****In Defence of Despair about Climate Breakdown****

Anh-Quân Nguyen

**Abstract**

Both within the climate movement and in academic circles, it has become common advice to avoid despair. Despair about the climate crisis is the opposite of hope and should be avoided on grounds of both rational aptness and pragmatic considerations. Despair about climate breakdown is only rationally apt if it is impossible for our actions to make a difference. As our actions do make a difference, despair is not a fitting response to climate change (McKinnon 2014). Further, we have pragmatic reasons to avoid despair as it leads to apathy and inaction about climate change (Malm 2021, Huber 2023, Thaler 2022). This chapter argues that despair is a rationally apt response to the climate crisis. Despair is a fitting response to the structural features of the climate crisis in terms of fragmentation of agency (Gardiner 2006), making despair an accurate representation of a situation lacking agency. Despair is an important source of moral knowledge about the structure of the climate crisis, which is not automatically outweighed by pragmatic reasons (Hutton 2022, Srinivasan 2017), and demanding to avoid despair can lead to affective injustice. The chapter closes with considerations whether despair really does hinder moral imagination.

**The world has for the first time breached the 1.5°C target for a year in a row (**Poynting **2024). According to the EU’s climate change service, the world’s average temperature between 2023 and 2024 reached 1.52 degrees of warming, breaching the target years earlier than expected. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels was designated by the IPCC as the “safe” target for global warming, with impacts and risks for both natural eco-systems and humanity to be significantly lower compared to an average of 2*°* in global warming (IPCC 2018). IPCC warned in 2018 that global warming above 1.5°C average would make adaptation efforts significantly more difficult, and that both mitigation and adaptation efforts would “*fall disproportionately on the poor and vulnerable”* of the world.** While 2018 is not that long ago for philosophers, it is vastly outdated in terms of climate science. In its 2023 assessment report summary, the IPCC now predict current pathways to lead to 3.2**°C of global warming. (IPCC 2023)**

There are several striking aspects about the breach of **1.5°C**, most of all the reaction, or more precisely, the lack of reactions from the most powerful governments and corporations. Coinciding with the 2023 report are governments’ commitments to an increase in fossil fuel extraction and usage, immediately defying the more optimistic roadmaps the IPCC has modelled[[1]](#endnote-1), while the sustained breach of **1.5°C coincided with the UK Labour party abandoning its green pledges, and the European Union slashing its climate targets to reduce agricultural emissions in response to farmer protests (Financial Times 2024 & Guardian 2024).**

How do people who care about the climate crisis react to this situation? The vast majority of young people around the world react with what has been coined eco-anxiety. Eco-anxiety, defined by Wikipedia, is simply “fear, worry and distress about environmental doom”, while the American Psychology Association (2017) frames it as “the chronic fear of environmental cataclysm that comes from observing the seemingly irrevocable impact of climate change and the associated concern for one’s future and that of the next generations”. A 2021 study on eco-anxiety in children and young people by the Lancet, surveying 10 000 children in 10 countries around the world, found that 59% of participants were “extremely worried about climate change”, 84% were “at least moderately worried”, and 75% agreed that “the future is frightening” due to the prospect of climate and environmental breakdown. (Hickman 2021)

Hidden in the term climate anxiety are a surprising number of emotions, including being sad (66.7%), anxious (61.8%) afraid (67.3%), angry (56.8%), powerless (56%), helpless (50.9%), guilty (50.2%), ashamed (45.6%), despair (44.2%), hurt (42.1%), grief (41.5%), and depressed (38.6%), with the target objects being climate change itself, the resulting impacts on both eco-systems, current and future human generations, one’s own prospects of living a good life, as well as the diminishing prospect of addressing and preventing catastrophic climate breakdown. The 2021 study finds a correlation between these negative emotions and “the failure of governments to adequately reduce, prevent, or mitigate climate change is contributing to psychological distress, moral injury, and injustice.”, with 82.6% of children agreeing that people have failed to take care of the planet.

Are these emotions a rational response to climate change? Taking a look into recent discussions suggests that climate anxiety is increasingly pathologised, something to be treated, managed, worked through, or done away with. For example, Sarah Ray advises in *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* (2020) on how to avoid eco-anxiety leading to burnout and despair and cautions against doom and gloom narratives. Similar titles include *Turn the Tide on Climate Anxiety* (2022) or *A Guide to Eco-Anxiety: How to Protect the Planet and Your Mental Health* (2020), providing self-help recommendations on how to deal with the dark emotions that have become so widespread in younger generations, specifically on how to manage your fear, anger and anxiety with the goal to avoid despair about the climate crisis.

In philosophical literature, things are similar: while there is a growing body of writing on ecological grief (e.g. Cunsolo/Landsmann 2017), and a more nuanced treatment of emotions like anger (e.g. Whyman, forthcoming), most philosophers agree that despair about climate change is not a rational response to climate change. For example, Catriona McKinnon (2014) argues that despair is an apt response to situations we cannot affect or change. Since our actions can and do make a difference in preventing climate breakdown, despair is not a rationally apt response. Andreas Malm in *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (2021) agrees with McKinnon and stresses in addition that despair hinders our imaginative faculties, making it difficult for us to imagine transformative change and collective action. And John Nolt (2008) argues that despair in itself is a form of suffering that we have a duty to avoid in an imperative of hope. Even more sympathetic writers like Huber (2023) insist that, while “episodic” despair can be justified by helping us towards better hope, despair fundamentally is a danger to our agency. This is echoed in the climate movement itself, with a famous Banksy mural stating “From this moment despair ends and tactics begin” appearing to accompany the first Extinction Rebellion blockades in London.

