

## The Ideologies of Resentment

Resentment has been and continues to be a component of numerous ideologies of our century, forming as much a part of the right wing (nationalism, anti-Semitism) as the left, as it finds its way into various expressions drawn from both socialism and feminism.

Resentment relies on basic fallacies: That any superiority acquired in the empirical world, in the world such as we know it, is in itself and without any further discussion, a sign of moral “baseness.” That the values attached to it by the dominant ones are contemptible in themselves, that is to say as values – and not merely those uneven (tangible and symbolic) benefits that the dominant ones draw from such values. And that any subordinate or inferior situation grants one the status of a victim, that any failure to take advantage in this world can be metamorphosed and justified through grievances directed at the dominant and the privileged groups – thereby permitting a total denial of responsibility.

Such an attitude involves an axiological reversal, an *Umsturz der Werte*, which Nietzsche and Max Scheler described in divergent ways. It is sometimes difficult to immediately distinguish within different militant ideologies fallacies of resentment on one hand and on the other the will for justice and emancipation behind which such fallacies hide or with which they are intertwined. This essay describes the idealtype of what I have called **the thought of resentment** which expresses itself through a specific rhetoric of argumentation (or rather a sophistics) and through a pathos of rancor and grievance. It seems that at the beginning of this century in industrialized societies – societies disintegrating into suspicious lobbies, obsessed by claims of their “identity,” twisting the concept of Rights to suit the bickering market of “rights to difference,” societies composed of groups or “tribes” fostering endless litigations based on insurmountable disagreements and a vindictive re-invention of the past – resentment is once again becoming an all-consuming attitude. This trend may be explained by the collapse of Socialism and the utopias of Progress among other determinants.

This essay studies and illustrates briefly the axiology and the rhetoric of resentment. It retraces its relationship with the relativism that prevails today in philosophy and the social sciences. It sheds light on some of the mechanics of discussion which have allowed resentment to organize itself into an impregnable sophistry resisting compromise and pluralism. Such sophistics grant resentment the self-justified advantage of indefinitely putting rational debate at bay.

### First Approach: Heuristic definition

\* I am oppressed, poor, ignorant, servile, defeated, – and this is my glory, this is what allows me to render myself immediately superior, in my ideological delusion – superior to the rich, the powerful, the talented and the victorious. The revenge of the defeated, which is meant to console them as they claim that the victor is blameworthy for his victory in itself and that the defeated is noble not because he reacts and struggles (this would not be considered resentment), but because the baseness of his position and his morals, his powerlessness, his lack of success, his inferiority, prove that he is gloriously incapable of taking advantage in a situation where, in any case, he claims to disdain success. This continues to the point where he will succeed in taking control over the others. (See further down).

\* Ideologies and axiologies of resentment are paralogical/paradoxical and self-destructive because they recognize and pay homage to the Other who is hated in the very frenzy they display to despise and denounce him.

\* At the beginning, one finds an axiology which is inverted or reversed, turned around: the baseness

and the failure are signs of merit, and mundane superiority, – together with the values and the products of this superiority – reprehensible by the nature of things because they are judged both usurped and arbitrary. Classified under the same logic of denegation are: the desire to break the instruments used to enhance dominant values, the desire to nullify the means of measuring, and the desire to demonstrate that there is not anything that can possess any universal value, since it is only through encroachment and violent imposition that social values present themselves. In short, making morals and scornful values from the one who is dominated to themselves constitute their axiological criteria. The inversion of ethical-religious origin, *Umwertung aller Werte*.<sup>1</sup> From this axiological position and from the zeal that defends it springs a sense of grievance and a sophistics of denial.<sup>2</sup>

\* Resentment does not arise from an accidental failure, but rather from the realization of being unable to challenge the others victoriously. Being aware of having a bad game and of being forced to play when one is destined to lose.

\* To disguise and legitimize a position that is frustrating and without the possibility for success, a position that makes one feel that he is being imposed upon and subjected, – but in any case “objectively” inferior, that is to say in the world such as it goes, – without having to strive to escape, to face the competition, to criticize oneself, to criticize the alienation and the “slave” mentality, all of which result from the condition itself that domination and the need to adapt have created for you. A magical way of seeing oneself as other than one is and of overcoming the domination at the least price. Resentment is more than a conditioning of ideological compromise: it is a way of living. It is to say a way of living that is derived partly from reality and partly from fantasy, fantasized compensation giving into abreactions.

\* To experience and to observe the world while pursuing one’s own grievances, i.e. narcissistic diversions of the will for justice. The grievance that has been brooded over, becomes the exclusive form of contact with the world, everything finding itself related to this form, serving in this way as a touchstone, as a hermeneutic grid. It provides a *raison d’être* and a social mandate which, however, never allow an escape from oneself. The grievance determines a sort of privatization of universal ethics, an ethnic-egotistical rerouting of values. The grievance is then cultivated for itself, the mass of grievances blows itself out of proportion, – from being snubbed after failing and colliding with the Others, – and occupies all mental horizons. The resentful individual is so preoccupied by the proof of his grievances that he has great difficulty conceiving that his peers are not possessed by the same obsessions. It is the grievance whose return and whose denial render dynamic the sequence of contradictory arguments that I relate to “the reasoning of the cauldron” (cf. the section “Rhetoric.”) Resentment therefore becomes a “second nature.”

\* Every advantage, every value of which one is frustrated and of which others are the possessors (usurpers) or with regards to which conduct themselves in a usufructuary manner, are perceived at the same time as contemptible and as having an unjustifiable privilege, like a fraud, like a prejudice made at your expense. Resentment derives its logic only through false reasonings, doubts and inconsistencies of this sort – as we will see later on.

\* There is no “objective” oppression which is not tempted to take advantage of its state of inferiority and of the partial conscience that it takes from the oppression in order to add to his just demands all possible subjects of complaint against each and everyone, against fate and very long periods of time – and especially – but in a disguised manner – against itself, against the oppressed

group itself and the repressed or disguised self-hatred that the servile condition and the internalized alienation as well as the secondary benefits which accompany resentment help to perpetuate (cf. “Secondary Benefits,” further on).

\* Resentment develops mainly in states of society which, by dint of destabilizing its members, of making them feel their incapacity to control the world and its logic, deprive them of reference points, deafen them with falsehoods, confuse collective values, keep alive endemic conflicts, stimulate resentment in each and everyone, urge to discover anaesthetics when confronted by frustration and pain which social disorganization inflicts. (cf. “Resentment Today”).

\* Metamorphosis of resentment: sudden progression from resentment to amnesic and stubborn acceptance of the Order of things when fortune smiles on you and when one approaches places of prestige, of joy and of power. This is why the parties of resentment erode slowly, in spite of everything, through small, underhanded defects of individual calculations.

\* Resentment comes in a second instance, it is a will, alienated and ill inspired, to escape pure and simple alienation. It remains an attempt to exceed inferiority at the least cost and followed by immediate benefits, retaining from the flicker of revolt only a dynamics of animosity, of self-satisfaction, of exorcizing with respect to the world that is denying you. I will classify under revolt – positive – the ways of exceeding servile alienation and the resentment stage at the same time.

\* A definition of resentment in terms of what it is not. It is the opposite of the spirit of revolt and the will for justice – in the clothes of which he easily covers himself. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, 1992, p.39:

“Resentment is a submissive revolt. Deception, through the ambition which reveals itself, constitutes an acknowledgement. Conservatism has never been wrong about this: it knows to look for resentment as the best homage paid to social order, that of spite and frustrated ambition.”

\* To know one’s unrecognized merits, to collide with obstacles that block the flourishing of this potential, to rebel against the injustice of this situation – in all of this there is no resentment! But obviously, it is difficult to distinguish sometimes between this sort of attitude from its opposite fallacy which consists in concluding the following: I do not arrive at anything, *therefore* I must have some merits; others succeed where I fail, *therefore* their success is due to advantages obtained at my detriment.

## **Origins of Resentment**

The historical model of the spirit of resentment – as Nietzsche pointed out – is in Christianity,<sup>3</sup> “the first ones will be the last ones.” See especially, in a paradigmatic fashion, the episode of the Sinful Woman with the parable of the two debtors, in the Gospel of Luke, VIII: 36-50. The first ones will be the last ones: one contrasts the presumption of the Pharisee, who is rich and passes for a righteous person, and the humility of Mary Magdalene (who cries and doesn’t demand anything) with the last few words spoken by Jesus: “Go, your faith has saved you.”

To present oneself to a transcendental arbiter and not to assert one’s self and to “fulfill” oneself. At this stage, this is a lesson of humility: know your place at the table, know that you have no merit, cry over your sins and do not judge, – it will take a final touch so that it transforms into an

interpretation of resentment: the Pharisee is rich, he is powerful, he pays tithes at the Synagogue and does good deeds, he receives with munificence the propheta along the way, but he retains his right to judge and is not overly zealous – all of that suspect and one must prefer the lost girl to him because her baseness is an indication of her merit, because she is not responsible for her unfortunate condition – all those who are above her, who despise her are responsible, and because she does not judge.

It is not yet the romantic social version, which will oppose appearance and social essence, being that of *Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue, for example (a formula which was later taken up by *Les Misérables*). The lawyer Ferrand, honored by his “respectable” clients, of whom he protects family secrets and fortunes acquired in blood and strife, libidinous and corrupted and finally unveiled (as a result of the trap set by the mulatto woman Cécily) vs the innocent convict (le Chourineur) and the virtuous prostitute (Fleur-de-Marie, ultimately transformed into Princess Amélie de Gerolstein. Refer to what Karl Marx says on the matter in *Die Heilige Familie*<sup>4</sup>).

No, it is the proto-version: the Pharisee is actually a powerful being and passes for a righteous person, but he claims to be an unyielding subject, that being the reason why he allows himself to reason out and to judge Jesus “Who is this man who does not know...” etc. And the sinful woman is baser than the earth and does not aspire to anything. Who will be saved? Where is the merit? Success and self fulfillment are minimal.

### **Some Modern Expressions:**

\* An historical model of resentment is found in the “antimodernist” Catholic ideology of the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX from last century: The Roman Pontiff against Modernism. To anathematize that which one is unable to conquer and to initiate against all of that an interminable rancorous struggle. “Be anathematized the one who says: the Roman Pontiff ought to reconcile with modern science, democracy, etc...” (This must really be distinguished from the stoicism of Emperor Julien called The Apostate – “You won, Galilee!”)

\* The state of mind also in patriotic France after the France-Prussia War in 1870 comes into question: our defeat is our glory.

\* Anti-Semitism is one of the great modern expressions of resentment, an area in which it is acknowledged and expressed the most explicitly and the most candidly. You succeed in this modern capitalist society where we, who constitute the majority, are not in any state to impose ourselves by challenging you. You are *therefore* wrong, and the social reasoning which allows and favors your success becomes devoid of value, thus becoming illegitimate and contemptible. And the more you succeed and we fail, the more you will manifest your infamy, your spitefulness, and you will be condemned in our eyes (cf. Édouard Drumont, *La France juive* (1884) and *La Fin d'un monde* (1888), prototypical, Catholic and “Old France”).

\* Resentment in 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism, not the chauvinism of great power of course: that of small, national groups carrying with them the memory of having been enslaved and made to feel inferior. This phenomenon is seen in a certain socialism and a certain feminism...<sup>5</sup>

Nationalism, like separatism, considered as a dream of secession, as a fantasy of not having to compare oneself anymore, nor of judging ourselves on the grounds of the historical adversary. In these terms, according to the logic which ensured its success, to free itself from it, it intends to break the bridges, to isolate itself in order not to be accountable anymore except with regards to the People of Resentment, convinced that the critics and the hatred never came from outside and that one will be able to save this suffering of past failures seen in the eyes of the other.

\* Resentment and social classes: not necessarily among the most exploited, such as the industrial worker who finds in the revolutionary militancy a mandate in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but rather, and on the contrary, a lot of resentment and harshness in the social strata taken between two fires, in decline, destabilized by modernizations which they have great difficulty facing and are, in fact, only able to face when they are updating themselves and changing their identity and function.<sup>6</sup> One of the great claims of resentment involves the right to persist in one's "essence," the right not to be obliged to add to the pain of a position without glory, the additional pain of having to adapt and the possibility of "disappearing."

\* Everything that one has ever written on the "lower middle class" revolves around the dilemma which is its own: to alienate oneself in the "good cultural will" and/or to agonize with resentment. An intermediary class which defines itself by the alternative of two demoralizing positions between which it balances.

\* The excess of plebeian resentment of the industrial worker in the "scientific" socialism: the mandate given to the Proletariat, that is to the transformed earning class – such that in itself finally History changes – into the Proletariat, to one day liberate Humanity "without distinction of class, race or sex..." ["Minimum program of the Workers' Party" of 1881]. Possibly here to discover a socialism of intellectuals seeking to endow Caliban with a sublime image, which will allow him to overcome his crude and barbaric resentment, or else to put it at the service of a certain modernization that pertains to partisans of the state, and its planification: one way or another, a case of ideological sublimation and of rationalization.

\* In a demanding version, the reversal of values presents itself in *L'Internationale*: "We are nothing, let us be everything!" On the other hand, resentment, pace Pottier, offers something else that is more positive, because therein we are rendered the productive force. It is therefore based on a still bound productive power that we are making ourselves menacing for the Vampires of the Capital. It is not at all the dialectic of the Master and the slave who serves his master by the passive undertaking that he demands and through a guilty conscience that he perceives from him in passing.

