

HERD MORALITY. NIETZSCHE AND THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF HUMAN LIFE

Moral de rebanho: Nietzsche e a dimensão pública da vida humana

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Paolo Scolari
Universidade Católica de Milão

ABSTRACT

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

Keywords: Nietzsche; Ethics; Herd Morality; Mediocrity; Public Life.

RESUMO

Nietzsche é quase sempre considerado como um dos pensadores que defendem o individualismo extremo, totalmente indiferente ou exclusivamente polêmico em relação à dimensão pública humana. Embora isso seja muito difícil de contradizer, se lermos seus textos com cuidado, podemos ver como sua celebração constante do indivíduo corre paralela a uma consciência aguda de viver em uma nova era, que ele definiu como 'o século da multidão e das massas'. O rebanho, o conformismo, a mediocridade, a opinião pública: uma civilização em que as comunidades tentam sufocar toda a inspiração individual e, portanto, parece remar na direção oposta. Embora Nietzsche frequentemente use a vida coletiva como um mero polo negativo para enfatizar mais efetivamente o indivíduo, suas palavras provocativas – empurradas para os limites da vitória inexorável do rebanho e da impossibilidade paradoxal de tudo o que é "público" – nos oferecem um testemunho direto do modo trágico de vida do homem de seu tempo. Isso nos fornece um recorte transversal fenomenológico extremamente claro e interessante da esfera social, bem como um sismógrafo muito afinado e valioso para o monitoramento contínuo de nossa coexistência cotidiana bem como uma percepção dos perigos que constantemente incumbem sua degeneração.

Palavras-chave: Nietzsche; Ética; Moral de rebanho; Mediocridade; Vida pública.

RESUMEN

Nietzsche es casi siempre considerado como uno de los pensadores que defiende el individualismo extremo, totalmente indiferente o exclusivamente polémico en relación a la dimensión pública humana. Aunque esto es muy difícil de contradecir, si leemos sus textos con cuidado, podemos ver como su celebración constante del individuo corre paralela a una conciencia aguda de vivir en una nueva era, que él definió como 'el siglo de la multitud y de las masas'. El rebaño, el conformismo, la mediocridad, la opinión pública: una civilización en la que las comunidades intentan sofocar toda la inspiración individual y, por lo tanto, parece remar en la dirección opuesta. Aunque Nietzsche frecuentemente utiliza la vida colectiva como un mero polo negativo para enfatizar más efectivamente el individuo, sus palabras provocativas empujadas hacia los límites de la victoria inexorable del rebaño y de la imposibilidad absoluta de todo lo que es "público" testimonio directo del modo trágico de vida del hombre de su tiempo. Esto nos proporciona un recorte transversal fenomenológico extremadamente claro e interesante de la esfera social, así como un sismógrafo muy afinado y valioso para el monitoreo continuo de nuestra coexistencia cotidiana así como una percepción de los peligros que constantemente incumben a su degeneración.

Palabras clave: Nietzsche; la ética; Moral de rebaño; la mediocridad; Vida pública.

INTRODUCTION

HOSTAGE TO OTHER

Nietzsche's view of the public dimension captures the tragic destiny towards which modern man navigates:

swept along by the conformism of public opinion, the individual hides own way of thinking and conforms to that of the majority. In the dynamics of cohabitation, in fact, the «tyranny» of «public opinion» exercises an absolute domain; its omnipotence imposes on the members of society pre-established and standardizing common opinions and beliefs, thus preventing them from formulating their own. It exerts enormous pressure of the collective spirit over that of the individual and eradicates the innermost *ego* of the latter: a very dangerous despotism that shapes the minds of men, annihilating their autonomy and isolating their intelligence (Nietzsche 1972, § 3).

Thus sucked into the maelstrom of opinions, man appears to Nietzsche as a 'hostage to others'. So influenced he is by others that he ends up paying more attention to what 'is said' about him than to what he really thinks: «his value lies completely in the opinion that his neighbour forms of him. He learns things as they are in the heads of others, he

learns them as others evaluate them». «Clothed with general convictions and public opinions», without which «most people are nothing and reputed to be nothing», the individual is dominated by the masses. In this «strict mutual conditioning» everything is done under the psychological violence «of others», either because we fear their opinion or do everything to «conform to their preferences» and obtain their «approval». In men, «positive qualities are those that are useful and acceptable to *others*. Their greatest joy is to please others, their constant fear is of *failing* to please them». They live in the «conviction that, on the waves of the society, having a good crossing or suffering a shipwreck depends much more on what they *are considered* to be than what they *are*».