**<Figure 13.1 here>**

**Figure 13.1.**

**<alt text:** Mural attributed to Banksy, Marble Arch during Extinction Rebellion protests in London, 2019. The slogan ("From this moment despair ends and tactics begin") is from The Revolution of Everyday Life by Raoul Vaneigem, 1967**>**

This chapter argues that this consensus has moved too quickly, and that despair about climate change is not only a rational response to the situation we find ourselves in, but provides important moral insights into the nature of the climate crisis. I argue for two main points: First, despair is a rationally apt response both in terms of fitting the progression of climate change according to the latest climate science as well as fitting the political circumstances we are finding ourselves in. Second, despair as an emotion reveals important moral knowledge about the structure of the climate crisis and how we ought to respond to it, such as the structural obstacles that stand in the way of tackling the root causes of the climate crisis.

Section I provides a short clarification on the different conceptual understandings of despair, while section II outlines and rebuts arguments that despair is not a rationally apt response to climate change. Section III considers how the so-called counter-productivity critique against despair is weighted against despair being an apt response to climate change, and how young people, climate activists, climate scientists and others despairing about the climate crisis are subject to *affective injustice*. Section IV engages with the question on whether despair is hindering moral imagination and argues that despair is an important source for moral knowledge.

# I

Despair has a long philosophical history, often contrasted with faith in Thomistic and Kierkegaardian thought.[[2]](#endnote-2) Recent literature however has contrasted despair with hope: despair is taken either to be synonymous with or closely related to hopelessness, either as an emotion that has the opposite affective connotations to hope, or as a belief, outlook or stance that is opposed to being hopeful.

According to what the philosophical literature calls the ‘standard account’ of hope, hope involves both a desire that p and a belief that p is probable to some degree, while the standard account of desire involves a desire that p and a belief that p is improbable to some degree. However, this leads to the standard account being unable to distinguish between hope and despair when two agents desiring the same outcome and believe in its possibility to the same degree (Meirav 2009). If you and I both desire global warming to be limited to **2*°* and both believe in the same level of probability that the 2*°* target can be realised, it is possible for me to despair over the low odds of limiting global warming, while you can still be hopeful about the goal. This shows that there is need for a revision of the ‘standard’ account, either in terms of the belief, the affective component, or a third factor that distinguishes hope and despair from each other.**

For example, McKinnon deviates from the account by omitting the affective component and limiting despair and hope to opposing beliefs, stating that “hope involves the belief that the future in which its objective exists is logically, conceptually, and nomologically possible” (2014: 34), and that despair means losing hope, typically generated by a judgement that this objective is not possible anymore. If I hope that catastrophic climate breakdown can be prevented by limiting global warming to **2*°***, I need to believe that the objective is still possible and achievable – despair about the **2*°*** target would involve me believing that this is not achievable in some way. Malm (2021) seems to follow her lead.

For McKinnon, whether despair or hope are justified hinges on the judgement that any individual action I pursue will not make a difference in mitigating climate change. If this judgement is correct, then despair is the rationally apt response. If it is not, and there are at least some forms of individual action I can pursue that *could* make a difference, despair is not justified, and we ought to be hopeful. Generally, for McKinnon, hope tracks possibility and is associated with agency, while despair tracks impossibility or extreme improbability and is associated with a debilitation of the will, leading us towards inaction and fatalism (2014: 35). As long as there is uncertainty about outcomes, and my actions could still affect what comes to pass, hope is a justified response. But if the outcome is already certain to not come to pass or is extremely unlikely, or if my actions cannot or will most likely not make a difference, despair becomes more rationally apt.

On the other hand, Huber (2023) more substantially diverges from the standard account, adding that agents not only need to desire that p and believe that p is probable or improbable, but also need to envision and imagine the gap between themselves and the desired outcome in a specific way. For a person to be hopeful about the **2° target,**they need to

1. Desire for global warming to be limited to **2°**
2. **Believe that the 2° target is possible but not certain**
3. **Be able to see the way the 2° target can come about**
4. **See that way to the 2° target as a genuine possibility.**

In contrast to this, a despairing agent can still see that (2) the 2**°** target may be principally possible to achieve (e.g. by immediately phasing out fossil fuel consumption), but either (3) cannot see a realistic way we can limit global warming to **2° (e.g. because they cannot imagine how we would stop fossil fuel consumption), or (4) can envision a way we can still reach the 2° target, but not see this as a genuine possibility (Kwong 2018). Either of these lead the despairing person to give up and withdraw from the objective in question. Huber asserts that despair and hope defined in this way are opposites in the sense that they not only are mutually exclusive – I cannot both be hopeful and despair about the 2° target at the same time – but also jointly exhaustive: If I (1) desire the 2° target and (2) believe the 2° target is possible, I am either hopeful about it or I despair, as in “high stakes” scenarios such as climate breakdown, mental or affective abstention are not possible. Agents desiring and deliberating about such objectives need to attend to their desires in some way (Huber 2023: 84).**

Huber goes on to distinguish between episodic, fundamental, and resignative despair:

*Episodic Despair:*A temporary state that leaves open the possibility of regaining hope

*Fundamental Despair:* A general state of hopelessness, loss of any ground of hope, an experience of ultimate and decisive abandonment

*Resignative Despair:* a desire for an outcome combined with the belief that such an outcome is impossible

Episodic despair, he argues, is the only form of despair that shouldn’t be rejected, as it can help us to hope well, by guarding us against false hopes in the forms of wishful thinking, complacency, and fixation. For us to hope well, its probability estimate needs to be accurate, and it needs to help us further our ends (2023 :87). If this is not the case, hope can become degenerative or irrational, leading us to wishful thinking by overestimating probabilities of desired outcomes (e.g. being overconfident about the likelihood of **the 2° target**, making us complacent and thereby hindering action (e.g. by having too much faith in external factors such as technological solutions to limit global warming), or lead us to become fixated on a goal to the detriment of alternative pathways and actions (e.g. by preventing us from shifting more attention to safeguarding those who are already impacted by overreaching 1.5**° of warming)**.

