind the moral predispositions and prejudices” (*Daybreak* 119, 542). The “knightly-aristocratic values judgements presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health” (GM I, 7) which is consequent of their being “well-constituted” (GM I, 14). “The men of *ressentiment*”, eaten by “the worms of vengefulness and rancor (*die Würmer der Rach- und Nachgefühle*)” are so because they are “physiologically unfortunate” (GM III, 14). *Ressentiment* consists of restless remembering, self-nourishing rancor, and “bad digestion”. The “unhealthy” ascetic priest is described in medical terms (GM III, 15): “intestinal morbidity and neurasthenia [...] has afflicted priests at all times” (GM I, 6). “Swallowing things leads of necessity to a bad character—it even upsets the stomach. All who remain silent are dyspeptic” (*Ecce Homo*, I, 5). Himself a dyspeptic (as well as a sufferer from other diseases), Nietzsche knew what he meant. He did not refrain from using himself as an example of the

¹⁶ Although the word *ressentiment* does not appear in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Campioni (2016, 23-25) argues convincingly that the book “had for Nietzsche also the therapeutic function of liberating him from *ressentiment*. ‘Purification from revenge is my morality’, he wrote in May or June, 1883 [...] From the very Prologue of the book, we have to deal with the spirit of revenge, the bearer of resentment [...] under the shape of the horrible and cruel clown [...] He is Zarathustra’s double, his danger, the bearer of *ressentiment*, by which he claims to speed up the exit from decadence”. The very language of the “Fool” (*Narr*), whom the people call “Zarathustra’s ape”, is characterized by the “spirit of revenge”.

¹⁷ And so are his pronouncements on races, which are often accompanied by physiological evaluations (for instance, BGE 48, 195, 229, 244, 252; GM I, 5, 9; GM III, 17).

direct relationship between illness and *ressentiment*.¹⁸ On 26 August 1883, he wrote to Heinrich Köselitz:

For a whole year I was hounded to get at a kind of feelings which I have renounced with the very best will in the world and over which I really believed I had gained mastery in the most absolute way: feelings of revenge and ‘ressentiment’ [*Rachegefühle und ‘ressentiment’*]. – And in doing so my instincts and intentions have become so confused and labyrinthine that I don’t know how to get out of it. (Nietzsche 1981, 435, letter 457; cf. his letter to Franz Overbeck on the same day, *ibid.* 437, letter 458).

On the brink of the end of his conscious life he openly confessed to have struggled against *ressentiment* throughout his life:

Freedom from *ressentiment*, enlightenment about *ressentiment* – who knows how much I am ultimately indebted, in this respect also, to my protracted sickness! This problem is far from simple: one must have experienced it from strength as well as from weakness. If anything at all must be adduced against being sick and being weak, it is that man’s remedial instinct, his *fighting instinct* [*Wehr- und Waffen-Instinkt*], wears out. One cannot get rid of anything, one cannot get over anything, one cannot repel anything – everything hurts. Men and things obtrude too closely; experiences strike one too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound. Sickness itself is a kind of *ressentiment*. (*Ecce Homo* I, 6)¹⁹

Not only were Nietzsche’s dismissive judgements on democrats, progressivists, socialists, and anarchists often couched in medical terms. He even traced philosophical attitudes back to physiological causes. Thus, for instance, “skepticism is the most spiritual expression of a certain complex physiological condition called in ordinary language nervous debility and sickliness; it arises whenever races or classes long separated from one another are decisively and suddenly crossed [...] Behind all the moral and political foregrounds indicated by such formulas [as ‘civilization’, humanization’, ‘progress’, or ‘democratic movement’] a great *physiological* process is taking place” (BGE 3, 242). “Our Europe of today, the scene of a senselessly sudden attempt at radical class – and *consequently* race – mixture, is as a result skeptical from top to bottom [...] and often sick to death of its will! Paralysis of will: where does one not find this cripple sitting today!” (BGE, 208). Even “the spell of definite grammatical functions is in the last resort the spell of physiological value judgements and racial conditions [...] That which translates worst from one language into another is the tempo

¹⁸ According to Pasley (1978), Nietzsche’s views on health were influenced by his own manifold concerns about it. See also Podolsky and Tauber (1999), Campioni (2016).

¹⁹ For a sharp analysis of “Nietzsche beyond *ressentiment*” see Lupo (2015).

of its style, which has its origin in the character of the race, or, expressed more physiologically, in the average tempo of its ‘metabolism’” (BGE 20, 28). No wonder, then, Nietzsche’s description of “the European of today” puts together aesthetic, social, physical, physiological, psychological and moral qualities (for instance BGE 62). He was neither the first nor the last to make such a mixture of symptoms and causes of *décadence* (Gilman and Chamberlin 1985; Pick 1989).

When Nietzsche wrote that, at a certain point, “*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values”, he implied that *ressentiment* was already present even before the so-called “slave revolt”. It is, therefore, a part of human nature, a spontaneous reaction that arises when the will to power, inherent in *all* living things,²⁰ is denied full expression. For life, as such, *is* will to power, and its social consequences are inevitable.

Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one’s own forms, incorporation and at the least and mildest, exploitation [*Ausbeutung*] [...] Even that body within which [...] individuals treat one another as equals – this happens in every healthy aristocracy – must, if it is a living and not a decaying body, itself do all to other bodies which the individuals within it refrain from doing to one another: it will have to be the will to power incarnate, it will want to grow, expand, draw to itself, gain ascendancy – not out of any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life *is* will to power [...] ‘Exploitation’ [*Ausbeutung*] does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it pertains to the *essence* of the living thing [*Wesen des Lebendigen*] as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life [*Wille des Lebens*]. [This] is the *primordial fact* [*das Ur-Faktum*] of all history. (BGE 259, in Nietzsche 1990)²¹.

²⁰ Including cells (Moore 2002, 27-28), and, going even deeper, all the “will-quanta”, as Müller-Lauter (2006, 210) defines them, which are the basic constituents of living entities. Cf. BGE 13: “Physiologists should bethink themselves before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength – life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results* thereof”.

