

1 Article

## 2 Herd Morality. Nietzsche and the Public Dimension of 3 Human Life

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7 **Abstract:** Nietzsche is almost always regarded as one of the thinkers who advocate extreme individ-  
8 ualism, totally indifferent to or exclusively polemical towards the public human dimension. While  
9 this is very difficult to contradict, if we read his texts carefully we can see how his constant celebra-  
10 tion of the individual runs parallel to an acute awareness of living in a new era, which he defined as  
11 'the century of the multitude and the masses'. The herd, conformism, mediocrity, public opinion: a  
12 civilisation in which community attempts suffocate all individual inspiration, and which therefore  
13 seems to row in the opposite direction. Although Nietzsche often uses collective life merely as a  
14 negative pole for more effectively emphasising the individual, his provocative words—pushed to  
15 the limits of the inexorable victory of the herd and of the paradoxical impossibility of all that is 'pub-  
16 lic'—offer us a direct testimony of the tragic way of life of the man of his time. This provides us with  
17 an extremely clear and interesting phenomenological cross-section of the social sphere, as well as a  
18 very finely tuned and valuable seismograph for the continual monitoring of our everyday coexist-  
19 ence with and perception of the constantly incumbent dangers of its degeneration.

20 **Keywords:** Nietzsche; ethics; herd morality; mediocrity; public life.

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### 23 1. Introduction

#### 24 *Hostage to other*

25 Nietzsche's view of the public dimension captures the tragic destiny towards which modern man  
26 navigates: swept along by the conformism of public opinion, the individual hides own way of think-  
27 ing and conforms to that of the majority. In the dynamics of cohabitation, in fact, the «tyranny» of  
28 «public opinion» exercises an absolute domain; its omnipotence imposes on the members of society  
29 pre-established and standardizing common opinions and beliefs, thus preventing them from formu-  
30 lating their own. It exerts enormous pressure of the collective spirit over that of the individual and  
31 eradicates the innermost *ego* of the latter: a very dangerous despotism that shapes the minds of men,  
32 annihilating their autonomy and isolating their intelligence (Nietzsche 1972, § 3).

33 Thus sucked into the maelstrom of opinions, man appears to Nietzsche as a 'hostage to others'.  
34 So influenced he is by others that he ends up paying more attention to what 'is said' about him  
35 than to what he really thinks: «his value lies completely in the opinion that his neighbour forms of  
36 him. He learns things as they are in the heads of others, he learns them as others evaluate them».  
37 «Clothed with general convictions and public opinions», without which «most people are nothing  
38 and reputed to be nothing», the individual is dominated by the masses. In this «strict mutual condi-  
39 tioning» everything is done under the psychological violence «of others», either because we fear their  
40 opinion or do everything to «conform to their preferences» and obtain their «approval». In men, «posi-  
41 tive qualities are those that are useful and acceptable to *others*. Their greatest joy is to please others,  
42 their constant fear is of *failing* to please them». They live in the «conviction that, on the waves of the  
43 society, having a good crossing or suffering a shipwreck depends much more on what they *are consid-*  
44 *ered* to be than what they *are*».

45 This psychological subservience quickly affects man's entire existence. The inhabitants of mod-  
 46 ern society are «ghosts formed in the minds of those around them: they all live together in a fog of  
 47 impersonal and semi-personal opinions», in an endless process in which each one «lives constantly in  
 48 the head of another and this head again in other heads».

49 This sort of matryoshka game does not end well, however: personal individuality, continually  
 50 mediated by others and their representations, remains constantly out of reach. «Always thinking of  
 51 their existence in the heads of others», such men «take seriously their effects and not what produces  
 52 these effects: themselves». It is a labyrinth from which they are unable to break free: the same «effects  
 53 are not in their power, but depend on those over whom they wish to wield them». Therefore, «it is no  
 54 wonder that, if someone looks at himself from the point of view of the opinions of others, all he can  
 55 see of himself is... the opinions of others!» (Nietzsche 1971, § 105; Nietzsche 1970, 1 [96], 3 [60]; Nie-  
 56 tzsche 1972, § 7; Nietzsche 1967, § 325; Nietzsche 1967<sup>1</sup>, § 60). Consciousness itself is no longer the  
 57 place of one's deepest and secret intimacy, its voice is no longer «the voice of God within man's  
 58 breast», but rather «the voice of other men in man», the «voice of the herd that continues to resound  
 59 within him» (Nietzsche 1967<sup>1</sup>, § 52; Nietzsche 1968, I, *Vom Wege des Schaffenden*).