Episodic despair, as a temporary state open to us regaining being hopeful, can help ward off false ways of hoping, as long as the despair can be transitioned back into hope, so that paralysis and stifling of action can be avoided. Huber emphasises that “the justification of despair is conditional and instrumental; that it is valuable only insofar as and to the extent that it helps us to hope well.” (2023: 95). Hence, fundamental and resignative despair, according to Huber, are unjustifiable, for reasons that are similar to McKinnon: they are connected to a debilitation of the will, and lead us to inaction and fatalism.

Fundamental despair in particular, so Huber, has a more global dimension than episodic despair in that it might not just lead us to abandon one particular action, but to fatalism about any kind of action we might pursue, thereby, just like McKinnon argues, losing all sense of agency, and conceiving the future as already determined (Huber 2023: 83). Or in other words, in fundamental despair, “we do not despair of or over something, but find ourselves in a much deeper and consequential state of being in despair: a sense that nothing we do makes any difference and the world is closed off to our intervention.” (2023: 96)

In addition, Huber (2023: 96) outlines how fundamental despair phenomenologically “involves an existential feeling that is directed at the world as a whole; a loss of all meaning, where our entire temporal horizon breaks down.” Fundamental despair, often conjured by apocalyptic images and narratives of climate breakdown, not only leads to inaction and fatalism, but also towards a “crisis of imagination” (Thaler 2021) that makes it difficult or impossible to imagine how things could be different.[[3]](#endnote-3) This is also emphasised by Malm (2021) in the context of militant climate action: the more people believe that a radically different future is not possible, the less imaginable that future will be, hindering our imaginative capacities to envision and create militancy within the climate movement. Malm draws from McKinnon, who argues that despair can become a self-fulfilling prophecy: if a denial of agency and possibility becomes deep-rooted and repeatedly asserted, something that is thought to be impossible may thereby become impossible (2014: 45). Transferred to a context of collective action, despair leads to a crisis of imagination for climate militancy where I become more likely to imaginatively accept the end of the world as we know it rather than envision different, radical ways of stopping climate breakdown (Malm 2021: 142).

In summary, despair is posited as the opposite of hope. Despair is rejected as rationally justified due to (1) not correctly fitting the situation we are in, and (2) due to its connection to fatalism and inaction, leading us to withdraw from trying to make a difference as well as hindering our imaginative capacities to conceptualise change. Is this diagnosis correct when it comes to despair about climate change specifically? It’s without doubt from looking at quantitative evidence at the beginning, and considering testimonies of climate activists, that despair about climate change is widespread, particularly among young climate activists.[[4]](#endnote-4) But is the widespread despair about climate breakdown a rational response, or should we tell the young activists to rid themselves of despair and become hopeful?

In the following, I argue, against McKinnon, Huber and Malm, that despair about climate change, even in its fundamental form, is rationally apt. Even if we grant that despair may not be strategically useful as a response due to its connection to fatalism, it still fits the structure of the climate crisis as well as the political situation we find ourselves in. The demand to not despair and be hopeful can hence lead to a conflict between rational aptness and strategic rationality. The imperative to be hopeful therefore risks leading to what Srinivasan (2018) calls affective injustice in young climate activists.

# II

In the philosophy of emotions, one of the widely accepted views is cognitivism about emotions, according to which emotions are propositional sets of attitudes that represent value-laden objects or state of affairs in the world (D’Arms & Jacobson 2000). Like beliefs, emotions correspond to features of the world, and can be assessed in terms of how well the particular emotion corresponds to a particular state of affairs. For example, anger can be assessed in terms of how fitting or apt it is for a situation: if I am angry at my friend for making fun of me behind my back, my anger fits or is apt for the situation as anger corresponds correctly to situations of injustice. In cases of political anger, Black people’s anger is an apt response to the injustice of anti-black racism, while women’s anger is an apt response to the injustice of sexist oppression. To return to climate breakdown, the anger of 56.8% of young people is apt due to “the failure of governments to adequately reduce, prevent, or mitigate climate change” (Hickman 2021).[[5]](#endnote-5) While such a cognitivist approach to emotions is not uncontroversial, this chapter will stick to this view due to its dominance in the field as well as due to a cognitivist approach being a natural and intuitive way to assess of political emotions.[[6]](#endnote-6)

What does this mean for despair? Despair is representing a state of the world that is closed off to intervention, a loss or a lack of agency. This may be because, with McKinnon, it is thought to be impossible for me to intervene and bring about a different state of affairs, or with Huber because I cannot envision an intervention, or I do not see a successful intervention as a genuine possibility. Despair then is an apt emotion for a situation in virtue of correctly responding to a state of affairs that is lacking in agency, or it can be an inapt emotion if the situation is actually open to intervention. For example, if I despair about my love life, this may be rationally apt if it is actually impossible for me to find fulfilment in my love life, or because I correctly assess that, even if not impossible, there is a genuine lack of agency in my love life that hinders me in imaginatively bridging the gap between me and my hoped-for future with a fulfilling love life, e.g. caused by a string of unsuccessful dates, a series of bad break-ups, or modern dating apps that lead me to experience despair as an emotion corresponding to a state of affairs where I lack agency. My despair about my love life is not rationally apt, however, if my emotion is *not* accurately representing a state where I lack agency – for example, if the possibility of a successful date is very real, or if there are ample alternatives to dating apps. As Huber (2023) states, despair may be *episodic* if it is directed at, say, a particular relationship that I assess as doomed, but is *fundamental* if it extends to my love life overall.

