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revulsion, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /rɪˈvʌlʃn/, U.S. /rəˈvʌlʃən/, /rɪˈvʌlʃən/

Forms: 15 **revulsione**, 15–16 **reuulsion**, 15–16 **revultion**, 15– **revulsion**.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from French. Partly a borrowing from Latin. **Etymons:** French *revulsion*; Latin *revulsiōn-*, *revulsiō*.

Etymology: < Middle French *revulsion* (1538, only in medical sense; French *révulsion*) and its etymon classical Latin *revulsiōn-*, *revulsiō* action of tearing off, in post-classical Latin also in spec. medical sense (1535 or earlier) < *revuls-*, past participial stem of *revellere* (see REVEL *v.*²) + *-iō* -ION *suffix*¹. Compare Spanish *revulsión* (mid 16th cent.), Portuguese *revulsão* (1661), Italian *revulsione* (1692).

1. Med. The action or process of withdrawing humours, blood, etc., from one part of the body by means of a treatment applied to another part; counterirritation. Also: an instance of this. Cf. DERIVATION *n.*¹ 1c. Now *hist.*

- ?1541 R. COPLAND *Galen's Fourth Bk. Terapeutyke sig. Gijj*, in *Guy de Chauliac's Questyonary Cyrurgyens* Yf the fluxyon be impetuous & great we shal make reuulsion [Fr. *reuulsion*] in the contrary partyes.
- 1598 A. M. tr. J. Guillemeau *Frenche Chirurg.* VIII. ii. f. 40^v/1 As oftentimes as we desire to make any derivatione, revulsione, interceptione, or evacuatione, of anye matter.
- 1643 J. STEER tr. Fabricius *Exper. Chyrurg.* v. 19 Let there be used..blood-letting, cupping, and other revultions.
- 1684 tr. T. Bonet *Guide Pract. Physician* IV. 123 When a Loosness is cured by the use of a Bath, it is cured by revulsion.
- c1720 W. GIBSON *Farriers New Guide* II. iii. 10 This Method of Revulsion has been safely practised among all Physicians.
- 1778 W. LEWIS *New Dispensatory* (Dublin ed. 4) II. 79/1 Sydenham assures us, that among all the substances which occasion a derivation or revulsion from the head, none operate more powerfully than garlick applied to the soles of the feet.
- 1833 J. FORBES et al. *Cycl. Pract. Med.* I. 524/1 Derivation or revulsion is often found to occur independently of any artificial excitation.
- 1874 H. C. WOOD *Treat. Therapeutics* 474 The process being called revulsion, or counter-irritation.
- 1903 M. S. GABRIEL tr. G. H. Roger *Infectious Dis.* xxiii. 768 Revulsion is often practised upon the region of the skin corresponding to the diseased organ as well as in distant parts.
- 1987 *Jrnl. Amer. Hist.* 74 516/1 The epidemic had forced physicians to reduce the level of depletion, revulsion, and other modes of quick derivation typical of early practice.

2.

a. The action or process of drawing back or away (*from*); the fact of being drawn back or away; an instance of this. In later use predominantly *fig.* and in figurative context.

- 1609 J. DAVIES *Holy Roode* sig. D1 That Head..vpon whose Crowne Depends the highest Heau'ns resplendant Roofe By whose reuulsion It would soone fall downe.
- 1662 R. BOYLE *Examen Mr. T. Hobbs* 88 in *New Exper. Physico-mechanicall* (ed. 2) The repeated impulse and revulsion of the Sucker.
- 1687 P. RYCAUT *Hist. Turks* II. 91 There necessarily followed a Revulsion of the Forces from Dalmatia.
- 1768 L. STERNE *Sentimental Journey* I. 62 The blood and spirits, which had suffer'd a revulsion from her, crowd'd back to her.
- 1776 A. SMITH *Inq. Wealth of Nations* II. IV. vii. 214 Thrown out of employment by the revulsion of capital from other trades.
- 1850 W. E. GLADSTONE in *Q. Rev.* Mar. 321 For common speculative liberalism..he had a contempt as energetic even as his revulsion from theology.
- 1877 G. MATHIESON *Growth Spirit of Christianity* II. xxix. 159 We behold next its [sc. the Papacy's] revulsion from the authority of the State, its refusal to render unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's.
- 1931 *Observer* 6 Sept. 6/4 The revulsions into Sunday School pretty-pretty are equally surprising.
- 1955 *Brain* 78 586 There has been a revulsion from the..idea of the nervous system as a telephone exchange.
- 1996 J. P. YOUNG *Reconsidering Amer. Liberalism* xiv. 251 He seems simply unable to conceive the possibility that the revulsion from authority in the S&S years might have been fully warranted.