## 60 2. The tamed man: herd morality

61 Nietzsche recognises the tragic bewilderment of modern man in the phenomenon of the general-  
 62 isation of existence. The human being becomes *Heerdenmensch* – 'herdman' –, losing and alienating his  
 63 own personality in an anonymous, coercive whole. It is the concept of the herd, therefore, that indi-  
 64 cates the profound and irreversible crisis, which to Nietzsche is underway in the history of  
 65 mankind, especially in the Europe of the second half of the nineteenth century. Man is «numbered  
 66 among the animals» and likened to a herd of sheep. As ancient as the human race, the herd seems to  
 67 be congenital to his nature; indeed, says Nietzsche «for as long as mankind has existed, there  
 68 have also been human herds» (Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 199, 202; Taureck 2008, pp. 195-196; Taureck 2004,  
 69 pp. 135-143; Taureck 1999, pp. 107-108).

70 Nietzsche's criticisms of ethics are sharp and cutting; in no uncertain terms he passes his wither-  
 71 ing judgement, leaving no room for doubt. Thus we read in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

72 «Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality».

73 To Nietzsche the herd is the most fitting symbol of the moral life of modern Europeans, the true  
 74 «herd animals» (Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, §§ 199, 202). In his lexicon, the image of the herd expresses concisely  
 75 and intensely the essence of that *modus vivendi* which, in the late 19th Century, was becoming over-  
 76 whelmingly popular throughout the European continent; 'herd' is a term coined *ad hoc* to identify the  
 77 logic of a massified, mediocre and conformist coexistence (Biuso 1995, p. 158; Goedert 2002, p. 126).  
 78 This «being next to» results in the «levelling out» and «mediocratisation» of human beings, with the  
 79 consequent loss of their specific individuality: «by smoothing away all the harshness and sharpness  
 80 of life mankind is reduced to *sand*». The «moral disguise» hardens into a «social straight jacket» which  
 81 harnesses «the predator animal 'man'» and transforms him into a «*tamed animal*, domesticated and  
 82 civilised»; man thus loses his own characteristics of singularity, unpredictability and possibility, and  
 83 becomes «*calculable, regular, necessary*» (Nietzsche 1968<sup>2</sup>, I, § 11; II, §§1-2; Nietzsche 1971, § 174; Nie-  
 84 tzsche 1973, §§ 352, 365, 369; Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 242; Nietzsche 1984, 7 [21]; Nietzsche 1970, 3 [98]).

85 In the eyes of Nietzsche, morality requires that all individuals maintain the same conduct: «the  
 86 individual conceals himself within society behind the universality of the concept 'man'». Based on  
 87 this abstraction, ethics exerts violence and produces a mystification at the expense of the human per-  
 88 son. In reality, in fact, there is no such thing as general man, there are only particular individuals: the  
 89 «bloodless abstraction which they call 'man'» is nothing but «fiction» (Nietzsche 1971, §§ 26, 105; Colli  
 90 1996, p. 90; Semerari 2000, pp. 21-43). And this universalisation quickly leads to depersonalisation.  
 91 Men are flattened and reduced to members of a herd in which each one is brought down to the level  
 92 of the others, all are on the same level and individual differences are eliminated: the gregarious in-

93 instinct is «the instinct of the *sum of zeroes*». In this «homogenisation», the uniqueness of the individual  
 94 disappears, nullified in the universality of pre-packaged rules and models and absorbed in the con-  
 95 formism of coexistence, which shrivels and drastically reduces his varied possibilities (Nietzsche  
 96 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 242; Nietzsche 1972<sup>1</sup>, 14 [40]; Nietzsche 1970, 6 [158]; Giovanola 2007, pp. 218-224, 229-233,  
 97 242-250; Semerari 2000, pp. 225-229). Where the herd is, human complexity is invariably compro-  
 98 mised.

