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MANY SHADES OF RESENTIMENT

Ivana Zagorac / Ignace Haaz

Introduction

In philosophical literature, the complex emotional state of *ressentiment* gained popularity through the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche⁹. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* was a bad feeling that reflected the suppressed anger, the pain of impotence, and the general misery of the weak when they compared themselves to the strong and talented members of society. Max Scheler took up Nietzsche's thesis and described *ressentiment* as a complex condition characterised by a thirst for revenge. Moreover, *ressentiment* has the annoying property of presenting itself as having some merit: the modern social and political context offers more than enough examples.

First, the aim of this article is to take a closer look at Nietzsche's 'man of *ressentiment*,' an odious personality characterised by weakness,

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deep frustrations, and hypocrisy. It will turn out that *ressentiment* has many different shades that paint a somewhat different picture and raise philosophical questions about positive valuation, vulnerability, and the sense of injustice.

Second, we shall be working on the link between the psychology of *ressentiment* and the temptation to lack integrity in writing, art, or science. The well-described and well-known fact that academic fraudsters evolve in disguise, that they first reactively endorse values very different from their own values, and that these plagiarist authors, second, embark on long-term projects repeating their misdeeds and errors, as if it were normal, are two facts worthy of our attention.

The author, first disappointed but soon operating a self-poisoning of the mind, passing from the state of self-deception of not being able to invest the time necessary to write his work properly, pushed to meet a short deadline, and who borrowing the work of another, considers, on second thought, that it is his own, is in a similar situation as the fox of the fable, who on second thought considers sweet grapes sour, which he ultimately perceives out of reach (Aeschbach, 2017, 9, 43)¹⁰. As in the case of the inaccessible grapes of the fable, the temptation of devaluation of some object or value, because they are reminders of our incapacity to confront these things correctly is a familiar experience, therefore we shall see how it can be transposed to the field of academic integrity, integrating some systematic aspects of a complex desire of *ressentiment*. If our intuition is plausible and correct, after comparing the relevant elements of on the one side the four main profiles of academic cheaters (Bergadaà, 2006, 2021, 2022), and of some recognised psychoanalytical expert in the domain of intellectual vices and academic fraud (Ciavaldini, 2023) we shall conclude on the value of

¹⁰ For a very complete analysis: Aeschbach, Sébastien. 2017. *Ressentiment: An Anatomy*, doctoral dissertation; here p. 9 and 43.

the psychology of the *ressentiment* in the actual research on ethics in higher education and the problem of plagiarism¹¹.

The man of resentment

In the opening paragraphs of his study of *ressentiment*,¹² Max Scheler quotes Nietzsche's passages from the *Genealogy of Morality*. In the paragraphs of the first essay, Nietzsche describes how *ressentiment* can be the source of value judgments. It is a constitutive part of his well-known analysis of the origins of "good" and "evil". In the *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche has already written about the inversion of valuation and the "slave-insurrection in morals" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 195),¹³ but in the *Genealogy of Morality*¹⁴ he describes the origins of such a revolt. In short, it came through *ressentiment*.

In the *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche invites us to imagine a society composed of dominant "masters" and the subordinate group of "slaves". The "masters" are strong, active, outspoken, and live life to the fullest with little or no reflection. They are uninhibited, spontaneous, strong enough to succeed in most of their undertakings, and happily oblivious to their misfortunes. They are their own criterion of "good" by

¹¹ André Ciavaldini, 2023. "Delinquents of knowledge and sex offenders: Same difference?", in: Michelle Bergadaà / Paulo Peixoto (Ed.), *Academic integrity: a call for research and action*. Geneva: Globethics, Publications, 2023. DOI: 10.58863/20.500.12424/4271540, 421. Michelle Bergadaà, *Academic Plagiarism: Understanding It to Take Responsible Action*, Geneva: Globethics, Publications, 2023, 109.

¹² Scheler, Max, *Ressentiment*. Marquette Uni. Press. Available at: <https://hscif.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Max-Scheler-Ressentiment.pdf>.

¹³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Helen Zimmern, New York: The Modern Library, 1929.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, translated by Carol Diethe, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