So, to assess whether the despair that young people, climate activists, climate scientists, and a lot of people who care about climate change feel is rationally apt, we need to examine whether the despair that is felt is accurately corresponding to a situation where our agency is undermined, where we are lacking in agency, or face a situation that is closed off to intervention. We also need to assess despair about the climate crisis more generally, not episodic despair about a specific aspect of it, such as despair about a particular UN climate conference, a particular strategy such as divestment or civil disobedience. According to Huber (2023), episodic despair can be rational ways of temporarily despairing in a specific instance and help shield us from false hopes. The emotion in question is fundamental despair about climate breakdown, as a feeling of abandonment and general lack of agency when it comes to preventing the climate crisis turning catastrophic.

Recall that according to McKinnon, my despair is only rationally apt if it fits my inability to make a difference to climate change, or the inefficacy of my actions. In recent literature, there has been a lively debate on the inefficacy problem, and whether individual acts of emissions reduction in fact do make a difference or not.[[7]](#endnote-7) One could argue that, given the fact that the climate crisis is escalating faster than scientists have predicted, breaching the **1.5°C ceiling years earlier than thought, and the continuing insufficient action by most individuals to reduce their emissions does indicate that it is increasingly unlikely for my individual actions to make a difference. After all, McKinnon wrote her paper ten years ago, which in philosophy is recent, but given the rapidly changing assessments of climate scientists, she might have changed her mind on the aptness of despair now.**

However, this debate, while important, is not decisive for the question of whether despair is rationally apt. For our purposes, I’m happy to grant that our individual acts of emission reductions make a difference, or have a chance to be efficacious. But despair might still be an apt emotional response, as it can still correctly correspond to a situation where we lack agency, even if our individual acts make a difference. In other words, my despair about climate breakdown not only tracks my individual inefficacy, but other, wider features about my agency when facing climate change.

Climate change as a phenomenon is a structural issue with features that makes it exceptionally difficult to tackle. Stephen Gardiner calls climate change the “perfect moral storm” (2006: 398) that makes us extremely vulnerable to moral corruption. According to Gardiner, climate change is a phenomenon with a dispersion of cause and effect: greenhouse gases don’t cause a direct impact at the source of their emissions, but dispersed both geographically and temporally, cause loss and damage at different places at different times. If I take a flight now from Edinburgh to Berlin, the emissions from that flight may not cause any damage in either Scotland nor Germany, but instead in communities far away, like Pacific Islands that are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise and other effects of climate change. The emissions may also not be causing any damage now or in the near future, but could, due to the longevity of carbon emissions, remain in the atmosphere for hundreds of years, causing loss and damage for future generations (Gardiner 2006: 403, Jamieson 2014: 102). The dispersion of cause and effect across time and space makes it difficult for me to conceptualise my moral agency, barring me from fully understanding the moral weight of my action: even if I know that my flight has an impact and make a difference, I cannot say where and when the effect will be.

In addition to this, the scale of the climate crisis itself threatens to overwhelm our agency (Jamieson 2014: 103). Numbers like 1.2 billion people that could potentially be displaced by the effects of climate change by 2050, or a quarter million deaths per year by 2050 due to the effects of heat alone (IPCC 2023) are difficult for us to imagine, conceptualise and understand in terms of their moral weight, which makes a deliberation about them when considering our actions difficult. Even if I know that my continued consumption of dairy products causes unnecessary emissions, it is conceptually difficult for me to weigh a slice of cheese against potential heat deaths and displacement of climate refugees, as the scale of the crisis overwhelms my moral deliberation.

In effect, the scale of the climate crisis and its structural features of being geographically and temporally unbounded cause our moral agency to fragment and dissolve, making us prone to moral corruption (Gardiner 2006: 407-408). Even if we recognise the impact of our actions, the gravity of the moral demands in combination with our agency being fragmented by the structure of the climate crisis encourages self-manipulation and self-deception. Even if I know that my purchase of a new gas-guzzling SUV causes harm by unnecessary emissions, the structure of the climate crisis makes it so that it’s easy for me to deceive or distract myself from the moral weight of my action.

All these structural features about the climate crisis – dispersion of cause and effect, fragmentation of agency, scale of the climate crisis, moral corruption – are linked to a sense of loss of agency beyond individual efficacy, indicate a powerlessness in my agency, and hint at structural features of the climate crisis that reinforce its root causes in a way that undermines or undoes my individual acts even if they do make a difference. Even if I do not believe that my individual actions are inefficacious, it is rational for me to feel a sense of abandonment and loss of agency when facing climate change. Even if I believe that my actions do make a difference, I can nevertheless despair about climate change. It follows that McKinnon’s and Huber’s assumption that despair represents a lack of agency is correct. But this does not mean that for despair to be apt, my actions need to be inefficacious. Despair is apt if our agency is undermined in some way, and that can be through our actions not making a difference. But our agency can also be undermined by the structural features of a situation that - even if my individual acts do make a difference - fragment, undermine or corrupt our agency in other ways.

My despair is rationally fitting to a situation lacking agency, a lack of agency that extends to me as an agent, to other agents, as well as collectives and institutions that are inadequate to tackle responsibilities towards preventing climate breakdown. My despair is also not just episodic, but fundamental, corresponding to the general state of the climate crisis that, even if some of my actions may have an impact, seems closed off to intervention. I am not despairing just about civil disobedience as a strategy, or the prospects of ethical consumerism in actually reducing emissions – my despair is fundamental in the sense that it tracks the structure of the climate crisis as a situation lacking in agency. The despair that is so widespread among young people, climate activists, climate scientists and people concerned about climate breakdown is hence rationally apt, as a representation of the structure of the climate crisis that fragments our agency.

