

Towards a genealogy of online hate: contagion, viralization and resentment¹

Por uma genealogia do ódio online: contágio, viralização e ressentimento

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ABSTRACT

The dissemination of hate in social media is investigated with special emphasis on its functioning mechanisms. The concepts of contagion and resentment are studied through the works of Gabriel Tarde and Nietzsche. Tarde conceives the suggestibility of beliefs and desires (imitation) as the driving force of the socius production. Viralization becomes a vector of production of unstable homogeneities, under the mobile background of differences. Nietzsche dissects the logic of operation of resentment, and highlights the invention of dichotomic relations ruled by negativity which generates moral values as well as *we* and *other* polarizations. The analysis of the molecular plane is privileged, in a politics of affects.

Keywords: Social media, hate, contagion

RESUMO

Investiga-se, em perspectiva filosófica, o fenômeno da disseminação de ódio nas redes sociais, com ênfase em seus mecanismos de funcionamento. São convocados os conceitos de contágio e ressentimento na esteira de Gabriel Tarde e Friedrich Nietzsche. Tarde concebe a sugestibilidade de crenças e desejos (imitação) como força motriz de produção do socius. A viralização torna-se vetor de produção de homogeneidades instáveis, sob fundo móvel de diferenças. Nietzsche disseca a lógica de operação do ressentimento, enfatizando a invenção de relações dicotômicas regidas pela negatividade, criando tanto valores morais quanto a polarização nós e outros. Privilegia-se, assim, a análise do plano molecular em uma política dos afetos.

Palavras-chave: Redes sociais, ódio, contágio

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TOWARDS A SINTOMATOLOGY OF ONLINE HATE

NOWADAYS, VARIOUS PHENOMENA invite us to reflect on the relations between ethics, politics, communication and sociability. Symptoms from distinct sociocultural sectors point to the conformation of a kind of contemporary *culture of hate*. One could imagine that the euphoria of a few years ago about the new democratic potentialities of internet has given rise to a prudent distrust of the vulnerabilities to which we are frequently exposed in times of hyperconnectivity. The daily outbreak of cases of intolerance, racism and all kinds of discrimination gains in social networks an ominous visibility and a still more worrying intensification.

A survey by the *Comunica Que Muda* (CQM) group has monitored for three months ten types of intolerance in social networks in Brazil, among them racism, misogyny, homophobia, physical appearance discrimination and class prejudice. A total of 542,781 mentions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, comments on websites, blogs, etc. have been evaluated. The percentage of violent approaches in the messages collected around the ten subjects surveyed was higher than 84%. Another poll done by a different research group found that there would now be more than 200,000 Nazi sympathizers in Brazil. The criteria employed to establish this classification concerned the downloads of more than 100 materials related to such topics as eugenics, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in a period of one year (Bernardo, 2017, pp. 37-8). If the power of networks had been celebrated in relevant political events of the last two decades, such as the Arab Spring, *Occupy Wall Street*, the Brazilian manifestations in 2013, an upsurge in the dissemination of hatred and intolerance of all kinds was also observed.

In the field of arts, an interesting work by the collective artist Garapa, of Rio de Janeiro, gathered videos of lynchings, posted on YouTube, accompanied by aggressive comments. They aesthetically reorganized this material in the form of a manifesto called *Postcards for Charles Lynch* (Coletivo Garapa, 2016). The aesthetic treatment (application of filters, clipping and collage of random words originating from hate speech) seems to have aimed to detach the images from their original contexts of barbarism. Through this procedure, they stress and reveal the terrible scenario in which those images were born, evidently without consenting or reproducing the violence of the lynching acts (Coletivo Garapa, 2016). The very reference to the historical figure of Charles Lynch in the title and its postal addressing emphasizes the critical bias of the work. Using this dislocation, the work brings to mind the historicity of this phenomenon, implicitly denaturalizing it.