²¹ This passage is preceded by two passages in which Nietzsche asserts that some form of slavery is inevitable. The first (BGE 257) is the famous one where Nietzsche mentions the “*pathos of distance*”, without which the “self-overcoming of man (*Selbst-Überwindung des Menschen*)” is impossible: “Every elevation of the type ‘man’ has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society and so it will always be: a society which believes in a long scale of orders of rank and differences of worth between man and man and needs slavery in some sense or other”. No “humanitarian illusion” must blind us to the necessity of “the incarnate difference of classes”, of “the ruling caste’s constant looking out and looking down on subjects and instruments, and [of] their equally constant practice of obeying and commanding, of keeping down and keeping at a distance”. In the second passage (BGE 258) Nietzsche writes: “The essential thing, [...] in a good and healthy aristocracy is that it [...] accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of innumerable men who *for its sake* have to be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental faith must be that society should *not* exist for the sake of society but only as a foundation and scaffolding upon which a select species

And in a manuscript text of early 1888 (which was altered and incorporated by Nietzsche's sister in her infamous edition of *The Will to Power*) we read that "neither hunger nor self-preservation are the *primum mobile*"; on the contrary, "hunger is the consequence of a will to power that can no longer become master".

What man wants, what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increase of power. Pleasure or displeasure follow from the striving after that; driven by that will it seeks resistance, it needs something that opposes it. Displeasure, as an obstacle to its will to power, is therefore a normal fact, the normal ingredient of every organic event; man does not avoid it, he is rather in continual need of it; every victory, every feeling of pleasure, every event, presupposes a resistance overcome. Let us take the simplest case, that of primitive nourishment: the protoplasm extends its pseudopodia in search of something that resists it – not from hunger but from will to power. Thereupon it attempts to overcome, appropriate, assimilate what it encounters: what one calls "nourishment" is merely a derivative phenomenon, an application of the original will to become *stronger*. Displeasure thus is so far from necessarily resulting in a diminution of our feeling of power that in the average case it actually stimulates this feeling of power – the obstacle is the *stimulus* of this will to power. (NF-VIII.3, 14 [174–175]; translation (modified) in Nietzsche 1968, 702; see also *ibid.*, 651, 656)

It is, then, impossible to be entirely free from *ressentiment*. Even the 'nobles' can experience it, but, as Ridley (1998, 24) puts it, "amongst the nobles *ressentiment* does not give birth to [the] slavish mode of values", because "the noble reacts 'before he has a chance'". Acting – even rudely – is healthier than simmering in rancor and turning one's reactive instincts inward. As Zarathustra recommends, "a little revenge is more human than no revenge" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I, 19). Reaction is not wrong in itself, but only when it is 'moralized' in the manner of the slaves. Nietzsche distinguishes between a healthy form of re-acting, which is typical of the noble and includes forgetting (a positive and vital force, in his view),²² and a pathological process of re-re¹-re²...reⁿ-action (where $n = \infty$), in which the first impulse, not being discharged, initiates a never-ending, self-reinforcing cycle – with no proper action taking place at all.²³ It is this second form of reaction that Nietzsche identifies as the origin of the

of being is able to raise itself to its higher task and in general to a higher *existence* (*zu einem höheren Sein*).

²²As Nietzsche made clear as early as the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, "On the use and disadvantage of history for life" (1874).

²³That the healthy psycho-physiological state consists of a balance between the system of active forces and that of reactive forces has been stressed by Deleuze (1986, chapter 4). He also emphasizes forgetfulness as a positive force that keeps these two systems separate, thereby maintaining their balance.

slave revolt in morality, and which he generally refers to as *ressentiment*. It became “creative”, that is, it generated fantastical compensations – because it shifted reaction from real life to thought, from immediate action and discharge to the axiological and metaphysical plane, thereby giving rise to entire religious and philosophical systems.

Ressentiment itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*: on the other hand, it fails to appear at all on countless occasions on which it inevitably appears in the weak and impotent. To be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget [...] Such a man shakes off with a *single shrug* many vermin that eat deep into others; here alone genuine ‘love of one’s enemies’ is possible – supposing it to be possible at all on earth. (GM I, 10; translation slightly modified)

In a word, as long as the *Herrenmoral* prevailed, *ressentiment* remained an individual phenomenon: it was either immediately discharged and dispelled (in the master) or repressed by force (in the slave). It became the decisive factor in the genesis of present morality only when it turned into a collective and organized phenomenon – that is, a *passion sociale* (Grandjean and Guénard 2012).

The values *ressentiment* gives birth to are *counter*-values: slave morality, Nietzsche says, is a “reversal” of healthy aristocratic values. Not a few interpreters, perhaps misled by Nietzsche himself, have made much of the prefix “re-” in *ressentiment*.²⁴ However, focusing too narrowly on its reactive aspect risks overlooking the more fundamental process that occurs *before* the reaction, or even before the impulse to react is felt. It is true that Nietzsche claims inferior natures – weak both physically and psychologically – are not capable of action, but only of *re*-action. Yet he also states that “they are prevented from reacting in the proper way” (*die eigentliche Reaktion versagt ist*) (NF-1887, 8 [4]). It is therefore not reaction or revenge as such that is bad, but rather reacting and taking revenge in a devious and (self-)poisoning way.

Genealogy?

Nietzsche did not delve into the full range of *ressentiment*’s multifarious manifestations. He treated it as a unified cultural, social, and ultimately bio-psychological phenomenon that characterized a general and

²⁴ An example is Max Scheler, whose *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen* (1915) will be discussed in the forthcoming part of my contribution.

increasingly dominant human type.²⁵ Although his analysis is subtle and insightful, and remains thought-provoking, it is based on an “extreme typologization of opposites (*Gegensatz-Typisierung*)” (Stegmaier 1994, 120), that is, on the opposition between “two anthropological types” (Llinares Chover 2008, 51-52). His is a “speculative anthropology,” an exercise in “animal psychology, consisting of conjectural natural history” (Risse 2003, 142 and *passim*; 157, note 52).²⁶ His masters and slaves are *physically* and *psychologically* distinct. They express their will to power in two essentially opposed ways. The former are healthy, full of life, exuberant, self-assertive, self-confident, joyously childish, improvident, and spontaneous – both in generosity and in acts of horrific violence; they take immediate revenge or simply ignore offences out of an unconscious sense of superiority. In short, they are psychically elementary, think little, and are more ‘animal’ than the slaves.²⁷ The latter, by contrast, are sick and incapable of action; they can *only* react. They are subtle, contemplative, calculating; they reflect, wait, and scheme. Obviously, such an oversimplification has no historical basis, not even in Greek mythology or Homer’s heroes (Solomon 1994). As Hamilton (2000, 174) notes, Nietzsche offers no concrete example of the noble he has in mind. He is content to speak in general terms of “the Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavian Vikings” (GM I, 11).²⁸ According to Hamilton, Nietzsche is

²⁵ Nietzsche’s portrait of the ascetic priest also boils down to an *Idealtyp*: he describes the ascetic priest as if all manifestations of asceticism were basically the same as those embodied by the Jewish and later Christian priest.