\* More generally, the dynamics of equality in the ideologies of civic claims can be tainted with resentment – they are always taken between the hunger for liberating justice and the resentment of equalization by the lower class, of revenge, of rigging the rules of the game in order to prevent, at the price of social lethargy and by all the persecutory means, distances from being seen and crossed. This last tendency is demoralizing and capable of provoking catastrophes.

\* Resentment should be understood as a component of diverse political ideologies, comprised neither of one particular ideology nor belonging to any one individual. There exist no pure doctrines of resentment. There are ideologies which are drawn to resentment as they would be drawn to their natural slope or to their energy source (or, for a more vivid image, as the dog is drawn to its own vomit). Many modern political and social ideologies, – for the most part, one could suggest, – contain a pole of modernization-excess and a pole of grievance-resentment withdrawal. One can detect in the history of these ideologies the opposition between these two poles. And sometimes one feels the tension between these tendencies in the same texts and the same pages.

\* Right-wing resentment over-abundantly rises to the surface in anti-Semitism, populism, jingoism with respect to diverse cases of xenophobia, antimodernism, "national" anticapitalism,

antidemocracy, attachment to the past...

\* The American Right wing of the 1970s and 1980s has illustrated well the component of resentment in any conservatism: to make a myth of “Law and Order” in the face of a world which is changing and depriving you of reference points. But resentment is cunning and versatile: it can express itself as well in the hatred of an evolution which destabilizes you, as in the gullible acceptance of the world such as it goes (particularly in situations where the disintegration of the social component favors the emulation of resentment in precarious alliance tactics).

\* One can also very well point out and analyze “left-wing” resentment, a component more or less repressed or denied by all the so-called progressive ideologies and their occasional stupidity, fanaticism and perversion, and even criminalization, through the denial of the real and the possible, and by the stubborn denial of failures that the reasoning of resentment and its compensating voluntarism procure. This reasoning can be interpreted not as a failure in relation to its unrealistic tactics, but as further (“paranoiac”) proof that the world of the dominant ones is neither good nor welcoming, that it continues to place obstacles in your path, to plot against you, and that the dominant ones will not return to a state of reason (cf. “Hermeneutics”). Resentment has been able to pass for progressive, as it projects a heroic exterior, modestly presenting itself as something else.<sup>7</sup>

\* One can sketch out a typical personality characterized by resentment, just as there exists, for example, an “authoritarian personality” [cf. Th. W. Adorno et al]. This personality is not monolithic, and it only comes to the head of a movement during periods of crisis. In effect, in collective situations of failure and disorientation, the resentful man imposes these situations on the disoriented and frustrated individuals who are following him.

\* Resentment is able to coexist within social and political doctrines with programs that include efforts aimed at rational reconciliation in justice, or in the course of modernization, or in periods of excessive antagonism. Such programs can repress and almost silence it; however, resentment can also (re)invade ideologies that maintain elements of stagnation and denial, that require taboos, or that build themselves around certain blindspots. In any militancy, any activism, any demanding party, one encounters personalities saturated with resentment, – and a plague is thereby placed upon the group who lets them take the reins, or set the tone!

### **Resentment today**

\* A vast market of resentment opened at the end of the 20th century. A prosperous market with a large clientele that is frustrated and disillusioned, in search of new illusions, inexhaustible rancor, and militant moroseness. It is a question of offering diversions from the social exhaustion and alibis to those who carry around with them their guilty conscience, or who no longer tolerate critical reflection. A second-hand identity and a stall of mannerisms of protest. There exists a high competition between the stalls. Each one tries to persuade the other, and everyone is blind and deaf to the resentment of the others, to the resentment which is not their own. It will possibly end in pacts of non-aggression and neighborly terms among the Tribes of resentment.

\* Resentment today, with its countless variants and possibilities for change, allows itself free expression that it procures an “ethical basis,” to countless groups from the market where the identity is derived, and that in a situation characterized by a rupture in the public sphere, by transformations of this public sphere into lists of demanding lobbies who refuse to listen to one another. “Relativism,” in the banal sense of searching for a working arrangement in a disintegrating doxa,

serves as a first justification of resentment and communal narcissism. As there is a disagreement over morals or arbitration, multiple absurd efforts are seen in society as converging in order to totally regulate social issues, which includes issues that are civic, private and intimate. There is an effort to fully regulate these issues, in an extremely meticulous fashion. These efforts, however, only arise during disputes and differences of opinion, resulting from the fact that the “values” referred to, constitute (and are recognized expressly and triumphantly as such) only the expression of particular interests based on endless blackmail and guerrilla warfare.

\* We are witnessing the birth of ideologies of resentment that are new, or at least remodeled, updated to suit current preferences. But these ideologies push onto the compost pile older resentments, which procure healthy conditions for mental development. Resentment is only well understood when considered over a long period of modern history by diverse peoples and cultures. There are also, in this modern history, “antiseptic” mechanisms of rationality, universality, and liberation, which apply in certain situations, find themselves overburdened by the constantly underlying backward surge of resentment. If perspectives of collective hope are missing, and if societies are found once again before lasting material or ethical shortages, disillusioned individuals tend to wave the flags of vindictive identity.

\* The criticism of resentment in contemporary ideology can be connected to the survey of the global crisis of progressive attitudes, including projects for freedom and “social” reforms, a crisis that has lasted for several decades, as much in the “First” as the “Third” worlds. It is, however, a crisis masked by the ultimate and spectacular collapse of the regimes originating in the Bolshevik Revolution. The present situation is consequently scattering demands, which have more or less been well-founded by diverse groups, through compartmentalized and antagonistic activism, of which the plans are no less unrealistic than the Socialist paradigm of liberation of all humanity “regardless of race, class or sex...”. But these plans exclude any unitarian mobilization of protesters, any prospect of rational reconciliation of humans, and seems to leave them only the choice between resentment, hostility and withdrawal without an alibi of “a brighter future,” and what is unlikely but, according to the Ruse of history, inevitable integration into the existing local or world-wide order.<sup>8</sup>

\* It has been said that the Great Narratives have come to an end. In fact, there are only little narratives left for coalitions of neurotics ruminating in their grievances. This gives those who have not yet discovered their grievance, incentive to quickly find one for themselves.

\* The ideological “map” does not even constitute an approximate reflection of the ground (geopolitical, economical, institutional); on the ground at the end of the XXth century, one witnessed the completion of world-wide application – a new order that is world-wide, “schizo-cultural” and human (established outside of the system, gullible and miserable). The “map” of ideologies then seems to form Noah’s coat. The ideologies of resentment are Noah’s coats hiding the obscenity of the world such as it goes, and resists the cunningness and the curbs present in history, the shared faults, the vain denials of responsibility, etc.

\* One ought to make appear, in the present situation, the contagiousness of resentment. When in contact with stigmatized minorities, who are determined to complain indefinitely without the prospect to negotiate rationally, groups who are relatively privileged also begin to seek out a dispute in which they will be opposed and they often find it. Without having anything other to offer the others than an improbable integration into their mental and ethical order, these minorities also feel tempted to mimic such “profitable” rancor, to furbish their grievances and to draw up lists of

complaints – without any hope for that matter of attracting pity onto themselves from the nonexistent Great Arbitrator.

\* Contemporary resentment and triumphant reappearances of ethnocentrism and nationalism in small homelands. To renew the meaning of history, to perfect modern history by a decline within. (cf. “Identities”).

\* Evidently, today’s sociologists-ideologists who are tolerant toward the “fatality” of ethnocentrism, circumvent or conceal this source of ethnic “pride” in the resentment and in the fear of otherness.

\* The contemporaries are plagued by the ambivalence between resentment and anti-resentment, but the anti-resentment means progress, rational reconciliation of interests, authentic pluralism, the universal as a horizon, cosmopolitanism, transcendence of knowledge: all sorts of values that current hegemony endeavors to show as very outdated. Resentment is more promising. It is also and always has been for psychological reasons: between my frustrations, my regrets, my rancor and a principle of explanation at my size, an existential mandate, there is no divergence; no effort is required. RESENTMENT ANSWERS TO THE LAW OF LEAST EFFORT.

\* A task to accomplish on the contemporary cultural market consists of preparing an inventory of and working on the ideologies which, born or remodeled at least at the beginning of the 1980s, have been legitimized as a result of contemporary relativism and Pyrrhonism, constructing the neo-tribal on exclusive rancor and claims / denial of a fundamental lack or “shame.”

\* *Öffentlichkeit*, Public Sphere. Let us examine in particular the new discourses present in the public sphere, provided of course that this public sphere, which appeared with the Bourgeois, industrial, capitalist, parliamentary age, still exists, and is not about to disintegrate into a juxtaposition of tribal encampments exclusively concerned about their identity, centered around their rancor, their grievances, their neighborly quarrels, the promotion of a sui generis axiology and of a rhetoric of pathos hostile to the very principle of general rules of truthfulness and sociability.

\* “The market of Identities,” the new discursive, narrative and argumentative forms which mark out fictions or enactments of reterritorialization. The general hypothesis is that the current cultural world is affected by a double movement: on the one hand, it is subjected to a world-wide application of cultural phenomena in relation to the world-wide expansion of markets (“the end of history,” the triumph, after the collapse of Communism, of liberal ideology on all fronts, the “New world order,” etc.). The effects of each can be measured in multiple sectors: new technical and media revolutions which abolish space and develop a numerical and digital imaginary world that is no longer the imaginary system based on the paradigm of representation (P. Virilio); determination in the remodeling of large cities containing “spaces without qualities” (J.-P. Dollé); “nondescript spaces” (M. Augé); the surge of individual floating identities that affect the personality and the body (body building, genetic manipulation, plastic surgery, transsexualism – all jumbled together); new cultural hybridities brought about by the recent massive population floods across the world. All of these confusing and destabilizing data bring about reactions which go along the same lines despite enormous superficial variations: a market of formulae of fictitious reterritorialization has appeared in the 1980s. This has been described as new tribalisms, including: (neo-)localism, regionalism, nationalism, fundamentalism, “separatist” feminism, ideologies of sexual minorities, micro-social narcissism of connivance/resemblance, simulacra of re-enchantment of the world, accompanied and prepared by a generalized cultural relativism, which is finding to justify themselves at the sources



of a Nihilism or cognitive and axiological Pyrrhonism derived from the skeptical “Great Thinkers,” coarsened and laid down in order to serve as an alibi for the overabundant promotion of colorful antagonist differentialisms.

\* Resentment is possibly stimulated during those periods in which the unstable balance of differing social tendencies and the congestion of disputes results from the impossibility to merge demanding groups towards rational convergent goals. These are the ages which welcome quacks, sophists and charlatans.

\* One must analyze and interpret these fantasies of re-enchantment and these reactions of resentment and of withdrawal by showing that, far from forming a resistance to the pressure of world-wide application, that is to say roughly, of the “Americanization” (one will otherwise refer to westernization) in all its forms, are, on the contrary, most probably a ruse in the adaptation to the emerging world. They offer a perverse way to better integrate in the end to the world-wide application of the culture of diverse groups that reclaim their imaginary specificity but lose thereby the ways of converging their “desiderata” in a perspective of global liberation, and render themselves too weak to mobilize themselves against the great dynamic infrastructures that they choose not to see.

\* Neo-tribalism etc.: words beginning with the suffix neo- do not only serve to indicate the effect of passing fashion, they also include the justifiable indication of the fact that “ideologies do not have a history” (Patrick Tort) and they do not invent anything new because they emerge from makeshift fabrications, recycling, straightening, and the putting back in line with current tastes. A trait specific to Ideologies: they are always ready obsolete and inadequate.

\* It is also an operation of re-justification of the intellectual element in the abandonment of the liberating Great Narratives and of the great militancy dispensing justice, that we are witnessing with the appearance of the many voluntary ideologists characterized by a system of neo-tribal identities. As for the object of discourse, the collective identity, it is both essential and evanescent. There is no material available to “deconstruct” an ideological mechanism which dissolves itself within the indemonstrable. The ultimate paradox being that this vacuity at the centre of the system is certainly that which ensures its dynamics and development. (Please see “Identities” further down).

\* The growing resentment has contributed to the promotion of a new ideology of laws that are thought out not in terms of citizenship and universality, but in terms of a scolding juxtaposition of “rights for difference.” There has been established a market of claims which are exclusive, irreconcilable and irreducible by ethnic, cultural, sexual etc. groups (for from now on, anything can form a group). Western societies have become animated by litigations and disputes – différends (Jean-François Lyotard) where the rancor and the grievances of each side do not transcend upon a rule of justice or upon a utopic horizon, where there is nothing left that still has an encompassing meaning or a lasting effect.

\* While the “Separated development” disappeared in South Africa, it triumphs in the entire world, promoted by the doctrinarians of resentment groups.

\* Consensus and pluralism have never been spoken of so much as they have been in societies like ours where the possibility itself of any dialogue between fetishized “differences” are stumped – a possibility that countless doctrinarians grant themselves as a task to undermine.