# III

So, despair as an emotion is rationally justified in terms of aptness, as a fitting response to the structure of the climate crisis. But critics of despair will reply: even if that is so, despair still is not pragmatically rational, as its strategic drawbacks of leading us to withdrawal and fatalism will cause us to abandon the struggle against catastrophic climate breakdown. According to McKinnon, Malm and Huber, despair (in its fundamental form) is a representation of lack or loss of agency and thereby inherently connected to giving up actions to address and mitigate climate change. Sure, it may be fitting, and certainly understandable, to feel despair about the state of the climate crisis. But if we want to halt its catastrophic effects on communities and ecosystems across the world, we need to avoid despair and be hopeful, as it increases the likelihood of success for our efforts against climate change. Or in McKinnon’s (2014: 45) words:

“The reason why combatting despair for effective personal action on climate change matters relates to the instrumental value of hope in securing effective agency, remembering that hope is despair’s opposite. Hope can increase the probability that a person’s agency achieves its purpose, and so can galvanise the person’s will as it aims at this purpose.”

Despair according to McKinnon impairs our agency, and if deep-rooted and “more than a fleeting doubt”, or with Huber, more than episodic, despair can become a self-fulfilling prophecy: by repeatedly asserting that we cannot bridge the gap between where we are now and where we want to be, we make it more likely that we actually cannot reach the point we desire. Hope, according to MacKinnon, “keeps open a space for agency between the impossible and the fantastical” and despair is therefore pragmatically necessary for us to avoid so that we have a chance to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown.

Additionally, one might argue that despair should be avoided because it’s bad for you – despair could be a form of suffering or harm that damages us as agents, and if we have prudential reasons or, according to Nolt (2010: 167), even a moral duty to avoid harm and suffering to ourselves, we ought to avoid despair as best as we can. In a climate change setting, this harm and suffering can take the form of burnout and mental health decline in climate activists, who, when experiencing despair, not only lose their ability to organise politically, but themselves experience the despair as suffering and pain.[[8]](#endnote-8) So, if we are to be prudential climate activists, prudence advises us to avoid despair as it impairs our agency and might even harm us.

For the moment, let’s assume that this is indeed the case, and grant that despair indeed is counterproductive and strategically irrational in its inhibiting of action and causing us to give up and abandon trying to change things. Instead, I draw from recent literature on affective injustice to argue that firstly, there is no straightforward argument that reasons of strategic rationality automatically trump reasons of rational aptness, and secondly, that the demand to avoid despair and stay hopeful leads to a costly and unfair deliberation and trade-off between aptly responding to climate change and strategic concerns about what they ought to feel that young people, climate activists, and people concerned about the climate crisis have to navigate.

In political debates about emotion, the critique that certain emotions are counterproductive to an agent’s goals is sometimes taken to be decisive. The anger of women about sexist oppression, the rage of Black people about racism is often criticised to be understandable but counterproductive to the goals of the feminist movement or the anti-racist movement. The response by feminists in particular is often to point out that there are many strategic uses of the emotion of anger, for example as an energising drive to end, or as a means to communicate an injustice.[[9]](#endnote-9) But this is not the only way to respond to this critique: Amia Srinivasan (2017) points out that even if the counterproductivity critique holds, whether an emotion is an apt response is independent of its productivity, and the ability to aptly respond to the world is valuable in itself. Her suggestion is that there is something valuable about apt anger as a way of appreciating injustice in the world, similar to our capacity for aesthetic appreciation. She writes:

“Imagine a person who does everything, as it were, by the ethical book—forming all the correct moral beliefs and acting in accordance with all her moral duties—but who is left entirely cold by injustice, feeling nothing in response to those moral wrongs of which she is perfectly aware. I don’t want to say that such a person has done anything wrong. But I do think it is natural to say that there is *something missing* in her; indeed, that it would be better, ceteris paribus, if she were capable of feeling anger towards the injustice she knows to exist.” (2017: 132, emphasis added)

A person that forms apt emotional responses to situations of injustice will feel anger and rage, and that in itself is valuable, as a way of correctly registering and appreciating the situation they are finding themselves in. What exactly is missing in a person who does not feel anything in the face of injustice? According to moral intuitionism, what that person is missing is *moral experience*, one of the foundations of moral knowledge. For many of us, merely deriving moral truths from a priori principles is not enough – we need to experience a variety of situations to become knowledgeable as moral agents. According to moral intuitionists, these moral experiences *are* emotions (Hutton 2022). Emotions are not only how we affectively represent different situations in the world, but are moral experiences that make up our moral knowledge. A person that feels apt anger about an unjust situation gains moral experience about injustice. If I look at the latest IPCC report (2023) that specifies that the effects of climate change disproportionately affect poorest **communities that are least responsible for climate change, I can still form my moral beliefs about what we ought to do without feeling anything about it. But my anger reveals to me a moral landscape of deep climate injustice and constitutes a moral experience leading me to gain moral knowledge about the injustice inherent in the climate crisis.**

What moral knowledge does despair reveal about the climate crisis? As I argued, despair about the climate crisis fits the loss of our agency due to the structural features of climate change that undermine, frustrate and fragment our agency, through cause-and-effect dispersion, the scale of the crisis, and making us prone to moral corruption. So, apt despair reveals moral experiences to us about the lack of agency, how our agency can be inhibited by structural features of a situation. My apt despair about the climate crisis constitutes moral knowledge about climate change being, in Gardiner’s (2006) words, the perfect moral storm. In other words, if an agent does everything “by the book” and gathers all information about climate change, deriving her duties and responsibilities correctly, and forming correct moral beliefs, but does not feel despair, we might say that she is missing something about the climate crisis. She lacks moral experience about the true scale and nature of climate change and how difficult it is to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown.