²⁶ If this is so, it is not clear why Risse argues in the same note that “Nietzsche is concerned to detach certain inquiries from philosophical a priori investigation and move them into the realm of *empirically-minded* inquiries”.

²⁷ In some respects, Nietzsche’s nobles curiously resemble the “savages” described by many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthropologists (including Herbert Spencer, one of his polemical targets) as closer to animals than to civilized humans. Solomon (1994, 120) notes that Nietzsche’s masters and higher natures display “a carefree, nonjudgemental attitude, even a ‘bold recklessness’ that he clearly envied”. However, “Nietzsche insists that [in some particular cases] master and slave morality can coexist within the same personality – no doubt an accurate self-assessment” (ibid., 126, note 25). Is it an exaggeration to suggest that Nietzsche harbors a kind of ‘Romantic’ nostalgia for a natural condition irretrievably lost with the birth of consciousness?

²⁸ Nor does Nietzsche fully explain the appearance of the ascetic priest. Where did he come from? Was he a ‘Darwinian’ chance variation? If he emerged from within the slave herd, the slaves cannot be represented as an undifferentiated mass of uniformly passive beings. Reginster (1997, 285-286, 289) assumes that the priest belonged to the ruling noble class, but the passages of GM he cites do not seem to support this interpretation. The same applies to Conway (2015, 134), who claims: “As a solution to the problem of the unruly slaves, the knightly nobles appointed the priestly nobles to quell the lower orders”, but “the priestly nobles” did not accept “their demotion to second-class status among the nobles”. Nietzsche wrote that it is “when the highest caste is at the same time the *priestly* caste [...] that ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ confront one another for the first time”, but he never specifies when that “first time” occurred. On the nobility of the priest see also Anderson (2011).

so vague on this point because those nobles “do not, in fact, fit the model that Nietzsche has given”. Achilles himself “has got the sulks”. He does not simply act on his drives and impulses; on the contrary, he broods over the offence he has suffered from Agamemnon. Neither he nor any other of Homer’s heroes was merely a “blond beast” dominated by a single instinct. Even the Greek gods – those “reflections of noble and autocratic men, in whom *the animal in man* felt deified and did *not* lacerate itself, did *not* rage against itself” (GM II, 23) – embodied conflicting instincts and quarreled with one another, using heroes to play out their rivalries.²⁹

Nietzsche said that his desire was to point out a “sharp and disinterested eye in the direction of an *actual history* of morality (*wirkliche Historie der Moral*)”: instead of “gazing around haphazardly in the blue after the English fashion”, a “genealogist of morals” must investigate “what is documented, what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short the entire long hieroglyphic record, so hard to decipher, of the moral past of mankind!” (GM, Preface, 7). But his *Entstehungsgeschichte der Moral* (GM I, 1) is hardly a genealogy in the proper sense of the word. Neither is it real history, despite his call for historical accuracy and his castigating “English psychologists” – first and foremost Spencer – whose “thinking is *by nature* unhistorical”, and who “have bungled their moral genealogy” by making “utility” and “habit” as the basis of all evaluations of “the origin of the concept and judgement ‘good’” (GM I, 2).³⁰ Nietzsche’s “genealogy of moral value judgements [...] consists of an inquiry into their *psychological origin*” (Reginster 1997, 282).³¹ Bernard Williams (2006, 308, note 12) goes further: Nietzsche’s genealogy combines, “in a form that analytical philosophy finds embarrassing, history, phenomenology, ‘realistic’ psychology, and conceptual interpretation”. Oudai Celso (2013, 43) rightly remarks: “Unlike

²⁹ Therefore, I do not understand why Hamilton speaks of Nietzsche’s “historicism”. He himself quotes BGE 224: “Everything *essential* in human development took place in primeval times, long before the 4000 years about which we have some knowledge” (Hamilton’s own translation) – that is, it refers to a pre-historical, obscure, unsoundable, and mythical past. One might go on and ask Nietzsche: Are beasts themselves, whether blond or not, free from inner contrasts between their own instincts? Are “higher individuals” immune to inner tensions? Is a great creative painter never torn between one shade of color and another? Was the masters’ domination always exercised in the same form? Did the slaves always obey in the same manner? But I am not here to challenge Nietzsche on trivial details.

³⁰ Nietzsche went so far as to say that “the plebeianism of the modern spirit [...] is of English origin” (ibid., 4). The English were definitely “no philosophical race”, and “the English-mechanistic stultification of the world” was responsible for the fact that “the spirit of respectable but mediocre Englishmen – I name Darwin, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer – is starting to gain ascendancy in the mid-region of European taste” (BGE 252–253).

³¹ Nor can his resorting to etymology – mainly to explain the conceptual transformation from *Gut* vs. *Schlecht* to *Gut* vs. *Böse* (GM I, 5-7, 10-11 – be taken as evidence of a historical approach. From Isidore of Seville to Heidegger, the appeal to the original, and *therefore* ‘authentic’, meaning of a concept has served as a trick to discard other meanings and interpretations.

the historian, the genealogist [Nietzsche] does not worry about the chronological succession of single events, nor is he interested in their specific conjunction or other details; he only analyzes general phenomena by selecting particular aspects of them, namely the physiological and psychological dynamics involved.” According to Birns (2010), “Nietzsche’s account of the replacement of the dichotomy of ‘good and bad’ with that of ‘good and evil’ is ‘historically situated, though not actually historical’”.