\* Resentment today is stimulated by its neighbors in the irrational realm: guilt over ecological issues, humanitarian “hospitalism”, aboriginophilia, occultism, parapsychism, “New Age” mysticism, cultism of all natures<sup>9</sup>. There is a connection with the convergent return, first of all in the perspective of universal guilt, whose sociopathological avatar is Anxiety as a “pathetic” motor of diverse regimes of public discourse.

### **Components, Ethos: Grievances, rancor and the spirit of vengeance**

\* Resentment = essentially rancor as ethos, an attitude before the world.

Resentment = a desire for revenge.

Persecutor – persecuted: rancorous and aggressive.

\* When one speaks of resentment, – as of any other ideological dynamics, – one must therefore not take this literally. ONE MUST NOT CONFUSE THE MAP WITH THE TERRITORY: any ideology of resentment identifies – in a Manichaeic manner – those who are privileged and dominant, the “masters” and knows himself as the subservient and innocent victim of their encroachment. But in the “sociological reality,” the relations of domination are hardly unilateral. The victim, first of all, can victimize one who is more oppressed than them. (This follows from the poor relations between the workers’ party and feminism at the beginning of last century. The proletarian discovered that he ought to leave behind his comfortable position of impassive accuser of vampire capitalism in order to occupy a position of accused in the relations of the sexes such as were perceived by the feminists.) The polarization dominant/dominated, hyperbolized in any discourse of grievance and claims, often conceals the real and complex aspect of relations, unequal, without a doubt, in many respects, from reciprocal dependence which asserts that the alleged “Master” is not without grievances that can be pleaded for or that are contentious with respect to the self-proclaimed Oppressed one who annoys him with his unilateral complaints and his bad faith.

\* The fundamental socio-historical problem facing the doctrines of resentment consist of arriving at measuring the conflict between the feeling of imposed handicap, of the disadvantage undergone and the empirical reality. To evaluate on the other hand the correlation between the handicap, the discrimination – experienced and/or objective – and the grievances maintained with regard to others, identified as being responsible for your difficulties and taking advantage of your misfortunes. Insofar as all the ideologies of resentment are always amalgamated and state in a single breath the suffered handicap and their grievance concomitant with respect to an Other, the fundamental question, which is very difficult, involves measuring in what sense and through which mediations, the groups considered to be dominating or privileged, are responsible for this unfortunate position, being entirely the cause of it.

\* Resentment involves a lengthy process, it contains heavy files full of grievances, it would fear forgetting them, it recalls them and feeds off of them and that goes far back... There is never a prescription. It is not too small: it does not approve of the saying *De minima non curat praetor*. He seeks in himself a transcendental and well prepared Judge, but fears having to disclose his cause before arbitrators who are all possibly the puppet of the Others, the dominant ones.

\* One remembers here, from the point of view that is in contrast with aristocratic morals, that leniency defined the noble Prince. The notion of sublime in the classical aesthetic. Resentment knows that it is not noble and ought to come to terms in order to turn envy and spite into something sublime. One of the favorite sublime acts involves claiming to avenge the memory of his

ancestors and collaterals. To maintain a spirit of vendetta which goes well with the horizon of tribal thought.

\* To brood over. Resentment broods over its rancor. It cannot escape them, they consume the resentment. Resentment thinks only of that. The work of resentment is endless.

\* “Ask the impossible”: understood outside of all 1968 lyricism, is a great strategy to perpetuate resentment. Resentment can only fear seeing part of its grievances satisfied, depriving him of cause and constraining him to look soberly at his place in the world. One can point out in many claiming programs one or the other point evidently impossible to satisfy. With this point on the program, one is sure that that will be able or continue indefinitely.

\* Resentment and frustration. Or yet self-punishment concomitant with the effort to make the dominant one pay at any price. Childishly, one punishes the other at the very price of self-punishment... Exemplary type of this: the frigid women according to the analysis by WILHELM STEKEL. Not: I can not, but rather, I do not want, I will not do him this pleasure...<sup>10</sup> One can also think of the little boy who takes it into his hands to slap himself in order to “punish” in this way his mother for having formerly punished him.

\* To hate / to be envious of the dominant one, it is to despise the values of the dominant one, to declare above that one would not want them for himself, that one is fine as one is, that one wants something other that is more ethereal and exalted, something disinterested – always exposed by the suspicion that this is possibly not so true. The observer easily discovers in the discourse of resentment a summary “Leave this place so that I may put myself there!”

\* Not only rancor with regard to an Other, but diffused, generalized rancor, – all are in various respects guilty for my miserable position by the only fact that they seem more satisfied, and to find their case there where I feed on my frustrations and grievances. Resentment does not only identify the dominant ones, it creates for itself multiple scapegoats and the responsibility for the failures of its group will fall on them a priori.

\* RESENTMENT AND XENOPHOBIA. To suspect first of all any group outside of being on duty, at the boots of the dominant one and spying on the advantages that would be able to acquire this group and of whom it would fatally strip us in order to be able to then start hating him.

\* The rancor of resentment is maximalist. It spreads out. It is coming to want the entire “system,” since to accept it would only imply that one part of the empirical reasoning would return ipso facto to judge itself in part also responsible for his base condition, for his difficulties and condemned to free himself through his own efforts.

\* Resentment and *contemptus mundi*. But the contradiction echoes here: the “hatred of the century” does not drive the resentful man to making himself into a hermit and to pray for the iniquitous ones. He despises this world that others have made in their image and that they govern, but wants however to make his grievances heard and to seek revenge.

\* Not only molded by rancor, but – and this is essential – of rancor denied as such: these are the **others** that want it from us, that strip us, as we are the victims (and will keep us this way forever) and therefore incapable of wanting to harm anyone. We defend ourselves. Even on the contrary, we

are letting ourselves shear, we are the sheep, the only reproach that one could make between himself is not to know to hate enough the dominant ones and their devoted henchmen, while we would have good reason not to groan and moan as loudly. There is still an effort...

\* Rancor tolerates everything in order to assuage itself; in resentment, the effort to achieve liberty is never so well quenched as when one achieves attempting the liberty of others.

\* Spirit of vengeance: “The desire for vengeance is the most important source of resentment”. (Max Scheler, *The Man of Resentment*, 16)... but it is a vengeance which differs as a result of its burning feeling of its incapacity to naturally take advantage, vengeance aggravated by the rancor.

\* “... And it is too bad that I crush / And it is too bad that I grind / I must take my revenge on the shame...” Three lines by Aragon – taken out of context – which mark well the rapport shame > rancor > thirst for vengeance.

\* From rancor to the spirit of vengeance. Vindictive by the perpetual/perpetuated memory of erased offences.

\* The full vengeance of the resentful group felt toward the “masters” is, by the nature of things, different. Its present state is that of helplessness. Vengeance is «a dish which is eaten cold”, according to the Wisdom of Nations. However, resentment has at its disposal possibilities of vengeance in effigy, of vengeance which is symbolic but immediate. It is precisely the depreciation of dominant values. It is the destruction of the values of others. As they are values which offend and obstruct you, one can at least despise them, profane them, transform them in petto into something base, vile. One can easily substitute for the gods of the dominant ones, the fetishes of its tribe, to initiate his fetishes to the saving blasphemy in the place of the foreign gods and in the reverence with respect to the local lairs. Resentment is not “Promethean”: as it is too risky to steal the Fire from the gods, let us adore our own small lights! The only vengeance in our reach is a matter of words or symbols. It is prudent, comforting and beneficial. Carrying out in effigy, I was saying: there is therefore a spectacle of resentment. And because it offers itself in a show, resentment requires an exterior public who would approve its auto-da-fés, admire its ceremonies, applaud its hams, and be able to see the grandeur in its tomfoolery. It is here where it spoils: outside of its “own”, resentment only meets reticent observers (sometimes the “bad conscience” of the spectators puts all the same a beef on their tongue).

\* Resentment also finds itself in the passage linking the dream to the act, the desire for vengeance, that of making the big/rich/dominant ones pay, of “putting the fire to the castles” etc., – not so much demanding justice, as the right to rise up to them, that to demand that they become like us in order to change, – living in our huts and our dirty, base, unkempt hovels. Any “superiority” is then considered suspicious and uncivic. Justice is conceived as with Proustes, as being “equalization by the bottom.” See Sylvain Maréchal and the Babouvists to the French Revolution: it will be virtuous to forbid in the egalitarian society of the future any form of “superior” education from fear that the qualities spread out by certain people do not come to disturb that rigorous and saintly equality. Or the “everyone to the factory” of certain agitators at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...<sup>11</sup> We will not end up being like you, but at the very least we can restore you to our common denominator. In his fantasized vengeance, the resentful man makes himself into the standard by which he measures the world.<sup>12</sup> It is a little bit the myth of Circe and Ulysses’ companions. Everyone is transformed into pigs.

It is not a question of liberating oneself nor of “rising up”, but rather of dreaming of bringing the dominant ones back to share one’s own baseness and to taste one’s frustrations. One does not confront the domination in order to suppress it, but rather to put into place the mechanisms of denial and concealment of inferiorities and perpetuated differences. Now, these inferiorities are precisely recognized very well *a contrario* by the false zeal applied to deny that one is suffering. To despise out of all one’s fantasy that “at the base of oneself,” one knows not to be able to attain, that which one neither can nor wants to claim, hatred less painful than having to interiorize the inferiority which results from this powerlessness to “rise up” or to have to enter a global struggle against all that.

\* Resentment felt by intellectuals, – always embittered by some side, for (self-) appointed by the Universal, but, as sociologists define them, “ a dominated fraction of the dominant class”<sup>13</sup>, from where their potential for resentment in face of the fraction of the bourgeois class better endowed with tangible, non-symbolic capital, and with efficient power. This resentment of intellectuals and “proletaroid intelligentsia” (Max Weber) in particular, is likely TO PUT ITSELF AT THE SERVICE OF “HOMOLOGICAL” FORMS OF RESENTMENT of other levels, classes or “identities”.

\* To feel better, to maintain a sense of superiority deep down inside, to understand oneself much better in giving oneself a mandate to understand everything, – in consoling oneself for not being recognized for one’s proper value in the world such as it goes, by the hatred carried over the triumphant “materialism.” Consider the case where numerous intellectuals from the XXth century went to the people: Taking advantage of their situation in the fraction dominated by the dominant class (see above) – an intermediary bat situation which lends itself to all crafty denials, – look at my wings, as I am a bird, but I have freely chosen to meddle with these poor viscous rats, which welcome me with recognition, as if I were one of them. Claiming not to envy – with their Buddha collection, their civil servant security and their modest salary – the businessman who is uneducated, insensitive, violent, earning millions and maintaining prostitutes. One will then be able to go and offer one’s pen and rancor to the exploited ones who will not push you away, as they very much need someone to “translate” their demands and their revolts.

\* Intellectual resentment and political illusion in “La Mouche du coche,” – an old and penetrating fable dealing with the burning yet illusory role played by certain doctrinaires and activists. Shouting yet epiphenomenal ideologies attribute to themselves the credit for the progressive changes to which they contributed to, and for amendments to the efficiently applied rules of justice.

### **Axiology: reversal of values and denial**

\* The one who loses wins... It is the pathetic-cognitive mechanism of the price of consolation.

\* There exists a double process of **re-enhanced value** which the resentful people are working on: the one is constructed like a justifying alibi, transcending world order and its evil demiurges, allowing this reversal which shows that the state of failure, despised, victimized, is – transcendently – a merit; the other, following directly from the identitarian withdrawal, from frustrated narcissism, legitimizing that which is immanent in its “own” and justifying the program of rancor with respect to the “others.”

\* To start from a difference, the one that stigmatizes you, indicates to you the oppression and hatred. It involves not making of it an illusion, self-seeking or subject to the caution of the

dominant look, nor to poke fun at it as one would do to a dream, but on the contrary, to demand it, adopt it, pride oneself on it. This difference in which the other sees the mark of our servility or of our inability to equalize it is, seen in the proper light, our glorious and inalienable essence. TO THEREFORE RENDER ESSENTIAL the difference, especially the one which the outside world has despised for ages. One therefore does not criticize it like an illusory point of view. One cherishes it in order to conserve it forever, in order never to have to merge, to surpass oneself in larger citizenship or humanity. In one way or another, all the resentment goes toward today's ontological-biological fantasy... But it is an inconsequent biologism which would obey the narcissistic desiderata of the group holding a grudge, and hold in the transcendence a kind mirror before its efforts, to become such that in itself its assuaged rancor will change. Empowerment. The egalitarian claim is not at all the search for a principle of justice; it becomes a simple method of blackmail used to con consideration, without having to accept "general" rules that one will declare eternally conceived by the other and therefore for him. There is a correlation: to accept a general rule would be to sell one's "right for difference" for the dish of lentils of a difficult integration into the world of diversity and of rational compromises.

\* Values: the values of resentment are to be conceived as a **tribalized absolute**. These are the values "according to us", favorable and desirable for appeasing resentment. From where derives the correlation that resentment strives not to see in all the predominant values, of universal pretention, that the only particular interests of those which, in really taking advantage, sets itself against depriving you of the means of legitimatization within your capabilities.