### 99 3. The herd is everything

100 The Nietzschean analysis of herd morality goes deeper still. In the same passage from *Beyond*  
 101 *Good and Evil*, Nietzsche immediately adds an important emphasis by personifying herd morality as if  
 102 momentarily it were given a voice to announce to all:

103 «I am morality itself and nothing else is morality!».

104 An exclamation that is both concise and caustic, and prompts a twofold reflection. The second  
 105 part of the quotation shows clearly that to Nietzsche the uniformity not only regards men within the  
 106 herd but also influences the relations that herd morality conducts with the various other forms of mo-  
 107 rality that exist in the human world. It is not content to represent «only one type of human morality»,  
 108 to be just one of many, but it craves to obtain a single, absolute character, desiring that all yield to its  
 109 model. Full of resentment and «implacable obstinacy», it dominates with its forceful demands of in-  
 110 divisibility and exclusiveness, «defending itself with all its strength» against the other moralities and  
 111 overpowering them as if «there were not or could not be any other». The pure «possibility» of any  
 112 further grouping of morality – «along with, before and after» it – is immediately suppressed by the  
 113 hypocritical self-esteem of herd morality. This eliminates all obstacles that could block its way and it  
 114 dominates everywhere unchallenged: even «*superior* morality», which was constantly lauded by Nie-  
 115 tzsche, seems to become powerless against it (Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 202; Nietzsche 1974, 37 [8]; Van Ton-  
 116 geren 1989, pp. 70-71; Van Tongeren 2000, pp. 205-214; Giovanola 2007, pp. 222-223).

117 With its «sense of totality» (Nietzsche 1973<sup>1</sup>, 11 [349]), the herd feels the need to grow every-  
 118 where and indefinitely without leaving anything outside it, until it coincides, in the end, with the  
 119 whole. There is nothing left outside the herd: it represents the only way that the modern individual  
 120 can find his own condition of existence, the only place where he can fulfil his own humanity. It is a  
 121 vicious circle with no way out. The gregarious existence becomes the only dimension possible to  
 122 which modern man is condemned by the middle class society to relate to others. It is, therefore, ex-  
 123 tremely difficult, if not impossible, for man to break out of the fine mesh of the herd, as if on the out-  
 124 side it were not even possible for him to survive. It makes no difference what role the human being  
 125 has inside the herd: whether he is a sheep, «dog» or «wolf», or astutely lets himself be «convinced»  
 126 in order to lead the herd through the «role of a shepherd», or again, hypocritically causes himself to  
 127 be chosen with an «expedient» to «represent it» as a «leading-sheep». No «exception» is allowed, all  
 128 are involved in the crushing logic of this totalitarian scenario (Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>, 10 [39]; Nietzsche  
 129 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 199; Nietzsche 1967<sup>2</sup>, § 470; Nietzsche 1968, *Zarathustras Vorrede*, § 9; Biuso 1995, p. 152).

130 All cohabitation is the prerogative of the herd. «The only morality that still makes sense and is  
 131 still heeded is the morality of mediocrity, which says: “Be like them! Become mediocre!”». In a moder-  
 132 nity where «everything is corrupted, nothing remains in place from one day to the next, except for one  
 133 species of man, the incurably *mediocre*». Paradoxically, only these – the «*most mediocre*» – have, ac-  
 134 cording to Nietzsche, a «hope of continuation and self-preservation: they are the men of the future,  
 135 the only ones who will survive and prosper». The «opposite» of Darwin’s natural «selection», with  
 136 «the inevitable victory of the average types», which emarginates the dissidents and forces them to flee  
 137 from cohabitation into isolation.