This does not refute the counterproductivity challenge directly – pointing out that aptly experiencing despair constitutes moral knowledge only shows that despair has normative weight. Because of this weight, according to Srinivasan (2017: 133), agents with an apt emotional response about the world that have to stop feeling it in order to do something about it, are experiencing a *genuine normative conflict*, having to “choose between making the world as it should be, and appreciating and marking the world as it is”. The demand on Greta Thunberg and other youth activists to be less angry so that she is less irritable and more convincing about the urgency of tackling climate change forces her into a substantive normative conflict between reasons of aptness and reasons of prudence. The same is true for the demand to not despair and be hopeful instead so that we can stop climate change, involving a conflict between reasons for apt despair and prudential reasons to be hopeful. This conflict, which may involve psychologically costly and exhausting deliberation, may not even be resolvable for some agents, as deliberating between aptly appreciating the state of the climate crisis and the pragmatic concern to take action to stop the climate crisis involves two different kinds of reasons that are not straightforwardly weighed against each other. Reasons of aptness and prudential reasons are incommensurable.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Srinivasan (2017: 134) argues for two lessons: Firstly, there is no account as of yet explaining why prudential considerations should always trump considerations of aptness. Just like how critics of political anger have to explain why it is less important to appreciate an unjust situation we find ourselves in than bettering our unjust situation, proponents of the counterproductivity critique of despair have to explain why it is overwhelmingly more important for us to prioritise strategic concerns about maintaining our agency than for us to appreciate how our agency is undermined. It might well be that such an account exists: maybe there are in the end good reasons for us to prioritise prudence over aptness, since prioritisation in practical reasoning may involve prudential considerations in itself. In the case of despair, given the urgency of climate change, and the need for us to act quickly and intensely, it may hence be that prudential concerns in the end will always trump reasons of aptness, especially for climate activists and others engaged in the struggle against climate breakdown. But this account has to be argued for, and it is by no means automatic that maintaining action at all cost trumps appreciating and understanding what is fragmenting our agency.

Secondly, the demand to prioritise prudence over aptness causes what Srinivasan (2017: 135) calls *affective injustice*. Affective injustice is a second-order injustice, in which victims of oppression are forced to negotiate between one’s apt emotional response to one’s already unjust situation and one’s need to better one’s unjust situation. This is not only normatively and psychologically taxing for people already experiencing oppression but is unfair as victims of oppression “through no fault of their own, into profoundly difficult normative conflicts” (2017:136). A woman who experienced a first-order injustice in the form of sexist oppression can be forced into negotiating between her rage and her desire to end sexist oppression. An indigenous leader who experienced environmental injustices at the hands of governments and fossil fuel corporations may be forced into deliberating whether to aptly emotionally respond to their situation with anger, or to swallow their emotions in order to stay functional and engage “constructively” to end the environmental injustice for their tribe.

There is no doubt that the demand to avoid despair and stay hopeful comes from well-meaning people who want to maintain the agency of the climate movement at a pivotal point. The demand may be less politically dubious than the advice to Black people to swallow their anger about anti-black racism. And it is open to question whether climate activists experience first-order injustices that are relevantly similar to sexist or racist oppression – some certainly do, such as environmental defenders or vulnerable communities on the frontline of the climate crisis. But even those of us in the climate movement who do not experience outright oppression are at risk of affective injustice.

Consider a climate scientist who for years and years has presented the latest science on global warming to world leaders. Given the rapidly escalating climate crisis, she feels increasingly desperate about her warnings, but she also knows that if she presents the data in a manner too shrill, too alarmist or too hysterical, it will be discounted by her audience. She experiences apt despair but must negotiate it with her aims to convince leaders to take action.

Imagine next a group of climate activists in a northern country which heavily relies on fossil fuels for its energy. The activists have for years organised protests, marches, and sit-ins to end fossil fuel usage in their country, to no avail. As they follow the latest climate science, they know time is running out, and feel increasingly desperate about the situation and their inability to change their nation. But the group knows that if they give in to the despair, they might stop being able to organise the next protest, so they must negotiate their apt despair with their need to function as a protest group.

Imagine a young person, who is not yet of age, but as a keen learner, reads about climate change. She knows as a result that, to no fault of her own, she and her generation will bear the brunt of the impact of the climate crisis, and feels anger at the injustice of this, but despairs as there was no possibility for her to have prevented the causes of the climate crisis due to the extended temporal boundaries of the crisis. She knows however, that her despair may cause her mental health to decline, threatening her exam results and future prospects. She is forced to negotiate between her apt despair and her agency as a person.

All three cases are instances of affective injustice – the demand to stay hopeful and avoid despair leads to an unfair and unjust burden on those who aptly experience emotions that correspond to the state and scale of the climate crisis. The climate scientist may already experience a first order testimonial injustice of not receiving the credibility she deserves, but is forced into a second injustice of having to engage in a costly and exhausting deliberation about how much she ought to feel despair. Similar things can be said about the climate activist group. And the young person already finds herself in an unjust situation of being unfairly subjected to a climate crisis that was in the making before she was born. Now she is forced to negotiate between feeling an apt response to her lack of agency in this situation, and maintaining her personal agency. In Srinivasan’s words, “things are even worse than we generally take them to be. This is the ugly truth that those who would dismiss [emotions] on the grounds of its counterproductivity obscure, inadvertently or purposefully.” (2017: 136)

# IV

So far, I have argued that despair is a rationally apt response to the climate crisis as it fits the structural features of climate change that undermine our agency. This not only explains well why climate despair is relatively widespread amongst young people; in a way, there is nothing wrong with the kids, they are on the contrary relatively perceptive of the scale of the climate crisis – maybe more so than some folk from older generations. It also explains why certain appeals by world leaders and self-help books to be hopeful feel so hollow: our moral experience tells us something different about the state of the climate crisis that is escalating every month, and the inaction or complicity of governments and corporations. While it may well be right that despair can be counterproductive, it is nevertheless an accurate representation of the realities of climate change, and there is a price young people, climate activists, climate scientists, and others despairing about the climate crisis pay when negotiating between apt emotions about climate change and maintaining their agency so that they can act against climate breakdown. This mental toll we ask of those who have done more than most to stop climate change is in itself an injustice that is entrenched every time we ask them to not despair and be hopeful.