“Genealogy and history are not the same. Genealogical enemies may be historical allies” (Yovel 1994, 233). Discussing the relationship between history and genealogy in Nietzsche, Foucault (2001) and Geuss (2001) agree that his genealogy of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge does not undertake the impossible and meaningless task of reconstructing a gradual, linear *pedigree*. On the contrary, Foucault argues, it “dispels the chimera of the origins” by replacing it with a “‘non-place,’ an endlessly repeated play of dominations”, a struggle of forces resulting in the “perpetual disintegration” of the “illusion of a substantial unity”. According to Geuss, “the closer we get to the ‘origin’ (*Ursprung*) of things, the less possible it is for us to evaluate what we find; our forms of evaluation simply become increasingly irrelevant. The realm of origins is the realm of radical insignificance, not of heightened meaningfulness”. For instance, “the genealogy reveals Christian morality to arise from the historically contingent conjunction of a large number of [...] separate series of processes that ramify the further back one goes and present no obvious or natural single stopping place that could be designated ‘the origin’”. *Ressentiment* was only one “of a number of diverse lines of development” (Geuss, 325 and note).

I agree that Nietzsche’s genealogy ultimately results in a demystification of the myth of origins; it is less a reconstruction than a deconstruction. After he breaks through any alleged foundation, history appears merely as an interplay and conflict of interpretations. However, precisely for this reason, his genealogy is not history. It is ‘history’ in the service of his vision of what human life is and should be. In the second of his *Untimely Meditations* (1874), Nietzsche praised history not for its own sake, but only insofar as it could be placed “in the service of life”. Later, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he described historical sense as a symptom of degeneration.

The *historical sense* (or the capacity for divining quickly the order of rank of the evaluations according to which a people, a society, a human being has lived, the ‘divinatory instinct’ for the relationships of these evaluations, for the relation of the authority of values to the authority of effective forces): this historical sense, to which we Europeans lay claim as our specialty, has come to us in the wake of the mad and fascinating *semi-barbarism* into which Europe has been plunged through the democratic mingling of classes and races – only the nineteenth century knows this sense, as its sixth sense.

The past of every form and mode of life, of cultures that formerly lay closely beside or on top of one another, streams into us ‘modern souls’ thanks to this mingling, our instincts now run back in all directions, we ourselves are a kind of chaos. (BGE 224, in Nietzsche 1990)

Nietzsche’s genealogy consists of an overlapping of psychology and history, with history, if ever, playing a subordinated role and merely providing instances of a single but universal phenomenon: “the slave revolt in morality”.³² More precisely, his account rests on a de-historicization and psychologization of modernity and its pathologies, with their alleged causes projected into a pre-moral past – a realm accessible only to psychological inquiry. Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche described himself as a “psychologist”, claiming that psychology – “a genuine physio-psychology,” that is, “the morphology and the *development-theory of the will to power*” – was “the queen of the sciences, to serve and prepare for which the other sciences exist”, and “the road to the fundamental problems” (BGE 23). In this light, Nietzsche’s so-called historical reconstruction resembles those sweeping, often pessimistic diagnoses of ‘modernity’ or ‘Western rationality’ that are common in postmodern philosophy and literature – many of which are, rightly or wrongly, inspired by him.

The remedy Nietzsche suggested to the all-pervading negative consequences of that baleful event, the slave revolt, lay *beyond* history: a “transvaluation of all values” and the coming, or self-creation, of the Overman (*Übermensch*). To discredit all forms of ascetic self-denial as symptoms of decadence and life-denial, and to unmask our moral prejudices, Nietzsche invented an unfathomable mythical past onto which he could project his dichotomy between what he despised and what he hoped for. This mythical-genealogical past served as a backdrop against which both his criticism of the present and his vague, desperate hope for the overcoming of man took shape – and stood out by contrast. The description of the millenary pathological-moral prison reinforced the need for transvaluation and pointed, by exclusion, to a path of liberation reserved for the few capable of an extreme effort upon themselves.

Nietzsche hardly pushed his enquiry beyond that primitive, vaguely described form of aristocratic society. He said little about the animal ori-

³² Nietzsche hardly goes into the historical details of this baleful event. He mostly refers to it in very general terms – “the rabble [coming] to predominate in Greece,” or the Jews and the “Oriental slave taking revenge on Rome”. The only explicitly historical references concern the Reformation, described as a “thoroughly plebeian (German and English) *ressentiment* movement (*Ressentiments-Bewegung*)”, and the French Revolution, with which “the last great slave revolt” began (BGE 46). Then, “Judea once again triumphed over the classical ideal”, and “the last political noblesse in Europe, that of the French seventeenth and eighteenth century, collapsed beneath the popular instincts or *ressentiment*”. The “mendacious slogan of *ressentiment*, ‘supreme rights of the majority’”, embodied “the will to the lowering, the abasement, the leveling and the decline and twilight of mankind” (GM I, 16).

gins of human pre-moral instincts, merely tracing them back to a manifestation of the will to power in the “blond beast” – itself a mythical image that later proved all too convenient for Nazi appropriation³³ – which created primeval society by imposing order through violence. Restricting himself to a “human, all too human” perspective, he neglected contemporary studies on the animal heritage in man and addressed human biological evolution only to disparage the views of English evolutionists, treating them as symptoms of moral prejudice, petty mediocrity, and intellectual decadence. Nietzsche’s engagement with evolutionary biology was fragmentary and desultory: he “appears never to have read a single work by Darwin himself” (Moore 2002, 22). Nietzsche’s information about Darwin and evolution came mainly through intermediaries – authors who derived ethical systems from their interpretations of evolution, such as Eugen Dühring, Paul Rée and Wilhelm Rolph³⁴ – as well as the “English psychologists” he so strongly despised. His attitude was also shaped by vitalistic interpretations of evolution, which were particularly widespread in the German-speaking world. Johnson (2010, 214) rightly criticizes those who “see Nietzsche operating in the shadow of Darwin, not as his spiritual antagonist”. Nietzsche accused Darwin of numerous errors, above all of “overestimating the influence of ‘external circumstances’ up to the Nonsensical” (KSA 12, 304). “English Darwinism exudes something like the stuffy air of English overpopulation, like the small people’s smell of indigence and overcrowding”, he wrote in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 2001, §349: 208). For Nietzsche, the struggle was not for mere survival – as it was for Darwin, Spencer, and their followers, whom he saw as blinded by their shallow mentality – but rather an aggressive struggle for the expansion of life and power. “The overall condition of life,” he claimed, “is not a state of need, a state of hunger, but rather abundance, opulence, even