In the scope of pop culture, the intriguing episode of the British series *Black Mirror* called *Hated in the Nation* summons and highlights the discussion concerning the relations among ethics, social contagion and digital technologies

of communication. The production uses strong hues to paint a dystopian picture that results strangely familiar to us. Indeed, this is the ambiguous sense that Freud (1919) had already pointed out in the German term *Umheimliche*, at the same time familiar and disturbing, disquieting. In the episode an almost inexplicable death sequence is connected to a supposedly harmless social-networking viral game. This game, using the hashtag *#DeathTo*, elects people who deserve to be killed because of attitudes considered to be condemnable by internauts. A police investigation team discovers then the relation between the actual deaths and the action of an activist hacker who invaded a government-funded project (*Granular Project*). This project had the initial purpose of spreading bee-drones (ADI – *Autonomous Drone Insects*) in order to implement the pollination of the country's flowers, since natural bees were already extinct. By linking the results of the game *#DeathTo* to the location sensors of the bee-drones, the activist created a morbid automatic murder device whose authorship refers not to a single person, but to the collectivity of the network (Saint Clair, 2017). Ironically, it is then revealed that the list of those supposedly deserving to be painfully exterminated included those who would have habitually – most part of the time inadvertently – “hated” other people on social networks. This system is ironic tautological, as it reduplicates hatred in a seemingly innocent environment. At the same time, it functions as a feedback of the system itself, intensifying hatred by the annihilation of those who *hated it*. At the same time, the use of bee-drones is diverted from the function of favoring the life of the planet and of human beings (“beeings”?). So, this originally positive technological device is cynically transformed in a weapon of attack and of cruel murders.

Wherever we direct our gaze, we are astonished by the violence of big masses of passion and repulsion, permanently propagated on the internet. For this reason, we consider it profitable to investigate *how* viralization occurs, its process and mechanisms, instead of seeking its alleged *causes* or *reasons*. This movement converges with that of contemporary Foucault-inspired thinkers such as Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (2008), who, by reconstructing the trajectory that led them to the studies on governmentality, well expressed the ethos implied in our research:

We asked a different question, not ‘why’ but ‘how’, thereby lightening the weight of causality, or at least multiplying it Instead of writing the history of self or of subjectivity, we would study the history of individuals’ *relations* with themselves and with others. . . . Not who they were, but who they thought they were. (pp. 6-7)

Let us explore the field of studies on virtual sociability, which, although having its own meanders and singularities, is frequently contaminated by all kinds of



common-sense perspectives, very present in current opinions. We suggest in this article to discuss the conditions of the possible emergence of such phenomena as those described above. This theoretical-philosophical effort is an attempt to bring to light other perspectives which could produce the effect of denaturalizing conceptions generally integrated, without much attention, to Communication studies, such as those of *society, individual, belief, desire*. These same words, once *transvalued*, can then be referred to a multiplicity of arrangements.

Our intention is to contribute, using less frequent philosophical references, to the improvement of Communication researches. In an apparently anachronistic direction, it may be appropriate, for example, to convoke the theoretical frameworks of two late nineteenth-century philosophers – Gabriel Tarde and Nietzsche – in order to shed new lights on contemporary devices of knowledge-power-subjection. It is not a question of merely applying Tardean and Nietzschean concepts to different historical-social grounds, but of projecting the movement of the thought of these authors over new and original arrangements. We will also dialogue with some contemporary researchers who, inspired by the mentioned philosophers, pointed to more productive ways for critical thinking.

The complexity of what is involved in the dissemination of hate by social networks requires the understanding of the various logics that preside the phenomenon. The link with the perspective of difference proposed here, inspired by the Tardean gesture, can open fertile paths for new analyses of online hate. Tarde's thought will be more extensively developed because of the singular aspect of his concepts, still not so much assimilated in the studies of the area². Nietzsche will be summoned to dialogue with those reflections in a more specific sense, specially to illuminate the logic of negative functioning. His philosophy will also help to highlight some underlying affections implicated in the discourses of hatred, such as resentment, also increasingly present in the current political games. Inspired by Tarde and Nietzsche, we will also stress that the reconfiguration of the theoretical-philosophical bases for the discussion of hatred online works, as will be seen, in at least two senses.

