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An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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- 9 *The Nature of Love*, p. 231.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 233; 20–2.
- 11 Cf. the profound discussion of this Augustinian theme in Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 21–7.
- 12 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 76–82.
- 13 One sees that one has to make a distinction with respect to Marion's "principle of insufficient reason." The beauty of the other as this unrepeatable person is an entirely sufficient reason for loving her; "insufficient" can only refer to the fact that the love is not owed to her in justice. The lover finds an insufficiency of reasons of justice.

Envy and Ressentiment, a Difference in Kind: A Critique and Renewal of Scheler's Phenomenological Account

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A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

—Proverbs 14.30

Classical phenomenology strives to clarify natural attitude intentionalities. It does not mean to replace them but to elucidate the cognitive acts and meaning structures at play in certain modes of relating to the world, most of which, phenomenology admits, are value-laden. What we value in the world and how we value it, our likes and dislikes, are disclosed primarily through our affective responses to the world and our formation of more determinate emotional responses built thereupon. When it comes to something like envy, we feel frustrated or annoyed (and dislike) seeing another person possess some thing, trait, capacity, or status that we value and desire but lack. The basic intentional structure of envy, then, is comparative and thus bilateral. The intentional structure of the emotions of envy directs feelings of frustration to the other and to oneself. Envy is self- and other-directed.

While consensus in philosophical matters is rare, philosophers almost universally agree (even with mundane belief) that envy is always bad and that its badness rests in its hostile regard for another.¹ This belief about envy and the resultant predominate focus (in philosophy, literature, etc.) on envy's attack on the other has suppressed the self-directed dimension of envy. The Judeo-Christian tradition, on the other hand, has captured something of this neglected phenomenological dimension of envy—as the epigram from Proverbs 14.30 warns. But how are we to capture this phenomenological insight into a more

complete sense of the badness of envy found for example in Proverbs when even mundane belief has inherited philosophers' almost universal agreement that the badness of envy rests in its hostile regard for another? The problem with isolating this feature of envy as its characteristic feature is that it easily conflates envy with jealousy, indignation, spite, or even more overwhelmingly envy's closest sibling with which I am here concerned, *ressentiment*. Even Max Scheler's Christian phenomenology of envy in his short work, *Ressentiment*, intuits but does not coherently account for the Judeo-Christian insight concerning the badness of envy in its self-directed moment. Scheler misses the self-directed dimension of envy because he (1) claims that the "causal delusion" essential to *ressentiment*—namely that another or rival is responsible for one's inferiority—is also an essential feature of envy, and he defends this claim because he (2) remains within the standard philosophical reading that takes envy to be a strictly other-directed emotion.

In this essay I want to critically develop Scheler's phenomenology of envy and *ressentiment* to highlight essential phenomenological distinctions between them. By drawing a distinction between a self-directed and other-directed mode of envy absent in Scheler's account of envy, I believe we can better avail ourselves of, because we can bring further into relief, Scheler's understanding of the difference between envy and *ressentiment* with respect to the good. In order to demonstrate my critical alternative to Scheler's account, I provide an eidetic analysis of envy and *ressentiment* at the level of the intentional focus or target of the agents under the spell of these emotions and not their affects. Envy is an emotion that, while inordinately relating to the truth or proper value-structure of life, rots the bones of the agent or negatively assesses the self and diminishes its happiness. *Ressentiment*, on the other hand, is a transformative emotion that, by distorting the truth or proper value-structure of life, preserves the bones of the agent or generates a peculiar sense of self-satisfaction that restores and even can enhance the agent's happiness. In short, the lived-experience of these emotions differs, then, at both the affective and objective levels. The phenomenological affect envy has on the agent reveals two perhaps surprising claims: (1) the badness of envy, contra the philosophical tradition, must include, perhaps primarily, its affliction of the envier rather than the envied; (2) envy is not all bad because it does not distort value apprehensions—a debased achievement reserved for *ressentiment* alone.

Section one argues that a tension exists in Scheler's account of the differences between envy, "true envy," and *ressentiment* with respect to their intentional focus, the characteristic of impotence and the belief in the causal delusion that

another is responsible for my inferiority. In section two, I present an alternative to Scheler's position by proposing a view of two types of envy distinguished by their intentional focus, namely self-assessing deficiency-envy and other-assessing possessor-envy. This distinction establishes a "thick" difference between deficiency-envy and *ressentiment* but only a "thin" difference between possessor-envy and *ressentiment*. Section three returns to Scheler's thought and distinguishes possessor-envy (the type Proverbs 14.30 warns against) from *ressentiment* on the grounds that the intentional focus of only the latter functions to negate values and thus dissolve the desires that caused the emotional tension in *ressentiment*.

1 Scheler on envy, "true envy," and *ressentiment*

Scheler's excellent short work, *Ressentiment*, stipulates that envy and *ressentiment* share two basic features. First, each stems from a "tension between desire and nonfulfillment"; second, each "is connected with a tendency to make comparisons between others and oneself."² Both constitute what we could call a comparative-intentionality wherein the agent is pained over his lack of some desired and valued thing, trait, capacity or status that the neighbor possesses but the aggrieved agent does not. And both are likewise characterized by feelings of pain, displeasure, and so on. As these identical feelings provide no way of individuating envy from *ressentiment*,³ we must consider the broad distinctions Scheler notes between the two.