which they validate their way of life and themselves as leaders. The constitution of “good” sets the “bad” as its antithesis, a pale counterpart to its basic positive concept. The nobility sees the “slaves” as ordinary, passive, passionless, too weak to lead a self-affirming life, and therefore pitiable. While the masters are self-confident and strong, the inherent weakness of the “slaves” prevents them from seeing themselves in any other way than in the comparison to the dominant ones. Nietzsche insists that the “slaves,” unlike the “masters,” seek their criterion of evaluation outside themselves. Unable to create a self-affirming identity, the “slaves” react against the masters, but in a sublime way. The weakness of the “slaves” prevents them from inflicting physical harm on the nobility, so they rebel against the master’s form of valuation. Their reaction stems from negative sentiments, for which Nietzsche uses the French term *ressentiment*. Over time, *ressentiment* becomes a productive force that helps the “slaves” promote the mediocre man as a “higher man.” At the heart of *ressentiment* are the frustrations and thirst for revenge that will also preoccupy Scheler in his study of *ressentiment*. In Nietzsche’s “remarkable thesis”, as Scheler describes it, the revenge of the “slaves” is creatively used to form a new morality. The revolt of the “slaves,” then, begins when *ressentiment* becomes creative. The new morality is based on the reconceptualization of the key concepts of ‘good’ and ‘bad’: the ‘bad’ now becomes the ‘evil,’ occupying the central place and referring to the life of the nobility, while the ‘good’ represents its opposite. The ‘good’ thus loses its connection to vitality, strength and genuine creativity, and becomes nothing more than a pale contrast to the joyful and vigorous life of the ‘masters’. Over time, the weak begin to believe that their inherent weakness is actually the result of their own choice and that the efforts they make to maintain their weakness must be positively morally valued. This is then a real establishment of the domination of ‘slave morality’. Even though such a change has an enormous impact on valuation, the balance of power

remains the same: the 'slaves' remain inferior and must still form their identity through comparison, only now they affirm themselves through the disapproval of the 'evil' masters.

In Nietzsche's thesis, *ressentiment* is a driving force for changing the prevailing morality. *Ressentiment* belongs to those who feel weak, inferior, or oppressed in some way. Even the "masters" can feel *ressentiment*,¹⁵ although rarely, while the "slaves" encounter many situations that can cause *ressentiment*. An important difference between the way "slaves" and "masters" deal with their *ressentiment* lies in their overall psychological constitution: the rich and well-rounded nature of "masters" leads them to feel *ressentiment* only occasionally and not over a long period of time, simply because they are not prone to bitterness of any kind: they do not take their misfortunes very seriously and also possess the power of healing and forgetting. In contrast to the powerful, active, and healthy forgetfulness of the "masters," the "slaves" tend to hold on to their *ressentiment* because of their passive nature. "Man of *ressentiment*"¹⁶ reconfigures the criterion for fulfilled and happy life in order to convince himself that his own life is in fact truly happy and morally good. He uses the terms 'good' and 'evil' to reinterpret power relations in such a way that he approves his powerlessness and disapproves of the strength of the 'masters.' The gain for the weak is therefore psychological, moral, and possibly metaphysical,¹⁷ as the weak are encouraged by the priests to embrace their lives of suffering exchange for the divine prize in the afterlife. In this sense, Nietzsche is particularly critical of ascetic priests who are "triumphant in the final agony"¹⁸ as they promote deprivation, self-sacrifice, and all that is in

¹⁵ Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I.10.

¹⁶ Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I.10.

¹⁷ Bittner, Rüdiger. "Ressentiment". In: Schacht, Richard (ed.). Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, 127–136.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III.11.

fact hostile to life. The Nietzschean man of *ressentiment* is deeply frustrated, dishonest, calculating, and a schemer. This unsavoury personality plays a role not only in the philosophical essays on morality. In a famous pedagogical example, the man of *ressentiment* is depicted in the fable of the fox who cannot reach the much-wanted grapes; after several unsuccessful attempts, the fox walks away scornfully, pretending to actually despise the grapes. As another general example, the man of *ressentiment* is often associated with a self-righteous person who is convinced in his moral superiority and the rightness of his way of life.

Ressentiment is obviously a very complex phenomenon. What makes it so complex is the experience of deeply interrelated emotions, i.e., its irreducibility to a single emotion (e.g., hatred, anger, malignant envy, or vindictiveness), a moral protest, or other complex states such as vengefulness or *Schadenfreude*. *Ressentiment* is none of these emotional states and can be all of them at the same time. The man of *ressentiment* can display episodes of envy, anger, malice, or hatred, but in many of these cases his outbursts have their roots in *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* thus shares similarities with many odious passions, but it also differs from them. The most intriguing distinction, however, is between *ressentiment* (the word is borrowed from French) and resentment. The difference between the two is usually described in terms of intensity and duration (*ressentiment* lasts longer and is more intense). *Ressentiment*, like resentment, is usually triggered by an unfavourable situation or event. In the case of *ressentiment* trigger must be something that is experienced as very personal, very dramatic, and deeply related to our sense of identity, recognition, and self-worth. The values we perceive as being violated must be of great importance to our sense of personal dignity.¹⁹ But that is still not enough for *ressentiment*, because the

¹⁹ At this point, it is important to note how resentment is a response to the attack on something we cherish, i.e., it exposes the positive value that is worth protecting. I shall return to that point in the last part of the paper.

unpleasant situation must also involve someone stronger than us; it must involve a sense of our inferiority,²⁰ of a real or imagined inability to act. The sudden awareness of our weakness, the perceived attack on values that are very important to us, the realization that the insult goes very deep into our self-valuation, coupled with the intense emotional reaction (unpleasant and hostile emotions in many possible combinations) are the main ingredients for the emergence of *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* is an enduring condition that involves imagination, revenge fantasies, and the frustration fed by the constant self-reminding on the painful situation.