³³ But not all of them and not in the same manner. On the different, even contradictory, views and uses of Nietzsche in Germany see Brennecke (1976), Penzo (1987), Kirchoff (1990), Aschheim (1992), Stackelberg (1981, 1983, 1989), and Golomb and Wistrich (2002). Between 1890 and 1918, Nietzsche also found favor among some German progressives, socialists, anarchists, and feminists. By contrast, the *Alldeutsche Verband* despised him, since his notion of the *Übermensch* undermined the moral values on which nationalist ideology depended (Thomas 1983). On the “blond beast” see Müller (1958) and Brennecke (1976). According to Taureck (1989, 10), there is “protofascism” in Nietzsche’s political views, as he proposed nothing less than “political final solutions” inspired by a counter-ideal rooted in slavery, hierarchy, caste, Machiavellianism, and war. On the contrary, Stegmaier (1994, 21, 24) argues that the allegations of social Darwinism, racism and “protofascism” made against Nietzsche are unfounded. Rorty (1989, 65, 99) similarly contends that Nietzsche’s “antiliberalism seems adventitious and idiosyncratic – for the kind of self-creation of which Nietzsche and Heidegger are models seems to have nothing in particular to do with questions of social polity”; Nietzsche’s attempt at “authenticity and purity”, Rorty adds, is only liberal when transferred to the public sphere.

³⁴ Venturelli (1986), Orsucci (2001), Moore (2002), and Small (2005). Nietzsche attacks Dühring’s Darwinism in GM II, 11.

absurd squandering... You should not confuse Malthus with nature” (*Twilight of the Idols*, in Nietzsche 2005, IX, 14: 199).³⁵

Emotions

Is resentment an emotion, an affect, a feeling, a sentiment,³⁶ or a mood? And what are its relations to – I apologize for throwing down these words in bulk – rancor, grudge, spite, contempt, disregard, disdain, scorn, disrespect, dislike, defiance, animosity, hostility, anger, rage, jealousy, malice, bad blood, venom, back-biting, suspicion, retaliation, vindication/revenge/vengeance/vindictiveness/vengefulness, (concealed) hatred, and envy?³⁷ There seems to be no agreed-upon phenomenology, no shared definition of these terms. And are some emotions or feelings more basic than others?³⁸ Scholars dealing with Nietzsche, whether directly or indirectly, do not seem to agree with each other.

Nietzsche did not seem to care much about precise terminology when speaking of *ressentiment*. Kerruish (2009, quoted by Oudai Celso 2013, 44, note 27) is right to note that Nietzsche “tends to refer to affect (*Affekt*), passion (*Leidenschaft*, *Passion*), and feeling (*Gefühl*, *Empfindung*) interchangeably”. He also used the word *Instinkt* somewhat loosely, applying it to a variety of feelings (or emotions) and behaviors. For instance: “Dabei mischen sich die Träger der Niedergangs-Instinkte (des *ressentiment*, der Unzufriedenheit, des Zerstörers-Trieb, des Anarchismus und Nihilismus), eingerechnet der Sklaven-Instinkte, der Feigheits-, Schlauheits- und Canaillen-Instinkte der lange unten gehaltenen Schichten” (NF-1888, 14 [182]). He spoke of “master and slave instincts”, “herd instinct”, “creative instincts”, “instincts of *décadence*”, “unconscious regulative instincts”, and even an “instinct to be badly made (*Instinkt für Mißrathen-sein*)”

³⁵ On Nietzsche and Darwinism see also Barbera and Campioni (1983), Henke (1984), Stegmaier (1987), Ansell-Pearson (1998), Venturelli (1999), Gayon (1999), Stiegler (2001), Clark (2000, 2007, 2013), Richardson (2004), Janaway (2007), Fornari (2008), Johnson (2001, 2010), Wilson (2013), and Oudai Celso (2016). On Nietzsche’s critique of evolutionary ethics see O’Connell (2017). Fornari (2006) is an important discussion of Nietzsche’s critique of Mill and Spencer.

³⁶ Bernard Williams (2006, 307) happens to write “the sentiment of resentment”, and so does Solomon (1994, 123). Brighi (2019) discusses “sentiments of resentment”.

³⁷ Foot (2001, 211) mentions “envious resentment”. Does she mean a species within the genus ‘resentment’ or is this merely a rhetorical slip? Babich writes: “Nietzsche’s genealogical inquiry lays out the still surviving roots of *hatred* (or *ressentiment* to speak obliquely) at the heart of Christian love” (1999, 9; italics original)

³⁸ Stearns and Stearns (1985), Dixon (2003), and Ben-Ze’ev (1987, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2010). Ekman’s (1992a, b, 1999, 2003) notion of “basic emotions” is criticized by Caruana and Viola (2018). On resentment from a psychoanalytic point of view see Kancyper (1991, 2001, 2016).

(NF-1888, 14 [29]). He equated “the instinct for freedom” with the will to power (GM II, 18), which, as we saw, he found in *all* forms of life, even in single cells.³⁹ By the word ‘instinct’, Nietzsche seems to mean any sort of spontaneous, inner-driven, and self-conditioning activity according to the being’s nature, but rooted in life as such. Likewise, he spoke indifferently of “Reaktions- und Ressentiments-Instinkte” (GM I, 11); “Geist des Ressentiment” (GM II, 11; *Ecce Homo*, ‘Die Genealogie der Moral’, 1); “Instinkte des ressentiment” (NF-1888, 15 [113]); “Instinkt des ressentiment” (*Anti-Christ*, 24); “zügellose Ressentiments-Gefühle” (NF-Fall 1887, 10 [2]); “Gefühl von ressentiment” (*Anti-Christ*, 40); “Ressentiment-Affekte” (*Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I am so clever’, 6); and “die allzu natürliche Gefühle [...] der Rivalität, des ressentiment, des Neides” (NF-1888, 14 [29]). Anti-Semites displayed “Neid, ressentiment, ohnmächtige Wuth als Leitmotiv im Instinkt” (NF-1888, 21 [7]).