Scheler thus stipulates that *ressentiment* differs from envy insofar as it is a "lasting mental attitude caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions" such as covetousness, envy, etc. (25).⁴ In this case, an individuating feature seems to be their temporal structure. *Ressentiment* appears sedimented, enduring, and dispositional, while envy appears fleeting, bound by an identifiable beginning and ending time, and episodic.⁵ This difference between envy and *ressentiment*, however, likely makes little difference when attempting to individuate them. Iago, for instance, has a long-standing mental attitude regarding Cassio. But whenever that disposition flares up into an emotion—say when Cassio appears to, is mentioned in the presence of, or even is imagined by Iago—it is difficult to tell whether this upheaval of emotion expresses envy or *ressentiment*, for both envy and *ressentiment* stem from the same intentional act of comparison and share the same affects triggered by the recognition of an unfulfilled desire that another has fulfilled. Perhaps an examination of the content of the intentional focus or target of the agent may better individuate these two emotions.

Scheler initially seems attracted to this approach. After conceding that envy “[comes] close to *ressentiment*,” he proposes a first feature that individuates them. Envy intends “specific ... definite objects” (25–6); *ressentiment*, on the other hand, is “detached from all determinate objects” (46). If we [dispatch the attitude versus emotion distinction and] follow the distinction in intentional focus between determinate objects and indeterminate objects, Iago appears to be a person of envy and not *ressentiment* because the envious person negatively intends some particular, definite, or determinate thing, trait, or capacity that signifies some desirable value in a way that neither (i) distorts the value itself nor (ii) dispenses with his desire for that object (thing, trait, or capacity) that signifies the value.⁶ *Ressentiment*, on the other hand, (i) negatively intends and distorts the value itself and thereby (ii) no longer finds desirable that value and likewise an indeterminate range of things things, traits or capacities that signify that value.

This initial distinction between the intentional focus of these emotions and its corollary claims related to values and desiring seems correct and useful to me, and I shall return to it in my conclusion. But Scheler obscures this difference in the intentional focus of envy and *ressentiment* by rendering it contingent upon a second distinguishing feature, namely impotence, which occupies an ambiguous place in his phenomenological theory. As Scheler initially puts it, envy “leads to *ressentiment* only if there occurs ... [no] act ... or expression of emotion ... and ... this restraint is caused by a pronounced awareness of impotence” (26). More precisely, the envious will not “fall under the dominion of *ressentiment* if he seeks to acquire the envied possession by means of work, barter, crime, or violence” (26). The claim seems to be that envy needn’t be coupled with impotence whereas *ressentiment* names the specific conditions already in place, namely a state of envy that happens to be coupled with impotence. At least four possibilities exist in this case. First, it does not seem obvious to me that one cannot be envious just because one has more of a desired good than a rival—e.g., one could covet the neighbor’s less attractive wife or the Lexus-driving lottery winner might envy his neighbor because she has this year’s model, even though he could go out and buy one if he wanted—but this concern does not register with Scheler. Second, if the envious does not feel impotent and successfully acts out toward the offender (perhaps even by smearing her character), then *ressentiment* will not develop if this ‘fist-shaking’ satisfies the agent (30). Third, if the envious does not feel impotent yet unsuccessfully acts out toward the offender, then *ressentiment* eventually develops as the tension of unfulfilled desire and envy festers.

Fourth, if the envious person does not believe he can acquire the desired thing, trait or capacity “because of weakness, physical or mental, or because of fear,” then *ressentiment* develops as the tension of unfulfilled desire and envy festers. The person of *ressentiment*, then, will necessarily be an envier, but an envier need not necessarily be a person of *ressentiment* because he need not feel impotence, as cases one and two suggest above.

Scheler’s account to this point thus presents two features according to which we can distinguish or individuate envy and *ressentiment*: first, envy targets a definite, particular or determinate object while *ressentiment* does not; second, an awareness of impotence is a necessary condition for *ressentiment* while it is not for envy.⁷ Scheler, however, obscures this second point of distinction between envy and *ressentiment*—that distinction which runs along the lines of a pronounced awareness of impotence—when he introduces the notion of “true envy.” While Scheler initially claimed that the envious would not “fall under the dominion of *ressentiment* if he seeks to acquire the envied possession by means of work,” etc., he now claims,

the experience of impotence and the causal delusion are essential preconditions of *true envy*. If we are merely displeased that another person owns a good, this can be an incentive for acquiring it through work, purchase, violence or robbery. *Envy* occurs when we fail in doing so and feel powerless. (30)

On this account, the first two cases mentioned above no longer would constitute envy because “true envy”—which I take to be Scheler’s stipulated phenomenological description aimed at capturing a discrete mental state—stymies rather than motivates actions or behaviors that would serve as the means to the end of eliminating the disparity by fulfilling the desire (rather than just diminishing the other).