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

This sort of matryoshka game does not end well, however: personal individuality, continually mediated by others and their representations, remains constantly out of reach.

«Always thinking of their existence in the heads of others», such men «take seriously their effects and not what produces these effects: themselves». It is a labyrinth from which they are unable to break free: the same «effects are not in their power, but depend on those over whom they wish to wield them». Therefore, «it is no wonder that, if someone looks at himself from the point of view of the opinions of others, all he can see of himself is... the opinions of others!» (Nietzsche 1971, § 105; Nietzsche 1970, 1 [96], 3 [60]; Nietzsche 1972, § 7; Nietzsche 1967, § 325; Nietzsche 1967¹, § 60).

Consciousness itself is no longer the place of one's deepest and secret intimacy, its voice is no longer «the voice of God within man's breast», but rather «the voice of other men in man», the «voice of the herd that continues to resound within him» (Nietzsche 1967¹, § 52; Nietzsche 1968, I, *Vom Wege des Schaffenden*).

THE TAMED MAN: HERD MORALITY

Nietzsche recognises the tragic bewilderment of modern man in the phenomenon of the generalisation of existence. The human being becomes *Heerdenmensch* – 'herdman' – , losing and alienating his own personality in an anonymous, coercive whole. It is the concept of the herd, therefore, that indicates the profound and irreversible crisis, which to Nietzsche is underway in the history of mankind, especially in the Europe of the second half of the nineteenth century. Man is «numbered among the animals» and likened to a herd of sheep. As ancient as the human race, the herd seems to be congenital to his nature; indeed, says Nietzsche «for as long as mankind has existed, there have also been human herds» (Nie-

tzsche 1968¹, § 199, 202; Taureck 2008, pp. 195-196; Taureck 2004, pp. 135-143; Taureck 1999, pp. 107-108).

Nietzsche's criticisms of ethics are sharp and cutting; in no uncertain terms he passes his withering judgement, leaving no room for doubt. Thus we read in *Beyond Good and Evil*: «*Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality*».

To Nietzsche the herd is the most fitting symbol of the moral life of modern Europeans, the true «herd animals» (Nietzsche 1968¹, §§ 199, 202). In his lexicon, the image of the herd expresses concisely and intensely the essence of that *modus vivendi* which, in the late 19th Century, was becoming overwhelmingly popular throughout the European continent; 'herd' is a term coined *ad hoc* to identify the logic of a massified, mediocre and conformist coexistence (Biuso 1995, p. 158; Goedert 2002, p. 126). This

«*being next to*» results in the «*levelling out*» and «*mediocritisation*» of human beings, with the consequent loss of their specific individuality: «*by smoothing away all the harshness and sharpness of life mankind is reduced to sand*». The «*moral disguise*» hardens into a «*social straight jacket*» which harnesses «*the predator animal 'man'*» and transforms him into a «*tamed animal, domesticated and civilised*»; man thus loses his own characteristics of singularity, unpredictability and possibility, and becomes «*calculable, regular, necessary*» (Nietzsche 1968², I, § 11; II, §§1-2; Nietzsche 1971, § 174; Nietzsche 1973, §§ 352, 365, 369; Nietzsche 1968¹, § 242; Nietzsche 1984, 7 [21]; Nietzsche 1970, 3 [98]).

In the eyes of Nietzsche, morality requires that all individuals maintain the same conduct: «*the individual conceals himself within society behind the universality of the concept 'man'*». Based on this abstraction, ethics exerts violence and produces a mystification at the expense of the human person. In reality, in fact, there is no such thing as general man, there are only particular individuals: the «*bloodless abstraction which they call 'man'*» is nothing but «*fiction*» (Nietzsche 1971, §§ 26, 105; Colli 1996, p. 90; Semerari 2000, pp. 21-43). And this universalisation quickly leads to depersonalisation. Men are flattened and reduced to members of a herd in which each one is brought down to the level of the others, all are on the same level and individual differences are eliminated: the gregarious instinct is «*the instinct of the sum of zeroes*». In this «*homogenisation*», the uniqueness of the individual disappears, nullified in the universality of pre-packaged rules and models and absorbed in the conformism of coexistence, which shrivels and drastically reduces his varied possibilities (Nietzsche 1968¹, § 242; Nietzsche 1972¹, 14 [40]; Nietzsche 1970, 6 [158]; Giovanola 2007, pp. 218-224, 229-233, 242-250; Semerari 2000, pp. 225-229). Where the herd is, human complexity is invariably compromised.