\* Resentment carries in its core a feeling of guilt, and a mediocre self-esteem that it constantly makes an effort to suppress or that it projects onto the exterior world. Psychological sequence: self-hatred, fragility of the collective me, denial and projection of negative feelings of the fantasized other, the Resentment and Adler's psychoanalysis, as inferiority complex. Also a conception of Freud's castration complex. (See the concept of (De)nia, Verneinung.)<sup>15</sup>

\* From the outset one is faced with a denial, a denial of reality, with oneself and the ruses of sociological reason, – and also, through its claiming tactics, a denial (felt to be commendable) of the feasible and the possible, – all that resulting from the formulation *in petto* of a dilemma which was hardly engaging and quickly suppressed: or the approving alienation, or even still the acceptance, whether it be temporary and under reserve, with the rules of the game fixed by the Other and by its System, with a weak capital to bet and the risk to fail, or rather resentment, offering immediate yield.

\* Denial of reality: especially denial of the inevitable future coexistence with the Other who aggravates inferiorization. It would pose necessary to be able to convince the countless cases of nationalist, social, sexual separatism that, tomorrow just as today, regardless of what they do, the question will arise of a rationally acceptable coexistence with their neighbors-enemies and that there are tactics which, – legitimized by a demand for justice, – only carry on the withdrawal perpetuated in the "entrenchments" where resentment prepares itself to maintain its rancor indefinitely and to indefinitely blame the exterior world for not welcoming without reserve its "difference" and its exclusiveness.

\* Denial: to disclaim the judgment of others, to deny one's current condition and one's effective limits, and to deny one's resentment as such; for resentment is in itself a source of guilt, – which, as psychoanalysis points out, is then "projected" into a feeling of persecution, – a feeling which is, in its turn, a source of anxiety and an obstacle to the gratification open to the world.

\* There is no doubt that the ideology of resentment is often or always an attempt to surpass a mental condition even more debilitating: self-hatred, pure and simple servility. This partial liberation, mixed up in its alienation, offers itself “good reasons” for blindness, and inspires conduct of failure which perpetuates in their turn the freezing of the group at the stage of resentment.

\* Good reasons. Of course! On the historical ladder, the dominated groups and cultures have “good reasons” for feeling resentment and find immediate “secondary benefits” to cling to.

\* Resentment as an interminable process, impassable, like complacency in failure, justification of failure, ennoblement of inferiorization **as such (and not as a phase of a liberation)**, for itself, static sacralization in its ways of being and in its values – making of the success, the grandeur, the force, according to hegemonic rules, a sign of (moral) baseness, of ignominy.

\* Resentment constitutes groups which succeed better in a society that one judges to be made by and for them, at their advantage, “in their image,” as an object of hatred and of demands impossible to satisfy.

\* Resentment blames the “big ones” not for what they have made you or are making you, but for what they **are** and for what they **do** without apparently worrying about you, since they are only and do something only at your expense, – considering everything they have, they have taken it from you, that they have deprived you of, – from where to program the hope of “making them retribute ill-gotten gains.”

\* I neither want to subject myself to a dominant society nor confront the hard and unrighteous rules that this society imposes on success, **therefore** those who succeed in distancing and dominating me are ignoble, immoral and, united against my equals, take advantage of a success which they have stolen from me.<sup>16</sup>

\* Denial and self-hatred. Among the grievances that the resentful group maintains with respect to the winners, the prosperous and the powerful ones represent especially all the reproaches that it could make to itself as a result of its lack of success and its faults of which the group attributes the fault of the others when it cannot deny them.

\* To blame others for being the cause of all your misfortunes and for being the cause not only through the oppression that they impose upon you or that the mediating structure of the institutions favors, through objective discrimination that opposes your free development (all that precedes is not in the order of resentment), but through the qualities which derive from their advantaged position and from the energy used to defend it, through the knowledge, the energy, the moral superiority (“Nobility demands”) that they have developed, of which they pride themselves on, and which ensures and perpetuates their success. Through a false fatal shift from that point, to despise for themselves these values and virtues of **power** and to transfer one’s love onto oneself, in transforming into virtues the rancor of the servility. Because the dominant one ends up by mobilizing at his advantage, by inflecting in his image, by monopolizing and capitalizing at his advantage the riches of the world including those that are “spiritual”: grace, taste, beauty, the esthetics of social relationships, and by denying any value **in itself** in these advantages, in these imponderables of which one is deprived.

\* Everything that the dominant one possesses is contemptible, until the day when one of my people seizes it; one can then admire the transmutation because one could monopolize the thing.

\* To require in one's ideological fantasy that the dominant one recognize one day his wrongdoings, that he make honorable amends, declare his imposture, confess as null and condemnable the advantages which allowed him to dominate, and that he declare only to keep for impostures and pretences, the qualities and the "graces" acquired at your expense, for they ensured his success in this society – which functions partially and in a rigged manner, one must admit, only for him and for his equals. That he reduces also his values since to maintain them like values, whether they be contingent and usurped, would return to objectify, to legitimize at least along the lines of immanence of social rules and institutions in place, the inferior position in which the dominated one finds himself.

\* What in effect answers to resentment is the bad conscience of those who confess having benefited and to continue to benefit from privileges and to suffer from them **without claiming to renounce them**.<sup>17</sup> To see one of the contemporary forms of bad conscience, *Le Sanglot de l'Homme blanc* by Pascal Bruckner criticizes the third-world bad conscience of the intellectuals of wealthy countries and of the self-flagellation before the political and economic catastrophes of the former Third World. One sees here the cooperation of two false consciences united in their recrimination/guilt for preventing the questioning of their complementary myths and false interpretations which serve to comfort them.

\* There exist two sorts of capital: the dominating one possesses goods, power, relations, savoir-faire and taste (he often thinks: "gifts"), and the art of exploiting these advantages in an intelligent fashion. The resentful man and woman feel an emptiness, a sense of alienation, spite, rancor, the need to carry through compensatory enactments, demanding paralogisms, failing behavior, but they however also make of themselves a capital from all of this and are aware of the art of bringing about "interest" to this patrimony of enactments and negativity. This capital is stable, deep-rooted, – all like that of the dominant ones -, and it also produces **interest**, as it brings benefits (see further down: "Secondary Benefits"). The resentful man lives off of his interest, but his capital does not diminish. Resentment is an investment.

\* The Fable of the Fox and the Grapes: "They are too unripe and good for the churls. Does he not do better than complain?" But this would only represent stoicism on the part of the fox of La Fontaine, if one did not make of it a general, collective hermeneutic principle of claims based on a denial.

\* Axiology: a reply in the eyes of the other. To end up despising those who despise you (what we are thinking of: they despise us in any case for the single reason that they are not like us, that they do not feel the way we do, and that in our eyes, they enjoy some advantage that indicates that they do not wish to mix with us), to give themselves the means for judging those who judge us. To therefore fix an axiology ad hoc which allows this retaliation-transmutation.

### **"Secondary Benefits": a victim's state, denial of responsibility and making others feel guilty**

\* Responsibility and denial: there is at the base of resentment a resignation of responsibility: I do not have any part in my unfortunate situation, while the privileged usurpers are responsible for everything and for its contrary.



\* The involvement of secondary benefits (in the Freudian sense applied to the resistance of the neurosis) of inferiority and denial: the right to complain, to moan, to revel in this, to always have an explanation ready in the event of failure in one's advances, to make those who are in a dominant position feel guilty if they listen with a spirit of adventure...

\* Another secondary benefit, progressing considerably today, is for the dominated one-victim, real or fantasized, of being able to declare oneself totally innocent in the course of things – as he declares himself to be a pure victim without being responsible on any account; he cleanses his hands of the disorders and of the crimes which are committed in the name of an Order that he did not want and that his ideology shows him as being established against him and his equals. He is irrevocably and in a congenital manner, innocent and disinterested, without having any part in the interests invested in an iniquitous order. One imagines that the victim does not recognize in himself any complicity with the torturer, he who is robbed feels no kindness toward the usurper, the slave shares no common interest with the master. In the ideologies shared by victims, the purity of the victim is an axiom. The state of a victim cannot be prescribed. There is a pleasant privilege...

\* It never goes from there precisely in this way. The slave takes advantage of the master's prosperity, even if he recognizes only the crumbs to be gathered from the feast.

\* His innocence-powerlessness which allows him to pass as a moral subject, is a totally abstract plea. But what a comfort there is in being able to cry out any time, from some advantage that one benefits from, "I did not want that!"

\* Victimization, compassion for oneself, self pity – resentful beings do not see themselves only as victims of an terrible system, but as victims of someone, of a group that is responsible and therefore punishable. One cannot in effect punish a system, but one can only fight to eliminate or to amend it.

\* Wounded, painful. Dolorism. The supreme value: guilt for the sake of itself, and extracting from the other the confession of his guilt. Dolorism is the utility and the moral excellence of pain. It is complacency in the suffering and the maintenance of that suffering as proof of moral superiority. One has made a philosophy from this: See J. Teppe, *Manifeste du dolorisme*, Paris, 1935.

\* To find self-esteem in forcing the desired other to confess his abjection... The "logic" of resentment is articulated in a haunting comparison which I, however, denied, concealed and reversed.

\* The problem with the responsibility must be at the centre of the criticism of the resentment in the culture. There are several ways of conceiving it, – from narrow judicial conceptions, to wide ones of characters by Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, or yet to *Allgemeine Sündhaftigkeit* by Fichte ["the era of universal guilt"]. The topos of resentment in this sector would find a radical form: as far as being victimized, we are not responsible for anything, all of those who hold a better position, by the single fact that they live and breathe, are responsible for their acts in all their consequences and ours,... including the painful methods that we must follow in order to put an end to their usurping.

\* To pass for a moral subject... to prove the principle of one's morality through the suffering that one claims to have experienced, and in declining logically any possible responsibility toward a world made by and for others. To state that the moral subject is necessarily an innocent subject, with pure

hands, – immaculate, impeccable (in the sense precisely theological). That the moral subject does not intimately know evil... The resentful being and his Immaculate Conception! It is always another element of Christian irrationality which has an undoubtedly long life.

\* The principal “shameful” benefit of the state of resentment is that it is an intermediary state between an intolerable servitude and a freedom which is difficult to assume. Is it a question of breaking free? Not completely, as resentment is a formula which especially eliminates the need to assume one’s FREEDOM, while feigning to shake off the supervision of a “master.” To blame the master for the servitude that he has subjected you to, but to be wary of freeing oneself to the point of no longer being under the master’s oppressive and tutelary gaze, to retain from the old state of servitude the ultimate advantage of being able to hurl at the former master one’s grievances and complaints – and to prepare oneself to blame the master for the neglected state in which he leaves you, the day when he makes a pretence of resolutely renouncing his control.

### **Temporality:**

\* A MORBID RAPPORT TO TIME: the future not as an opening, a freedom, an overtaking, but as **a purification of vindictive accounts that one fosters with the past.**

\* The ideological advantage of the past, is that one can no longer change anything there. In effect, one does not really see how he could, as such, be avenged.

\* Memory and rancor. Resentment is fatally turned toward the past (although inscribing its rhetoric toward a compensatory future) and a past with a long memory, full of brooded over reproaches, of the memory of offences which lose themselves in the night of times of which each generation reactivates the grievance because its identity holds onto these lapses, these mortifications, – aggravated by the transmission, by instilled “tradition,” and full of ad hoc explanations of failures of its own group, failures which have never been assumed for they cannot be assumed. Nothing is “pardoned” (for pardoning supposes conceiving oneself as subject entirely on one’s own), nothing is overcome, one pulls behind oneself a heavy burden, a past which interferes in any present action and which forbids it from ever finishing.

\* Invention of the current group through the reinvention of this history of which the group claims to be dispossessed: to personally resume his history, a history generally obliterated there and which will serve to prove that one has good reason to complain.

\* The obsessive reminiscence of former grievances forms a socio-analysis which is interminable and never successful, never settled. A past widely mythified, which moreover prevents (it is the function of the narrative that one makes of oneself) from looking directly at one’s present condition and one’s objective possibilities...

\* The perception of the present through history (reoriented and revised) of the snubs passed, serves mainly to deny certain present dynamics which would lead to relativizing. The following constitutes a classic example: the argument of the “absolute proletarianization” of the wage-earning classes, which is recurrent in the revolutionary socialism from Jules Guesde to Maurice Thorez.

\* Functioning within resentment is a **temporal paralogism** analogous to that which Proust gives to Swann who is jealous of Odette: the joy of imagining, in anticipation, the pleasure that one will have when one will no longer love and when one will finally be avenged by the regret that possibly the

instances in which she has snubbed you will inspire the loved one – without understanding that on that day you will have become another and indifferent to a revenge that will be without flavor.

\* TO PERPETUATE. Because this world changes, because it evolves according to a dynamic whose wheels no one controls, the desire not to change, to persist in fidelities and to feel commendable for the constancy in the poverty of spirit. To persist forever in one's frustrated I: the resentful man, - populist, nationalist, tribune of stigmatized groups, – is a sick individual who does not want to recover.

\* The work of resentment is interminable (and therefore profitable for all the demagogues and professionals of resentment which are cultivated for itself). It is impossible to eliminate, compensate, satisfy, it is impossible to come to terms with the Others. The unsurpassing. The perpetuation. Inextinguishable. Resentment is like a Sisyphean task.

\* Rigged and selective memory. One can apply to the ideologies of resentment a famous formula concerning the French aristocrats returning from exile in 1815, without having “learned anything and forgotten anything.”<sup>18</sup>

\* The past became strictly “unpredictable” at the end of the 20th century, subjected to all the corrections, recycling and other revisions. (The concept – originating in small neo-anti-Semitic groups from the beginning of the nineteen-eighties, – from “historical revisionism” ought to be indefinitely stretched.) The past which is revised and corrected serves to reinforce the memory, the memory of the group, the memory-against.