These two essential features of “true envy”—a sense of impotence and the causal delusion that another is responsible for one’s impotence and inferiority—hold for both of Scheler’s two types of “true envy,” both of which, in turn, I believe share essential features with *ressentiment*. The first type of “true envy” Scheler terms “existential-envy,” or hatred of the other person whose very existence “causes” my inferiority and psychic tension because I find that I am lesser in the face of her very character and existence, her superior strength, beauty, etc. The second type of “true envy” he terms “*ressentiment-envy*,” or hatred and the “illusory devaluation” of the positive values of strength, beauty, etc., itself (30). I do not find this distinction between two types of “true envy,” existential- and *ressentiment-envy*, very helpful, nor do I think it holds up for

two reasons. First, since "true envy" occurs when one fails to acquire the desired good that the agent lacks but another possess, it appears quite like *ressentiment* given Scheler's initial account of the distinction between these two emotions. Whereas a "profound awareness of impotence" originally appeared in Scheler's account as a feature that distinguished *ressentiment* from envy, impotence now is described as the first of two essential features or necessary conditions of "true envy."⁸ Second, Scheler's theory further collapses one emotion into the other by positing as a second "essential" feature or necessary condition of "true envy," namely the envier's apprehension of the envied as the "cause" of the envier's "privation" or inferior status (30). Yet this second, essential feature of "true envy"—the causal delusion—seems identical to what Nietzsche identified in his *Genealogy* as the essential feature of *ressentiment*. For Nietzsche, "this need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself ... is the essence of *ressentiment*"; indeed, *ressentiment*-man, Nietzsche further specifies, "looks for a cause of his distress; more exactly, for a culprit, even more precisely for a guilty culprit."⁹ We should consider Scheler's second type of "true envy" *ressentiment* and his first type of "true envy" as one type of envy among other types of envy (which I shall do below in sections two and three under the label of possessor-envy).

Scheler's view of the two types of "true envy" overlooks various ways in which the envying self may fail, feel impotent and then psychically construct an account of the cause and object of his emotion, seemingly running "true envy" into *ressentiment*. This oversight, I suspect, stems from Scheler's construal of "true envy" as a strictly other-directed emotion that negatively intends the other as causally responsible for his comparative inferiority. If different types of enviers, however, cope with their impotence and inferior comparative status in ways otherwise than assigning causal responsibility to the other, i.e., if different types of enviers have a different intentional focus, then perhaps a phenomenological description of these differences in these types of emotional intentionalities will produce conceptual a distinction between envy and *ressentiment* absent from Scheler's account. My hypothesis is that if we examine the intentional focus of these emotional agents following the "cause" of impotence, we shall see (i) that the causal delusion is not an essential feature of all types of envy and, as such, (ii) that both different type of envy and envy and *ressentiment* take different objects. And in instances where the causal delusion rightly characterizes one type of envy, as well as *ressentiment*, the intentional focus characteristic of the agent in these emotional-states also will serve to further individuate them.

2 A different view of two types of envy: Deficiency-envy and possessor-envy

Philosophical accounts of envy since Aristotle have roughly repeated his view of envy as always bad and hostilely regarding the other. Philosophers have predominately limited their analyses of envy to their moralizing worries about the envier's potential vindictiveness at the expense of providing a fuller phenomenological account of the experience of envy that includes the envier's experience. As envy is an essentially comparative intentionality, an adequate account of envy must detail its assessments of self and other, envier and envied,¹⁰ and thus must explore envy's self-assessing moments in addition to its more popularly treated other assessing-moments. Scheler's account of "true envy" explores only the ways in which existential-envy or *ressentiment*-envy redirects itself to the world and either determinate objects, things, or values or indeterminate objects, things, or values, respectively.

Yet as Aristotle recognized in his *Rhetoric*—though in passing and somewhat incidentally—we "envy those whose possession of or success in a thing is a reproach to us ... for it is clear that *it is our own fault* we have missed the good thing in question."¹¹ Aristotle's thought implies that the envier not only looks askance at both the envied and himself, but also focuses, at least initially, on his own shortcomings. Nevertheless, envy is complicated; it tends to conceal itself, often even from itself, and when it appears it appears only in those exceptional instances of the most malicious revenge (which is why Iago is the paradigmatic envier). Rare is the envier who critically assesses his beliefs concerning himself, his deservingness, or the quality of his efforts to secure what he believes he deserves.¹² Most enviers tend to change their beliefs about a person in the world thought responsible for their inferiority—to "falsely consider [the other] to be the cause of [their] privation," as Scheler put it (30). Enviers thus account for their inferior standing by redirecting their painful feelings of self-assessment outward and suppressing the self-reproach mentioned by Aristotle in favor of begrudging or maligning the envied. Hence philosophers have concluded that envy always accuses or attacks the other and therein lies its malice.

Yet even if enviers typically redirect or translate their envy into an approximate emotion, they first must have comparatively evaluated their shortcoming *vis-à-vis* the envied. The envier's changing belief about his standing in the world, which Gabrielle Taylor notes as an essential feature of self-assessing emotions, had first to be entertained if it later was to be covered over, directed outward. Examining how different enviers process these feelings of tension and

displeasure that reflect their new beliefs (that conflict with their old beliefs) about themselves reveals compelling reasons to favor a view of envy as a self- and other-assessing emotion—and thus two types of envy quite different than those Scheler's view of true-envy describes.

