Physiology versus Psychology

The Priest and the Biopolitics of *Ressentiment*

Sjoerd van Tuinen

Looking back on the *Genealogy of Morals* in *Ecco Homo*, Friedrich Nietzsche claims that his book contained »the first psychology of the priest«.[1] This should be understood in a dual sense as both the typology of the priest and the priestly nature of psychology. First, the priest wages a war against aristocracy, not through direct physical engagement but through psychological contagion and seduction.[2] As Sigmund Freud allegedly said whilst travelling to America, where he was to introduce psychoanalysis: »We are bringing them the plague.« Second, psychology presupposes the gregarious organisation and moralising mediation of the men of *ressentiment* which only the priest can bring about, thus paving the way for the modern liberalist pacification of the loser as guilty individual (if you were unsuccessful in the market, blame no-one but yourself). Not only is psychology a typical method employed by the priest, the priest is also typical of psychology: the priest is the psychologist *par excellence*, the very sense and value of psychology's will to power. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari put it: »there never was but one psychology, that of the priest.«[3] At once sick and strong, servile and noble, the priest is the artist of the soul.[4]

Without a doubt, Michel Foucault and Deleuze are the most profound authors to have continued Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry into the priestly origins of Western subjectivity and its interior core, the psyche. As early as 1946, in an essay inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled »From Christ to the

1 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo. How To Become What You Are*, transl. by Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2007), III GM.

2 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, transl. by Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Essay I-III, here I 7.

3 | Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia 1*, transl. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 111.

4 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III 15.

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Bourgeoisie,« Deleuze argued that with Christianity there begins a cult of interiority, which capitalism would deepen by means of private property and money.[5] After his treatment of the Nietzschean revolution in philosophy in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and the events of May '68, Deleuze rewrote, together with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, the *Genealogy of Morals* in terms of the universal history of capitalism and penned a fulminant polemic with that »last priest«,[6] the psychoanalyst, only to culminate, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Foucault* and *What is Philosophy?*, in a »geology of morals« which gets rid of the last remnants of human subjectivity which may still have been constitutive of the historical continuity of Nietzsche's original genealogical method.

Similarly, and more or less simultaneously, Foucault attempted »a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.«[7] Whether in his early archaeologies of knowledge practices or his later genealogies of power relations and of technologies and aesthetic practices of the self, his questioning of subjectivity is not concerned with morality but with ethics and sovereignty. While this leaves out the Nietzschean problematic of *ressentiment* or moral sickness, it nonetheless attributes a constant and essential role to the priest or »pastor« as fulfilling a psychologising function in Western dispositives of power and their particular regimes of truth.

After a short recapitulation of the Nietzschean typology of the priest, we will follow Foucault in unfolding the pastoral function as an essential link between politics and biological and psychological life. By way of Deleuze, we will then situate the forgetting of the priest in later discourses on *ressentiment* within the context of contemporary biopolitics. If, as Nietzsche foresaw, modern politics has become a struggle over the definition of life, what matters is first of all the protection of the body from the mould of psychology as a privileged mode of subjectivation. The critical problem of *ressentiment* and its clinical transmutation into new forms of life at stake in the battle between the philosopher and the priest as two radically opposed physicians of culture.

The Priest as Organiser of *Ressentiment*

According to Nietzsche, the »morality of customs« (*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*, the disciplining and domesticating practices of culture in its immeasurable historical extension) is constituted in principle, although hardly ever in fact, by the

5 | See www.raymondvandewiel.org/from_christ_to_the_bourgeoisie_translation.pdf (last accessed 21-11-2014).

6 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 112, p. 108 and p. 332.

7 | Michel Foucault, »The Subject and Power,« in: *Power, Essential Works of Foucault. 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 326.

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spontaneous activity of nobles, while slaves are characterised by an unhealthy »feeling of revenge« or *ressentiment*: that fixation of affects which occurs when a »reaction ceases to be acted in order to become something felt (*senti*)«[8] and expresses itself only in moral indignation over the actions of others. If this typological difference between aristocrats and slaves is first of all a hierarchy in principle, this is because in history it tends to be blurred, distorted or even reversed by *ressentiment*, which fictionalises a threefold reversal of values: the vengeful reversal according to which misfortune must be immediately and symmetrically turned into fortune; the paralysing reversal by which compensation is sought for impotence in imaginary action; and the normative reversal by which the precarious promises of the other two reversals are consolidated as unconditional and universally valid.[9]