The man of *ressentiment* not only keeps himself in the circle of remembering and reliving the painful situation that revealed his weakness and inferiority, but he also suppresses any sign of his vindictiveness. According to Aristotle, anger must be expressed; if it is suppressed, it turns into *ressentiment*. Scheler described more clearly than Nietzsche how important the suppression of emotions (anger, hatred, envy, revenge) is to the very existence of *ressentiment*.²¹ When the affects are discharged, Scheler said, “they are prevented from turning into that psychical dynamite which is called *ressentiment*”.²² *Ressentiment* can only arise when strong emotions are suppressed.²³ Similar to Nietzsche, Scheler’s *ressentiment* is reserved for those who are dominated and feel deeply frustrated under authority. However, they remain silent and suppress any expression of their frustration. Fear of a violent reaction from the ‘masters’ does not seem to be the crucial motivation for suppression. More likely, the motivation lies in an attempt at self-deception: one cannot admit own *ressentiment* as this would serve as the indisputable proof of one’s weaknesses. *Ressentiment*

²⁰ Aeschbach, Sébastien. *Ressentiment: An anatomy*. 2017, 45–51. doi: 10.13097/archive-ouverte/unige:103621

²¹ Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 20.

²² Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 20.

²³ Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 6.

reveals vulnerability. By telling a story of being unaffected, one can maintain the false image of being equal to the stronger subject, of being endowed with the same qualities. I will return to this issue in the next section of the article. For now, let us state the obvious: the strategy of denial and repression can be very damaging to an individual. Both Nietzsche and Scheler are clear about this, with Scheler writing this at the very beginning of his essay, in his description of *ressentiment*:

“*Ressentiment* is a self-poisoning of the mind which has quiet definite causes and consequences. It is a lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which, as such, are normal components of human nature. Their repression leads to the constant tendency to indulge in certain kinds of value delusions and corresponding value judgements.”²⁴

The relationship between *ressentiment* and revenge is strong. The thought of revenge keeps *ressentiment* alive; without it, *ressentiment* fades. When the thirst for revenge is quenched, *ressentiment* loses its reason, as Max Scheler suggests. When the offended “really acts and avenges himself, if he who is consumed by hatred harms his enemy, gives him ‘a piece of his mind,’ or merely vents his spleen in the presence of others,” there is no *ressentiment*.²⁵ The favourable environment for *ressentiment* are the dark corners, hidden holes, and secret passages, as Nietzsche noted,²⁶ e.g., areas that lend themselves to intrigue and avoidance of direct confrontation, which would most likely end in defeat anyway. Scheler agrees, saying the “the desire for revenge, which is itself caused by a repression, has powerful repressive tendencies.”²⁷ Secret intrigue, however, is not the only way to deal with

²⁴ Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 4.

²⁵ Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 6.

²⁶ Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I.10.

²⁷ Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*, 7.

the thirst for revenge. The desire for revenge continues as long as the wrong is not balanced, either by a punishment (through a legal system) or by witnessing a downfall of the target of *ressentiment*. When the balance is restored, *ressentiment* should be gone. The Nietzschean man of *ressentiment*, however, has nurtured his *ressentiment* for far too long for it to be relieved by a single act of humiliation of a ‘master’. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* boils until it explodes as a creative force and produces a form of morality. The man of *ressentiment* has achieved a certain level of satisfaction by reversing the concepts of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ into ‘good’ and ‘evil’, even though the anthropological differences that caused the reversal in the first place remain essentially unchanged. He is convinced that the reconceptualization of morality has somehow improved his position. He does not seek relief by changing the structural conditions of factual subordination he endures, nor is he interested in finding ways to break with the humiliation he feels. In this respect, he accepts his weaker position. In Nietzsche’s perspective, the man of *ressentiment* accepts his inferior position because his way of thinking depends on the role models, e.g., the nobility, whom he simultaneously despises and reveres. Nietzsche regards such characters with contempt, since he obviously associates meekness with vulnerability. I will briefly address these and some other questions in the following section.