Different types of envy contain different intentional contents or objects based on different envious' values, beliefs and aspirations. Let's take an example. A scholar leaves a talk by another scholar to whom the audience responded quite favorably, a talk for which this honored scholar deserved praise; our irritated scholar remarks to his companion, "So-and-so's paper was pretentious, unclear and full of jargon." How this agitated scholar experiences the unpleasant feelings that follow from this experience indicates important differences in the intentional structure of envy and its intentional focus as conditioned by the agent's beliefs.

If the agitated scholar targets the honored scholar for possessing a great talent or capacity in the way that Iago envied Cassio's military status, then he may be said to suffer from other-directed possessor-envy. This type of envy wishes inordinately to possess that thing, trait or capacity in superior degree and/or exclusivity from the envied, i.e., at the expense of his neighbor or rival enjoying that something or enjoying it in superiority.¹³ Lacking that desirable thing, the possessor-envier considers the envied responsible for, or the cause of, his lack of honors: Since she has it, I cannot, or cannot have as much as I want, and so she is the cause of my privation and inferiority.¹⁴ The distress experienced by the possessor-envier in his inferiority couples with a hateful feeling directed toward the honored scholar who has the desired something exclusively or in superiority. The honored scholar in the possessor-envier's view is the cause and object of the unremarkable scholar's inferiority and thus hostility.

In the case of possessor-envy, it is easy to see how it is other-directed: The possessor-envier sees the envied as someone who is the cause of, or responsible for, his not having some good. Were it not for Cassio, Iago believes he would have the fame, attention, and accolades that he at least thinks he deserves. It is difficult, however, to see how possessor-envy is self-assessing because it so vehemently yet "falsely considers [the other] to be the cause of [his] privation." But possessor-envy is self-assessing insofar as the possessor-envier must assess that he is as worthy and deserving of the desired good; in the comparative assessment he believes he is superior, equal or equal enough to its possessor and thus he is personally pained by his lack of the desired good and hostile toward its possessor. If there is a sense of impotence, here, it is with respect to those impeding the envier and not with respect to the envier's beliefs about himself.

Whether this possessor-envier "subconsciously" reproves himself or gripes about an unjust disparity; whether he believes himself even to be envious or not, is not essential to envy. The self-assessment of a possessor-envier remains hidden, self-deceived; rather than hold himself accountable for some measure of self-assessment, he redirects—or magically transforms—this feeling into a proximate yet more appropriate emotion (e.g., self-justifying indignation).¹⁵

Alternatively, and parting ways with Scheler and Aristotle, if our agitated scholar were to wish to possess that desirable something in equal quality to which the honored scholar possesses it—but neither at the expense of his neighbor having it nor even in superiority to the neighbor—then he may be said to suffer from deficiency-envy. Wishing to enjoy the desired something in equivalent degree renders the affective reaction to his perceived inferiority (at least with respect to the desirable something) more ambiguous.

The distress experienced by this deficiency-envier in his inferiority may couple with a begrudging feeling but not a sense of hostility directed toward the honored scholar. The deficiency-envier begrudges, i.e., unwillingly acknowledges, the superiority of the envied but focuses on self-reproof rather than attacking the other. As he only wishes to have the honor too, rather than having it at the honoree's expense, he does not see the honoree as the cause of his inferior standing. He may feel impotent insofar as his best was not good enough. But, contra Scheler, there is no "causal delusion" here as there seems in possessor-envy. His comparative appraisal involves, however distortedly, his desire to nurture his esteem; the center of gravity in deficiency-envy—the object of the intentional focus—is the self and its shortcomings rather than the other and how her good fortune purportedly stymies the deficiency-envier's desires.¹⁶

Opposite the case of possessor-envy, it is easy to see how deficiency-envy is self-assessing but difficult to see how it is other-assessing. Yet deficiency-envy entails an assessment of the other. As a person with whom I compare myself, the envied (with her possession) is essential to the feeling of envy, the painful reminder of my lacking a certain desirable good that comparatively disadvantages me.¹⁷ The other is assessed necessarily because the envier measures what he should or should not have based upon his view of what an apparent equal does have. Since the deficiency-envier regards the other neither as the cause of his predicament, nor an obstacle to his attaining the desirable good, the deficiency-envier may begrudge the envied but not direct hostility toward her.¹⁸

My account of two types of envy thus shares Scheler's starting point: Envy stems from a "tension between desire and nonfulfillment ... [and] is connected with a tendency to make comparisons between others and oneself" (30-1) But

I develop this basic observation quite differently: different agents who differently desire particular objects, traits, or capacities will experience the tension produced by this unfulfilled desire differently; this difference, in turn, conditions the beliefs those agents will form and the objects they will target in their intentional focus in order to cope with the tension generated by seeing another fulfill a desire the agent has not or cannot. Some sense of impotence may be an essential feature of all envy, but the "causal delusion" is not. And once we remove the causal delusion in the case of deficiency-envy, we remove the hostile, vicious and vindictive regard of the other often thought to be a universal feature of envy as found in Scheler's view of "true envy."¹⁹ As Robert Solomon rightly noted, and as Scheler may likely agree but did not pursue, the Judeo-Christian tradition recognized that "envy was considered a sin not because of its malicious tendencies, since it is usually ineffective, but because it tends to demean oneself."²⁰