But how does *ressentiment* become capable of this historical reversal of values, given the slaves' essential inability to act? This is the genealogical question *par excellence* and Nietzsche's answer is highly original: the reversal of values is due to the calculating genius of a third type, the priest. Only the priest is able to organise *ressentiment* and thus lead the slave revolt in morality, which is the moment when »*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values«[10]; in other words, when it constitutes a global culture of its own in which weakness turns into merit, baseness into humility, passivity into patience, or more generally good into Evil and bad into Good. Indeed, from the genealogical point of view, the priest is the most important type: without him it is not clear why the whole of life would succumb to passivity. While *ressentiment* is the source of slave morality, it takes an artist capable of giving an adaptive and regulative form to passive matter for the fictional reversal of values to bring about real effects and usher in the long history of a postponed and imaginary revenge.[11]

The role of the priest, according to Nietzsche, is that of a healer or redeemer who suffers from the same illness he is supposed to heal. Accordingly, the priest is the »delicate animal«[12] whose weakness leads him to withdraw from direct physical battle with the strong, and to use only psychological concepts

8 | Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 111.

9 | As Christoph Narholz has argued, the normative reversal makes the other two psychological reversals relevant to the critique of metaphysics, but also more generally to all discourse on legitimation. See Christoph Narholz, *Die Politik des Schönen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2012), pp. 35-38.

10 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, I 10.

11 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, In: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman, (New York: Cambridge University Press 2005), pp. 3-67. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 125-126.

12 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III 15.

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(soul, free will, God, bad conscience) and techniques (pity, confession, interpretative authority, ascetics), which are the sign of an all-the-more ambitious and all-the-more vicious desire for power, because they legitimate and conserve an impotent form of life which, were it not for this spiritual revenge, would be destined for physiological ruin. On the one hand, the priest is parasitical on the outcome of the culture of the nobles, namely conscience, or »the capacity to make promises«[13] inscribed in our bodies. There is no body politic, no composition of bodies in bigger sovereign unities, without the inhibition and internalisation of animal instincts in the form of souls that suffer.[14] On the other hand, the priest is both the accomplice of the *ressentiment* that follows from this latent regime and its disseminator. His concepts all derive from the basic paralogism of *ressentiment* which lies at the basis of all moral judgment, the fiction of a force or subject »separated from what it can do«, e. g. the projection of a bird of prey that is free to act like a lamb and whose intentions are blameworthy if it does not.[15] But his procedure is to re-orient this projection in order to execute the recrimination against the subject of *ressentiment* itself. Whereas the man of *ressentiment* seeks the structural unity of a Doer behind the deed who might be blamed for his action, the priest finds a Feeler behind *ressentiment* who must be made conscious of his irrationality (»you are guilty of yourself«[16]). In this way, the outcome of the activity of the noble becomes the starting point for the priest, while at the same time it acquires a new evaluation: conscience becomes bad conscience. Pity is the preeminent means by which the priest protects his lambs, both against the greed of the birds of prey (by seducing the latter to become lambs as well and thus separate them from what they can do) and against explosions of rancour within the herd itself (by redirecting the outward, recriminatory sense of *ressentiment* inwards).[17]

More than any other tradition of priesthood (shamanic, Buddhist, Judaic etc.), Nietzsche credits Christianity with the consolidation of this paradoxical victory of reactive over active forces. The priest triumphs over the noble, not through an immediate composition of forces but through an indirect contagion of souls. He establishes his power over his herd by giving each of its members a new psychological depth. Indeed, for Nietzsche there is no culture of the spirit or soul worthy of the name except that of the priest.[18] Psychology is precisely the way in which the priest gives meaning to the suffering from which he

13 | Ibid., II 1.

14 | Ibid., II 16-7.

15 | Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 122-124; Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, I 13.

16 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III 15.

17 | Ibid., III 13-15, 18.

18 | Ibid., I 7.

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simultaneously derives his power. He provides the sick with refined but addictive defence mechanisms (*Gefühlsausschweifungen*, especially against the feeling of guilt[19]) which momentarily anaesthetise suffering, but in fact only stimulate its proliferation and envelop us in reactionary sentiments. For whereas the noble affirms suffering as the consequence of his own actions without internalising it, the slave learns to see himself as the source of Evil (sin) and suffering as the necessary negation of his own secret desires (nihilism, or the will to nothingness). From here on, nobles and slaves alike need to fear, denounce and repress their own desire for power in order to live peacefully: we are all slaves now.