The perspective jeopardizes the status of the reflective subject in the network. Rather than supposing centered subjects who access networks and consciously propagate discourses of hatred, we investigate provisional arrangements of forces. Although such arrangements may acquire a certain duration and persistence in their manifestations, they emerge, as we shall see, by contagion in inconstant imitative games. As in Tarde, in the Nietzschean perspective the subject isn't presupposed. The German philosopher establishes close links between resentment and the formation of flocks. For both authors, the formation of subjectivity doesn't

² Except for *A opinião e as massas* (Tarde, 2005), a book that incorporates concepts previously delineated by Tarde, here preliminary introduced.

derive from discourses but from flows that propagate through impermanent subjects and discourses.

Secondly, the view that privileges difference, insofar as it presupposes changing instabilities in time and not essentializing fixations, has an evident political potential: the reference to non-substantiated categories implies that everything is always open to unpredictable variations and disputes. In fact, even the most banal discourse of hatred supposes a permanently moving background of changing forces in tension. Let's start by exploring the conceptual basis formulated by Gabriel Tarde.

ONLINE HATE VIRALIZATION: TARDE REVISITED

Although quite fashionable today, the themes (or mere terms) of viralization and social contagion were not inaugurated by internet social networks. While the philosopher and sociologist Gabriel Tarde worked at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, his thought can be considered visionary in this sense. However, we will avoid classifying his perspectives as forerunners of currently propagated theories such as actor-network or memetics. By doing so, we would obscure the richness and specificities of this theoretical universe³. The reference to a nineteenth-century thinker is profitable in the sense of producing the astonishment and the distance which are capable of awakening us from the somnambulism currently affecting us. In this sense, we are here adopting the idea of contemporaneity such as defined by Giorgio Agamben:

The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness . . . It is as if this invisible light that is the darkness of the present cast its shadow on the past, so that the past, touched by this shadow, acquired the ability to respond to the darkness of the now⁴. (Agamben, 2009, pp. 24-25 and 31)

In this sense, let us therefore be contemporaries, referring to two thinkers who, from the nineteenth century, project their singular lights towards our own time. Tarde thought about the functioning of societies based on a background of pure singularity and difference⁵. It is important to emphasize that Tardean sociology is an ontology. Difference is not only localized in human societies: it is also present in the physicochemical world as well as in the vital world. Founding opposition couples of sociological thought, such as individual *versus* society, are alien to the thought of the philosopher, since an individual is itself a society of cells, chemical compounds, divisible to infinity. It functions like Leibniz's

³ Bruno Latour, for example, refers to Tarde as a "predecessor", a "forefather" of the theory of actor-network. See Latour (2002).

⁴ In the original: ". . . il contemporaneo è colui che percepisce il buio del suo tempo . . . È come se quell'invisibile luce che è il buio del presente proiettasse la sua ombra sul passato e questo, toccato da questo fascio d'ombra, acquisisse la capacità di rispondere alle tenebre dell'ora".

⁵ About this, see Saint Clair (2012), book based on his dissertation defended in PPGCOM-UFF, 2007.

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monads, but without the reference to any *pre-established harmony* dictated by an assuring God. Unlike Leibniz, Tarde considers monads as open complexes, without the guarantee of a unifying and harmonic supposed Superior Monad. Such monads are pure immanent processuality. They are open and in constant communication with one another.