THE HERD IS EVERYTHING

The Nietzschean analysis of herd morality goes deeper still. In the same passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche immediately adds an important emphasis by personifying herd morality as if momentarily it were given a voice to announce to all: «I am morality itself and nothing else is morality!».

An exclamation that is both concise and caustic, and prompts a twofold reflection. The second part of the quotation shows clearly that to Nietzsche the uniformity not only regards men within the herd but also influences the relations that herd morality conducts with the various other forms of morality that exist in the human world. It is not content to represent

«only one type of human morality», to be just one of many, but it craves to obtain a single, absolute character, desiring that all yield to its model. Full of resentment and «implacable obstinacy», it dominates with its forceful demands of indivisibility and exclusiveness, «defending itself with all its strength» against the other moralities and overpowering them as if «there were not or could not be any other». The pure «possibility» of any further grouping of morality – «along with, before and after» it – is immediately suppressed by the hypocritical self-esteem of herd morality. This eliminates all obstacles that could block its way and it dominates everywhere unchallenged: even «superior morality», which was constantly lauded by Nietzsche, seems to become powerless against it (Nietzsche 1968¹, § 202; Nietzsche 1974, 37 [8]; Van Tongeren 1989, pp. 70-71; Van Tongeren 2000, pp. 205-214; Giovanola 2007, pp. 222-223).

With its «sense of totality» (Nietzsche 1973¹, 11 [349]), the herd feels the need to grow everywhere and indefinitely without leaving anything outside it, until it coincides, in the end, with the whole. There is nothing left outside the herd: it represents the only way that the modern individual can find his own condition of existence, the only place where he can fulfil his own humanity. It is a vicious circle with no way out. The gregarious existence becomes the only dimension possible to which modern man is condemned by the middle class society to relate to others. It is, therefore, extremely difficult, if not impossible, for man to break out of the fine mesh of the herd, as if on the outside it were not even possible for him to survive. It makes no difference what role the human being has inside the herd:

whether he is a sheep, «dog» or «wolf», or astutely lets himself be «convinced» in order to lead the herd through the «role of a shepherd», or again, hypocritically causes himself to be chosen with an «expedient» to «represent it» as a «leading-sheep». No «exception» is allowed, all are involved in the crushing logic of this totalitarian scenario (Nietzsche 1970¹, 10 [39]; Nietzsche 1968¹, § 199; Nietzsche 1967², § 470; Nietzsche 1968, *Zarathustras Vorrede*, § 9; Biuso 1995, p. 152).

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

The result of this extreme attempt at totalisation is doubly dramatic for the fact that gregarious man will go as far as hypocritically praising his being «tame, sociable and useful to the herd», using terms that are as nauseating as they are false, such as «community spirit, benevolence, respect, industriousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, compassion». «Boasting about being the only human species permitted to exalt its own qualities as authentic human virtues», it forbids any other human type from developing and dominating in society; in the «protest of the herd» and «mediocrity, that which is average» is considered «superior». In fact, «mediocrity presents itself as sense and as purpose»: it will eventually come to the point, Nietzsche seems to predict, where «the incurably mediocre man will feel that he is the destination and culmination, the meaning of history, a ‘superior man’» (Nietzsche 1968¹, §§ 199, 262; Nietzsche 1968², I, § 11; Nietzsche 1972¹, 14 [123]; Nietzsche 1970¹, 9 [162]; Nietzsche 1974¹, 8 [4]).