From Pastoral Power to Biopolitics to Psychopolitics

It is not difficult to find historical instantiations of the type of the priest. Under the title »Dionysus versus the Crucified«, Nietzsche first shows how the Jewish priest constitutes the typical condition of existence for the desire for power of the Jewish people by interpreting their servility as a virtue sanctioned by a punishing and rewarding God.[20] The despot and the priest both need the sadness or suffering – affects that involve the diminution in the power of acting – of their subjects and compensate them with a transcendent meaning. As Deleuze and Guattari would later argue, every priest belongs to an »imperial-despotic system«, where written signifiers are expressions of a hidden voice, whether of the emperor or of God, requiring interpretation. The hermeneutical alliance of priest and despot substitutes a fiction of revealed »truth« for efficacious expression, and subjugates the will (desire) to the reproduction of meaning under the lawful rule of those who claim privileged access to its truth.[21]

However, the truth of the Jewish priest is not yet a psychological one. For, more than the Jewish priest, it is the Christian priest who is typical of European culture, as it is he who teaches man's will to desire its own repression, and first of all the repression of its own vengefulness. He offers a system of interpretation by which the meaning of individual confessions is uncovered at the same time as the speaker is socialised as an individual who accepts, adapts to, and identifies with the behavioural model of the metaphorical flock. By way of the desire for truth, the priest thus introduces an asceticism or narcotics of life which in modernity would be secularised in the Kantian ideal of the emancipated subject, capable of prescribing to himself the Law of Reason. Once it is freed

19 | Ibid., III 15-20.

20 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, I 1-17.

21 | Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2*, transl. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 114-135.

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from the power of the Church, subjectivity acquires the neurotic unity of priest and believer, despot and subject, conquering and conquered slave (or Hegel and Kojève's master and servant), in other words, the unity of the personal.[22] It is at this point of appearance of the new psychosocial type of modern man that the psychologising function of the Christian priest is assumed through practices such as psychoanalysis, which, as Deleuze and Guattari have shown, even after the death of God continue to help us in interpreting the secret truth of our repressed desire while simultaneously *civilising* it in accordance with the dominant model of subjectivation of capitalist society, the triangular or Oedipal family.[23]

Whereas Deleuze and Guattari, in their critique of psychoanalysis, stay truest to Nietzsche in conceptual terms, Foucault stands alone when it comes to historical detail. In *Discipline and Punish*, *The Will to Knowledge* and their methodological justification in *Nietzsche, History, Genealogy*, Foucault takes up Nietzsche's cry that the origin of morality and of free and responsible individuals is not itself moral and free, but an infinite play of subjection to external forces that are inscribed in our bodies and to the specific types of knowledge that legitimate and inform these practices of power. Where Nietzsche conceives of morality or culture as a body politic, Foucault is particularly interested in mapping the »composition of forces« in the period between the late 18th and early 20th century: the political anatomy of disciplinary power involved in the production of modern subjectivity in the fields of sexuality and delinquency – the former long since the privileged domain of priestly power and the latter traditionally coming under the control of the despot.

Discipline is the »art« by which the human body becomes useful as it becomes more obedient, and vice versa, without this leading to any sort of alienation: »If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.«[24] The privileged technology of disciplinary power is the Panopticon, which locks us up in a situation of general surveillance which we internalise and maintain by ourselves as patients or delinquents. The first truly faceless and de-individualised organisation of power in history, it is also the most individuating. Both subject and object of power, the individual acquires an infinite knowledge of him- or herself at the same time as (s)he acquires the techniques for self-measuring, -controlling, and -improvement. Thus while the knowledge and power of discipline have their point of application in the body, what they produce is the self. Together they constitute what Nietzsche called the process of *Einverseelung* and

22 | Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 87, pp. 93-94.

23 | Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 154-155.

24 | Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, transl. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 138.

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what Foucault calls *assujettissement*, the inscription of power relations in the body in the form of the soul: a non-corporeal, discursive reality, which is nonetheless inconceivable without the discrete functioning of power assemblages.[25]

If the Nietzschean figure of the priest has disappeared from Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power, this is because his psychologising function has been outsourced to the more anonymous political-technological architectonic of the Panopticon. However, the political anatomy of docile but useful bodies is insufficient for explaining the functioning of the modern state, as here the experience of freedom is fundamental. Even before the rise of disciplinary power and its institutions of enclosure such as the hospital and the prison, from the first great crisis of capitalism in the 16th century onward, there had gradually appeared another, complementary mode of power which would acquire its full scope and consistency in the 18th century. This »governmentality« is the care of self and the government of others in an open environment full of aleatory events. While discipline is applied to the individual body and its model of power is that of war, governmentality applies to the population at large, and its model of power is that of the government of men's lives in quotidian detail. Complementary to processes of identification and *assujettissement*, governmentality provides conditions of *subjectivation*.[26] It is in this context that Foucault, in his research in the middle and late seventies, is quick to rediscover the Nietzschean theme of »pastoral power« and its specific mode of psychologisation. Rather than in the exercises of the army, the ancestor of modern governmentality is found in monastic discipline, which is based on the more tender techniques of individual care and dutiful guidance (*conduit*) of the shepherd over its flock of free sheep.