†**b.** A forceful separation or tearing (or being torn) away. *Obs.*

- 1663 J. HEATH *Chron. Late Intestine Wars* 308 Their violent Revulsion out of that Bosome, where they might and ought to have been cherished to a competent vigour.
- 1796 F. BURNEY *Camilla* I. II. xi. 334 Drawn by a total revulsion of ideas from the chain of thinking that had led him to composition, he relinquished his annotations in resentment of this dismissal.

†**c.** Recovery, restoration. *Obs. rare*⁻¹.

- c1760 in *Etoniana* (1865) 74 One of his..pupils speaks of the 'revulsion' of the fame of Eton 'owing to his able..administration'.

3. A sudden violent change of feeling; (in modern use chiefly) a strong emotional reaction against something; abhorrence, repugnance; a

sense of loathing; (also) an instance of this.

- 1699 J. DENNIS *Rinaldo & Armida* II. 14 He meditates profound, and fetches sighs, Which..With terrible Revulsions shake his Soul.
- 1751 E. HAYWOOD *Hist. Betsy Thoughtless* IV. vi. 50 All together racked her with most terrible revulsions.
- 1793 C. SMITH *Old Manor House* III. ix. 213 It was the..long walk of the preceding evening..that occasioned an unlucky revulsion.
- 1816 SCOTT *Old Mortality* v, in *Tales of my Landlord* 1st Ser. IV. 93 The transition from the verge of the grave to a prospect of life, had occasioned a dizzy revulsion in his whole system.
- 1853 C. KINGSLEY *A. Smith & A. Pope* in *Misc.* (1860) I. 289 There comes a natural revulsion from the baldness and puerility into which Wordsworth too often fell.
- 1867 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Ess.* (1871) 1st Ser. iii. 55 The cause of this strange..direction of popular feeling is to be found in a sort of generous revulsion of sentiment.
- 1924 *Amer. Mercury* Sept. 107/2 The wily sage of Monticello [sc. Jefferson] realized that as soon as the real import of the acts was fully grasped by the country at large, there would be a marked revulsion of opinion against the Federalists.
- 1943 A. M. LINDBERGH *Diary* 21 Feb. in *War within & Without* (1980) 327 I feel conscious of how I hate the house—with an almost physical revulsion—that apricot living room, with the false bumpy walls.
- 1975 R. S. DENISOFF *Solid Gold* i. 27 Revulsion became Alice Cooper's ticket to pop-music fame.
- 2004 L. JENSEN *Ninth Life of Louis Drax* 70 We have all those nightmares in which we do something monstrous, then wake, skin clammy with revulsion.

4. A sudden or marked (esp. untoward) reaction or reversal in trade, fortune, etc.

- 1779 W. EDEN *Three Lett. Earl of Carlisle* 87 A moderate tax..would not occasion any check or revulsion in the present system of expence.
- 1830 I. D'ISRAELI *Comm. Life Charles I* III. xiv. 321 In that great revulsion of fortune, the Archbishop was consigned to the hands of his old Sectarian.
- 1832 R. SOUTHEY *Ess.* I. 147 To grow up..while the trade flourishes, and to be thrown out of employ..when it meets with any sudden revulsion.
- 1848 J. S. MILL *Princ. Polit. Econ.* II. 195 A state of business which, when pushed to an extreme length, brings on the revulsion called a commercial crisis.
- 1913 W. G. L. TAYLOR *Credit Syst.* IV. xi. 302 There is no difficulty in establishing the fact that gold is at a premium, or, in the case of revulsion after a crisis, at a discount, in paper.
- 1939 R. SYME *Rom. Revol.* xxviii. 424 Other nobles with influential connexions..were not so deeply committed to the court faction that they could not survive, and even profit from, a revulsion of fortune.
- 2001 E. J. BALLEISEN *Navigating Failure* I. i. 33 Contemporaries referred to the most severe revulsions of credit as 'panics'.

DERIVATIVES**re'vulsionary** *adj.*

- 1817 J. PORTER *Pastor's Fire-side* II. ix. 249 The statesman's frowns had not been those of displeasure at the young secretary's revulsionary indecorum.
- 1900 F. T. BULLEN *Idylls of Sea* 248 Recovering from that revulsionary paroxysm, all hands rushed upon the retreating mass.
- 1994 L. E. BOOSE in R. Burt & J. M. Archer *Enclosure Acts* I. ix. 197 An English pornography that brought together prurient lust and revulsionary loathing.

This entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, March 2010).

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