I think we should move away from a typological or essentialist view of emotions and feelings, and instead see them as clusters, groups, constellations, or families of related phenomena that coalesce around an average or median, which varies over time and across contexts – much like natural populations, where no two individuals are identical but fluctuations occur around a statistical norm that taxonomists take as the ‘type’ of the taxon. The type is an operational abstraction, yet species remain real despite no single individual or group perfectly representing the type. Before 1887, Nietzsche used a family or population of related terms to describe the many facets of the psychological, moral, and social syndrome he would later *also* name *ressentiment* in *Genealogy*, a term that has since become dominant. None of these terms took precedence over the others; rather, they supported each other. Often Nietzsche employed several at once, as if to achieve a cumulative effect.

There was continuity as well as variation in Nietzsche’s analysis of this population of phenomena, but continuity in words and concepts prevailed over novelty. *Ressentiment* was more an addition to, rather than an innovation in, his vocabulary.⁴⁰ The decisive step Nietzsche took in *Genealogy* was not the discovery of the syndrome itself, but the demonstration of why and how it became “creative”. This breakthrough could have occurred even without adding *ressentiment* to his linguistic repertoire. What mattered was the context – the entire theory – rather than the word itself. The term acquired new *nuances*, or a new meaning if you will,

³⁹ See above, note 20. Nietzsche was also influenced by the Swiss biologist’s Wilhelm Roux’s (1881) theory of “the struggle of parts within the organism” (see Moore 2002).

⁴⁰ On Nietzsche finding the term *ressentiment* – and, above all, its spirit and phenomenology – in an 1886 French translation (or, more precisely, adaptation) of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864) see Miller (1973), Orsucci (2001), Brusotti (2001), Müller-Buck (2002), Linares Chover (2008, 2009), and Stellino (2011, 2015). On Dostoevskij and *ressentiment* see Sugarman (1980) and Tagliagambe (2016).

through Nietzsche's doctrine. His early readers understood the word without concern for why or how he employed it. Their modern descendants echo this sentiment: "Lo! Here's the right word in the right place", as if it had been waiting for Nietzsche to give it voice, to do justice to its qualities by choosing it among its siblings, and – to paraphrase the subtitle of one of Nietzsche's works – by making it "become what it was".

But words have a history – hardly ever a linear one – within the very minds of those who use them. Scholars who attempt to explain the role of *ressentiment* in the *Genealogy* by first trying to define the 'real' meaning of the word or grasp its essence fall into what might be called an 'essentialist' or 'analytical fallacy'. They behave like old creationists who believed organisms appeared fully formed and perfectly adapted to their environments. Similarly, those who read into *ressentiment*, as a standalone term, all that Nietzsche *later* attributed to it commit what I would call the 'fallacy of retrospective overinterpretation' (also known as the 'preformationist fallacy' or 'pre-packaged fallacy'). *Ressentiment* became a 'technical' term precisely because of the uniquely Nietzschean conceptual framework in which it was used. Later history consecrated it as a key concept in his philosophy, turning what was initially a contingent event into a seeming necessity – as often happens with both ideas and organisms. Let us then take a brief look at the family of words of which *ressentiment* eventually became a member, rather than a replacement.

Rancor, envy, revenge, etc.

Interestingly, a leading member of this family is another French word: *rancune* (rancor), sometimes Germanized as *Rancune*. Its pervasive presence in Nietzsche's writings prior to the *Genealogy*, and its occurrence in that work even before the first mention of *ressentiment*,⁴¹ compel us somewhat to deflate the significance of the introduction of the new term. What is more, far from disappearing after *ressentiment* was introduced, *Rancune* remained a prominent member of the family, occurring both on its own and alongside the newcomer. Thus, for instance, Rousseau is portrayed at times as a typical man of *ressentiment*, at others as a man full of *Rancune*.⁴² And we read in GM II, 11, that "it is the spirit of *res-*

⁴¹ GM I, 1: "a petty subterranean hostility and rancor against Christianity" (*eine kleine unterirdische Feindschaft und Rancune gegen das Christentum*). The adjective *unterirdisch* inevitably brings to mind Dostoevsky's "underground": the French translation bore the title *Lesprit souterrain*.

⁴² Rousseau had *die Rancune des Kranken, Menschenverachtung* and *Mißtrauen*. Lord Byron too was full of *rancunöser Groll* (NF-1887, 9 [184]). Cf. *Twilight of the Idols*, 'Skirmishes of an untimely man', 3, 48: "under every *romantisme* there growls Rousseau's hungry instinct of revenge [...] Rousseau, this first modern man, an idealist and a rascal in the *same person* [...] this abortion", etc. On Rousseau and *ressentiment* see Iacono (2016).

sentiment (*Geist des Ressentiment*) itself out of which this new nuance of scientific cheapness (*Billigkeit*), for the benefit of hatred, envy, jealousy, mistrust, rancor and revenge (*Hass, Neid, Missgunst, Argwohn, Rancune, Rache*) proceeds” – an attitude that, despite its claim to be scientific, gives way to “deadly enmity and ill-prejudiced disposition” (*tödlicher Feindschaft und Vorangenommenheit*).⁴³ We also find *rancune* later in GM and in subsequent works,⁴⁴ including passages where we would not have been surprised to find *ressentiment*.⁴⁵ In some cases the two words seem equivalent; in others, they appear together, as if to reinforce each other for rhetorical effect. Both are used sometimes in the singular, sometimes in the plural, sometimes with a specific object, sometimes without.⁴⁶ There is even room for a somewhat positive sense of *rancune*: “Es giebt Etwas, das ich die *rancune* des Grossen nenne”: all great works, once made, revolt against their maker (*Ecce Homo*, ‘Zarathustra’, 5). Nor did the host of other terms Nietzsche used in addition to *rancune* (*Groll, Haß, Rache, Neid, Verachtung, Verstimmung*) disappear after he introduced *ressentiment*. They remained in his panoply and continued to appear both in place of and in association with the newcomer, in order to describe various aspects

⁴³ Nietzsche is here criticizing the philosopher Dühring (1865), whose supposedly scientific attitude he regarded as itself motivated by *ressentiment*.