THE HERD IN US: THE GREGARIOUSNESS OF MORALITY

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

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

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

And while morality becomes gregarious, the herd becomes moralised. Not only is it *in* morality, but it *is* morality. «Herd instincts» rise to the honour of morality and are «venerated under the name of morality». Indeed, «the less freely one acts and the more ones actions express the instinct of the herd rather than personal discernment, the more moral one is considered to be» (Nietzsche 1973, §§ 116, 117; Nietzsche 1968¹, §§ 191, 201, 202; Nietzsche 1967², §§ 94, 99; Nietzsche 1984, 5 [1] 273; Kim 1995, pp. 114-121). Raised to the level of morality, the herd represents the way of life of men in modern society, their common ethos. After all, according to Nietzsche is it now impossible to think of any cohabitation that is not of the gregarious type: the place where man encounters man can only be the herd.

EVERYONE IN THE CENTRE. THE PRAISE OF MEDIOCRITY

Through a genealogical exploration, Nietzsche digs into the subsoil of mankind to find the origin of the herd instinct and bring to light the reason for which a multitude of people can be defined as a 'herd' (Biuso 1995, pp. 151-152; Le Bon 2004, pp. 45-46, 49). He identifies an adhesive that binds together and coagulates all the components of the herd, giving them mental unity and a structural identity that previously did not exist. To the question «what forces the individual to think, act and exist socially like a member of a herd?», while in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* he had answered «need or boredom» and in the third of his *Untimely Meditations* «adaptability, sloth, tendency to laziness» (Nietzsche 1973², § 1; Nietzsche 1972, § 1), in *Genealogy of Morality* he says that the herd originates by organising itself around the «instinct of weakness». It is the weak, in fact, who are urged, almost by nature, to «gather together». «All the sick and sickly instinctively strive after a herd organisation as a means of shaking off their dull displeasure and feeling of weakness».

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

Nurturing a suspicious aversion towards those who do not belong to the herd, the modern 'mass-man' grows comfortably settled into uniformity and absolute stability and, shielded from all uncertainty, ambiguity and risk, does not feel any need to leave this state of «ovine mediocrity». With the collaboration of his fellows, he pursues «life's comforts and ease», embarking on the «task of eliminating with all his strength every kind of *danger* that life holds»; he regards as «good» only those «actions that pursue the goal of common safety and sense of security within the society» (Nietzsche 1968², III, § 18; Nietzsche 1970¹, 10 [39], 10 [80]; Nietzsche 1974, 34 [176]; Nietzsche 1971, §§ 173, 174; Nietzsche 1968¹, § 201; Nietzsche 1967², § 226; Ortega y Gasset 1962, pp. 7-8, 41; Abou El Magd 1996, pp. 86-90).

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

«We set our chair in the *midst*, as far from dying gladiators as from satisfied pigs» (Nietzsche 1968, III, *Von der verkleinernden Tu-*

gend, § 2; Nietzsche 1972², § 8; Nietzsche 1970¹, 10 [39], 10 [98]; AA.VV. 2009, p. 230).

COLLECTIVE LIES. THE FEAR OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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

On the other hand, «the moral perspective» of modernity is that there be «little danger to the community». In a logic in which «public usefulness» is synonymous with «usefulness to the herd» and where «only the preservation of the community is kept in view», «the loftiest and strongest instincts are perceived as dangerous, deviant, repressed». They are «branded and defamed» because they «carry the individual so far above and beyond the average, and the low level of the gregarious consciousness», that the «self-reliance of the community is destroyed, its belief in itself, its backbone, as it were, breaks». Consequently, independent and autonomous individuals are perceived as «immoral» and «bad», as well as «dangerous» and harmful to the common economy and the «existence of the community». This sentiment is so deep-rooted that «*they themselves believe they are so*» (Nietzsche 1971, §§ 9, 173, 174; Nietzsche 1968¹, § 201).

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

CONCLUSIONS

The herd or nothing. The ultimatum of modern society.

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

Nietzsche places «the individual at a crossroads. If he takes the first, easier and safer, road he will be welcomed by his time: powerful parties will support him, behind him and before him he will have equally many companions of his ideas and when the first in line gives the word it echoes right down the lines». At the same time, this flat, comfortable existence is ostensibly gilded. The individual is even rewarded for his conformism; the herd – within which it is actually «virtuous to be zero» – will indulge his every desire. With «enticing» fabrications, it will invite him to follow and remain within it, treating him as a «master» while camouflaging the «chains» of enslavement behind the illusion of «enjoying his free personality». Inciting him and hypocritically gratifying him with the conventional «commending applause of the audience», it will courteously accommodate him «in the front rows» and «and freely bestow on him crowns and rewards» (Nietzsche 1972, § 6; Nietzsche 1973³, IV; Nietzsche 1972¹, 14 [40]; Nietzsche 1973⁴).