138 The result of this extreme attempt at totalisation is doubly dramatic for the fact that gregarious  
 139 man will go as far as hypocritically praising his being «tame, sociable and useful to the herd», using  
 140 terms that are as nauseating as they are false, such as «community spirit, benevolence, respect, indus-

141 triousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, compassion». «Boasting about being the only human  
 142 species permitted to exalt its own qualities as authentic human virtues», it forbids any other hu-  
 143 man type from developing and dominating in society; in the «protest of the herd» and «medioc-  
 144 rity, that which is average» is considered «superior». In fact, «mediocrity presents itself as sense and  
 145 as purpose»: it will eventually come to the point, Nietzsche seems to predict, where «the incurably me-  
 146 diocre man will feel that he is the destination and culmination, the meaning of history, a ‘superior man’»  
 147 (Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, §§ 199, 262; Nietzsche 1968<sup>2</sup>, I, § 11; Nietzsche 1972<sup>1</sup>, 14 [123]; Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>, 9 [162];  
 148 Nietzsche 1974<sup>1</sup>, 8 [4]).

#### 149 4. The herd in us: the gregariousness of morality

150 The first part of the abovementioned fragment from *Beyond Good and Evil* allows us to make a  
 151 very important note. In the attempt to suppress all other morality, herd morality passes itself off as  
 152 «morality *per se*» sets itself up as the unchallenged sovereign of modernity. And since it is this very  
 153 morality that becomes the herd, it will no longer be possible to find any alternative to it. Not only is there  
 154 a morality *of* the herd, but morality actually *is* the herd. The logic of the herd has gone as far as infecting  
 155 the very structures of the system: morality has taken on a gregarious conformation.

156 The herd is therefore in morality, it is the very essence of modern morality, «the ground from  
 157 which its own concept arises». The individual appears to no longer exist, to have disappeared; «once  
 158 the ego was concealed within the herd: now it is the herd that is concealed in the ego». In this typical  
 159 inversion of the modern age, not only does the ego merge with the herd but also the herd itself re-  
 160 sides within the individual and suppresses individuality.

161 In Nietzsche’s view, modern man is a veritable living contradiction, because «he lives and acts as a col-  
 162 lective individual». Morality itself is «the herd instinct within the single individual»; its «terrain» is  
 163 developed «when a collective individual, such as, for example, society or the State, subdues single in-  
 164 dividuals, drawing them out of their isolation and organising them into an association», and they in-  
 165 teriorise the logic of the herd. In this morality «the evaluations and hierarchies of human instincts and  
 166 actions are invariably the expression of the needs of a community and a herd: that which *it* considers  
 167 useful is also the supreme standard of value for all the individuals». Going from «*compulsion*» and  
 168 «instinct» to «custom» and finally «free obedience», «morality» teaches the individual to live as a  
 169 herd. «Like everything that becomes habitual and natural», it is then «associated with pleasure», and  
 170 even «called *virtue*». The individual is defeated: «in the things of morality the herd continues to win».

171 And while morality becomes gregarious, the herd becomes moralised. Not only is it *in* morality,  
 172 but it *is* morality. «Herd instincts» rise to the honour of morality and are «venerated under the name  
 173 of morality». Indeed, «the less freely one acts and the more ones actions express the instinct of the  
 174 herd rather than personal discernment, the more moral one is considered to be» (Nietzsche 1973, §§  
 175 116, 117; Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, §§ 191, 201, 202; Nietzsche 1967<sup>2</sup>, §§ 94, 99; Nietzsche 1984, 5 [1] 273; Kim 1995,  
 176 pp. 114-121). Raised to the level of morality, the herd represents the way of life of men in modern so-  
 177 ciety, their common *ethos*. After all, according to Nietzsche is it now impossible to think of any cohabi-  
 178 tation that is not of the gregarious type: the place where man encounters man can only be the herd.

#### 179 5. Everyone in the centre. The praise of mediocrity

180 Through a genealogical exploration, Nietzsche digs into the subsoil of mankind to find the origin  
 181 of the herd instinct and bring to light the reason for which a multitude of people can be defined as a  
 182 ‘herd’ (Biuso 1995, pp. 151-152; Le Bon 2004, pp. 45-46, 49). He identifies an adhesive that binds to-  
 183 gether and coagulates all the components of the herd, giving them mental unity and a structural iden-  
 184 tity that previously did not exist. To the question «what forces the individual to think, act and exist  
 185 socially like a member of a herd?», while in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* he had answered  
 186 «need or boredom» and in the third of his *Untimely Meditations* «adaptability, sloth, tendency to lazy-  
 187 ness» (Nietzsche 1973<sup>2</sup>, § 1; Nietzsche 1972, § 1), in *Genealogy of Morality* he says that the herd origi-  
 188 nates by organising itself around the «instinct of weakness». It is the weak, in fact, who are urged,

189 almost by nature, to «gather together». «All the sick and sickly instinctively strive after a herd organisa-  
190 tion as a means of shaking off their dull displeasure and feeling of weakness».