Is all despair hindering our agency? As Huber (2022) argued, episodic despair can sometimes be productive in keeping us from false hopes, and thereby make us better agents. But despair in a more fundamental sense will hinder our agency by “becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy” (McKinnon 2014), leading to a “crisis of imagination” (Thaler 2021) that makes us unable to envision how we can close the gap between where we are and what we want. In Malm’s (2021: 142) words:

“Imagination is a pivotal faculty here. The climate crisis unfolds through a series of interlocked absurdities ingrained in it: not only is it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, or the deliberate large-scale intervention in the climate system – what we refer to as geoengineering – than in the economic system; it is also easier, at least for some, to imagine learning to die than learning to fight, to reconcile oneself to the end of everything one holds dear than to consider some militant resistance.”

Or as Huber (2023: 96) says, “If I am in fundamental despair, any attempt to act constructively seems absurd.” I agree with Huber that, if I am in fundamental despair about climate change, I may not act constructively. But I close this chapter by raising a question mark over the claim that despair leads to a crisis of imagination, and point to cases where despair has led to militant, radical actions that may seem absurd to someone hopeful. A person’s despair can lead them to exercise their agency in radical, absurd ways that someone like Albert Camus (1955) would describe as asserting their freedom against a world that has closed off possibility. Not having absurdity have the last word is something a despairing agent can achieve, and for pessimists like Camus an act of rebellion.

Consider a case that Andreas Malm (2021: 150) cites: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, where Jews who knew that they would die chose resistance with no hope for victory:

“In the ghettos, as in the extermination camps to which they were the antechamber, the reistants embarked on a race against death. To struggle and resist was the only lucid choice, but this most often meant for the fighters no more than choosing the time and manner of their death. Beyond the immediate outcome of the struggle, which most often was inevitable, their combat was for history, for memory… This affirmation of life by way of a sacrifice and combat with no prospect of victory is a tragic paradox that can only be understood as an act of faith in history.”

This passage by Alain Brossat and Sylvie Klingberg (2016: 162) reads the Warsaw uprising from an optimistic lens as an “act of faith in history”, which may be based on a fundamental hope, or following Jonathan Lear (2006), a radical hope that despite disaster, something good, something of value will emerge. But in my mind, it is just as likely radical, fundamental despair that led to violent resistance with no possibility of victory or survival. While some participants in the uprising surely have held radical hope, I suspect that at least some were motivated by a radical despair, that resigned the possibility of their own survival and created a courage from their despair, to die at least not without resistance, and not be led to death like “lambs to the slaughterhouse”.[[11]](#endnote-11) This courage of despair shows that the link between despair and fatalism may not be as straightforward as we think.

Consider next the contrast that Lear (2006: 106-107) draws between the Crow Nation and the Sioux Nation in responding to the inevitable domination by US American civilisation over native American life. The Crow Nation, led by Plenty Coups, faced the evisceration of their way to living and the loss of the very concepts underpinning it, making it impossible to imagine their way of life. Plenty Coups decided to embrace radical hope, choosing to embrace faith that after the onslaught is over, something good will emerge and a new way of life for the Crow nation can be found. According to Lear, regardless of what we think of the act, it required courage to hope like this. But the Sioux Nation, a traditional enemy of the Crow, chose differently. Under their last great chief Sitting Bull, they united in resistance against the overwhelming might of the United States, and regardless of the possibility to win, inflicted a legendary defeat on US Army forces led by General Custer in 1876, even if it led to a decimation of their tribes afterwards. The point here is not that one of the great leaders was right or wrong. It may well be that both were right in their own way by doing what they thought best to ensure their nation’s survival against an overwhelming colonising force. Rather I want to emphasise that, it is well conceivable that not only did some in the Sioux Nation lack radical hope in the sense that Lear described, but took action from fundamental despair – experiencing a lack of options, a closing horizon of possibilities, and no path towards victory, they chose to draw courage from despair and engage in one of the most stunning acts of militant resistance in American history. I do not know for sure whether Sitting Bull and the Sioux Nation experienced despair or hope at the time – but despair would have certainly been an apt response for the Sioux Nation, and even in its fundamental form may not have led to fatalism, but to radical militant acts even if they are doomed to fail.[[12]](#endnote-12)

What lessons should we draw for the struggle against climate change? I do not deny that sometimes, hope may be necessary for some to maintain their agency and imagine a path towards a different future. But for others, that might not be so. Facing catastrophic climate breakdown, accepting despair and realising a state of hopelessness can lead to radical, militant action, acts of rebellion without possibility of success that may appear absurd. Sometimes, despair may liberate us to engage in militancy that, given current standards of agency, appear irrational. Think of recent acts in the global north where climate activists blockaded roads, damaged paintings and monuments, scaled buildings and fossil fuel infrastructure, destroyed SUVs, or even self-harmed by self-immolation. Think of acts in the global south, where environmental defenders face absurdly more powerful states and corporations threatening their lands and ways of life. In all these cases, it is certainly rationally apt to feel despair – but despair can also be the foundation that helps us imagine actions of radical militancy.

# References list

Broome, John. 2019. Against denialism. *The Monist*, *102*(1), 110-129. <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/ony024>

Brossat, Alain, and Sylvie Klingberg. 2016. *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish radicalism*. New York: Verso Books.

Bykhovski, Bernard. 1973. A Philosophy of Despair. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *34*(2), 187-200. https://doi.org/10.2307/2106686

Camus, Albert. 1955. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Translated by Justin O’Brien. New York, NY: Vintage.