Both disciplinary and pastoral forms of power may be defined as simultaneously totalising and individualising. But while discipline consists of a strictly vertical relationship of obedience and utility of the individual subject to the despot he serves – whether this is the traditional sovereign and his law-giving power or the law internalised in the soul – pastoral government combines the vertical relation to the priest with a horizontal relationship to the rest of the social body (*Omnes et Singulatim*).[27] Based on subtle bonds of reciprocity between pastor and flock and distributed to the whole community, its aim is to quiet hostilities within the herd.[28] Belonging to a religion devoted to salvation, its object is not just the sexual pervert or the criminal, but the troubled soul

25 | Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 29-30.

26 | Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, transl. by Graham Burchell (New York: Picador), pp. 184-185.

27 | Foucault, »Subject and Power«, pp. 332-336. See further Foucault, »Omnis et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of ›Political Reason‹,« in: *Power*, pp. 298-325.

28 | Ibid., pp. 301-303.

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in general: the soul obsessed with its pernicious combination of avidity and anguish, covetousness and culpability, in other words, with lack and sacrifice.

As inheritor of the ancient spiritual master of the pre-Christian, Mediterranean East, especially the Hebraic relation between God and his people, Christianity expands pastoral power in three ways: it offers guidance towards salvation by means of an economy of faults and merits; it submits its individual subjects to the law by means of moral prescriptions; and it directs and conducts them by teaching a hidden, inner truth.[29] Or in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, power is organised around lack, law and signification: »The priest cast the triple curse on desire: the negative law, the extrinsic rule, and the transcendent ideal.«[30] Since it cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's souls and their desires, pastoral power firstly implies a conscience and the ability to constantly examine and direct its inclinations (analytical identification). Since Christianity is not a religion of the general law, but of God's will for each individual in particular it demands, secondly, total and limitless obedience of the sheep to the pastor (*assujettissement*). And since the pastor can only care for the care that others take of themselves if the other speaks the truth, this truth is, thirdly, made available and intelligible through a hermeneutic understanding of, and relation to, the soul (*subjectivation*). Thus, if the Jewish priest had already installed an exterior authority, in Christianity the soul and its experience of freedom became the product of a new kind of hermeneutics that mediates between authority and conscience through the incorporation of a technology of self-examination and self-government inherited (and transformed) from post-Socratic philosophy. Jerusalem and Athens, the shepherd-flock and the city-citizen converge in a new pastoral type of power. It is based on the constant care for individuals and their obedience and is combined with the particular knowledge acquired through an internalisation of the despotic desire for truth.

Much more than both the traditional political power of the prince and modern disciplinary power, pastoral power is concerned with the worldly order of everyday conduct.[31] Foucault sometimes refers to Saint Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* first published in 1609. Precisely at the moment when political power is no longer modelled on the virtues and wisdom of the sovereign and God's rule of the world, but on the anonymity of the state apparatus and the rational government of free individuals, the new, centralised state begins to secularise and integrate the technologies of the self and individuation

29 | Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 123-190, pp. 183-185. For a good summary, see Jeremy Carrette, »Foucault, Religion, and Pastoral Power,« in: *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary and Jana Sawicki (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), pp. 376-377.

30 | Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 154.

31 | Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 154.

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of Christian pastoral power. Embodied by the mixed figure of the minister, the shift in the relationship between religion and politics from church and state to »pastorate and government«[32] is made possible by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and their struggle over the correct manner of governing in the Church. As a result, priests gained increasing power at a local level and caused confessional technologies and codes of conduct to spread through society at large.[33] The history of the Church already featured a combination of political and pastoral problems of dispersion, and a constant tension between ecclesiastic dogma and dissident forms of spirituality. From the 16th century onwards, the police became the integrated solution to the tricky adjustment between political power wielded over legal subjects of state and pastoral power wielded over free individuals.[34] The two kinds of exercising of power, represented by despot and priest, converge in the general production and control of free individuals.[35] The pastor provided for salvation in the afterlife; now, the state seeks man's wordly happiness by regulating society and the moral quality of life. The aim of the modern art of government, or state rationality freed from the mould of administrative monarchy, as Foucault writes, is »to develop those elements constitutive of individual's lives in such a way that their development also fosters the strength of the state.«[36] Combining economic and religious themes, its main concern is the bio-economical health and security of the body politic of floating populations, commercial networks, and technical innovations, and as such it also constitutes the biopolitical core of the neoliberal welfare state.[37]

The moment in the Middle Ages when early Christian technologies of penance became confessional is also the moment when the priest first acquired a medical role (the administration of the proper satisfaction corresponding to a sin in order to heal the patient suffering the effects of sin). It is true that, with the appearance of the medical rationality of politics and governance (the *medizinische Polizei*) at the end of the 18th century, the authority of the pastor was replaced by the competence of the economist and the doctor. If, from the 17th century pastoral and Jean-Baptiste de la Salle's concern for detail to autobiographical literature in 19th century, ours has nonetheless become a singularly confessional society, this indicates that the intricate links between confession and medicine have never really been broken. Psychoanalysis' »talking cure«

32 | Ibid., p. 192.