Tarde's thought had been obliterated for decades, until the interest in difference, deployed in Deleuze's works at the second half of the twentieth century, brought Tarde to the debate. His works were then re-edited in France. Professor at Durkheim – considered as one of the founders of sociology as an institutionalized science – , Tarde sought to investigate the constitution of societies by using very different principles from those postulated by his student. Instead of presupposing homogeneities and identities of groups, of what the social groups have in common, his sociology assumes that what originally exists are only singularities in differentiation, pure impermanent movement:

To exist is to differ; difference is, in a sense, the truly substantial side of things; it is at once their ownmost possession and that which they hold most in common. This must be our starting point, and we must refrain from further explaining this principle, since all this come back to it – including identity, which us more usually, but mistakenly, taken as point of departure. For identity is only the minimal degree of difference and hence a kind of difference, and an infinitely rare kind, as rest is only a special case of movement, and the circle only a particular variety of ellipse . . . Difference is the alpha and omega of the universe⁶. (Tarde, 2003, p. 70)

If everything is originally different, what needs to be explained is precisely the production of identities and the practices of homogenization in societies. How can it be explained that, almost out of the blue, singular beings (including in the self-relation) begin to think, act and feel in a similar way, so that we can consider them as integral parts of a social group?

To Tarde, the constitutive force of the relative homogeneities of social, vital and physicochemical groups, almost in pure impermanent differentiation, is a force of contagion, viral contamination, and pure suggestibility. In the physicochemical world, such a process is called ondulation; in the vital world, generation (or heredity) and, in the social world, imitation. As Tony Sampson (2012), an interesting contemporary reader of Tarde, notes, “Tarde's theory of social encounter stresses that social wholes are derived from a principally accidental repetitive succession of desire” (p. 18). Identities of social groups are always provisional, in relative dynamic equilibrium. Therefore, they remain open.

⁶ In the original: “Exister c'est différer, la différence, à vrai dire, est en un sens le côté substantiel des choses, ce qu'elles ont à la fois de plus propre et de plus commun. Il faut partir de là et se défendre d'expliquer cela, à quoi tout se ramène, y compris l'identité d'où l'on part faussement. Car l'identité n'est qu'un *minimum* et par suite qu'une espèce, et une espèce infiniment rare, de différence, comme Le repos n'est qu'un *câs* Du mouvement, et Le cercle qu'une variété singulière de l'ellipse. La différence est l'alpha et l'oméga de l'univers”.

But what is effectively contaminated by contagion? To Tarde, two *psychological quantities* called *belief* and *desire*. Tarde states that beliefs and desires are not qualities, but *quantities*, they are masses that grow and decrease in combination with the sensations, perceptions, and qualities of moving singularities. In this sense, in the expression *psychological quantities*, the adjective “psychological”, that in the nineteenth century had much more fluid contours, gains an ontological orientation, referring not to *individuals*, but to singular multiplicities always in flux. In a scale of degrees, a belief goes from the pure negation to the complete affirmation, the neutral state being that of doubt. A desire goes from pure repulsion to full adherence, while apathy corresponds to the state of neutrality. A singularity endowed with a great amount of belief and desire would be able to contaminate the beliefs and desires of other singularities, making them momentarily similar to it. Despite the use of the words *belief* and *desire*, we must be careful, however, not to insert Tardean thinking in the scope of psychologism. Belief and desire are not the fruits of individual processes, but they correspond to social flows that combine with all the singularities of the three spheres (physicochemical, vital and social). Imitations in Tarde are not restricted to the individual. As pointed out by Deleuze and Guattari (2004),

a microimitation does seem to occur between two individuals. But at the same time, and at a deeper level, it has to do not with an individual but with a flow or a wave. Imitation is the propagation of a flow; opposition is binarization, the making binary of flows; invention is a conjugation or connection of different flows (p. 98).

Even being precarious and unstable in themselves, such homogeneities (as a trend of public opinion, for example) often appear to have great solidity, due to the repetitions that renew the imitative gesture, calling even more adhesions to it. Briefly: solidity is always, on one hand, illusory; on the other hand, mere imitative production. To refer to the plane of flowing multiplicities is therefore crucial to follow Tardean thought precisely. Otherwise, we would be restoring the validity of identity foundations as a necessary starting point to understand social phenomena.