191 «Gratifying themselves» in the «worship of security» – the modern «supreme divinity» guaranteed  
192 by the «herd organisation» –, in their gathering together the herd men activate a twofold mechanism.  
193 On one hand they overcome their fears and their loneliness – «Fear ceases in the midst; here one is  
194 never alone» –, while on the other they dissolve all interhuman differences that may cause frictions  
195 and live more peacefully, comfortably and happily: «here there is little room for misunderstandings;  
196 here there is equality; here a man's individual existence is not felt as a reproach, but as the *right* exist-  
197 ence; here contentment reigns supreme». This reassuring aggregation is the ideal habitat for the herd  
198 man, who loves tradition and «accepts» things out of «habit», but fears all things diverse and new  
199 that «reason» would force upon him.

200 Nurturing a suspicious aversion towards those who do not belong to the herd, the modern  
201 'mass-man' grows comfortably settled into uniformity and absolute stability and, shielded from all  
202 uncertainty, ambiguity and risk, does not feel any need to leave this state of «ovine mediocrity». With  
203 the collaboration of his fellows, he pursues «life's comforts and ease», embarking on the «task of elim-  
204 inating with all his strength every kind of *danger* that life holds»; he regards as «good» only those «ac-  
205 tions that pursue the goal of common safety and sense of security within the society» (Nietzsche  
206 1968<sup>2</sup>, III, § 18; Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>, 10 [39], 10 [80]; Nietzsche 1974, 34 [176]; Nietzsche 1971, §§ 173, 174;  
207 Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 201; Nietzsche 1967<sup>2</sup>, § 226; Ortega y Gasset 1962, pp. 7-8, 41; Abou El Magd 1996,  
208 pp. 86-90).

209 In this mediocrity (as is suggested by the root of the German word *Mittelmäßigkeit*), «the herd in-  
210 stinct considers the *centre* (*die Mitte*) and what lies *in the midst* (*das Mittlere*) – the point at which the  
211 majority is found – as the highest and most valuable thing». Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, to  
212 define this mediocrity as «*man-oriented*» or an «Aristotelian virtue» would definitely be a mistake:  
213 «though it is called moderation (*Mässigkeit*), it is *mediocrity* (*Mittelmässigkeit*)». As we can see by com-  
214 paring with the German text, this 'being in the centre' represents the discrimination between an opti-  
215 mal moderation and a more faded mediocrity. Modern «*mediocritas*» has nothing to do with Horace's  
216 *aurea mediocritas*, much less with Aristotle's *habitus virtuoso*: «it is not halfway between two flaws, there-  
217 fore, but between a virtue and a flaw». «In this midst are found *all* the qualities» of the modern herd  
218 men, which «are modest also in virtue, – because they want to live comfortably». «Smugly», they re-  
219 fuse the extremes both of the excellence of a heroic deed and the baseness of an animal life, and, pre-  
220 ferring to remain sedated in the warmth of this middle way, they say:

221 «We set our chair in the *midst*, as far from dying gladiators as from satisfied pigs»  
222 (Nietzsche 1968, III, *Von der verkleinernden Tugend*, § 2; Nietzsche 1972<sup>2</sup>, § 8; Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>,  
223 10 [39], 10 [98]; AA.VV. 2009, p. 230).

## 224 6. Collective lies. The fear of the individual

225 Nietzsche seeks to delve deeper still. The herd is a superstructure, which arises from a terrible  
226 mystification, because the instincts of weakness that gives the members of the herd a sense of unity and iden-  
227 tity is the product of the deceit that lies at its roots. The spark that leads to the formation of the collec-  
228 tive consciousness that takes the name of 'herd' is the «fear of all individual reality». Nietzsche  
229 speaks very clearly: «the *individuum*» represents «the danger of dangers». «Feeling individual, being  
230 alone, having an individual sensitivity, having significance as individuals»: all this is perceived as  
231 something incredibly «fearsome», and this fear finds expression even in the hypocritical «praise of  
232 useful impersonal actions».