33 | Ibid., p. 89, pp. 227-231. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*, transl. by Graham Burchell (London, New York: Verso, 2003), p. 175.

34 | Foucault, »Omnes et Singulatim«, p. 307; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 191-226.

35 | Foucault, »Subject and Power«, p. 333.

36 | Foucault. »Omnes et Singulatim«, op.cit., p. 322.

37 | Ibid.; Foucault, »Subject and Power«, p. 307.

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was perhaps the first domain in which confessional procedures and psychiatric medicalisation of sexuality were explicitly combined.[38] But what all biopolitical technologies of medical psychology share is that, unlike the psychiatric hospital or analytical session, they work in an open space centred around the family as cornerstone of bourgeois society, where power functions not through meticulous composition, but by infinite contagion. Thus, while itself an apparatus of security and prevention of the aleatory, such as the 18th century inoculation campaigns against smallpox (as distinguished from the exclusion regime of lepers and the incarceration regime against the plague), the process of biopolitical medicalisation and psychologisation has no boundaries.[39]

Precisely at the moment when the Cartesian *cogito* became the transcendental or universal model for the management of the freedom and rationality of the individual, the demand for medical psychology became insatiable and pastoral power dispersed into the complete governmentalisation of society. As hermeneutics was replaced by analysis, the new confessor is no longer a spiritual guide but a master of scientific discourse. In the name of liberation, we now prefer a doctor to a spiritual guide and pity those who choose otherwise for their lack of emancipation. Yet this last vestige of sovereignty at the same time implies an infinite process of empirical psychologisation of all that remains stubbornly irrational, such that, from *kindergarten* to elderly care, we are turned into obedient students of psychological method and evidence, which drains us from all political subjectivity. It is therefore not enough to say that psychologists are the pastors and priests of our time, since everybody has become his own psychologist. Indeed, while Christianity's preoccupation with self-knowledge still presupposed a spiritual practice and transformation of the self, the Enlightenment would suppress any spirituality and thus finally alienate truth from practical subjectivity.[40] For as Nietzsche already knew, scientific knowledge as non-belief is also the last refuge of belief, just as the Cartesian non-spirituality based on pure self-knowledge instead of self-transformation is the degree-zero of spirituality.[41] Biopolitics defines and limits subjectivity by

38 | Wendy Grace, »Foucault and the Freudians,« in: *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary and Jana Sawicki (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), pp. 226-242, esp. p. 230.

39 | Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 41-42, pp. 57-63.

40 | Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, transl. by Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), pp. 17-19, p. 26, pp. 190-191. Cf. Mark G. E. Kelly, »Foucault, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self,« in: *A Companion to Foucault*, pp. 510–25, https://www.academia.edu/4267297/Foucault_Subjectivity_and_Technologies_of_the_Self, (last accessed 7-8-2017).

41 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, transl. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), I.

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its relationship to its individual truth, while politics is reduced to the administration of bio-economic life. In the first part of the *History of Madness* Foucault therefore describes this new claim of politics on life, which begins at the end of the 16th century, as the »Great confinement« of everything deemed unreasonable.[42] Or as Deleuze and Guattari put it: »Oedipus is one of those things that becomes all the more dangerous the less people believe in it; then the cops are there to replace the high priests.«[43] What was once mild paternalism now becomes a matter of continuous surveillance, medication and psycho-education. In the scientifically constructed world, psychology is the concluding piece, the necessary complementary truth to neuro-biology and economics and their guiding ideal of completely desubjectivated knowledge.[44]

Contemporary biopolitics is psychopolitics, in which the pharmaceutical sector, policy makers, the entertainment industry and the psy-sector increasingly rely on one another. From the Church to new discursive authorities such as practitioners of neurocognitivism and all the mediagenic experts, teachers

42 | Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, transl. by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London, New York: Routledge), p. 77. As Edward F. McGushin, from whom I have borrowed the analogy between biopolitics and the Great Confinement, has argued, religion itself becomes a moralising force, such that the modern desacralisation of poverty and instrumentalisation of charity is inseparable from the imperative to work. Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis. An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), pp. 228-237.

43 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 81.

44 | Jan de Vos, *Psychologisering in tijden van globalisering. Een kritische analyse van psychologie en psychologisering,* (Leuven: Acco, 2011), pp. 186-187. While De Vos consistently contrasts psychoanalysis as spiritual practice with medical psychology, Deleuze explains the paradoxical popularity of psychoanalysis after May '68 by situating it squarely in terms of the process of psychologisation, precisely because its popularity is based on contagion outside the traditional institutions and even outside the family, where »[n]eurosis has acquired its most frightening power, that of propagation by contagion: ›I will not let go of you until you have joined me in this condition.‹« See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues 2,* transl. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Haberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 83. He identifies three mechanisms of contagion of »psychoanalytic power«: the recruitment of »patients« which no longer works by familial filiation, but by alliance (friends telling you that »you ought to try it yourself!«), the juridical transition from a contractual relationship to statutory fixity between analyst and analysand (while the psychiatrist deals only with the clear cases of »madness«, the analyst deals with a whole psychopathology of everyday life, from those who appear to be mad but are not exactly mad to those who are mad but do not immediately appear to be so), and the transition from signified to signifier (psychoanalysts are like journalists who create their own event, such that the consultation room offers a better understanding of Oedipus than our parents' bedroom). Ibid., pp. 82-87.