The power of the powerless man

Nietzsche despises *ressentiment*, but why should one despise a feeling? From Nietzsche’s point of view, *ressentiment* is the characteristic of ‘slaves’, the weak and devious. They seem to be the real targets of Nietzsche’s hostility.²⁸ The ‘masters’ feel *ressentiment*

²⁸ Solomon, Robert C. “One Hundred Years of Ressentiment. Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals”. In: Schacht, Richard (ed.). *Nietzsche, Genealogy*,

only occasionally, for a brief moment, before shaking it off, along with any memory on the perpetrator or the humiliating episode. The suggestion seems to be that forgetting an insult is noble, while remembering and reliving it is a sign of slavery. The relationship between *ressentiment* and forgetting is intriguing. Why does the man of *ressentiment* insist on remembering and reliving painful events? According to Nietzsche, the inability (or unwillingness) to forget the injury inflicted and to declare the aggressor unworthy of our further action is one of the main differences between the noble man and the man of *ressentiment* (if we can call Nietzsche's "slaves" "men of *ressentiment*," and this seems plausible). The noble man "shakes [...] with one shrug, many worms which would have burrowed into another man"²⁹ and is blessed with the healing power to quickly forget the insults directed at him. The "other man" in this context is most likely the resentful man who tends to experience *ressentiment* and continue to nurture it. Perhaps Nietzsche, as in an Aristotelian account of anger, has in mind a pleasant aspect of the generally unpleasant *ressentiment*. Aristotle depicts anger as a painful emotion that is a reaction to an undeserved insult directed to us or against those close to us. However painful it may be, anger is at the same time pleasurable because it is based on the fantasy of taking revenge for an injury. Plotting revenge is enjoyable. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the man of *ressentiment* keeps reminding himself over and over again on the suffering and pain he has endured.

There is another angle to this issue. Forgetting and forgiving certainly play a very important role in our moral landscape, but one can argue, as Didier Fassin does, that keeping *ressentiment* alive and the refusal to forget can also have an important political, social, and even

Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, 95–124.

²⁹ Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I.10.

moral function. Let me briefly introduce Fassin's argument. He generally follows the distinction between *ressentiment* and resentment outlined above, where *ressentiment* is "a reaction to historical facts, which generate an anthropological condition: victims of genocide, apartheid, or persecutions experience this condition."³⁰ Importantly, this is a very serious experience that is by no means accidental or situational. Man of *ressentiment* may have been exposed to oppression, directly or indirectly through narratives of people close to him. Drawing on the writings of Jean Améry, a writer and survivor of the Nazi death camps, Fassin asks whether *ressentiment* is a counterpart to the contemporary politics of amnesty. The tendency of the politics of amnesty is to ask the perpetrator to apologise, while the victim (or those close to the victim) is asked to forgive, with a goal of reconciliation. As Nietzsche noted, forgiveness and forgetting are antidotes to *ressentiment*. Forgiveness and the disappearance of *ressentiment* also mean that the rancor is gone, together with a wish to revenge. Every society wants to minimize conflicts or at least open conflicts, so it welcomes reconciliation and the disappearance of *ressentiment*. But what if one does not want revenge, but also refuses to forgive and forget? This is a proposed reconceptualization of the Nietzschean vengeful man of *ressentiment* into a defender of dignity.³¹ This is not (only) a matter of justice, but of recognising and restoring one's worth. Would the moral adversary, the 'evil enemy,' and his misdeeds be forgiven and eventually forgotten without *ressentiment* that keeps them alive? *Ressentiment* is on the side of the victims, it is very private because the pain is very private, subjective, and not fully comprehensible to an outsider. Remembrance thus serves "the moral function of keeping alive for the perpetrators the

³⁰ Fassin, Didier (2013). "On Resentment and *Ressentiment*. The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotion", *Current Anthropology*, 54(3), 249–267, here 260.

³¹ *Ibid.*

meaning of what they have done.”³² Using *ressentiment* as an instrument to keep the atrocities from being forgotten and to not allow the moral asymmetry between the victims and the perpetrators to ever be lost reveals the resentful individual as one with dignity and a sense of pride. *Ressentiment* interpreted in this way becomes the strength of the victims, quite different from the illusion of strength nurtured by the Nietzschean man of *ressentiment*.

Although he largely places the reconfiguration of *ressentiment* within the conceptual frame of Nietzsche and Scheler, Fassin leaves aside some of the important features attributed to *ressentiment*. For example, that it is hidden from the eyes of others, so deep that it sometimes eludes even the subject himself. Self-deception does not seem to play a role in this proposed reassessment of *ressentiment*, nor it does it take into account the potentially devastating psychological effects on the man of *ressentiment*. Perhaps it is the anchoring of the remembrance in *ressentiment* that offers some comfort to those who have suffered. There is also an aspect of learning from the mistakes of others, or a moral story about evil: “the injury exists as long as there is someone to remember it.” Not forgiving and not forgetting sometimes brings a more compelling moral and educational message than reconciliation.