Social contagion occurs, most of the time, unconsciously. We are not always aware of imitation, and even when we do, it is because imitation has already occurred even before such a contagion reaches the plane of consciousness. It is easier to understand this if we understand that Tarde describes social life as a somnambulant state. This is what he says: “Society is imitation, and imitation is a kind of somnambulism”⁷ (Tarde 2001, p. 147). Or else:

⁷ In the original: “La société, c’est l’imitation, et l’imitation c’est une espèce de somnambulisme”.

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The social like the hypnotic state is only a form of dream, a dream of command and a dream of action. Both the somnambulist and the social man are possessed by the illusion that their ideas, all of which have been suggested to them, are spontaneous⁸. (p. 137)

⁸ In the original: "L'état social, comme l'état hypnotique, n'est qu'une forme du rêve, un rêve de commande et un rêve en action. N'avoir que des idées suggérées et les croire spontanées : telle est l'illusion propre au somnambule, et aussi bien à l'homme social".

This is not a metaphor: imitation differs from somnambulism or hypnosis only in *degree*, but not in *nature*. In this sense, we are in fact always dreaming our lives, as Calderon de la Barca, author of the famous play *La vida es sueño*, has already pointed out. Similarly, contagion in Tarde is not a metaphor: it refers indeed to "forces of relational encounter in the social field" (Sampson, 2012, p. 4), which imply an ontological capture of the *socius* movement on radically different bases from those erected by the sociological view that would later become hegemonic. It seems to us that the Tardean perspective is quite fertile for us to think about the modes of production of collectivities today, in times of viral and accelerated propagation of beliefs and desires in social networks, in which great passions and hatred circulate through point-to-point contagion, crystallize and ends up to seem solid.

When we adopt a political opinion, for example, we are contaminated by infinitesimal myriads of beliefs and desires, instead of convinced by the rational arguments. This usual way of putting the problem reinforces the status of the reflective subject which, as Tarde would say, is but a concept propagated by imitation for centuries in the Western societies. Not just discourses but mainly beliefs and desires are spread. In a Tardean perspective, discourse is intertwined with a metadiscursive flow of contagious affections, feelings, and emotions. In this way, we would avoid saying that, today, only *hate speech* is spreading. More radically, we understand viralization in a molecular level, which is much more disturbing and insidious. At this level, there are not just speeches, but especially masses of hatred and resentment in sub representational matters.

Inspired by Tarde, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) coined the concepts of *molar* and *molecular* to account for this plethora of social processes that sometimes the same phenomenon involves:

Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms or the same relations or the same nature or even the same type of multiplicity. If they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other. . . . Take aggregates of the perception or feeling type: their molar organization, their rigid segmentarity, does not preclude the existence of a entire world of unconscious micropercepts, unconscious affects, fine

segmentations that grasp or experience different things, which are distributed and operate differently (p. 90).

Molecular flows of beliefs and desires always run the risk of being captured, fixed, stabilized, ordered according to molar patterns. Media has a crucial role in this process. Maurizio Lazzarato (2006), from Tardean bases, comments:

Public opinion, the creation of the sensible, as they are managed by the media in capitalist societies, join this infinitesimal power of formation and transformation of desires and beliefs, to capture its virtuality, to transform it into an instrument of imposition of monolingualism, a means of transmitting information and communication (the words of command of power) that neutralizes any power of co-creation and co-effectuation of possible worlds. (p. 165)

Despite of his critical bias, Lazzarato, in a text published in 2006, suggests a certain optimism about internet, which we consider to be somehow problematic. Opposing the internet to mass media (newspapers, television etc.), like many other authors, Lazzarato stresses the very mechanism of production and circulation of network information in point-to-point contagion. Hence, the infinitesimal variation of beliefs and desires would be less likely to be captured by the network, as the pole of the emission wouldn't be unique, supposedly enhancing the autonomy of the message receivers.