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and trainers that accompany it, we are educated in private coping strategies that define what seems doable within given bio-economical coordinates. At the same time, these strategies publicly legitimate trauma. »Psychologization is more than the design of alienation and discontent in contemporary global culture. It is a part of the processes that create that very alienation and discontent.«[45] Thus, from criminals asking for psychiatric guidance to war victims learning to observe themselves and to the indebted man who lives in constant distrust of himself and others, we are all obsessed with a psychology that forces us to become the subject of our own desubjectivation and that precedes in an *a priori* fashion any psychosocial or political role we might occupy. And did not Deleuze and Guattari describe this situation already when writing about the infinite Oedipalisation?[46]

Polemology: Physiology versus Psychology

In an interview with Alain Badiou in 1965 entitled *Philosophy and Psychology*, Foucault argues that psychology is not a science, but the »cultural form [...] with which Western culture has been familiar for a long time, and in which there emerged such things as confession, casuistry, dialogues, discourses, and argumentations that could be articulated in certain milieus of the Middle Ages, love courtships or whatnot in the mannered circles of the seventeenth century.«[47] All his later works on the hermeneutics of the self, pastoral power, and the ministry of the body as flesh are already anticipated here: »Every psychology is a pedagogy, all decipherment is a therapeutics: you cannot know without transforming [*sans transformer*]«.[48] Yet it is precisely with the onset of modernity, and its privileging of psychology as the transcendental framework for spirituality in general, that psychology's transformative potential has become minimised and locked up in empirically prescripted forms of subjectivity. Philosophy and the human sciences, the transcendental and the empirical, converge in the psychology of man's reflection on his finite self, or in other words, in what Foucault calls »anthropology«. The transformative passage through psychology has become an »absolutely unavoidable and inevitable impasse« symptomatic of the »anthropological slumber« in which both philosophy and the human sciences

45 | Ibid., p. 19, p. 163.

46 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 265.

47 | Michel Foucault, »Philosophy and Psychology,« in: *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault,* ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 250.

48 | Ibid., p. 255.

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are »put to sleep by one another«,[49] just as in the classical *episteme* critical thought is kept asleep by the dogmatic slumber of the relationship between man and God.

This impasse of psychology raises again the question of the possibility of a critical transformation of subjectivity, a repoliticisation of psychology, perhaps an active biopolitics[50] – a question that takes us back to Nietzsche's psychology of the priest. Its empowering potential revolves around the problem of *ressentiment*, a problem which before and after Nietzsche may have been of a positive psychological nature, but, as I will demonstrate, should now be reclaimed for a rather special, i.e. critical, polemical and – in any case – decidedly non-empirical psychology. For why does Nietzsche call his work a »psychology of the priest«, when in the *Genealogy of Morals* he had already argued first, that the proper genealogical method – if it is to avoid the very perspective it seeks to criticise – had to be physiological rather than psychological; and second that social organisation concerns an immanent composition of forces and not a transcendent form.[51] How does he distinguish himself from the priest whose typology he prided himself in having unmasked?

The general aim of *Ecce Homo*, for Nietzsche, is to present himself as »a psychologist without equals.«[52] From the »psychology of tragedy« to the »psychology of the professor,«[53] he reinterprets his entire oeuvre under the banner of psychology as a new image of philosophical thought. What makes him a psychologist without equals, however, is that, at least from *Human, All too Human* onwards, he consistently maintains that the only method of psychology, if it is to keep a healthy distance from what it diagnoses, is »physiology, medicine, and physics.«[54] For Nietzsche, psychology's point of application is not the subconscious feelings of the soul that we should somehow learn to become the subject of, but the unconscious activity of the body. The psychologist is the »physician of culture«, whose task is precisely to keep the body from falling prey to the psychologising judgments of the passive.[55] In this way, Nietzsche makes a distinction between the perspectives of the good doctor and the bad doctor. While the latter sees *ressentiment* as a psychological emotion, an illness of the soul that should be fought with psychological means, only the former understands it as

49 | Ibid., p. 259.

50 | This is also the *Leitmotiv* of the various continuations of Foucault's research into the genealogy of contemporary biopolitics developed by Italian authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and Roberto Esposito.

51 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality,* I 17, Anmerkung.