Let me return to an earlier point. What if the real target of Nietzsche’s revulsion is not *ressentiment* as such, but rather those who are susceptible to it: the weak. As Solomon noted, feeling contempt for weakness is not uncommon among people; even the weak are sometimes disgusted by weakness. In this interpretation, weakness itself is “bad”, not the expressions of weakness. Nietzsche obviously praises strength, but his description of strength is not very clear. Solomon notes that Nietzsche attributes ‘strength’ in very different ways: to status and class, to biological determinants, or to health. What seems clear is that strength

³² Ibid.

is not the physical advantage that proves itself in combat, but rather the intrinsic qualities that give a person a privileged position in the world. The weak, then, as Solomon says, “react against a world that they did not make, which is not just, which is ruled by people who—even by the standards they themselves espouse—do not deserve their advantages”.³³ They respond to oppression and injustice. *Ressentiment* of the weak would then, similar to Fassin’s previous remark, testify to a proud soul with wounded dignity seeking recognition. Nietzsche’s man of *ressentiment* belongs to the herd, while the noble man leads a self-affirming, independent life. Solomon’s reading of Nietzsche raises a legitimate question: What is so wrong with being dependant and vulnerable? Why should our vulnerability be shameful? Indeed, it can be argued that it is precisely our vulnerability that draws us to others, gives meaning to social bonds, and reminds us of the limits and significance of dignity, justice, and humanity.³⁴

Interestingly, to stretch Nietzsche’s metaphor a bit, his birds of prey live without each other, while the little lambs try to find safety in flock. Solomon’s interpretation locates the origin of Nietzsche’s praise of strength not in factual strength but in a confidence and self-satisfaction. Admittedly, it is easier to be free of self-doubt when one occupies a privileged position in society, but one needs more than physical strength to hold such position; one needs the silent approval of one’s subordinates. It is this silence – motivated by the belief that all reactions to perceived injustice regarding the organization of society must be suppressed – that eventually leads to *ressentiment*. Deeply buried

³³ Solomon, R.C. “One Hundred Years of Ressentiment”, 111.

³⁴ Zagorac, Ivana. “How Should We Treat the Vulnerable? Qualitative Study of Authoritative Ethics Documents”. *Journal of health care for the poor and underserved*, 27 (2016), 1656–1673 doi:10.1353/hpu.2016.0154; Zagorac, Ivana; Stamenković Tadić, Barbara. “Health within illness: The negativity of vulnerability revised”. *Medicine, health care and philosophy*, 25(1) (2022), 207–217. doi:10.1007/s11019-022-10072-5

frustrations are most certainly unhealthy. On the other hand, frustration with oppression and injustice means that one not only recognizes but also highly values the concepts of freedom and justice. Despite its repulsiveness, *ressentiment* is grounded in a positive valuation. In this essay, I cannot explore on this point; however, it is worth noting that *ressentiment* raises interesting philosophical questions because it is “aware of the larger view.”³⁵ This is not to say that *ressentiment* is actually a positive emotion, that frustrations are to be welcomed, or that Nietzsche’s nobles are in fact slaves. What this article aims to do is to show the shades of this dark and complex emotional state. Nietzsche’s confrontation between the strength and weakness, self-sufficiency and vulnerability, vitality and cynicism is not as simple as it might seem at first glance. More generally, *ressentiment* itself requires careful philosophical (not just psychological) analysis to reveal some hidden parts of our human nature.

We propose in the last section of this chapter to transpose our now clearer picture of the psychological and philosophical layers of the notion of *ressentiment* into the field of research integrity, for the search of a clearer comprehension of re-offending nature of many authors of wrongdoing.

The knowledge delinquent as “man of *ressentiment*”

How can we explain that a character profile “x,” linked to a lack of integrity, often seems (though not always) aligned with a strategy of recurrence, even when the person knows he has been exposed? Placing *ressentiment* under the light of reflective thinking, acknowledging that there may sometimes be legitimate *ressentiment*, is not an excuse to deny responsibility or to avoid foreseeing risks and possible damages in

³⁵ Solomon, R.C. “One Hundred Years of *Ressentiment*”, 116.

preventive ways. The unconscious, however, plays a role in all automatism and excessive behaviour, this is on the psychological side³⁶.

The social ethical et philosophical analysis add some shared observations: Where does the flaw come from that makes us unable to see the problem of manipulating others, even at the cost of exposing individuals and groups to potential significant harm, especially when the author of academic dishonesty, repeats almost identically his/her modus operandi?

From M. Bergadaà's field of research, she inferred and published over the past years, four profiles of "knowledge delinquents", and specifically the profile of the "manipulator," (Bergadaà, 2021, 112-118) has a very negative self-image because (it seems) they were poorly recognized by their father or mother, as would Freudian psychology conjecture. So, by plagiarizing someone else, these manipulator type of knowledge delinquents appropriate the identity of those they looted. This is what classical psychoanalyst may conclude. The concept of the profile is defined by Bergadaà, as the person's attitude towards the values and norms of a given society, instead of a deep psychological archetype with Jung/Hesse, or the key figure of the "man of *ressentiment*"; we shall come back to this difference later.