3 How do you feel now? Possessor-envy and *ressentiment*

Apart from the comparative assessment that some rival is better positioned, deficiency-envy shares with possessor-envy and *ressentiment* only a sense of impotence and inferiority processed quite differently by the agent. The deficiency-envier begrudges the other her goods. He benignly regards the envied, i.e., acknowledges reluctantly that another has something that he desires but lacks. This type of regard can take the form of not celebrating that good with her and/or lamenting his lack of that good. We thus have a "thick" difference between deficiency-envy and *ressentiment*, for the "other" plays only a marginal role in deficiency-envy; she is neither the focus nor the cause of deficiency-envy (Taylor). Hence, deficiency-envy, unlike *ressentiment*, does not direct blame or feelings of moral outrage toward the other. In the interest of time, I leave this difference aside, noting only that deficiency-envy perhaps establishes that the reach of the badness of envy is most often the envier's malignant self-appraisal.

My account of possessor-envy, however, may seem indistinguishable from Scheler's notion of *ressentiment*, for both emotions are characterized by a deep yet unfulfilled desire, feelings of impotence, and hateful feelings directed toward the other due to the falsely construed "causal delusion." Possessor-envy is about my inferior status for which I believe the other responsible. The possessor-envier does not simply look on the disparity between himself and the other

with reluctant acknowledgment (begrudgingly) but malignantly regards the envied since she is believed responsible for his inferiority. This type of regard takes the form of both not celebrating that good with her and condemning her for possessing that good. The possessor-envier will not go for a celebratory drink with our honored scholar. Seeking a source for his inferiority, he may go for drinks with others and engage in a debriefing during which they attempt to minimize the possessor of that good. Possessor-enviers thus tend to criticize the envied for reasons that go beyond their possession that triggered the envy: Iago belittles Cassio's qualifications, skills, and achievements; Salieri harshly judged Mozart's moral character. The possessor-envier seeks any reason why the envied does not deserve the honor: she plays the game; she's so mean, so smug, so whatever—so long as it's negative. Only a "thin" difference seems to exist, then, between possessor-envy and *ressentiment*.

Despite the confusions Scheler introduces into his account of "true envy" and existential- and *ressentiment*-envy, we can appeal after our clarification of self- and other-directed types of envy to one of Scheler's insights—namely, that the envious unlike *ressentiment*-man desires a definite and determinate object—in order to distinguish these two emotions based on their intentional focus. Scheler identifies a structural difference at the level of intentional focus between what I am calling possessor-envy and *ressentiment* with regard to how we "feel" the values in question ... when we feel unable to attain certain values" (35). This structural difference concerns two types of feelings contingent upon the agent's beliefs about himself and the other. The first type of feeling, an intentional feeling-act concerning how we "feel" [about] the values in question," "expresses" something like what students means when they claim to "feel like Augustine is too harsh on infants." This feeling-act is a mixed cognitive-affective value-judgment, which as such is intentional and discloses some thing or state of affairs as likeable or unlikeable. The second type of feeling, an affective response understood as a feeling-sensation of pleasure or pain that arises "when we feel unable to attain certain values," "indicates" (in the phenomenological sense) the tension experienced in seeing another fulfill a desire we did not or cannot fulfill.²¹ This affect indicates to the agent his concession that some desired thing, trait or capacity outstrips his reach or resources (at least for the present moment) and the affective value-judgment is laminated to it and discloses the painful as unlikeable. Initially, in the first instance of apprehending the other's superiority, the affects of possessor-envy and *ressentiment* are identical at the level of a feeling-sensation and value-apprehension. The affects or feelings of pain and displeasure, as noted in section one, cannot help us individuate

possessor-envy from *ressentiment* because they characterizes both emotional states. A closer look only at the feeling-act or intentional focus—what Scheler call the affective value-apprehension—can achieve this end. Indeed, it will do so in a way that reveals that both the intentional feeling-act or focus and its correlative feeling-sensation differ in both possessor-envy and *ressentiment*.

Granted, the “causal-delusion” characterizes the intentional affective feeling-act or value-apprehension of both the possessor-envier and *ressentiment*-man. A salient difference nevertheless lies in the fact that while the stymied possessor-envier may belittle the honoree and/or award, he will not belittle the value that the award signifies.

While the possessor is perhaps construed as one not deserving of that good, the good itself of recognition, honor, etc. remains good in the view of the possessor-envier who still feels or apprehends these values correctly. The desire for the good remains and—and precisely because—the values signified by that good are not “illusorily devalued”. Even if, like the fox to the inaccessible grapes, the possessor-envier belittles the particular award itself and/or its possessor, claiming perhaps to value teaching more than scholarship or integrity over reputation, for example, this emotional reaction remains a “determinate hostility,” i.e., one directed to a “specific and definite object,” the instantiation of the good (the award) and/or the possessor of the good that the possessor-envier desires but failed to acquire (48, 30). The possessor-envier has not falsified the values themselves. Good is still good, but he was mistaken (perhaps) in his belief that this particular thing accurately signifies the good, or perhaps he believes that the person who possesses the good does not deserve it (whereby indignation merely masks possessor-envy). This negative assessment of the unfulfilled desire for the award and the value it signifies, Scheler notes in a move Sartre might have admired, “relieves the tension between desire and impotence ... The desire now seems unmotivated ... and the tension decreases. Thus our ... feeling of power increases ... though on an illusory basis” (46).