Such opposition between internet and mass media is not sufficient to deal with contemporary issues. The contagious power of networks does not seem to necessarily erode the foundations of capitalism; on the contrary, it is likely to reinforce them, producing new and weird configurations. The president of the greatest capitalistic economic power was elected – not without a certain worldwide astonishment and perplexity – with a speech that fomented all kinds of intolerance, insistently reproduced in his daily *tweets*. Curiously, the political forces currently in power in Brazil prove – as caricatures of an already caricatured model – the Tarde theses on imitative contagion. More broadly and clearly, since the last electoral process, it has been possible to observe the tearing of the social tissue of the supposed Brazilian cordiality, giving rise to a mere virulence which presents itself as political *criticism*. We can here observe an evident appropriation of (and an effort to neutralize) the idea of “criticism”. The molarization of hate speech in politics operates by distinct mechanisms than those of online viralization, but it depends on that level for their concretization and renewal. When the masses of hatred become dense, new and dangerous arrangements attain visibility. From a different perspective relative to the scope of Cultural Studies, Arjun Appadurai



(2009), for example, has already emphasized the passage from ordinary resentment to hatred directed to countries, minority groups etc.:

The move from garden variety resentment to generalized hatred of whole countries, populations, and societies, often hardly experienced concretely, requires us to understand the moral core of this hatred. . . . Long-distance hatred requires that two lethal items to mix – a Manichaeian theodicy that seeks to explain the moral rot in the world in one fell swoop and a set of images and messages in which this Manichaeian theodicy can be anchored and made locally plausible. Long-distance hatred creates a moral image of complete evil and gives it the face of an entire society, people, or region. This is the fuel of *ideocide* and its policy consequence, *civicide*. (p. 95)

It is also important to highlight that the relations between social influence in network (through viral contagion of accelerated opinions) and the trajectory of the volatile masses of financial capital are a new field to exploit the current system. There is a perverse association between the spread of network hate and capitalism. The so-called *fake news*, defamatory blogs of all kinds, bombastic commentaries feed the so-called *click economy*, “a term that refers to advertising driven by false news and blatant speeches” (Ferreira, 2018, p. 40). Given the power of viralization of hate and defamatory speech in general, companies tend to run ads on such sites aiming at their visibility. In a footnote to the instigating text “Opinion and Conversation”, Tarde states that

no matter how much an opinion is widespread, it manifests little if it is moderate; but, no matter how less widespread a violent opinion is, it manifests much. Well, “manifestations”, expressions which are both very comprehensive and clear, play an immense role in the fusion and interpenetration of the opinions of different groups and in their propagation. By manifestations, it is the most violent opinions that are quicker and more clearly aware of their existence, which strangely favors their expansion. (Tarde, 2005, p. 64)

Capital, hatred, and virality are interwoven into a dark and new arrangement of powers. At this point, an approximation between the Tardean and Foucaultian perspectives seems fertile for the approach of the viral infections of hate in networks. Endowed with a “non-subjective intentionality” (Foucault, 2006, p. 102), that is, of tactics that should not be referred to supposed “behind subjects”, power is understood as a set of relations of forces immanent to the domains in which they operate. Although there are great magnetizers of beliefs and desires in networks, one could hardly attribute to a sole individual or a specific group the

possession of power. So, the so-called *manipulative subjects* are insufficient as a critical tool. However, this doesn't mean that there is no objective intentionality in power relations, functioning as action on possible actions.

In such intentional but not subjective relations, we cannot neglect the role of algorithmic managements by companies such as Facebook in the formation of so-called internet *bubbles*, which, based on patterns of consumption, searches and activities of users, guide the contents to be visualized and discussed by them, drastically reducing the possibilities of discovering effectively different perspectives. According to Lazzarato (2006), "in control societies, power relations are expressed by the distance action of one mind over another, by the ability to affect and be affected by brains, mediated and enriched by technology" (p. 76). Therefore, the power arrangements derived from algorithm management can be considered as a kind of biopower update.