The "swindler" profile (individualist/norm-violating and immoral) re-offend because they are gamblers (Bergadaà, 2021, 118-124), while the "manipulator" profile does so due to this deep internal fracture and wounds. The "cheater" profile (ibid., 130-135) relies solely on the

³⁶ Contrary to the three first subsections of this chapter, which are totally the fruit of the research by the author herself, this last part is the fruit of many exchanges between the author and the editors, it has written in a participative and collective way, the responsibility of the views are also shared under ultimate control of the author.

practices of their environment and does not re-offend if moved to an honest research environment³⁷.

As shown previously, placing *ressentiment* under the light of reflective thinking, is acknowledging that there may often be negative but also sometimes positive resentment (which we would keep in the English form), is not an excuse to deny responsibility, nor is it a way to avoid foreseeing risks and possible damages. However, the unconscious plays a role in all automatism and excessive behavior.

The “swindler” profile is an individualist and disregards the community. The “manipulator” profile has formed clans around them, thus only considering their own clan, and they often reach the highest levels, as indicated by major cases (e.g., the scandal that made the headlines of the resignation of a minister in Germany and recently a vice-chancellor in a famous the US university).

According to a preliminary reading by Reginster: the psychology of *ressentiment* is based on at least two desires. Firstly, the desire to ensure a “master class” social status for someone who realizes that they can no longer meet their own responsibilities/ambitions. Instead of acknowledging vulnerability and developing an ethical principle suitable for the new weakness observed in their own personal constitution through reflective thinking, intersubjective contacts and efforts, and good communication and work, the person goes beyond and acts as if there were no problem, projecting it onto others. This could be seen as typical case of negative emotions, experiencing sadness and identifying an external cause to it. Nietzsche warns us of not identifying, on the one hand, the feeling of ambition with pleasure, which is totally originating in a repetitive string of rather negative experiences of powerlessness, that the person would overcome; he on the other hand does not identify

³⁷ The author and editors would like to thank Prof. Bergadaà for her help in clarifying the deep but clearly contrasting motives of re-offending in these four various profiles, as the different perceptions of the nature of social bounds.

the state of powerlessness and consequently the disposition of *ressentiment* with hatred (neither love, blame or praise) which are, following his view of our psyche, indifferent to the ambitious persons who simply seek *power*:

“The essential element of ambition is to attain the feeling of one's own *power*. The pleasure of power is not merely about being admired in the opinion of others. Praise and blame, love and hate, are indifferent to the ambitious individual who seeks power.

Fear (negatively) and the will to power (positively) explain the high regard we have for people's opinions.

The pleasure of power. The pleasure of power is explained by the repeated experience, a hundred and a hundred times, of the displeasure arising from dependence, from powerlessness. Without this experience, the said pleasure is also lacking.” (Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 1877, 23[63]; trans. from German: see Günzel, 2004³⁸)

The swindler seems to capture this strong sentiment of autonomy, on the axis of the social norms, and a potential immorality on the axis of the values, although the figure of the “bricoleur”, captures more precisely the lack of moral engagement, or characteristic amorality of this profile (Bergadaà, 125-129). It is by taking care of many functions in the university system at the same time that this figure of knowledge delinquent tries to escape the recognition of their inappropriate behaviour, and if they reappear in the system it is not because they deny their responsibility, but because they try to change the semantic of the words. Probably the bricoleur is the less powerless among the four types and also the less a candidate for being called “man of *ressentiment*”. But

³⁸ Trans. by the editors and author from: Günzel, Stefan. 2004. *Nietzsche Von Wille und Macht*. Frankfurt a. Main: Insel Verl.

let's come back on the feature of powerlessness and the reaction to it, as it overall characterise the manipulator type in particular.

The second desire is revenge or a desire for justice. According to Reginster, this is the desire upon which *ressentiment* is based. The ethics of *ressentiment*, as its contrary the ethics of ambition (and what Nietzsche will call later the will-to-power) is not automatically blameworthy. We even might find challenging to imagine an ethics or a theory of justice without any element of reaction, fault, and guilt or resentment. "*Ressentiment*" in the French form, seems to define a late state of evolution of this experience of fault and guilt, without any reference to a principle of proportionality of the share of benefits and sufferings on both sides of the parties involved.

The "positive" desire (I intentionally use quotes) from which the "reevaluation of *ressentiment*" arises is the desire for political or socio-economic superiority, to be part of the "ruling class" and live the kind of life that some people consider to be the ordinary goal of life. If we question the positive value of the desire for superiority/vanity/ambition, it is because part of the motive could be an imbalanced pride and the pursuit of honors and glory without good balance (upon close examination of this emotion, we realize that it is a slippery slope inherent to its very nature, we tend much quicker than we would expect to think we are God, the illusion of an absolute sovereignty of the Self). If the means chosen to achieve this end (asserting one's superiority) turn into unjust and harmful methods, it obviously calls into question the "positive" attraction that one might have to an innocent use.