\* Resentment can neither desire nor plan the future, – the future in terms of an opening, a deliverance, a relative indetermination, an overtaking or metamorphosis of the subject (which also contains the possibility of its “disappearance”). It is backward-looking – and renders the past false. It is why its opposite and its cure remains to be found in the only dialectical thoughts, the thoughts concentrating on change and evolution. These are the thoughts decompartmentalization, of mixture and, all things considered, in their utopic horizon, of the thoughts of reconciliation.

### **Identity and Tribalism:**

\* Whoever undergoes a failure, – facing the alternative of attributing the cause of it to others or of having to experience the additional pain of blaming it on oneself-, will prefer to choose the first branch of the alternative: another is responsible, precisely this other who does not fail or who, from his position of power, assumes the right to sanction this failure, and to judge through himself, my incapability to equal him. But further, – through a deluded effort to distance the hypothesis that this failure was able to be mine, – I ought to convince myself that my unfair failure is relates to one category; and therefore the others' success is equally unfair. Consequently, the suspicion arising that there is an iniquitous system which favors such a category and puts at a disadvantage a certain other category in which I can see myself inscribing. It further follows that the mental constitution of this stigmatized and handicapped category in the name of which (and no longer in the reason of my single failure), I am going to legitimize my rancor and formulate my protest. This process explains why resentment is immediately in search of groups, of victimized tribes. Resentment cannot remain individual.

\* Resentment and collective narcissism. Narcissism of the failure and of the stigmatized group.  
FROM THE RAPPORT OF RESENTMENT WITH THE IDENTITY CRISIS: A NARCISSISM

OF THE OPPRESSED, – compensation for the withdrawal of love of the exterior world, a way of not having to face the servile and envious ways of life which result from the oppression itself, the asserted effort to one day liberate oneself – but in deliriously claiming to preserve the traits and habits, and the ways of seeing which result from oppression. To even glorify them, through lack of being able to change them. To impose the presence of this on the Others, to obligate them to feign considering me. Through a well-known inconsistency, to admittedly discredit the values of Others, but however to wait that the Others one day recognize me and that they confess to seeing my greatness and my force – those whom I hate because they see me as being base and weak and have always made me feel this way.

\* TRIBALISM AND RESENTMENT: resentment comes first, it is that which unites the tribe whose identity-cohesion results only from the collective rehashing of grievances and rancor. RESENTMENT PRODUCES A TRIBE: THIS IS WHAT IS ESSENTIAL.

\* TO FORM A TRIBE: the ethnographers ensure that “tribes” are in effect guilefully created entities – that means that in tribalizing itself, the ideology of resentment actively seeks to counter the social and interethnic fluidity, to curb on the one hand the exterior interactions and interpenetrations, and to conceal and deny the heterogeneity of the resentful group itself. This resentment-oriented group, despite the rhetoric shared by its followers, can be in effect not very homogenous, very unequal in terms of conditions and morals, to the point where one dreams of nationalist demagogy; in the group, the relations of power exist or establish themselves, that the doctors and orators of the tribe are relentlessly determined to deny, in proclaiming the essential and “organic” unity of the tribal body.

\* Tribal values: to love and justify one’s being, one’s idiosyncrasies, one’s goals and hopes, but not in themselves: by a comparison which denies and antagonizes the values of “others”; to promote the values which debase, which avenge those of the others, seek less to impose themselves than to reduce the value of those of the target groups of the collective rancor.

\* Narcissism refers primarily to the complacency in oneself, particularly with regard to these traits that the outside world judges as being undesirable and contemptible. It is a question of cultivating complacent values with respect to lower common denominators, weaknesses and foolishness that one maintains in his heart for “his” and for “ours.”

\* Narcissism of the gap, exhibitionism of castration. One loves oneself for that which one is deprived of. If no one loves us or admires us, let us allow ourselves all the love of which we are deprived. If self-esteem characterizes the aristocratic ethos, it is a question of declaring that one is not less aristocratic in this respect.

\* There is a community **happiness** in resentment: it is certainly aggressive and frustrated, but it also exhilarates its partisans, it warms the heart, it gives the warmth of solidarity to those who recognize themselves in its message, it allows communions between pairs and mentalitarian cousins; one is no longer alone or ashamed, one recognizes oneself between those who embody resentment to the ways of being. One fools together ones regrets and deceptions. Resentment is gregarious, it creates colonies if piled up, fragile I’s. Happiness also finds itself in the fact that resentment is easy and profitable: to try it is to adopt it. It is quickly learned.

\* Resentment **makes** the ethnic group in particular, and the fear of disappearing that it confesses,

the policies of persistence and of “containment” in the exterior world are not other than fear of having to renounce to this resentment which unites it. That which goes back to saying that ethnic or social groups are essentially structured by the. They are determined from the exterior, which all of their discussions speak only of their own “identity” to cherish and to defend.

\* The ideological (social, socio-sexual, national) grouping together is formed by: an initial claim, a “claim” facing a feeling of deprivation, by the partial denial/compensation of this claim, and at the same time by the grievance and the rancor with regard to others, supposed to have caused the prejudice of the hidden “good”. These ethnic or social groups are therefore not defined at the origin by a full collective identity (they certainly finish by fixing themselves up into a collective I), but by a **lack**, a collectively felt inferiorization and the claims which follow from a common loss. It remains to be seen to function under the multiple avatars in all the contemporary tribalisms (populist variants of anti-capitalism, antiracist racism, separatist feminism, nationalism and regionalism, parochial chauvinism, activism among minorities, cultural and intellectual relativism).

\* The dominant groups not obsessed by a grievance, are free not to be exclusively interested in themselves, they have acquired their self-esteem – which leaves them all the time to reflect on the outside world and to eventually conquer it. The dominated one overcome with resentment concentrates, on the contrary, all his efforts into loving himself, body and soul, – in loving himself in his despised difference of which he seeks to make a completeness and a singularity, but this narcissistic task consumes too much energy for him to be able to invest too much effort into understanding a world which slips away from him – this deficiency will of course also turn a grievance against the success of the dominant one.

\* RESENTMENT AND ETHNO/EGOCENTRISM, brings everything back to the wrong undergone, to the lack and to its interminable denial. Us and them. A fundamental inconsistency in the logic of resentment is as follows: in totally denying the lack and in interminably claiming its retrocession (or the retrocession of substitute or metonymical objects), never allows the narcissistic wound to close.

\* Over-simplification: Us vs The Others. Virtue/Vice, Victims/Torturers, Benignancy/Malignancy, Legitimacy/Imposture. The chains of binary axiological oppositions..

\* A principle of withdrawal: Achilles withdraws into his tent. A correlation of the principle of withdrawal: an aggressive ban placed on the members of the group who would like “to leave” by their own means, while leaving the others behind, the requirement of a static solidarity, of a fraternity in perpetuated unhappiness, and the undergone and hated exploitation, but supplier of an identity for which one would not exchange one’s freedom.

\* Resentment and **territoriality**, – do not obsess over a concrete or symbolic “territorial imperative.” It is a question of surveying one’s neighbors and their encroachments, of camping on their positions.

\* Adhesion of classes, groups, favored milieux, to the ideologies of the universal, of progress, etc. The ideologies of resentment, on the contrary, are like “particularisms”. “Narcissism of small differences” (Freud). In excessively enlarging the meaning of this word, one could say that these ideologies are all “regionalisms.”

\* Resentment and the so-called collective “identity”: the emptiness found in nationalisms. The national discourse, when it is a question of verbalizing this identity on which rests all of its claims, is reduced to finding nothing precise to say, to articulating only pitiful idiosyncrasies, platitudes, fallacious assertions, tautologies, to asserting specificities which do not contain anything of a specific nature, to form a basis of indemonstrable banalities. In reality, the national identity, for lack of being able to be described or analyzed, is evoked, asserted, reiterated in a performative “Us;” it is set out, it is articulated and repeated, the nationalist propaganda makes it exist in uniting with its partisans in the very evidence of the assertion. This identity with content that is neither able to be demonstrated nor verbalized other than by means of a diffused sentiment, knows no other reality than its very absence of delimitation which makes it oscillate between the two modes of the indemonstrable: the evidence and the dream.

\* Nationalisms. They all carry a dream of **air tightness**. The political identity which is postulated as a lack, would alone be susceptible to erecting a barrier against the emptiness, against the menacing loss.

\* What do their nationalisms recognize? The same rancor. To not only unite the tribe, but to ensure its identical reproduction [a formula by Pierre-André Taguieff<sup>19</sup>] from generation to generation. Resentment instills itself well if one takes the people early enough, before they are exposed to ideas of rational liberation and of universalism.

\* Resentment as an inheritance (referred to earlier as “capital and interest”) that parents pass on to their children.

\* Tribal ideologies try to conceal by means of diverse denials, the origin of their “identity” in the lack and the rancor (see above): they therefore mimic the models of prestige in order to build a positive symbolic capital. They are going to provide themselves with an imitation culture, venerate a consolatory enactment, and construct pantheons where they can put “their own people.” To institute Cargo Cults, imitate the Important People, to do as they do, so that the gods will want to listen to us. To build an identity which may be the caricature, the ersatz of the identity which the dominant one assumes, then cherishes and flaunts it.

\* Something positive could be seen in tribal resentment: it would create solidarity, even if it is by means of rancorous denial. But this solidarity is maintained especially from the conspiracy of silence. It is not necessary to confess to a “stranger” our weaknesses and difficulties. In the large peasant families, if the cousin Hortense turns out badly and ends up working in a bar in the Vieux-Port, she is disowned, her photograph is removed from the living-room, but a derisive town-dweller does not have to come to speak to you about her, for he would be welcome!

\* Narcissism, tribalism, a tribal axiology, counter-racism, idiosyncrasies... But resentment, which is inconsistent, is not only withdrawal into “one’s own kind.” It does not give up impressing the outside world and making the dominant ones feel a sense of regret. It understands that they end up by justifying their ideals, their culture and their knowledge. Resentment does not require that the people from “outside” adopt them: they are too different from it. But they pay homage to them, by bad conscience or by diplomacy. Resentment needs former masters and their accomplices, not to break the chains, but to lower them to its level. The dictionary meaning of “tribalism” does not say everything. The contemporary society transforms into a hostile juxtaposition of demanding and finicky tribes, facing territorial encroachments. But these tribes still want public status and

recognition. The university, the press, and some other sectors of what rests in the public sphere, are supposed to arbitrate between their claims.

### **Defeatist Behavior:**

\* Resentment and defeatist behavior included in its own process: to go toward the future, but to avenge the wrongs undergone in the past and to extend, to perpetuate in this way the alienating past which made for you a community of misfortune. To find in the probable shortcomings of techniques of this kind, to double bind, the excessive proof of the spitefulness of the dominant ones, and of the necessity not to adapt oneself to the social evolution which allowed them to triumph and which makes that that does not always work for you.

\* “Defeatist behavior”: I do not understand by that that resentment cannot advance his pieces and conquer the positions. I am noting only that the partial blindness procured by one’s grievances, drives him to frequently adopt unrealistic tactics and to strengthen himself though the consequences of judgment errors that he cannot nor wants to recognize as such.

\* Resentment often seems for example to be more avid for symbolic victories rather than concrete ones: to change words, to extort excuses, to censure differing opinions, to suppress or impose symbols. It seems to prefer the shadow to the prey.<sup>20</sup>

\* Forms of defeatist behavior: they derive also from the fact that resentment subordinates positive results (effort for justice, liberation) to completely negative outcomes (loving one’s baseness, to want it for the “others,” to harass them, to stimulate their bad conscience, to take vengeance on this).

### **From another resentment:**

\* The tribe of resentment does not like to be confronted by other tribes of the same ilk with their grudges and claims. The tribe would like to claim its **exclusive rights** in the state of protestarian and victim. And then the links of interdependence in social life are such that the other tribes run the risk of forming grievances which target it and which come to confuse its fixed idea or offer a disruptive caricature of it. The essential logic of resentment is such that each claiming identity conforms to the same general paradigm and presents mutatis mutandis the same traits, but each one, withdrawn into its obsessions and into the uniqueness of its denial of justice, would like to have the exclusion of a model narrative of deprivation and persecution which would lose its force in the wind of the competition.

\* Two forms of resentment facing one another. They glare at each other with uneasiness, mistrusting the other’s stare. They resemble each other, as they both mistrust the other’s glare. But the grievances of one relativize those of the other (which displeases one as it does the other) and their versions of rancor caricature each other reciprocally.

\* The resentful activist discovers with reprobation the resentment of others declaring their victimized state (he receives it indignantly when this resentment suddenly takes him for a target, that it takes it out on him), but on the other hand, he does not recognize the relativity of his own resentment because it appears to him to follow from the nature of things. The parable of the pot calling the kettle black...

\* Resentment is fundamentally antidemocratic for it can neither discuss nor make a compromise, nor even give a place for others’ resentment.