⁴⁴ See for instance GM, III, 7, where Nietzsche states that, as long as there are philosophers on earth – and wherever there have been philosophers – “there unquestionably exists a peculiar philosophers’ irritation and rancor against sensuality” (*eine eigentliche Philosophen-Greiztheit und -Rancune gegen die Sinnlichkeit*). Philosophers want to live in peace and chastity, free from compulsion, noise, worries, and duties – far from “barking of hostility and shaggy-haired rancor” (*zotteliger Rancune*, GM III, 8). But this *rancune* against *Sinnlichkeit*, and the tendency to treat it as a “a personal enemy”, is obviously also typical of priests (NF-1888, 15 [21]). Nietzsche also describes the “rebellious instinct of the criminal” as *die rancune des déclassé* [sic]: NF-1887, 10 [50]. He felt he himself was made the object of *eine Art Rancune oder Ferocität* (NF-1888, 22 [26]).

⁴⁵ “Das Christentum hat die *rancune* der Kranken auf dem Grunde, den Instinkt gegen die Gesunden, gegen die Gesundheit gerichtet” (*Anti-Christ*, 51). But in *Twilight of the Idols* (“What I Owe to the Ancients”, 4) *ressentiment* replaces *rancune*: “das Christentum, mit seinem Ressentiment gegen das Leben...”. Cf. NF-1887, 10 [200]: the morality of disinterest preached by Luke “ist eine *Rancune* gegen die Pharisäer”. Buddhism, on the contrary, directs itself against “the feeling of revenge, hostility, *ressentiment*” (*das Gefühl der Rache, der Abneigung, des ressentiment*). “The struggle against *ressentiment* (*der Kampf gegen das ressentiment*) appears to be almost the main task of Buddhists”; they look first and foremost for the peace of the soul through self-detachment (*sich loslösen*), but *ohne Rancune* (NF-1887, 10 [157]). Buddhism “was not born out of a motion of *ressentiment* (*Ressentiments-Bewegung*)” (NF-1887, 11 [240]). It lacks “die Bitterkeit, die Enttäuschung, die *Rancune* [of Christianity]” (NF-1888, 14 [91]).

⁴⁶ See for instance NF-1885, 2 [171] (43): “Der Gewissensbiß wie alle *ressentiments* bei einer großen Fülle von Kraft fehlend”; NF-1887, 10 [2]: “die Herrschaft der zügellosen *Ressentiments-Gefühle*”; NF-1887, 10 [184]: “die *ressentiments*, welche diese Niedrig-Gestellten gegen Alles, was in Ehren ist, empfinden”; and *Anti-Christ*, 62: “The equality of souls before God, [...] this screen for the *rancours* of all low-spirited (*dieser Vorwand für die rancunes aller Niedriggesinnten*)”.

of the same syndrome – in the *Genealogy* (for instance II, 11) as well as in subsequent writings.⁴⁷

Neid (envy) deserves special mention. It carried a certain *vis inertiae*, having been the traditional term that moralists had used since the time of Latin *invidia* to encompass many feelings that would later be distinguished from one another.⁴⁸ It appears in one of Nietzsche's early writings, *Homer's contest* (*Homers Wettkampf*, 1872), where he ascribed to discord (*Eris*) and envy (*Neid*) an important and even positive role in the Greek world. At that time, man, unencumbered by "the emasculate idea of modern humanity", was free to give vent to his natural "cruelty and tiger-like pleasure in destruction" and allowed "his hatred (*Haß*) to break forth unimpeded" in war and conquest: "in such moments the compressed and swollen feeling relieved itself; the tiger bounded forth, a voluptuous cruelty (*wollüstige Grausamkeit*) shone out of his fearful eye". In spite of what orthodox thinkers claim, such natural drives are perfectly human, as "man, in his highest and noblest forces, is wholly nature", and "his abilities generally considered dreadful and inhuman are perhaps the fertile soil out of which alone can grow forth all humanity in emotions, action and works" (Nietzsche 1911, 51-52). Nietzsche endorsed Hesiod's distinction between two kinds of *Eris*: an evil one, base and merely destructive, and a good one, which spurs individuals to achieve great deeds through emulation and rivalry. It was mistaken to attribute *Groll*, *Neid*, and *Eifersucht* (jealousy) solely to the evil *Eris*. When they do not prompt malevolent action but instead stimulate competition (*Wettkampf*) for noble things – "every superfluity of honour, rich-

⁴⁷ For example, "revenge" is sometimes coupled with *ressentiment*: "der Instinkt der Rache und des Ressentiment" (NF-1888, 14 [29]); "... in jenen Aposteln der Rache und des Ressentiments..." (NF-1888, 15 [30]); "eine aus Ressentiment und ohnmächtiger Rache geborene Tschandala-Moral" (*Anti-Christ*, 45). In these examples, the two terms reinforce each other rather than indicate different feelings. Likewise, Nietzsche says that "it is on such soil [i.e., *ressentiment*], on swampy grounds, that every weed, every poisonous plant grows [...]. Here the worms of vengefulness and rancor (*Rach- und Nachgefühle*) swarm" (GM III, 14). But the reverse is also true, as "hatred and contempt (*Haß und Verachtung*) are the primum mobile [...] of all *ressentiment*-inspired ideals (*bei allen Ressentiments-Idealen*)" (NF-1887, 10 [9]). Zarathustra had described the "preachers of equality" (the "tarantulas") as being full of "aggrieved conceit" and "repressed envy" that erupt in a "frenzy of revenge" (*vergrämter Dünkel, verhaltener Neid... Wahnsinn der Rache*), and as "shrouding their most secret ambition to be tyrants in words of virtue" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 7). *Thus spoke Zarathustra* was composed between 1883 and 1885.