The causal-delusion in possessor-envy is not an illusory devaluation of values but a devaluation of some particular instantiation of those values, some particular thing that signifies those values. As Scheler insightfully writes, the possessor-envier has “only [formed] a new opinion about the true qualities of the desired object” (46). This determinate and particular illusion in possessor-envy functions to change the possessor-envier’s beliefs about the world, in order to relieve the possessor-envier’s psychic-tension, but it does not strive to change the world itself. Iago never says that Cassio’s position is bad but only that Cassio is bad for the position insofar as Iago believes himself comparatively

better. Your neighbor’s new plasma television is not bad, it’s just that he bought last year’s model or should have bought the Sony rather than the Vizio, which you would have done, of course, had you the opportunity or the liquid assets to make the purchase yourself. Possessor-envy thus minimizes but does not eliminate impotence, whereas deficiency-envy neither minimizes nor eliminates impotence because there is no causal delusion at play. As such, the sense of self-satisfaction in each type of envy differs in quality and feeling.

Ressentiment, however, goes further than envy, possessor or otherwise; it holds different beliefs and takes a different and indeterminate object, to use Scheler’s language. *Ressentiment* does not just target groups rather than individuals; this is not what Scheler means by the claim that *ressentiment* does not take a determinate or definite object, for a group would be a determinate or definite object itself. *Ressentiment*, on the contrary, claims that the values themselves of intelligence, honor, success, beauty, etc., no longer are good and thus no longer desirable. The possessor of these values, then, is no longer consciously considered causally responsible for *ressentiment*-man’s lack but is now seen, instead, as someone to be pitied for having such an incorrect or superficial view of the world (48). It is not just that *these* grapes are sour in the view of *ressentiment*, but that, as Scheler incisively puts it, “sweetness is bad” (46); *ressentiment* is thus a “*falsification of the world view*” (47). While possessor-envy directed itself against specific and definite objects, the intentional focus of *ressentiment*—its intentional feeling-act or value-apprehension—“goes beyond such determinate hostilities—it ... perverts *the sense of values* itself ... [such that] ... those values which are positive to any normal feeling become negative ... power, health, beauty [etc.]” (48). The causal delusion in *ressentiment* strives to change the world and value itself rather than just the agent’s beliefs about determinate or particular objects—things, traits, or capacities—in the world that signify those values. In reality, *ressentiment* does not succeed, but psychically it believes it has. The intentional focus of *ressentiment* is the effort to “subvert this eternal order in man’s consciousness to falsify its recognition and to deflect its actualization” (45).²² As deficiency-envy preserves impotence and unhappiness with the self, while possessor-envy minimizes without eliminating but covering over the unpleasantness it causes, *ressentiment* both eliminates a sense of impotence and restores a sense of self-satisfaction by illusorily devaluing the proper value-structure of things, which eliminates the desire that would otherwise remain unfulfilled.

We can thus begin to see more precisely why envy surely always is bad. Beyond its hostile regard of the other and ineffective malicious tendencies, the

true badness of envy—its primary intentional focus—lies more persistently in its debilitation of the self. Scheler misses how deficiency-envy “flogs itself,” as Chaucer noted and Proverbs 14.30 implied, and thus minimizes the envier’s happiness. But his descriptions of existential-envy capture how what I am calling possessor-envy mitigates the self’s unhappiness by attributing its flaws to another and thus protecting a self it already does not like, as Gabrielle Taylor noted. While both types of envy “rot the bones,” things are otherwise with *ressentiment*. And Scheler seems to have been the first to emphasize the claim that envy is not—perhaps surprisingly—all bad even if it is bad for the envious self, for unlike *ressentiment* envy still desires and preserves the order of values, the good, which *ressentiment*-man must distort and pervert in order to “feel ‘good,’ ‘pure’ and ‘human ...’—perhaps all too human (48).²³

Notes

- 1 J. D’Arms and A. D. Kerr, “Envy in the Philosophical Tradition,” in *Envy: Theory and Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 38.
- 2 M. Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. L. B. Coser and W. W. Holdheim (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007), pp. 30, 31. Henceforth cited parenthetically without label as this is the only text cited parenthetically.
- 3 Since envy, *ressentiment* and any other emotion of comparative assessment attributed to the inferior party in this comparison will share the same affects of pain, displeasure, and so on, the affective quality cannot distinguish these emotions. Moreover, different people experience or “feel” the same emotions differently, and the same person may feel the same emotion differently at different times in her life. J. Drummond, “‘Cognitive Impenetrability’ and the Complex Intentionality of the Emotions,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11 (10–11) (2004). Reprinted in *Hidden Resources: Classical Perspectives on Subjectivity*, ed. Dan Zahavi (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), pp. 109–26. One wonders, of course, whether or not neural imaging studies of subjects presented with these emotional cases could identify differences at the neural level and whether or not these studies were well enough constructed to draw definitive conclusions regarding “affective” differences or still remained simply pain, pleasure, dislike, and so on that would remain indistinguishable or not individuating features.
- 4 When combined with his belief that emotions are disclosed by feelings, his view that *ressentiment* may arise from any number of certain emotions creates an impasse in attempts to phenomenologically distinguish envy and *ressentiment*, for any number of certain different emotions would share the same feelings or