### **Literature and sciences:**

\* Among the literature of resentment are for example the lyrical boasting of the defeated: *L'Aiglon* et *Chantecler* by this poor Edmond Rostand, thirty years later still. Mediocre masterpieces! Resentment is confused with the sublime and with irony, two esthetic forms for plain subjects. Its ostentatious and emphatic aesthetic quality reveals it, as it is a sublime pastiche, of quibbling and whining eloquence.

\* Various literature of resentment was seen to appear in the 1980s. The forms of literature which were canonized by the "System" and praised throughout the vast world speak neither of us nor of our grievances, nor do they speak well of these subjects. This indifference offends us, or this point of view which objectifies us is not sensitive to our values. Each one of us will therefore have our own literature which will show the world through the exclusive point of view of our identitarian narcissism. That makes one think of a famous ditty from the 1930s: "When a viscount / Meets another viscount / What do they tell each other / Stories of viscounts..."

\* Tribal literature and aesthetic qualities: in the domain of discourse and identitarian doctrines, the forms of literature pertaining to a sense of "group" identity, which, for the past twelve years, have found a taker, as diverse – as for talent – as Renaud Camus, Nicole Brossard, A. Haley, the films of roots and re-implanting, of the CIA in the USA (the militant ethno-activist, Afro-American films, as for example, Spike Lee, Malcolm X etc.).

\*...And the tribal sciences begin to proliferate, – through hatred of any conquest of universally receivable objectification and through horror of public criticism. By suspicion with regard to the scientific tradition even in which there has always been a ferment of rebellion and of non-conformism, a founding effort of not having to subject oneself to the doxa, no more to virtuous ideas than to their ignorance.

### **Rhetoric:**

\* Resentment is generally defined as "a mode of production" of values, but production by way of reasonings, forms of fallacies, of underhanded and false argumentations. From here follows our interest in reconstructing a rhetoric of resentment.

\* Rhetoric of Resentment: It serves two consecutive ends: in demonstrating the injustice inherent in the present situation, it persuades the Inversion of the values which finds itself in accordance with its principle **and** it explains the condition of the group in dismissing *ad alteram partem* the failures suffered (especially because of resorting to unrealistic tactics in order to change it).

The second aim of the rhetoric of Resentment: to value enhances the victim's position and the oppressed one's way of being; to depreciate the values that the dominant one cherishes and which are inaccessible to you in showing them at once (this simultaneousness is already paralogical) as chimerical, arbitrary, usurped, and able to cause prejudice. To enhance ones values as a given, but also always by comparison with the values of "others." "Falsification of the scale of values," writes Nietzsche.

\* If the "secular" success is hardly, in good logic, the necessary proof of merit, the sophistic of resentment derives from this negative proposition the thesis that the lack of success here below is, on the contrary, a probable sign of merit.



\* A thought to conceive of as a logically unchanging **sequence** of ideological and rhetorical-dialectical stages in a relationship of correctives clashing with one another: grievances, reversal of values, denial, projection, self-satisfaction, etc. “The cauldron was already cracked when I received it; I rendered it intact; and for that matter I never borrowed this cauldron.” The old **Paralogism of the cauldron** is set forth as follows: three arguments which, taken separately, would be possible, would merit defense and which, if they were demonstrated, would exonerate you, – but whose co-presence reveals an effort too confused to reject any responsibility for the breaking of the famous cauldron. The argumentation of the cauldron is contradictory and useless by dint of wanting too much to prove the innocence of the one who addresses the message. Let us see now: I am rendered inferior, subservient and I therefore suffer. My inferiority is my glory and my merit. – The goods, virtues and talents which the dominant ones and their fanatically devoted henchmen assume, are without the least value. – These goods, virtues and talents have been stolen from us, they rejoice at our expense. – We are without any responsibility toward the condition in which we find ourselves, any blame must be addressed to the Others. – We also have our values and virtues which are well worth those of others. – We are denouncing the ostracism by which we have been struck. – To each one’s axiology and separated development. – The rancor we feel as victims, as members of the injured party, ought to stem from an upcoming revenge; it will be necessary to retribute ill-gotten gains to the usurpers and to impose upon them other rules of the game. – We will still have the right to blame the dominant ones for the unpleasant means that we are forced to use against them. – The future will liberate us from our grievances. – We will persist eternally in our essence, that is, in this rancor which is the source of our strength and which constitutes our soul. It is the reasoning of the cauldron, broader than ever: a sequence struck by denials around a gap which is turned into a *raison d’être* and which is nevertheless unable to be completely fulfilled.

\* And still, in the same sequence: we are claiming the status of victims in the name of justice, – but we are refusing any arbitration in the name of a justice that would transcend our rancor and our idiosyncrasies.

\* Resentment is humane (too humane). “To want the butter and the butter’s money”, “Each person sees noon at their door”, “When one wants to drown one’s dog...” There is no lack of old sayings that refer to its logic. It is true that the Wisdom of Nations only ever does this with irony tempered by indulgence.

\* Within resentment functions a brief controversial dialectic, the Art of Always Being Right (this is the title of an amusing little opus by Schopenhauer), of being inaccessible to objection, to refutation as to the antinomies that are revealed in you, an impregnable mechanism and also a long-lasting reserve (see here still certain forms of nationalism with their demagogical perpetuation): one has never won, it remains always the old wrongs which have not been corrected, the wounds which remind one of the past and its misfortunes, the former dominant group is always there and – if one has not ended up by totally getting rid of it, of annihilating it – it always preserves some superiority, some advantage which makes of it an infinite obstacle to the good image that one would like to have of oneself.

\* There is something diabolically simple in the reasoning of resentment. In the “ordinary” logic, the failures give way to the possibility of returning to the opening hypotheses and of correcting them. It is even one of the rules of the scientific method... In resentment, failures do not prove anything; on the contrary, they reinforce the so-called system. They transform into as many supplementary proofs as one has always been right and that decidedly “the others” always still put a spoke in your wheel. A

system in which the denials of experience never serve to put into doubt the axioms, but what reinforces them is a system impregnable by nature.

\* RHETORIC OF AMALGAMATION. A great mechanism for simplifying the world. It can still pass for a psychological benefit. Resentment is Manichaeic, denying, egocentric, a-dialectic (In the Hegel-Marxian sense). The main clause of these very practical simplifications of the thought of resentment is the “rule of the only enemy” with its great discursive-argumentative way, the AMALGAMATION. The enemy must have only “a single head” so that one can hope to knock him down with a single strike. It is necessary that the diversity of his opinions, of his interests and of his ways of being be only a “curtain of smoke” which hides a huge conspiracy. One must also personally blame any fellow from “the outside,” for all the harm that one has done to you, that he has hence done to you. Let him confess the crimes of the others and repent openly!<sup>21</sup>

\* Resentment unwinds enactments of reasoning not so much to convince the outside world – from which he does not expect anything good – as to continue to turn over to the ears of his people his truth and to dissuade from any vague impulse of criticism, the members of his tribe who would be tempted to reason “by themselves” or who would be able to have doubts. They are forbidden from dismissing the tribal faith and from hiding from the group’s discipline. Convinced of harmful and conspiratory union of the others, he requires the unanimity and the submission of his own, without a murmur to the articles of his faith. Resentment is a black hole, from which the light does not escape. Who is not with us is against us: a great formula which has been applied with many variations by all forms of resentment. The cost of rebellion is enormous. For the tribal doctrinaires there is no difference between detailed criticism and total apostasy. Those who would be tempted by the independence of spirit ought to think about it at two times.

\* Resentment is a doctrine upon which absolute truth is founded on faith: it exalts faith and reduces the objective examination.

\* Resentment and the **spirit of orthodoxy**: resentment accumulates, produces a mass, a tribe, a herd, – the doxa of grievance and rancor acts as a shepheress to the sheep-like mass: she rounds them up and prevents anyone from going to bleat apart from the herd.

\* Reasonings. The arsenal rhetoric contains also the forbidden terrorist who is ordering the “observers” not to exhaust the reasoning of their objectifying logic, not to arrive at conclusions which would cause the inadequacies, the torturous grievances and the over-simplifications to be seen under too clear a light.

\* The habit adopted to **compare** in order to claim and then in the same breath to deny that no comparison has taken place, becomes a prolonged collective neurosis. Resentment remains to be seen repeat itself and reinforce itself as immediate cause and denial of the collective lack of success of its undertakings.

\* In all the instances, one can read, underlying the logic of resentment, a dilemma from the consequences that one very quickly represses: this proves that you obstinately refuse to envisage placing yourself in another point of view. The reasonings of resentment ought to be stubborn, obstinate, aggressive if necessary. If it was not this way, if all of the construction, the interpretation of resentment were simply open to debate, I would **therefore** have to recognize, without a doubt, having somewhere to my own misfortune, then certain tastes and dispositions of mine et **my**

**resentment itself** would be susceptible to being diagnosed as signs of an alienated condition, of little sophistication and “grandeur”, and then alone the struggle in the empirical world, therefore in part on the ground of the adversary and not a program of imaginary mundus inversus, would be able to liberate me, and in fact liberate me first of all from myself. So that liberated from all that, I would no longer be what makes my present identity, that is to say, a knot of rancor. And therefore I would never be avenged **I**, since my future I would have passed, eliminated that for what I am making of the future to which I am aspiring a simple REVENGE FROM THE PAST. (See “Temporality”, up above).

\* One returns to the level of rhetorical characters to the relativism or ideological-tribal separatism: a judgment, a priori, without considering their content or their force, that which their speaker is worth **congenitally** or by essence. And congenitally one is born within or against the people of resentment. Inside or outside. Therefore audible or inaudible. It follows that the argument ad personam be generalized. To disqualify the exterior argumentative person to spare an idle discussion. And to say to one’s own: do not listen to these people, close your ears, they are not ours, do not pay any attention to them, as you would risk replying and you would finally be brought about to see yourself with some distance and to relativize your grievances. You would possibly be brought about to see also that others can have grievances against you because (outside of the ideological oversimplification), there do not exist any pure victims and pure oppressors in political and social relations; there exist everywhere relations, certainly unequal, of reciprocal dependence and of imposition of partial powers. The disagreement of one, however significant it may be, does not invite the judge to not consider the disagreement of his adversary. Others would be able to plead their grievances and forbid you from closing your ears.

\* Only having to give an account to one’s own people. Before any judgment, any invocation of value or norm, to wonder first of all what is the **identity** of the evaluator. If he belongs to our group, we are ready to listen to him... If not, what he says automatically has no importance. His most insistent arguments are only the epiphenomenon of the hostility whose group is pursuing us and that does not reach us.

\* The ones who are not with us are against us. And if you are not before every debate with us, we will not discuss. Let us then see now what you had to say...

\* Horror of objectification coming from outside which would be “insensitive” to his “specificity”. One must first always pay homage to him, taking into account his hypersensitivity, and his susceptibilities in terms of his tormented soul. When the resentful man agrees to speak to someone who he assumes first of all to be of good will, he finishes by having to say, annoyed: “You just can’t understand.” See linguists’ works which analyze the topic of “You just don’t understand!” [Deborah Tannen.]

\* Resentment uses rhetoric to justify, in the final analysis, the fact that it **does not want to discuss** since it cannot suffer from being wrong or from being put into contradiction, signs that its dialectic itself would be weak and vulnerable. But it really wants to feel tutelary powers, doctrinarians and guides among his own people and forgive himself. He needs a spokesperson, prosecutors and tribunes, behind which the resentful people chant in ancient chorus, incessantly approving.

\* A follow-up for the Fallacy of the Cauldron. If we have not succeeded in equaling you up until this point, it is because you have unfairly established the rules of success. For we are worth

something to you and besides, we do not have to demonstrate it. One can say even better, if the success of our people does not always come to equal the situations: accept therefore to enter the game and to play the match again with a handicap that we will determine, or let us create rules by which any evaluation would be impossible. Let us decide, for example, that anyone who makes a pretence of evaluating, loses the match. Or in short: we are not designed for any of your present or future rules, as they all frustrate us and offend us, for we are not of the same kind as you. Our values will never be yours, nor your way of reasoning. If you had imposed upon us some discriminatory mechanism, we would have let out loud cries, but what we want in the final analysis, is two rules of the game: one for us, and one for you and your people. Let us continue the game from that point.

\* Argumentative fallacies and pure and simple falsification, intimidation, propagandist manipulation, censorship, disinformation: as the world inflicts defeats, it changes, at least on paper, its defeats into victories, for lack of changing the world, it changes at least its transcription; it rewrites the past, reinterprets the present in a way such that it does not inflict any denial on the doctrines of the group. A considerable part of the history of “real socialism” passes through these maneuvers.

\* Resentment: if it is not very rational, it does not motivate itself less secretly through “good reasons.”<sup>22</sup> More precisely, the choice of a rhetoric of resentment, in a given social quarrel, can be explained through good reasons: self-criticism is harmful and can appear to be demobilizing; resentment provides immediate ideological benefits; it instills itself and easily propagates itself; it acts as a ground, contrary to more nuanced and complex propaganda which depend, in a rational effort, on their possible followers.

### **Pathos**

\* Resentment and its style, its rhetoric of pathos: it makes scenes, flaunts its anger, its humiliation, its indignant rancor, its always unsatisfying claims, the insults received, the incomprehension met with; it does not wish to prove its sangfroid, nor accept to argue its claims and possibly be in this way driven back to examining compromises. When one is not immediately of his opinion, on his side, he becomes annoyed, he suffocates from indignation at the least reserve; the least reticence to taking his ideas confirms it in the fact that he is oppressed and isolated, and that the surrounding world wishes only evil upon him. If one asks him to argue certain facts put forward, or to take other data into consideration, he feels badly, lets out sharp cries, thus giving off (he suspects in fleeting moments of lucidity) the bad impression that his cause is not so good that he must defend it by so much pathos and “hysteria.”