52 | Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, III 5.

53 | Ibid., III BT 3; III UM 3.

54 | Ibid., III HA 3.

55 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality,* III 14.

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a physiological constellation of forces or affects: a problem of our active capacity of forgetting, in other words, a problem of the stomach.[56]

We should remember that the *Genealogy of Morals* is a polemic with priestly modes of thought, and that it opens not simply by rejecting the books of other psychologists such as Paul Rée or Eugen Dühring, who had already located the source of Western morality in *ressentiment*, but by displacing their inquiry into the origins of morality to the psychologists themselves.[57] It is their rancour, mistrust, impotence, disappointments, ideals, habits, hatred and tastes, in other words, the typical symptomatology of their desire for power, that Nietzsche is interested in. By itself, the problem of *ressentiment* is not interesting. It becomes so only »on the soil of this essentially dangerous form of human existence, the priestly form,«[58] as it is only through the priest that *ressentiment* becomes formative on a cultural level and turns man into the ›skin disease‹ of the earth.[59] By reclaiming the body from psychology and for philosophy, Nietzsche thus enters into a direct contest with the priest. If, for Nietzsche, the aim of philosophical psychology – or rather, of a transcendental physiology which is also a »psychology of the cosmos«[60] – is to depsychologise, the priest works in the opposite direction. Whereas the former protects the healthy from the self-deceptive devaluation of life by the sick by discerning the true cause of *ressentiment* in a *physiological upset* and by curbing its senseless ravages in a body politic or community of justice, the latter merely protects the weak against the strong, since he is himself inspired by *ressentiment*, such that it suffices to treat only its effects.[61] Psychology, in this sense, is the most adequate manifestation of the spirit of revenge and the degeneration of the body politic. Deleuze sums it up nicely: »*Ressentiment* is not part of psychology but the whole of our psychology, without knowing it, is a part of *ressentiment*.«[62]

The Psychopolitics of Ressentiment

The problem of *ressentiment* thus constitutes the very *polemos* that separates the philosopher and the priest as radically incommensurable perspectives of clinical evaluation. Their conflict cannot be settled in terms of a final truth. Plausibility is

56 | Ibid., III 16.

57 | Ibid., I 1.

58 | Ibid., I 6.

59 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. by Adrian del Caro and Robert B. Pippon, transl. by Adrian del Caro, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 103.

60 | Gilles, Deleuze, *Pure Immanence* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 75.

61 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III 14.

62 | Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 34.

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disconnected from truth as soon as truth becomes a moral, i.e., universal or absolute aim in itself. For then it is itself already marked by the sign of *ressentiment*: it is the truth of the slave who denies the irreducible *difference* between higher and lower standpoints: »[D]ifference,« after all, »breeds hatred.«[63]

The problem with most established approaches to *ressentiment* is precisely their psychologising denial of a physiological difference. The »untimely« and »extra-moral« originality of Nietzsche lies in his emphasis on the genealogical necessity of millennia of slow cultural preparation and consolidation of *ressentiment* in the Judaic-Christian priest-culture before culminating in the egalitarian morality characteristic of modern democracies. Most later approaches, by contrast, reverse the causality between *ressentiment* and democracy into a more direct and determinate but also more circumstantial relation: if Christianity were still capable of mediating *ressentiment* (after all, in Christ we are all equal), it would become explosive only in the egalitarian cultivation of the frustration of the disadvantaged over the persistence of inequality. Instead of the progenitor of modernity, then, the culture of *ressentiment* would be its child, since *ressentiment* is now seen as the consequence of the modern culture of envy and indignation over withheld justice. This inverted perspective on *ressentiment* enables those coming after Nietzsche to either deny (Max Weber, Max Scheler, René Girard, Charles Taylor) or ignore (John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Marc Angenot, Marc Ferro) the priestly nature of every culture of *ressentiment*. One should wonder, however, whether their perspective is not itself indistinguishable from precisely that of the priest and the general process of psychologisation. Does not the very diversity of philosophical positions represented by the aforementioned writers prove that it has become common sense to use the notion of *ressentiment*, and isn't it precisely this kind of psychological common sense that has traded in the polemical sense of the concept of *ressentiment* for the kind of calm and impartial rationality that Nietzsche would certainly have criticised as »moral«?

In fact, one should not be surprised about this paradoxical moralisation of the discourse on *ressentiment*. As a coping strategy, psychology not only gives meaning or form to our private suffering, it thrives on it. What the aforementioned authors have in common is a depoliticisation of the concept of *ressentiment* which fits seamlessly into the biopolitics of contemporary empirical psychology and neurosciences, which focus on the emotions of private individuals instead of on political affects. Within the general framework of anthropology, this depoliticisation may even pretend to be the completion of the critical project begun by Immanuel Kant, but now drawing on all sorts of psychological, economical, anthropological and biological sources while denying, if necessary, its own psychologis*ing* and individuat*ing* functions. The empirical facts may vary but the formal psychology of *ressentiment* still reigns supreme. The reversal of values remains in

63 | Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 263.