On the other hand, one could argue that the desire for glory and vanity is not inherently bad, especially if the person benefits from belonging to the ruling class and simply desires to consolidate their way of life and ensure benefits and lack of needs for their loved ones resulting from it. The question is whether this person equally considers and values others, including but not only those who do not belong to

their idea of the “ruling class.” The problem arises as the division of classes may be interpreted as an ideally classless society, but reality brings forth the issue of a perception of class justice (rather than a justice behind the veil of ignorance of a social contract), meaning a permanent division between the masses and their elites. But one way or the other more justice may be needed to escape setbacks and hardship.

In my opinion, if we discuss the desire for superiority in a nuanced way, as Spinoza might invite to do, placing vanity and pride as mostly a moral vice that “colonizes” the entire person, we should see that non cognitive, non-realist type of autonomous character “as a striving (conatus) to persevere in being”, or persisting in one's being for Spinoza is natural, and the existence of self-love vital (*fortitudo*, strength, as opposed to servitude), without which a person suffers from a lack of self-esteem. This point is not a minor aspect because a poorly constituted self-esteem is the source of serious disturbances in physical and psychic life, leading to pathological indifference/disinterest in the world in most severe cases, and the manipulative tendency, we just try to elaborate following the line of Nietzsche. Justice is a virtue distinct from esteem or shame. It can be “blind” as reason-based minimalist consensus, a pragmatic need to come to a compromise, and it can be magnanimous, inclusive and visionary; but in any case, there is a balance of values to maintain straight and, if necessary, a sword, which means justice cannot entirely be built on the weakest and most vulnerable part of the society, without risking collectively of not being able to operate the system aligned on common good and ethical values.

As shown by Aeschbach, and analysed above, *ressentiment* is not only is related to desires, but as such it alters our axiological judgements, being based on a crucial characteristic called the *process of reevaluation* itself. The *reevaluation of ressentiment* based on the desire to remain a member of the ruling class can become problematic as intrinsically linked to a judgment alteration, which is either *object* or

value-devaluation related (Aeschbach, 2017). It is not illegal or socially prohibited in many places in the world to desire dominance according to respect and public rules. Our consumerist communication society praises the narcissism of dominant power in many directly cynical ways. On the other side, contrary to a harmless and gentle form of self-affirmation, an excessively positive image of oneself will be closer to the harmful consequences of the problem of overcoming plagiarism and fraud in academia, if we grant that as such the reevaluation operated by *ressentiment* transforms in a devaluative manner some object, which has value or the cherished values themselves.

Excessive admiration and identification with the work of others, and some sort of envy and *ressentiment*, the attitude of “a soul” who “squints”, and plagiarism silently may occur. We find two possible axes according to Hesse of the reevaluation. The pair formed by the admiration of an attractive force (Latin: *anima* seen as the feminine part in the masculine unconscious) and the capacity for precision and insight, *animus* (seen as the masculine part in the feminine unconscious), both form two types of characters, instead of representations of real masculine or feminine identities.

Within the framework of the novel *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Hermann Hesse (1930) transposes the great lines of the psychology inherited from Nietzsche, which sees the devaluation of the object partly as devaluation of an artistic mastering of the experience. The strongly attractive character of vanity, the appeal of a blind pursuit of social advantages tend to gradually cloud our capacity for a well-balanced evaluation. Furthermore, the devaluation of the values themselves (truth, ethical virtue, beauty) are based on the antirealistic claim that even reason, seen as dominant affect, can also seek to submit the rest of our options of a balanced life, which do not depend solely on this masculine principle in a feminine unconscious. As Spinoza also thought, without well-designed counter-affects, reason alone cannot either guide, nor can

our reason-based action neutralize other affects³⁹ (Hesse, 1930; Wolf, 2006, 197).

On one hand, if the ability/competence to fulfill one's aspirations is preserved even though the person may still show vulnerability in certain particularly difficult contexts, he/she may keep control of these powerful appetites and pursue external satisfactions of their desire for political/academic/economic-social superiority.

Introducing a situation of vulnerability could take us beyond the framework of the problem of the double devaluative alteration inherent to *ressentiment* to discern the limits of autonomy or successful self-affirmation in a broader sense, i.e., to suppose complex harmful conditions, including devaluative pathological tendencies. Provided we analyse in priority the needs of vulnerable populations and leave feminine or masculine archetypes related to poetic creativity and arts, the importance of the responsibility to respect and protect a vulnerable person appears in the forefront (Santi, 2016; Goodin, 1985; Zagorac, 2016)⁴⁰.