\* The pathos of resentment as self-intoxication, an intoxication maintained in the souls of his zealous followers by his own propaganda. “Only preach to the converted...” Like a man always between two wines. And the resentment intoxicates its zealous followers because “it does not put water in its wine.”

\* The dominant one claims willingly to be “in possession of himself,” his ethos of discussion is the phlegmatic, while for the enslaved subordinate one, the claim for justice is always mixed with melodrama; the dominated one is “possessed” – thus follows the pathos as remedy to a weak dialectic.

\* Resentment, – which is close to grudge, envy and rancor,... – is, in ordinary language, a distressing, painful passion, in pursuit of the enforceable. But for Nietzsche and for the social philosophers who

have reworked the notion in various ways, resentment is defined especially by an axiology, inscribed in a “vision of the world.” It is a (perverse) system of values supported by a way of arguing over the society and one’s own condition. Said differently, resentment is at the same time pathos and logos; the classical separation between pathos and logos is shown to be completely inadequate for the study of a synthetic phenomenon like resentment. But what rapport exists between this pathos and this logos, between frustration and argumentation? Resentment judges and argues, but it does it with its suffering, its deception and its hatred. It argues in order to transform this suffering into something which can be objectified, – a comforting vision of the world, – and to distract from this suffering, to reroute the traumatism towards other less debilitating passions, – pity for one’s own people, which is a sentiment of its merit proved by its own defeats, hatred of the victors and the wealthy, the iconoclasm of the values of others. It knows through its pain and frustration; it does not argue to become aware, to clarify its rapport to the world, but rather to anaesthetize its original pain.

There is here certainly something general on rhetoric, that is to say, on the universe of the probable and the doxa: the passion in rhetoric, they are not only these “figures of passions,” these emotional enactments put into discourse, showing the passion (making a spectacle of the passion) of the orator and stimulating the aroused passions in the audience. It is precisely also the passion as origin of the rhetorical construction, an origin partially repressed of the arguments and of the theses in which one believes. The real sophistry is not in the “error of judgment” or reasoning, but it is in the “Logic of Passions” (to take up again the title of a treatise by Théodule RIBOT, *La logique des sentiments*, Paris, 1904).

\* The pathos allows here to both intimidate the adversary or the witness of the menacing gesticulations **and** to conceal the insufficiencies in the logos, in the dialectic, the difficulty to communicate. But the man and woman of resentment suspect that their arbitrariness judge with a small amount of contempt and an irony, both more or less concealed, from the height of their usurped and damned “superiority,” which finds here an **additional** opportunity to assert itself, all this histrionics. Resentment wanted that its fits of rage attract attention, impress, and here the observer pokes fun and makes him feel in a burning fashion that the oratorical tactics of pathos are unquestionable signs of alienation. It ought to content itself with at least arriving at exasperating in the final analysis, at wearing down the patience of others.

\* The dialectic of resentment intimidates. It seeks to intimidate. With its pathos and its inconsistencies, it places the listener in front of a troubling dilemma: either he says to the declared victim that he reasons like a pierced drum, – by this presumptuousness, he sees himself immediately placed in the camp of the adversaries and paradoxically confirms in this way the resentment-oriented person in his vision of things; or he approves reluctantly, justifies his prudence or his condescension through a kind of philanthropic pity. Is the barbaric logic of resentment not a supplementary proof of the fact that the resentful people have been deprived? It can be commendable not to examine too closely the files and the indictments of the people who seem to have so many and such striking subjects of complaint.

\* One can read in the great speeches of the doctrinaires of resentment an explicit intimidation and a silent plea: do not dare to reveal to us that our theories do not have a common meaning, for that would cause us considerable pain. Moreover, if you argue to us that our convictions do not have a common meaning, that would prove that you also place yourself on the side of the dominant ones – therefore, we would be very much bullied eternally and the whole world would be against us, – and therefore our theories on the world would very much have a common meaning! It is seen: resentment resorts to false, underhand figures, the dilemma *ad hominem* reinforcing its impregnable

logic.

\* Any critic of an ideology is necessarily formed “from the exterior”: an adhesive critic is not a critic. And the critic is necessary, even if he does not address the supporters of a more or less righteous cause. If this critic judges the theses and tactics of the ideology under analysis to be unrealistic, narrow, contradictory, and skeptical, one can only require that the critic provides examples and reasons. Resentment does not understand itself in this way: to assume the right to criticize without adhering to the reversal of values which founds it, appears to be a presumptuousness reprehensible a priori. In the alternative case – from two things the one: or this ideology presents such shortcomings, and it is advisable to recognize them; otherwise the critic is considered presumptuous and impertinent, – resentment is organized never to envisage only the second branch of the alternative.

\* There is an implicit or sometimes explicit blackmail in the militancy of resentment. Nothing will be able to tire us, so if you want relief and harmony, give in to our demands. When we have what we want, we will leave you alone. It hardly matters that our grievances seem to you to be poorly founded, make it right and we will no longer hassle you. One can surrender to this blackmail to discover, once the compromise has been established, that nothing has been arranged and that everything is starting over. The compromise itself engenders new grievances which come to add themselves to old rancor. For the resentful man, the appetite comes in the process of eating.

### **Hermeneutics:**

\* The hermeneutics of resentment: everything is brought back to the wrong suffered and one ends up seeing it manifested in every difference with itself immediately perceived to be an exorbitant privilege. Resentment is before the world like an obsessive person in front of a Rorschach ink blot.

\* There is an inevitable parallel between this rancorous hermeneutics and categories of psychopathology. Resentment and “reasoning madness” (an antiquated category of 19<sup>th</sup> century French psychiatry, see Ant. Porot, *Manuel alphabétique de psychiatrie clinique*), with its subcategories: chronic frenzies of interpretation, frenzies of demand, frenzies of prejudice... Reasoning madness: the forms of reasoning, but serving the frenzy.

\* Being paranoiac, resentment constantly “feels directed at” and never believes in the innocence/indifference of the Other, the others.

\* The forms of (il)logic of resentment: one is driven to understanding them in immediately resorting to terms which design the psychoneurotic mechanisms that one perceives to be underlying its paralogs: Verleugnung, denial, projection, repression, defense mechanisms...

\* In its rapports with the neurosis (but is it not the nucleus of any neurosis?)<sup>23</sup>, resentment is hysterical, it is paranoid and obsessional, it interprets constantly and for a cause: the appearances are against it on the one hand, and on the other hand, he must treat all the events of the world as if he is relating to his problem. He tells himself continued stories of endless family novels. He seeks to deny that the apparent world, where he is so seldom, is the real one, – it is therefore the world of a malevolent demiurge.

### **Difference of Opinion and Transcendental Arbitrator**

\* The tribal truths desperately seek out a transcendental Arbitrator, equitable and benevolent, who

renders them total justice, whose rules of justice do not objectively favor the Dominant Ones. When in doubt, the tribes must transform any dispute into a difference of opinion (J.-Fr. Lyotard), that is to say to call into question – in bringing a complaint to an imaginary Tribunal – the rules of law which are supposed to apply to the dispute up until then, in declaring them as insensitive to the “difference” of their grievances, and favoring from that moment the other party. Here also, the resentment-oriented Tribe has good reasons from the saying *Summum jus, summa injuria* and not to leave from there to found his challenging of the Judges of this world.

\* Thus follows the dismal spectacle of the end of this century seen through the newspapers and media: a society characterized by disputes and differences of opinion, dragged continuously from the district court to the Supreme Court. With statistics which “prove” your point. For lack of shared civic criteria and common hopes, there remains only the eternal and anonymous statistic which objectifies the “victimness” of the victims and that it is always commendable to fiddle about.

### **Tribalism and Relativism:**

\* The cultural relativism, like a doctrine superficially rationalized from the resentment in the culture: see against him, Alain Finkielkraut, *La Défaite de la pensée*.<sup>24</sup>

I do not understand Alban Berg, Boulez and I really appreciate Julio Iglesias; so my tastes must be worth yours, that there really is not any difference, unless... The cultural relativism of today, the Bogdanovism in Russia at the beginning of last century: denies the intolerable objectification of the hierarchies that culture brings. What underlies the position of the relativist is this: you cannot seek to demonstrate that the arts and literature of the plebeians and the tribal “minorities” compare themselves in accordance with some general criteria, because you risk reaching the conclusion that they do not hold a candle to the canonic works produced by the dominant ones; you would therefore not be able to deliver yourself to this perilous comparison without asserting the superiority of your tastes and theirs, leaving your superiority on us, – you will not dare. Acknowledge therefore that there is only an aesthetic quality that is tribal. You the lyrical Abstraction, me the painting from Woolworth... To each his own, all preferences being identically legitimate. Caricatural application of the evangelical precept: “Do not judge if you do not want to be judged.”

\* Relativism and tribalism: relativism provides a false legitimization to the tribal and victimal axiologies, to the specific genesis of values of withdrawal and denial.

\* Relativism: it has become a cognitive principle which adheres perfectly to the immediate interests of the resentment-oriented position. Egocentric and monophonic, the ideology of resentment finds in the anthropological and philosophical relativism, the justification for its fetishisms. It is in effect a paradox and a strange ending to the history of criticism and genealogical thought.

### **The Other, the others:**

\* Resentment and refusal of the diversity and the multiple: “The morale of the slaves opposes, from the manner a “no” to that which is not included in itself, to that which is “different” from it, to that which is its “non-I”: and it is this no which is its creative act.” (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*).

\* Majorities can very well impregnate themselves with resentment with respect to lowly minorities: see the example above concerning anti-Semitism.

\* The Other, the one who commits the first crime, hereditary enemy and source of resentment is figured to be a static, Transhistorical essence: it is imperative to make those people pay today for the

harm imposed done to me (done to us) two or three generations ago. If it is not you, then it is your brother or even one of your own people.... It always requires from those that it identifies as representatives of the other group, that they personally recognize their wrongs and the usurping of their wrongs. And let them pay... See the innumerable avatars of this in the present century. For if there is nothing responsible *in praesentia*, – immediately pointed out as being guilty for his merits themselves apparent, for the position that he occupies above me, – then my frustration and my inferiorization are forgivable since it is not a question of giving me the means to surpass them, but of being able to blame him for them indefinitely.

\* Consequently, the resentment which has the long memory, it has been said, is THE GREAT SUPPORTER OF THE MYTHS OF PERPETUAL COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.

\* To presume that the “others” only ever think of us (in order to harm us), determine themselves in all their decisions and acts with respect to us. This is fundamentally the paranoid “gnoseology” of resentment.

\* A great inventor of **narratives of conspiracy**. The adversaries spend their time weaving frameworks; they do not stop until ensnaring him. As these malevolent intrigues are hardly reinforced by the evidence from the observation, one must presuppose a secret conspiracy, – and to convince oneself of its existence immediately once the hypothesis is envisaged. And as resentment gets tangled in its own contradictions and that its claims do not remain very intelligible “on the exterior,” this conspiracy confirms itself constantly. The ideatype of this imaginary aspect of conspiracy: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>25</sup>

\* Resentment believes that it seeks to liberate itself from the supervision of over-possessive master, usurper and no better yet worse than him, but he essentially needs a Master to indefinitely direct his rancor and demands toward him, and to blame him indefinitely for not wanting to put himself “within his reach” and at his level, for situating himself in a plane of reality and in a dynamic of I that he cannot strive to emulate.

\* Whatever the bases may be in the reality, in the concrete history, of his sentiment of deprivation and oppression, The ideologist of resentment makes of the Master, in his work of mythification/mystification, an “extraordinary” hyperbolic portrait, and it is to this enactment, this fantasy nourished by rancor that he addresses his complaints. The ideology of resentment makes of the fantasizing dominant one a hyper-realistic entity, more real than reality: it does not want to believe the spokesperson from the exterior world which ensures it that they cannot recognize themselves in the Great Oppressor that resentment is hallucinating.

\* One part of the errors in perception and appreciation of resentment returns to confuse the modifiable and the unchanging, which can change and which is “in the order of things.” To attribute to the adversary for having woven outlines to render you inferior when it is even a question of things against which “no one can do anything,” but that one chose to “add to the file” to all useful outcomes. To neither envisage the stoicism of fatality, nor to measure the ruses of the long period and the hazards of the uncontrollable.

\* Whatever the declared dominant/privileged person has been able to do or does, one does not maintain it in him through grievance. He seeks to impose his values, institutions, ways of seeing; he is wrong, he proves his insolence, his condescendence, and plots to spare the people from the



resentment of his identity. If he restricts access to these values, he is still wrong. Claiming to be taking charge of you, he interferes. He stays indifferent and lets you live as you like, he despises you. No attitude could satisfy the ideology of resentment which seeks only to find again in all circumstances, additional proof of the malevolence of others.

\* Everything that comes from others hurts us: their pleasure, their egocentrism, but also their pity, their philanthropy. Resentment, which hates the dominant one for the self-confidence that he exhibits, for the benefits that he has acquired and the power that he exerts, does not despise less when he confesses from a guilty conscience, that he proves his philanthropical condescension.