- affects such as tension, pain, and so on. Yet Scheler not only sometimes holds that “feeling is nothing but cognition,” he also offers two further features that would individuate envy from *ressentiment*.
- 5 One wonders why one could not envy someone—those damn lottery winners that used to live down the street—every time one thinks of them for the rest of one’s life, the end of one’s life being the ending time of the state. If such is the case with envy, then wouldn’t *ressentiment* share the same fate with envy? It seems that this is a difference Scheler wishes to capture with respect to these two emotions, though I suspect that the emotion in this example is likely neither envy nor *ressentiment* insofar as it deals with a social gap and perceived injustice characteristic of resentment in the English sense.
 - 6 That a broad range of varied objects and persons trigger his emotions does not constitute indeterminacy. However he relates to the world with a pervasive attitude of frustration; however persistently he feels overlooked, this attitude manifests and in specific behaviors, e.g., his friendship of utility with Rodrigo and his constant whinging and scheming, and in emotions with specific and determinate objects, e.g., his envy toward Cassio, his contempt toward Othello. Iago is a man of envy and not *ressentiment*.
 - 7 Three potential problems—two extrinsic to Scheler’s theory and one intrinsic—exist with this second distinction between envy and *ressentiment*, however. First, the experience of impotence certainly can give rise to varied emotions beyond envy and *ressentiment*, including humiliation, embarrassment, grief, indignation, etc. Second, different senses of impotence exist in envy and difference senses of impotence exist between envy and *ressentiment*. For example, unlike *ressentiment*, envy is an emotion that occurs in relation to a neighbor or someone close to the envier in social standing. The envier may feel impotent and frustrated over his failure to secure the desired good in question, but he could attribute this failure to himself or the other. If the former occurs, then envy appears self-directed, perhaps self-pitying or self-lacerating; this is a point Scheler does not explore. Nevertheless, if the latter occurs, then envy begins to look like *ressentiment* insofar as it goes on the attack against the other. Yet while I may feel a certain *ressentiment* toward Donald Trump and may complain that his greed or excessive consumption causes the little financial man to suffer and feel impotent, it makes little sense to say I envy him because my efforts to achieve his wealth would be in vain given the choices I have made that now restrict my earning potential. To establish certain ground rules for adjudicating these difference, one can appeal to Aristotle’s claim that envy occurs between neighbors, but more importantly to ordinary language claims. The third potential problem, since it is intrinsic to Scheler’s theory, is discussed above in the body of the text.
 - 8 Scheler underscores this first essential precondition of “true envy”—impotence—

through a discussion of envy in relation to covetousness and emulation. The mere displeasure of seeing another enjoy a good we desire but lack, since it does not qualify as "true envy," likely refers to covetousness. Two different emotions, in turn, may emerge from the coveter's efforts to dissolve the disparity between himself and another depending on the success of the coveter's efforts, envy or emulation. Consistent with his view of "true envy," Scheler distinguishes envy from covetousness insofar as envy, "understood in its everyday usage, is due to a feeling of impotence which we experience when another person owns a good we covet" (29). According to Scheler's criteria for "true envy," true envy attacks the person who possesses the good that one desires but lacks because the true envier is impotent to rectify the situation; the coveter, however, does not attack the possessor of that good because he retains the power to rectify the situation and acquire the desired good. Emulation, on the other hand, does not thwart the agent by targeting the other negatively but instead incentivizes the inferior party (who may nevertheless resort to untoward activities to acquire the desired good). Scheler's first, essential feature of "true envy" thus effectively quarantines emulation from envy, for he strips envy of any positive or motivating quality, as Aristotle already had done.

- 9 F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1967), I.10, III.15.
- 10 Since Aristotle, work on envy has tended to focus on envy's begrudging regard of the envied and the envier's potentially harmful actions directed toward the envied. Roughly two millennia later, this view endures. As Scheler notes, envy grows out of covetousness—"aspiration," as he more politely puts it (R 35)—when "a feeling of impotence ... flares up into hatred against the owner" (29–30).
- 11 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1388a17. Scheler hints at an other- and self-directed sense of envy precisely in the notion of existential-envy when he writes: "existential-envy ... is directed against the other person's very nature ... the strongest source of *ressentiment* ... strips the opponent of his very existence, for this existence as such is felt to be a 'pressure,' a 'reproach,' and an unbearable humiliation" (30). Although humiliation constitutes a self-directed emotion, in Scheler's account the envious converts this self-assessment into an assessment of the other. As such, he does not explore the self-directed moment of envy that necessitates the conversion of self-destruction into other-destruction.
- 12 There is not a general consensus about whether envy involves believing that you deserve what the rival has. Adam Smith, for instance, seems not to make that assumption and, perhaps, even to take the opposite view: "Envy is that passion which views with malignant dislike the superiority of those who are really entitled to all the superiority they possess" (Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,

p. 244). Even here, however, Smith seems consistent with Aristotle, who argued that the *philodoxoi* envied the nobles who rightly enjoyed their goods; in this case, envy is unjust since it is unmerited pain at merited good fortune, unlike pity, which is merited pain at unmerited misfortune, and indignation, which is merited pain at unmerited good fortune.