⁴⁸ We find *envie haineuse* (hateful envy) in a list of negative characteristics describing "our present state", all in French: "Our state: well-being increases sensitiveness; one suffers for the smallest pains; our body is better protected, our soul sicker. Equality, comfortable life, freedom of thought – but at the same time *l'envie haineuse, la fureur de parvenir, l'impatience du présent, le besoin du luxe, l'instabilité des gouvernements, les souffrances du doute et de la recherche*. – One loses as much as one gains" ([NF – end of 1886–beginning of 1887, 7 [7]). This is a compendium of the symptoms of *décadence*. The French words are a quotation from Taine (1858, 175) – I am grateful to Martino Rossi Monti for pointing out this source to me.

es, splendour and fortune” – they belong to the positive Eris. For “every natural gift must develop itself by contest” (ibid., 58). Incomprehensible though it may be to “our scholars”, “the Greek is envious and conceives of this quality not as a blemish, but as the effect of a beneficent deity” (ibid., 55). “Even the artist has a grudge (*Groll*) against the artist!” (ibid., 59). The Greeks did not tolerate the “‘exclusiveness’ of genius”, the idea that there should be one final winner. They believed that “in the natural order of things there are always several geniuses which incite one another to action” (ibid., 57). And when a man is “without rival, without opponent, on the solitary height of glory”, then the “envy of the gods breaks into flames” (ibid., 61), and he is doomed to fall. The Greek even took pleasure in ostracizing leaders and war heroes. For “without envy, jealousy, and contesting ambition the Hellenic State, like the Hellenic man, degenerated. Both became evil and cruel, thirsting for revenge, and godless (*böse und grausam, rachsüchtig und gottlos*)” (ibidem; translation slightly modified). And the spirit of Greece yielded to “the cosmopolitan Hellene, and the so-called Hellenism” (ibid., 62).

It is difficult to resist the temptation to read back major aspects of the *Herrenmoral* in the above description of good Eris, and aspects of (self-) destructive, *ressentiment*-based *Sklavenmoral* in evil Eris. No wonder readers familiar with Nietzsche have been prone to consider *ressentiment* and envy, when referred to the behavior of the inferior, as more or less equivalent. So did, for instance, Ludwig Klages, who devoted a whole chapter of his 1926 book *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* to an analysis of the “spiritual action of a special kind of envy, which we call envy of life (*Lebensneid*) and which Nietzsche prefers to call by the foreign word *ressentiment*”.⁴⁹ And few, I think, would object to Helmut Schoeck including Nietzsche in a chapter on “Our age of levelling, resentment and nihilism” of his *Envy and society* (1969), where he also discusses Kierkegaard, who used “envy” and never “resentment”.

To sum up: Nietzsche added *ressentiment* to an already thriving family of words that described a multifaceted syndrome (Zagorac and Haaz 2023). That syndrome has since become generally identified by this new addition. He did not *introduce* it as a technical term. It *became* one not because it possessed a special virtue of its own, but because Nietzsche made it the label for a concept on which he based his mature critique of morality. Therefore, we should not conflate resentment and Nietzschean *ressentiment*, as is often the case with philosophers of an analytical frame of mind. I emphasize this out of respect for historical facts, not out of reverence for linguistic nuances. Let me be even blunter: the same effect

⁴⁹ Klages (1926, chap. 10) begins by discussing Nietzsche’s distinction between good and evil Eris. If I understand him rightly, despite his eminently muddy prose, Klages argued that there is a fundamental contrast – one that escaped Nietzsche – between “life” and the “will to power”.

could have been achieved by any other term Nietzsche might have chosen to use in the *Genealogy*.

Conclusion (for the moment). *Envie* and *égalité*

The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1897) accused Nietzsche of moralizing social facts.⁵⁰ In Nietzsche's genealogical diagnosis of modernity, *ressentiment* was not, or no longer, an individual affair, but a psycho-social phenomenon. In this, he was preceded by a host of authors denouncing envy and related feelings as the mainspring of the French Revolution, democracy, socialism, and the belief in equality and universal rights. Losurdo (2019) has assembled impressive evidence of analogies between Nietzsche's attack on modernity and those of authors such as Burke, Michelet, Guizot, Tocqueville, Taine, Renan, and many others. They hated Rousseau, whom Nietzsche would call "a moral tarantula". They claimed that moral indignation and talk of equality, compassion, and justice became slogans in the hands of would-be reformers full of rancor. As Nietzsche would later do, they often resorted to medical and physiological language and, when it became popular after the 1850s, to that of *dégénérescence* to explain "the chimaeras generated by corrupted minds" which fueled the "revolutionary spirit". Frustrated and depraved agitators deluded the rabble into rebellion and poisoned public life. Envy and similar feelings simmered among the new urban masses, provoking uncontrollable reactions by disaffected individuals and eventually leading to revolt. In the "multitude souffrante, [...] un flot de haine monte de l'estomac vide au cerveau malade" (Taine 1902, 187). Then, "le peuple cherche partout ses ennemis imaginaires, et force en avant les yeux clos, n'importe sur qui ou sur quoi, non seulement avec tout le poids de sa masse, mais avec toute la force de sa fureur" (Taine 1904, 92).⁵¹ Burke had spoken of "envy", "rapacity", "malice", "malignity", "revenge", and "odium". The French rarely used *ressentiment*,⁵² but frequently employed *jalousie*, *antipathie*, *haine*,

⁵⁰ "Although he boasts to think in a way 'free from moraline' (*moralinfrei* zu denken), the whole complicated problem of social evolution is contained [according to him] in the problem of *morals*". This is a "childish way of putting the question [...] Nietzsche never enquired whether the moral doctrines that are accepted and predicated have had and can produce such remarkable effects [as he assumes them to do], whether they somehow agree with actually obtaining traditional morals". In short, he neglected social factors (Tönnies 1897, 15-16). Nietzsche himself speaks of "moraline-free virtue" (*moralinfreie Tugend*) in *Ecce Homo* ('Why I am so clever', I).

⁵¹ Halévy (1944, 458) writes that "according to a tradition that circulates in Germany and that Scheler seems to have supported by his authority, the source of Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment* is Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*".

⁵² Here is, for instance, Taine (1902, 186-187): "Quand le cœur est révolté, tout est pour lui sujet de *ressentiment*. Le Tiers [État], à l'exemple de Rousseau, sait aux nobles mauvais gré de tout ce qu'ils font, bien mieux, de tout ce qu'ils font, bien mieux, de tout ce qu'ils sont".

malveillance, *rancune*, and above all *envie* – a standard term in centuries of moral philosophy. Many collective and crowd psychologists, especially in France, later argued that these feelings spread quickly and intensified through “imitation”, “contagion,” or “suggestion” (Nye 1975; Moscovici 1981; Mucchi Faina 1983; Nacci 2019). Such emotions could make a crowd regress to a more primitive, barbaric, indeed animal, state.

Such social and political uses of envy, resentment, and related concepts will be the subject of the second part of this contribution (to be published later in this journal), in which further instances of the moral diagnosis of modernity will also be given.

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