### **Hatred of the Universal:**

\* What offends today's ideologists of resentment the most, is the pretension exhibited in referring to universal rules (of justice or rational debate). For them, these rules are always the arbitrary disguise of the dominant power, with its function of aggravating their differences and relativizing their grievances. The question is never to decide whether a rule is just, but to sniff around to see if it will benefit us or not. Resentment is "pluralist" in its way, which gives it a vague tint of progressive modernity: "to each his truth." Each tribe, enclosed in its rules of justice ad hoc, its dogmas and its dialectic. Here there is still a paralogism: to denounce the dominant values as a concealed expression of interests of certain advantaged minorities, – to then justify its own values through the rancorous obsession of its remarkable interests.

\* The resentment which functions according to the logic of the cauldron ( see "Rhetoric" above), is evidently not keen on submitting its reasonings to universal criteria of validity. There is suspicion for the principles which do not "accept anyone" and will expose themselves as insensitive to the "specificity" of its "case.' It has his ancestral wisdom, his tribal justice, his idiosyncratic reason and his dispute.

\* Resentment against rationality, – historically relative and imperfect as long as one will want. Any resentment always **reserves** a quota of its rancor against what one calls reason, property of the adversaries and instrument of their power and of their legitimatization that they maintain from this. It therefore concludes an alliance with diverse current forms of irrationalism, always themselves deprived of the recognition of their dogmas, their hermeticism and thaumaturgy, and searches in the irrational (what exactly? Not the Dionysian for sure) of the instruments of liberation, of transcendental legitimatization of its grievances. It is far from seeking to make itself the defender of a reason which is more encompassing, less tributary of transitory interests.

\* The values and rules given as universal are in effect, necessarily, in their historical contingency, those also being the dominant ones<sup>26</sup> that they take advantage of). Whether these be the sciences and techniques, the rules of law, the moral "ideals," the "great political principles," the savoir-vivre, the orthography or the linguistic norm... Resentment is derived from this two brief sophisms: that any normal and universal will is a menace of oppression and that it is necessary to defend oneself from this through tribal narcissism. That the dominant values being depreciated and the pretention of the dominant ones to speak in the name of the universal, taxed by imposture, it is preferable that the subservient ones substitute now for these impostures, their sciences, moral values, savoir-vivre and cultural norms. These values become tribal absolutes, as valid as those of the "others", since they keep their criteria to themselves. In effect, one can only, for example speak of "spelling mistakes," malapropism, janotism, sophism or barbarism, in referring to a norm whose pretention of being accepted and founded only reinforces the "symbolic violence" that it exercises.

\* The resentful man begins to savor his vengeance in treating like an iconoclast the Great Values, which are only those of the dominant ones, – their right, their scientific practices, their culture and their language. He proves his new independence in refusing any homage paid to them. He erects alters for his small idols. He requires that in the temples on makes place, at least equally, for the gods of his tribe. He comes defiantly with his bonesetters, his ball carrier, his entertainers and his clowns, his tribunes and makers of harangues: these constitute his science and his culture, which are both very much worth those of the others.

### **Heuristic interest of the notion:**

\* The notion of resentment forms an idealtype, the accentuation by the thought of an ensemble of observable facts, but which are diffused throughout diverse ideologies. Certain people will find it interesting to say that this notion-type caricatures them and that the things are not that simple. It is nevertheless the work itself of the cultural analyst to extrapolate paradigms of this kind to allow one to better observe tendencies and evolutions.

\* One advantage of this notion is that it is pertinently heterogeneous: it invites one to connect facts of ideology and of “mentalities” and maladjusted or neurotic psychological (psychological) dynamics, which would usually be treated as being historical. It forces one to rethink the conception of ideology as a “false conscience.” It calls upon an ethnography, but well situated in the successive moments and sectors of cultural, social and historical life: there is a **man of resentment**.

\* Resentment ought to be approached as a whole, psychological and ideological. It is not only in the spirit of revenge, nor of simple denial, nor of over-simplification, nor of frustrated narcissism, nor of “paranoia,” nor of tribal withdrawal..., nor a juxtaposition of these facts, each of which would be autonomous. It forms a specific dynamic which orders these elements and composes them into a Gordian knot of contradictions and denials. It is no longer negative in all of these stages: the protest of the one made to feel inferior, the spirit of rebellion, the long memory, and the group solidarity are evidently not, – in the abstract of ethical attitudes, – evils in themselves. But in resentment, they all corrupt themselves: the long memory becomes worn out, mythical history, etc.

Also, to transform into a choice a condition of fact (without renouncing to modify it) can be a maneuver, partially untruthful of course, but nevertheless healthy and positive.

\* Another advantage of the notion: it articulates the recurrence of a position facing society, of an ethos and of ways of reasoning, – of positioning the subject and of questioning the world, and this in a long lasting development: since its genesis in Christianity, in the ideologies of the Primitive Church, until its successive avatars in modern political ideologies.

\* Resentment and disenchantment, Entzauberung, see Max Weber. Resentment is intimately linked to the anxiety facing modernity and deterritorialization. The mentality of the *Gemeinschaft* [Tönnies], homogeneous, hot and stagnant, having turned bitter in cold and rational-technical societies.

\* To explain the ideological evolutions through resentment, is not only to see there the false conscience and myths, from inadequacy to the empirical, – for militant myths, they exist in all natures. It is a question of striving to analyze a specific dynamics of denials and accumulated compensations whose principle action is in the inversion without more current/dominant values, the creation of a culture of rancor with self-glorifying, identitarian withdrawal.

\* Being ahistorical insofar as psychology, resentment is a historical fact through the multiple ideologies which carry it and its particular situations where it extends.

\* Not to isolate other negative psychological types: alienation, bad conscience, contemptus mundi, types which have been alluded to here and there in this paper. To isolate the resentment even less so that these perverse psycho-social mechanisms are synergetic, they stimulate each other. Not to describe individually: an emotional and cognitive position which, in an ideal topography, completes itself with other simple forms of false conscience: cynicism of the sated, conservatism, “Social Darwinism” but also double game, bad conscience and unhappy conscience (quite proper for the dominant ones/dominated ones), anarchism, Puritanism of the “pure” conscience, racism and social phobias from different origins..

### **Remedies and counter-propositions:**

\* The ultimate argument in favor of resentment would be that it would be the inevitable means of an attempt to dominate the domination (or a fatal stage). This can be a frequent stage, but its cost is high, for its partisans and for its victims, failure rate also; it blocks critic and makes the group regress who hears suggestions from him.

\* Any thought of citizenship, of the universal, of the universality of rules of justice, of the dialogue, of the cosmopolitan and of the undivided plural, is an antidote for the resentment which can only ever satisfy the particularizing tribal grievances and find it commendable to enclose itself.

\* The opposite of resentment, it is the will for justice like a universal reach, that is to say the will to struggle for justice “without distinction among people,” a will which implies that the interests in place, **including those of the oppressed**, be surpassable, seen as liquidate-able. It is on the contrary the anticipation of a future, of which would be banned the dispute itself which mobilizes you, the rapport of current strength, the I, decomposed and cherished, which perpetuate resentment.

\* Against resentment and its penetration into contemporary culture from all parts: to restore a little stoicism (“I want the world and I want it just the way it is..”) and cynicism. A certain cynical realism: remember the last conversation between Lucien de Rubempré in Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*: “society is like a card trick-taking game...,” if you agree to play and that you are however reluctant to apply the rules, you are assured of losing. One can certainly choose to withdraw from the game or choose to reverse the tables of the Sellers. But you cannot have the cake and eat it too.

\* To wonder whether the real resistance to world-wide application and simultaneously to the identitarian withdrawal, is not to search in the literary text, – at least from today, in a situation unsuitable for art by its dreams of re-entrenchment and its “sentimental” fantasies of re-enchantment at the least cost, – in that of writers whom, often coming from other cultures and having different mother tongues, write in one of the great languages of the planet, participate there in several cultural universes, and live in their creations of the processes of deterritorialization, of becoming-other, that they are not (not all) tempted to think about in terms of frustration and resentment, of identitarian narcissism for lack of another possible withdrawal; but in terms of an opening, of identity that is fluid but not exploded, in terms of authentic cosmopolitanism – in that alone which seem to take refuge, an appetite which tends toward the universal. That a writer like Salmon Rushdie could be sentenced to death on account of his fictional writings says a lot about the

impossible work of the mourning of tense societies on the legend of their taking root.

\* Resentment is chimerical (denying that the empirical world and its immanent values are “true”) – but it is not and cannot be utopian, if utopia implies liberation and ultimate harmony.

\* The “remedy for resentment,” is at the same time in the reflexiveness and in the utopia of excess. Reflexiveness: objectifying the self, its passions, its bitterness – does not return to renounce resentment, but rather to see them from time to time as if they did not coincide with us. Distance. Let us say *Verfremdungseffekt*. Ethical and aesthetic advantages.

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## Notes

1 cf. Max SCHELER’s *Vom Umsturz der Werte*. Kierkegaard was the first to turn resentment into an object of moral philosophy, and it is it is through the use of this French word that his English translator renders a Danish expression which he uses in his 1848 booklet *The Present Age*.

2 Ressentiment, in the philosophy glossaries: No definition in the “Lalande.” In the “Foulquié,” p.662: A state of animosity maintained through the recollection of an offence of which the victim longs to take revenge. **Syn.** grudge, rancor. p.611: Rancor lasts longer than resentment, as it is more profoundly dependant by nature and as it is more plotted.

3 Max Scheler, mentioned earlier, rejects and endeavors to refute subtly (but in a way that I have difficulty finding convincing) Nietzsche’s thesis in which he asserts that the Christian ethic is “the fine flower of resentment.” Cf. *Vom Umsturz*, ch. III. Scheler strives to demonstrate that the character of Jesus in the Gospels is not a resentful being, but that is not to say that the logic of resentful values does not impregnate many episodes of the Gospel and does not seduce “the slave and the prostitute.”

4 Karl Marx, *La Sainte Famille*, for example. Paris: Éditions sociales, s.d.

5 When one says “a certain” in the face of ideological mechanisms full of antagonisms and antinomies of this century, one exposes them to what the militant ones who “feel targeted” oppose for you the paralognism from the amalgam: you are opposed to Stalinism – or Maoism, later – you are therefore against the emancipation of the proletariat... Now the progressive ideologies – always radically heterogeneous – enter the social scene in the form of diametrically opposed doctrines. In this way still, you do not appreciate the essentialism of denial and of resentment of Irigaray, you are therefore against the Cause of women. The ideologists of resentment believe always to speak in the name of multitudes – what justifies their having to resort to the most brief sophisms to defend their Good Cause.

6 For example, from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle of the small shopkeepers against the new big department stores.

7 This is really why I am striving here to show it for what it is.

8 Insofar as the 1980s were the years of a great cultural catastrophe (catastrophe in a technical sense), the collapse of this socialism which was possibly in the XIXth century “like a fish in the water” (Foucault), but which casts its shadow on most of the XXth century. The collapse was anticipating also on the collapse, in reality, of that which Mr. Reagan named “The Evil Empire.” This collapse – anticipated in the French Ideology, corresponding at least partially, from the 1970s to the topos of the Rats which abandon the Ship (a good example of a self-fulfilling prophecy), is, against the denials themselves, from this catastrophe that there is room to leave.

9 Everything that one can call countless “idolatrics.”

10 *Das Geschlechtskälte der Frau*, 1937.

11 It would be easy to recall in this context the Khmer Rouges and the Cambodian “self-genocide,” – the partisans of Pol Pot considering that any education and any competence merit death.

12 One will bring this closer together with the maxim of Vico, “L’uomo ignorante si fa regola dell’universo.”

13 Pierre Bourdieu.

14 *Bohème littéraire et révolution*. Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1983.

15 One should possibly take the Freudian word *Verleugnung*, refusal of the perception of a fact imposing itself in the outside world, a lie to one-self.

16 Not only are they deprived of us, but they have taken advantage of their usurped power to put into place a System where we cannot even recognize ourselves and promote values which deprive us without us admitting to envying them.

17 If for Nietzsche, the bad conscience is an unhealthy deformation, following from the name of morale to soften and turn the subordinated ones into half-wits, one must admit that there are hardly any more “masters” in our societies.

18 The ideologies of resentment are certainly obsessed by a demanding past, but they only retain what suits them, and are provided with a compensation of a capacity of a very practical selective memory lapse.

19 Pierre André Taguieff, *La Force du préjugé*. (Paris, La Découverte, 1988).

20 And these struggles in the purely symbolic terms, is very practical when it is a question of mobilizing stratas of individuals that hardly resemble interests, common materials...

21 In these fantastic requirements, one can detect, under the embryonic forms, the great model of the Stalin processes with his “boukharino-trotskyist” saboteurs recruited both by the Gestapo and the Intelligence Service.

22 Please see the discussion concerning this notion in Raymond Boudon, *L’Art de se persuader des idées*

*fausses etc.* (Paris, Fayard, 1991).

23 Please see Melanie Klein “Envy and Gratitude” (1957), in the work bearing the same title, London, 1975.

24 Paris: Gallimard, 1987.

25 See Ashley Montague, *Warrant for Genocide*.

26 There are some discrepancies between the general principal and its application adapted to the established interests.

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