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place and merely changes in nuance, due to an apparent lack of necessity (instead of the evaluation of misfortune, we get the evaluation of happiness) and a supposedly enlightened and emancipated orientation (instead of some other-worldly compensation, it is desired here on earth).[64] The political problem is clear: knowing that our subjectivity is determined by *ressentiment* is by no means sufficient to overcome it. At best, we will feel offended by our own powerlessness; at worst, we will feel guilty of ourselves. Either way, we become patients, which means that we are locked up in a passive relation to ourselves. Lack and castration are internalised and become constituents for our self-identity, now defined by fatigue and neurosis. »[L]ife itself is a biological impairment for which medication, psycho-education and frameworks for adaptation are appropriate.«[65]

In summary, the problem with today's critique of *ressentiment* is that it likes to think of itself as critical, but without the transcendental, let alone the invention of new perspectives of valuation. In this manner, it betrays an inversion of Nietzsche's original genealogical difference, which now appears only from the perspective of reactive forces that limit active force and that are already controlled by the spirit of the negative. The desire for justice itself – and as a consequence all political desire and struggle – is seen topsy-turvy, as an ideological mask for the insatiable revenge of the *Schlechthinweggekommenen*. For this reason, Nietzsche himself had already warned that *ressentiment* can never be the beginning of justice, and that every idea of justice should imply a cruel indifference to *ressentiment*.[66] If he nonetheless has a need for the concept of *ressentiment*, this is precisely because of his struggle with those who base their power and their conception of justice on it.

From Psychopolitics to Politics

If the highest caste is at the same time the *clerical* caste that chooses a title for its overall description that calls its priestly function to mind, this does not constitute an exception to the rule that the concept of political superiority always

64 | As Christoph Narholz has shown, the criticism of *ressentiment* itself becomes ressentimental as soon as it absolutises empirical knowledge against metaphysics or ideology and thus repeats the formal movement of *ressentiment*. The vengeful reversal now turns the hatred of the fortunate towards the weak who impersonate our own feared misfortune. The paralyzing reversal now demands some kind of auto-suggestive violence to compensate for the fact that we are never rational enough to control all our actions all the time. And the normative reversal now teaches us that any conception of universality beyond the simple human right to happiness must be fought. (Narholz, *Politik des Schönen*, pp. 20-21)

65 | De Vos, *Psychologisering in tijden van globalisering*, p. 46, p. 149.

66 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II 11.

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resolves itself into the concept of psychological superiority (although this may be the occasion giving rise to exceptions).[67]

All psychology begins as psychopolitics and as a typical form of politics it remains inseparable from a body politic. An active biopolitics, a new setting of priorities becomes feasible only at the level of the body. As Foucault writes, contrasting Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the paralogisms of psychoanalysis from the perspective of a materialist psychiatry in *Anti-Oedipus* with pastoral morality: »The Christian moralists sought out the traces of the flesh lodged deep within the soul. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body. Paying a modest tribute to Saint Francis de Sales, one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*.«[68]

At the level of the body, *ressentiment* is no longer an irrational pathology that we must somehow be made conscious of. On the contrary, it becomes the object of a political care of the self: »Psychology, or rather the only bearable psychology, is politics, because I am forever creating human relationships with myself. There is no psychology, but rather a politics of the self.«[69] Contrary to being a matter of moral psychologisation, the real problem of *ressentiment* is that of explaining and overcoming the subjective identification with impotence as a prison we choose to live in. The political alternative lies not between revolutionary hatred and counterrevolutionary remorse. Rather than judging over an emancipatory stance by reducing it to some self-discrediting *ressentiment*, the true question of a political psychology is: Why do we often fight for our own slavery as if it were our beatitude? In fact, it is only here that a genealogical approach becomes indispensable and that a focus on the passions need not necessarily facilitate the moral self-gratification of the democratic Right, but could also provide the practical conditions for a liberating politics. *Ressentiment* may well be a psychic phenomenon, but it becomes interesting only at the level of culture. To re-politicise psychology is to highlight subjectivity not on the level of the individual soul but on the level of the collective body. Let us therefore conclude with a battle cry: »We have to reinvent the field of health, and invent a *political* medicine based on forms-of-life.«[70]

67 | Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality,* I 6.

68 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. xiii. (Original emphasis).

69 | Deleuze, Gilles, »Pericles and Verdi: The Philosophy of Francois Chatelet,« in: *Opera Quarterly* 21 (2005) pp. 716-725, here p. 717.

70 | Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, transl. by Alexander R. Galloway and Jason E. Smith (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2010), p. 185.

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