- 13 L. Purshouse, "Jealousy in Relation to Envy," *Erkenntnis* 60 (2) (2004): 179–205.
- 14 G. Taylor, *Deadly Vices* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 45. Cf., L. Purshouse, "Jealousy in Relation to Envy," pp. 192–3.
- 15 The Lexus-owning, lottery-winning neighbor can be envious without feeling impotent. It's just that he doesn't have the desired superiority or exclusivity. Indeed, however, this renders him neither a possessor-envier nor a deficiency-envier, necessarily. Purshouse would call this a type of jealousy, a fear of losing what one has, exclusive or superior sense of esteem in community.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 43. The alternative, I have argued elsewhere against Taylor, who removes the envied from the picture along the lines of the analogy of hating the sinner but not the sinner, is covetousness.
- 18 As will be explained briefly below, Scheler likely would refuse the notion of deficiency-envy for two reasons. First, insofar as deficiency-envy need not necessarily imply impotence or the inability to improve one's circumstance, this is not "true envy." Second, insofar as deficiency-envy begrudges the other in the strict sense of the term (of reluctant regard) but not hatred, this type of envy would seem like an instance of being merely displeased.
- 19 G. Taylor, *Deadly Vices*, p. 43.
- 20 R. Solomon, *True to our Feelings: What our Emotions are Really Telling Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 101–3.
- 21 I mean to draw a parallel here between Scheler's senses of "feeling" and expression and indication according to Husserl's account of them in the first of his *Logical Investigations*. While Scheler and Schelerians may resist this relation given Scheler's attempt to liberate feeling from brute "senselessness," Scheler himself in *Ressentiment* notes that "'feeling' or 'preferring' a value is essentially an act of cognition." Rather than reduce Scheler's position to Husserl's, I merely think it useful to elaborate the complexities of Scheler's ambiguous use of "feeling" in this particular text, unlike his *Formalism* where this distinction is clearer.
- 22 Scheler, of course, posits a genuine morality based in an eternal hierarchy of values much like that found in the work of Augustine. Contra Nietzsche, then, values are not historically conditioned even if they are realized or apprehended historically.
- 23 If the point is that envy, whatever else is bad about it, can be good in that it involves correct valuations of the rival's circumstances as compared to one's own

(e.g., recognizing and desiring a good) rather than distorting them, is a view like this implicit in the Adam Smith quote from 1759 that "Envy is that passion which views with malignant dislike the superiority of those who are really entitled to all the superiority they possess"? Indeed, wouldn't it be a bit surprising if Smith was even the first to recognize this? But perhaps one already finds a claim of this sort in Augustine's *Confessions* insofar as "Enviousness claims that it strives to excel, but what can excel before You?" (*Confessions*, II.6).

Reinach's Phenomenology of Foreboding: Battlefield Notes, 1916-17

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In a conversation with Edith Stein and Fritz Kaufmann about his enlistment in the army, Adolf Reinach said: "it is not that I must go; rather I'm permitted to go." After Germany's declaration of war on France in the summer of 1914, Reinach, like many German intellectuals, immediately volunteered for the army with great enthusiasm, even attempting to exercise pressure to be admitted as quickly as possible. He was recruited in his hometown of Mainz in mid-August, and after two weeks of training he was assigned to the reserve battery of the 21st Field Artillery Regiment of the 21st Reserve Division under the command of his younger brother, Heinrich. By February of 1915, he was fighting in the trenches against France, and later he received the Iron Cross for his efforts during this time. By November of 1915, Reinach was stationed in Belgium, serving the supply lines to the front, and in October of 1916 he was promoted to commander of the 185th Field Artillery Regiment. It was during this time on the Belgian front that he wrote a collection of rough notes (*Aufzeichnungen*): *Zur Phänomenologie der Ahnungen* (Phenomenology of Foreseeing/Foreboding)¹ dated July 1916, and later three other fragments under the heading *Bruchstück einer religionsphilosophischen Ausführung* (Fragment of a Treatise on the Philosophy of Religion) titled *Das Absolute* (the Absolute), *Struktur des Erlebnisses* (Structure of Experience), and *Skeptische Erwägungen* (Skeptical Considerations) (September/October 1917).² On November 16, 1917, Reinach died on the battlefield in Flanders; he was 34.

In this essay, I will introduce and discuss the relatively unknown and underappreciated battlefield notes. Since these are unpolished and incomplete fragments, I must attempt to draw conclusions about where Reinach intended to take his phenomenological investigation of foreboding and illustrate relationships that