Algorithms exercise control over us by subordinating forces by means of the establishment of relationships between real-world surveillance data and machines capable of statistically making relevant inferences about what that data can mean. *Soft* biopower processes work in a similar way, allowing for ever-productive sense modulation – since it constantly creates new information – always following and supervising its contents to ensure that user data is effective. New cybernetic categorizations are the consequence of this modulation, and ultimately allow the production of a *free* but constantly conditioned user (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 178)

Following Tarde's steps, we can see that the political polarizations that are organized today result from the flattening of all variation, subjecting the difference to the regime of the negative. It is an insidious and microscopic process in which point-to-point contagion subtly fades every multicolor variation in favor of black and white oppositions.

At this point, Tarde's concept of *invention* is also helpful. The force of invention expresses itself in new sources of belief and desire which are also constantly created, increasing the masses of faith and passion. Working in partnership, imitation and invention execute a *pas-de-deux* in the beautiful ungoverned ball that life in society is. Beyond the necessity of a balance of beliefs and desires, guaranteed by imitation, there is an urgent need to increase these forces. New social discoveries must inevitably emerge. Creativity is the engine of the increase of immanent belief and desire, indispensable for the functioning of social logic. After all,

From the marriage of the monotonous and the homogenous what could be born but tedium? If everything comes from identity, aims at identity and returns to identity,



what is the source of this dazzling torrent of variety? We may be certain that the fundamental nature of things is not as poor, as drab, or as colourless as has been supposed. Forms are only brakes and laws are only dykes erected in vain against the overflowing of revolutionary differences and civil dissensions, in which the laws and forms of tomorrow secretly take shape, and which, in spite of the yokes upon yokes they bear, in spite of chemical and vital discipline, in spite of reason, in spite of celestial mechanics, will one distant day, like the people of a nation, sweep away all barriers and from their very wreckage construct the instrument of a still higher diversity (Tarde, 2003, p. 78).

Finally, we may also think that there are at least two logics that preside the diffusion of online hate. The first of them – *micropolitical* – can be analyzed through the bias of contagious forces of beliefs and desires under a background of immanent and inventive differentiation. The second – *macropolitical* – builds great dualities, understood as oppositions and polarizations that structure contemporary hate. Both of these sights should be articulated, but the micro plane – much less evident and less present in general – deserves to be emphasized, and to be both inserted and unfolded in our reflections.

At this point, Nietzsche's philosophy can contribute to our theme, intensifying the molecular plane of the affects we have been alluding to. The viralization of hate updates a very effective mechanism of reinforcement and production of resentment. Not only because the philosopher has diagnosed resentment as the great disease of the Judeo-Christian civilization, but above all because he has dissected its sinuous modes (not always self-evident) of expression and acting, even in a horizon of cracking or corrosion of moral and metaphysical values and beliefs.

ONLINE RESENTMENT AND HATE: NIETZSCHE REVISITED

Let us take a fruitful shortcut: Nietzsche's investigation on the perspective of resentment, especially in paragraph 13 of the first dissertation of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1986 and 2001). In this text, Nietzsche proposes a brief parable – a genre traditionally linked to evangelization and moral lessons – in which two perspectives are expressed: that of the lamb and that of the bird of prey. It is a polyphonic text in which the philosopher dismantles the strategies of resentment, inventor of moral values. This is what the lamb says to his fellows: "These birds of prey are evil, and he who is as far removed from being a bird of prey, who is rather its opposite, a lamb, – is he not good?" As shown by Gilles Deleuze (2007, pp. 140-142), these lambs play a dialectical game in order to produce simulacra

of affirmations of themselves as *good*, through an operation of double negation. They start by considering the other (the generalized bird of prey) as evil. From the denial of the other, they extract through two logical reductions (“he who is as far removed from being a bird of prey, who is rather its opposite, a lamb”) the conclusion of paralogism (“ – is he not good?”). Such a conclusion is shown in a significant way as a question to the other members of the flock: “is he not good?”. The resentful lamb needs the support of others, needs the concordance and reinforcement of a flock. The rhetorical question demands acquiescence and infects the flock, which will echo it in the supposed affirmation of his goodness.