233 On the other hand, «the moral perspective» of modernity is that there be «little danger to the  
234 community». In a logic in which «public usefulness» is synonymous with «usefulness to the herd»  
235 and where «only the preservation of the community is kept in view», «the loftiest and strongest in-  
236 stincts are perceived as dangerous, deviant, repressed». They are «branded and defamed» because  
237 they «carry the individual so far above and beyond the average, and the low level of the gregarious

238 consciousness», that the «self-reliance of the community is destroyed, its belief in itself, its backbone,  
239 as it were, breaks». Consequently, independent and autonomous individuals are perceived as «im-  
240 moral» and «bad», as well as «dangerous» and harmful to the common economy and the «existence of  
241 the community». This sentiment is so deep-rooted that «*they themselves believe they are so*» (Nietzsche  
242 1971, §§ 9, 173, 174; Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 201).

243 According to Nietzsche, from fear to guilt the road is very short. The individual is not origi-  
244 nal, but always arrives later: «older is the pleasure in the herd than the pleasure in the ego». And  
245 since the individual is «harmful to the herd», «to the origins» of the process of social evolution and to  
246 the «instinct», the «*primum mobile*» of morality, «being oneself offends 'good taste' and appears ab-  
247 surd and mad», even going so far as to provoke a «guilty conscience». Individuality is perceived as  
248 «punishment»: «being individual» not only «is not pleasurable», but also it is actually «a sentence».  
249 «Freedom of thought», «originality» and «free will» create «unease» and «have in their most imme-  
250 diate vicinity a bad conscience». Consumed by resentment, modern man «hides like a bad con-  
251 science» the fact that he is «*unicum*». «And as long as the good conscience is identified with the herd,  
252 only the bad conscience says: I» (Nietzsche 1973, § 117; Nietzsche 1971, §§ 9, 173; Nietzsche 1972, § 1;  
253 Nietzsche 1968, I, *Von tausend und Einem Ziele*; Nietzsche 1984, 3 [1] 255, Nietzsche 2011, 4. Januar.  
254 1888).

## 255 7. Conclusions

### 256 *The herd or nothing. The ultimatum of modern society*

257 In a passage from the third of his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche succeeds in condensing into a  
258 few lines the essence of herd logic. Within the mechanisms that regulate gregarious cohabitation, the  
259 autonomy of the human being is condemned in the name of a levelling heteronomy, from whose log-  
260 ic the individual cannot escape. Either he conforms completely and acritically to the community, dis-  
261 appearing in its midst, or else, if he chooses to think with his own head and act independently, thus  
262 raising himself above the anonymous mass, he is perceived as bad and shunned as dangerous. In fact,  
263 even he learns to regard himself as such: in an undifferentiated society made up of «one single herd  
264 where all are equal and want the same things, whoever feels differently goes willingly to the mental  
265 asylum» (Nietzsche 1968, *Zarathustras Vorrede*, § 5; Giovanola 2002, p. 108; Giovanola 2007, pp. 233-  
266 237).

267 Nietzsche places «the individual at a crossroads. If he takes the first, easier and safer, road he  
268 will be welcomed by his time: powerful parties will support him, behind him and before him he  
269 will have equally many companions of his ideas and when the first in line gives the word it echoes  
270 right down the lines». At the same time, this flat, comfortable existence is ostensibly gilded. The indi-  
271 vidual is even rewarded for his conformism; the herd – within which it is actually «virtuous to be ze-  
272 ro» – will indulge his every desire. With «enticing» fabrications, it will invite him to follow and re-  
273 main within it, treating him as a «master» while camouflaging the «chains» of enslavement behind  
274 the illusion of «enjoying his free personality». Inciting him and hypocritically gratifying him with the  
275 conventional «commending applause of the audience», it will courteously accommodate him «in the  
276 front rows» and «and freely bestow on him crowns and rewards» (Nietzsche 1972, § 6; Nietzsche  
277 1973<sup>3</sup>, IV; Nietzsche 1972<sup>1</sup>, 14 [40]; Nietzsche 1973<sup>4</sup>).