This step could be justified by the factual problem of the inability to fulfill an aspiration as “constitutional” or “incurable” impotence, in other words, when long-term ability to engage in honest work is

³⁹ Hesse, H. *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Fischer Verlag; Leila Vennewitz: Engl. transl. 1994. Wolf, Jean-Claude. 2006. “Menschliche Unfreiheit und Desillusionierung (4praef-4p18)”, in: Hampe, Michael and Schnepf, Robert. *Baruch de Spinoza: Ethik in geometrischer Ordnung dargestellt*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 197. DOI: 10.1524/9783050050218197.

⁴⁰ Goodin, R. 1985. *Protecting the Vulnerable*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. More recent work on the analysis of vulnerability in research in bioethics and social sciences: Zagorac, Ivana. “How Should We Treat the Vulnerable? Qualitative Study of Authoritative Ethics Documents”. *Journal of health care for the poor and underserved*, 27 (2016), 1656–1673, DOI: 10.1353/hpu.2016.0154; María Florencia Santi, *Ética de la investigación en ciencias sociales*, Geneva: Globethics Publications, 2016; doctoral dissertation.

questioned and devaluation has turned pathological, deserve social care and medical attention.

Research on academic honesty and academic fraud shows that some people who engage in reprehensible acts academically maintain an undisputed willingness to persist despite clear communication of a well-founded suspicion of cheating or plagiarism. To some extent, these authors also remain vulnerable individuals if we define this concept as someone or a population deserving protection due to a lasting state of weakness. However, we must compare weaknesses or risks without focusing solely on the author. The key importance of a no-harm principle is even more fundamental, and prevention of risks in social interactions and the aim at concrete benefits, suggest the complementary role of these principles, including a vulnerability principle (Santi, 2016, 127ff.).

In his pioneering work on the affection of *ressentiment*, Nietzsche (1887; GM, I, 6) show that the fundamental characteristic of *ressentiment* is closely related to the idea that error or malicious intent is not a chance occurrence, something fleeting and ephemeral, but a lasting trait expressed in disturbing constancy, forming an identity of the subject over time⁴¹. For the early psychologists of depth and poets, there could be a situation where an essential feature of self-evaluation, the fact that the agent, researcher, or author, considered as a sort of academic and cultural mandarin (an administrator of responsible institutions coupled with a highly cultured individual), perceives themselves as irremediably weak instead of being temporarily weak.

Yet, this finitude is not understood and accepted by the person, even translated into an ethic that transforms this new personal constitution into a matter of resilience, because of the *devaluative* trait of the *reevaluation process of ressentiment*, leading to a game of blindness. The honest and just acceptance of one's own limit should come, as in

⁴¹ Reginster, B. 2006. *The Affirmation of Life*, Harvard: UP, 265-8.

Hesse's novel, from an agreement in a meeting between the personifications of the feminine and masculine components of the soul, in a collective framework: the artist and the wise/scientist are finally reunited and reconciled.

If we come back and reflect again on the “manipulative plagiarist” on which Bergadaà has conducted psychological and normative studies (among the other three other types), we can say that behind the cheater is a “masked individual” and should add the testimony of André Ciavaldini, as psychoanalyst (Ciavaldini, 2023, 421). The mask is partly the nature of the psyche, half Goldmund, half Narcissus... According to Ciavaldini, knowledge delinquents act (including plagiarists) in order to mask a wound and as themselves products of a psychological injury. Various social behavior disorders such as “confabulation, mythomania” are only symptoms of this primary disorder. Having received little maternal attention and retaining even fewer memories of his family, who abandoned him as a young child, the tragic figure sets out in search of the original *Mother*, that of the *Arts*, embodied in the character of Goldmund. If Goldmund encounters the ugliest and most emotionally negative chapters of existence, it is because he prefers a form of total artistic freedom, and refuses to settle down, in the manner of Montaigne who prefers to sway with the “sway” of the universe.

In the framework on Nietzsche's later work, the addition of the concept of eternal recurrence to the will to power is meant to help Nietzsche interpret the redeeming character of some experiences, which are not dependant on consciousness but related to volition and some unlearning of the spirit of revenge by counter-balancing these affects by some sort of “backwards willing”. We can only hope that reevaluation in this more radical sense could escape the risks of devaluation, as it is not either object nor value oriented but a deep counter-balancing of the affective devaluative powers of the will:

“But has the will spoken thus? And when will that happen? Has the will been unharnessed yet from his own folly? Has the will become his own redeemer and joy-bringer? *Has he unlearned the spirit of revenge and all gnashing of teeth?* And who taught him reconciliation with time and something higher than reconciliation? For that will which is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation; but how shall this be brought about? Who could teach him also *to will backwards?*” (F. Nietzsche, KSA IV, 181; emphasis added)

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