We highlight the distorting genius present in the intermediate operation, which consists in slipping, subtly, from the comparison (“he who is as far removed from being a bird of prey”) to the violence of a regime of an open and clear opposition (“who is rather its opposite, a lamb”). In this case, this is not a simple progression, but an astute leap, since the opposition thus obtained secretes the supposedly neutral common ground necessary for the invention of dichotomous and universally applicable moral values. By this logical stratagem, the lamb immediately establishes a pretended equality of nature between him and the bird of prey. It flattens the distance between both beings and compares therefore incomparable species, which would not, in principle, have parameters of comparison. In this way, it forces two distinct perspectives on a same plane. Thus, the different perspectives are transformed into *antagonistic* ones. This strategy implies the surreptitious introduction, over both perspectives, of the fiction of a common, neutral substrate, supposedly endowed with free will. Therefore, morally imputable. Thus, the radical polarization between *good* and *evil* is produced.

This regime of opposition in which alterity (the bird of prey) is inserted constitutes the most effective strategy of denying its irreducible character, producing a relation of equivalence capable of engulfing the *other* into the logic of the same. As Deleuze stressed, this syllogistic lamb, an emblematic expression of resentment mode of operation, invents the fiction of the subject as a neutral force, separated from its manifestations. Such an autonomous force will be required to respond for what it supposedly *chose* to be. The flattening of differences is the presupposition of moral imputation. In short, this is what is at stake in the cunning, rational, seemingly harmless, negativity typical operation: the establishment of a dual game in which alterity, difference, is domesticated, neutralized, reconducted to the category of the *same*, in the figure of the *opposite* or the *contrary*. In this operation, anchored in logical articulations, what was pure difference becomes the *opposite* of the lamb, and the lamb consequently becomes a common, universal reference. Simultaneously, by effect of the same operation, the other (the bird of prey) becomes morally reprehensible for being what it is.

A

Towards a genealogy of online hate

In this passage, Nietzsche highlights how negativity, as an expression of resentment, has become a creator of values in Western cultural tradition. The philosopher stresses that the fiction of moral values and the judgment derived from it need to rely on the belief in a substantialized and neutral subject which can be judged (or praised) simply for *what it is*. Therefore, moral valuation presupposes the production of a relation to alterity capable of destroying it, inasmuch as it inserts it into a set of symmetrical and bipolar oppositions ruled by negativity. This hegemonic means of erecting values and producing models of identity cannot dispense the fiction of a dialectical game between *us* and *others*, very present in political and social constructions, clearly expressed in the viralization of online hate.

Nietzsche was then aiming at the production of moral values, but the logic of identity production and expression of resentful affections remains active in the case that this article addresses. Not only in the sense of contagion of resentment, giving shape and expression to shared opinions that thus acquire the cohesion of “truths”. Let us mention Oswald de Andrade who, in the *Cannibal Manifesto* (Andrade, 1928), quotes the phrase by the Viscount of Cairu, according to which truth is but a lie that is often repeated. Thus, new flocks are formed, which generally need shepherds, drivers – in German, *Führer*. The reference to the Nietzschean dissection of the *modus operandi* of resentment shows above all the social force of the negative and its poisonous effects: the invention of dual oppositions governed by negativity, the polarization of opinions absorbed as truths. Such polarizations, as we have seen with Tarde, result from the density of masses of beliefs and desires contaminated by social imitation. This article tried to show the relevance of Tarde’s and Nietzsche’s reflections in order to account for the dissemination of online hate and thus to contribute to the discussion of the current political moment in Brazil, as well as in other countries. This could be a first hint to identify online hate mechanisms of proliferation related to the negativity manifested by resentful perspectives. This was the bet of this article. ■

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