If modern man, therefore, wishes to «have an easy life» all he has to do is «stay with the herd and forget himself for its sake» (Nietzsche 1984, 4 [38]). Since the idea of breaking away from the herd and going «against the customs of society» involves the «fear of standing out» and the «*dread* of isolation» he is better off remaining nice and comfortable within the enclosure. What this man «strives for with all his strength is ‘usefulness to the community’ and the ‘happiness of the greater number’ – the universal, evergreen pasture-happiness of the herds, with its security, comfort, absence of danger, fashion, ‘general well-being’ and lightening of life for each one; to him, pain itself is something to be *eliminated*» (Nietzsche 1970, 1 [96]; Nietzsche 1973, § 50; Nietzsche 19681, §§ 44, 228).

The second way proposed by Nietzsche, on the other hand, «is more difficult, tortuous, steep». Following «laboriously» this path – «alone» or «with an occasional travel

companion», the individual «will frequently find himself in danger». In fact, the consciousness of the herd grows in direct proportion to its repulsion towards the individual: «the more firmly the herd becomes conscious of itself, the stronger is its *aversion towards that which lies outside it*». The mottoes of the members of the herd are «'fight aligned'» and «treat all those who do not want to align themselves as enemies». Inspired by these two mottoes, «the enormous crowd» exercises overwhelming pressure over «all the solitary rebels», leaving them no way of escape: either they are «drawn to it» and easily incorporated into its impersonal logic, or, if they put up resistance, they are «banished and excluded». Those who do not wish to blend with the masses and try to differentiate themselves are actually «mistreated, tossed aside or isolated with sickened disgust» (Nietzsche 1972, § 6; Nietzsche 1984, 8 [9]).

The herd «sees all *exception* with diffidence, as something hostile and harmful». Those who stand out and are not part of the herd are frowned upon, their distinction is regarded with fear: «every individual way of thinking causes it to tremble». For this reason, the herd has developed a logic of resentment and vengeance against everything that goes against the rules and beyond the mass. «Those who want to be *seen* to be autonomous and independent, to fight for their own opinions, who distance themselves from the public opinions and set themselves apart, who consider men as herd and flee from them as fast as they can will always have the entire herd against them: and there is no doubt that they will eventually be caught and battered» (Nietzsche 1970¹, 10 [39]; Nietzsche 1971, § 9; Nietzsche 1967, § 233; Nietzsche 1973, § 174).

This violence, which is not only physical but also verbal and psychological, gives rise to a profound transvaluation of human values. «Everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates his neighbour is henceforth called evil; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honours». «Being different» is actually «considered a fault»; in fact, «the instinct of the sense of community rests on the evaluation that on their own individuals are generally of little importance, while all together they are very important, on condition that they form a community, with a collective feeling and a collective consciousness» (Nietzsche 1974¹, 7 [6]; Nietzsche 1970¹, 10 [39]; Nietzsche 1968¹, § 201).

When he attempts to delineate the second way, the apparently more 'positive' path of the individual, Nietzsche again seems to dwell on the negative and conforming aspects of the mass. He appears almost disconsolate, as if he were somehow already convinced that, in modern society, it will be always and only the herd that wins. In the first case, by assimilating the individual and pleasing him with hypocritical guarantees, and in the second by preventing him from dissenting and forcefully repressing every attempt to separate himself. The mass, in fact, overwhelms absolutely everything that is different and individual.

And, as Ortega y Gasset says, «anybody who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated» (Ortega y Gasset 1962, p. 12).

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Notas sobre o autor:

Paolo Scolari. Doutor em Filosofia pela Università "Carlo Bo" di Urbino (2011). Possui Licenciatura em Filo-sofia pela Università Cattolica di Milano (2008). Publicou Nietzsche. Fenomenologo del quoti-diano (2013), uma antologia sobre Nietzsche (Astenersi dai giornali, 2015), e vários artigos em revistas especializadas. É professor assistente na Università Cattolica di Milano, na qual diri-ge seminários sobre Nietzsche. Além disso, atua no magistério em escolas de ensino médio, nas áreas de Filosofia e História. Contato: scolari_paolo@libero.it.

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