278 If modern man, therefore, wishes to «have an easy life» all he has to do is «stay with the herd  
279 and forget himself for its sake» (Nietzsche 1984, 4 [38]). Since the idea of breaking away from the herd  
280 and going «against the customs of society» involves the «fear of standing out» and the «*dread* of isola-  
281 tion» he is better off remaining nice and comfortable within the enclosure. What this man «strives for  
282 with all his strength is 'usefulness to the community' and the 'happiness of the greater number' – the  
283 universal, evergreen pasture-happiness of the herds, with its security, comfort, absence of danger,  
284 fashion, 'general well-being' and lightening of life for each one; to him, pain itself is something to be  
285 *eliminated*» (Nietzsche 1970, 1 [96]; Nietzsche 1973, § 50; Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, §§ 44, 228).

286 The second way proposed by Nietzsche, on the other hand, «is more difficult, tortuous, steep».  
 287 Following «laboriously» this path – «alone» or «with an occasional travel companion», the individu-  
 288 al «will frequently find himself in danger». In fact, the consciousness of the herd grows in direct pro-  
 289 portion to its repulsion towards the individual: «the more firmly the herd becomes conscious of itself,  
 290 the stronger is its *aversion towards that which lies outside it*». The mottoes of the members of the herd  
 291 are «'fight aligned'» and «treat all those who do not want to align themselves as enemies». Inspired  
 292 by these two mottoes, «the enormous crowd» exercises overwhelming pressure over «all the solitary  
 293 rebels», leaving them no way of escape: either they are «drawn to it» and easily incorporated into its  
 294 impersonal logic, or, if they put up resistance, they are «banished and excluded». Those who do not  
 295 wish to blend with the masses and try to differentiate themselves are actually «mistreated, tossed  
 296 aside or isolated with sickened disgust» (Nietzsche 1972, § 6; Nietzsche 1984, 8 [9]).

297 The herd «sees all *exception* with diffidence, as something hostile and harmful». Those who  
 298 stand out and are not part of the herd are frowned upon, their distinction is regarded with fear: «eve-  
 299 ry individual way of thinking causes it to tremble». For this reason, the herd has developed a logic of  
 300 resentment and vengeance against everything that goes against the rules and beyond the mass.  
 301 «Those who want to be *seen* to be autonomous and independent, to fight for their own opinions, who  
 302 distance themselves from the public opinions and set themselves apart, who consider men as herd  
 303 and flee from them as fast as they can will always have the entire herd against them: and there is no  
 304 doubt that they will eventually be caught and battered» (Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>, 10 [39]; Nietzsche 1971, § 9;  
 305 Nietzsche 1967, § 233; Nietzsche 1973, § 174).

306 This violence, which is not only physical but also verbal and psychological, gives rise to a pro-  
 307 found transvaluation of human values. «Everything that elevates an individual above the herd and  
 308 intimidates his neighbour is henceforth called evil; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming men-  
 309 tality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honours». «Being different» is actually  
 310 «considered a fault»; in fact, «the instinct of the sense of community rests on the evaluation that on  
 311 their own individuals are generally of little importance, while all together they are very important,  
 312 on condition that they form a community, with a collective feeling and a collective consciousness»  
 313 (Nietzsche 1974<sup>1</sup>, 7 [6]; Nietzsche 1970<sup>1</sup>, 10 [39]; Nietzsche 1968<sup>1</sup>, § 201).

314 When he attempts to delineate the second way, the apparently more 'positive' path of the indi-  
 315 vidual, Nietzsche again seems to dwell on the negative and conforming aspects of the mass. He ap-  
 316 pears almost disconsolate, as if he were somehow already convinced that, in modern society, it will be  
 317 always and only the herd that wins. In the first case, by assimilating the individual and pleasing him  
 318 with hypocritical guarantees, and in the second by preventing him from dissenting and forcefully re-  
 319 pressing every attempt to separate himself. The mass, in fact, overwhelms absolutely everything that  
 320 is different and individual. And, as Ortega y Gasset says, «anybody who is not like everybody, who  
 321 does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated» (Ortega y Gasset 1962, p. 12).

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