Chang, Ruth. 2002. The possibility of parity. *Ethics*, *112*(4), 659-688. <https://doi.org/10.1086/339673>

Cherry, Myisha. 2022. Political anger. *Philosophy Compass*, *17*(2), e12811. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12811>

Cripps, Elisabeth. 2013. *Climate change and the moral agent: Individual duties in an interdependent world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cunsolo, Ashlee, and Karen Landman. 2017. *Mourning nature: Hope at the heart of ecological loss and grief*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

d'Arms, Justin, and Daniel Jacobson. 2000. The moralistic fallacy: on the ‘appropriateness' of emotions. *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, 65-90. https://doi.org/10.2307/2653403

DeYoung, Rebecca. 2015. The Roots of Despair. *Res Philosophica*, 92 (4):829-854. <https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.2015.92.4.2>

Furtak, Rick Anthony. 2018. *Knowing emotions: Truthfulness and recognition in affective experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gardiner, Stephen. 2006. A perfect moral storm: Climate change, intergenerational ethics and the problem of moral corruption. *Environmental values*, *15*(3), 397-413. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327106778226293>

Grose, Anouchka. 2020. *A guide to eco-anxiety: How to protect the planet and your mental health*. London: Watkins Publishing.

Hancock, Alice and Andy Bounds. 2024. The Power of Europe’s Rebellious Farmers: in Financial Times, 9 February 2024. Accessed March 2024. <https://www.ft.com/content/c642343b-589e-4347-9a7f-ff04b83728ff>

Hickman, Caroline, Marks, Elizabeth, Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, E. E., ... & Van Susteren, L. 2021. Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, *5*(12), e863-e873. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00278-3

Huber, Jakob. 2023. Hope from despair. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *31*(1), 80-101. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12283

Hutton, James. 2022. Moral Experience: Perception or Emotion?. *Ethics*, *132*(3), 570-597. https://doi.org/10.1086/718079

IPCC. 2018. Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 3-24, doi:[10.1017/9781009157940.001](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157940.001).

IPCC. 2023. *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report.* Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 35-115, doi: [10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647](https://dx.doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647).

Jamieson, Dale. 2014. *Reason in a dark time: why the struggle against climate change failed--and what it means for our future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kagan, Shelly. 2011. Do I Make a Difference?. *Philosophy. & Public Affairs*, *39*, 105. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41301865

Kennedy-Woodard, Megan, and Patrick Kennedy-Williams. 2022. *Turn the tide on climate anxiety: Sustainable action for your mental health and the planet*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Kieran, Stacy and Fiona Harvey. 2024. Labour cuts £28bn green investment pledge by half. *The Guardian* 8 February 2024. Accessed March 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/feb/08/labour-cuts-28bn-green-investment-pledge-by-half>

Kierkegaard, Søren, and Gordon Marino. 2013. *Fear and trembling and the sickness unto death*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kleres, Jochen, and Åsa Wettergren. 2017. Fear, hope, anger, and guilt in climate activism. *Social movement studies*, *16*(5), 507-519. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2017.1344546

Kurth, Charlie. 2022. *Emotion*. London: Routledge.

Kwong, Jack. 2019. What is hope?. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *27*(1), 243-254. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12391

Lear, Jonathan. 2006. *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Lorde, Audre. 1997. The uses of anger. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *25*(1/2), 278-285. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40005441

Lustiger, Arno. 1994. *Zum Kampf auf Leben und Tod!: das Buch vom Widerstand der Juden 1933-1945*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

Malm, Andreas. 2021. *How to blow up a pipeline*. New York: Verso Books.

McKinnon, Catriona. 2014. Climate change: Against despair. *Ethics & the Environment*, *19*(1), 31-48. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/ethicsenviro.19.1.31

Meirav, Ariel. 2009. The nature of hope. *Ratio*, *22*(2), 216-233. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2009.00427.x

Mosquera, Julia, and Kirsti M. Jylhä. 2022. How to feel about climate change? An analysis of the normativity of climate emotions. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *30*(3), 357-380. https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2022.2125150

Nefsky, Julia. 2019. Collective harm and the inefficacy problem. *Philosophy Compass*, *14*(4), e12587. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12587

Newton, Huey. 2009. *Revolutionary Suicide:(Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)*. London: Penguin.

Nguyen, Anh-Quân. 2024. Pessimism for Climate Activists. Ethics and the Environment, 29(1).

Poynting, Mark. 2024. World's first year-long breach of key 1.5C warming limit. BBC News, 8 February 2024. Accessed March 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-68110310>

Ray, Sarah Jaquette. 2020. *A field guide to climate anxiety: How to keep your cool on a warming planet*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter. 2005. It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations. In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong & Richard B. Howarth (eds.), Perspectives on Climate Change. Elsevier. pp. 221–253.

Srinivasan, Amia. 2018. The aptness of anger. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *26*(2), 123-144. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12130

Steinbock, Anthony. 2007. The phenomenology of despair. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *15*(3), 435-451. https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550701445431

Stuart, Diana. 2020. Radical hope: Truth, virtue, and hope for what is left in extinction rebellion. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 33(3), 487-504.  https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-020-09835-y

Thaler, Mathias. 2021. We are going to have to think our way out of this: Utopian thinking and acting in the climate emergency. *ideology theory practice*. https://www.ideology-theory-practice.org/blog/we-are-going-to-have-to-imagine-our-way-out-of-this-utopian-thinking-and-acting-in-the-climate-emergency>.

Whyman, Tom. 2021. *Infinitely full of hope: fatherhood and the future in an age of crisis and disaster*. London: Repeater Books.

1. The US approval of the Piper Alpha Pipeline, the UK approving the new Rosebank Gas Field, and Germany opening up a new Coalmine in Lützerath, all coincided with the release of the 6th assessment report of the IPCC. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See DeYoung (2015) for despair as a Thomistic vice, Bykhovsky (1973) Steinbock (2007) and Kierkegaard (2013) for existentialist considerations of despair. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For an overview of apocalyptic climate narratives and their connection to philosophical attitudes, see Kleres & Wettergren (2017) and Nguyen (2024). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. For more testimonial accounts of despair about climate change, see Stuart (2020) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. For an overview of the normativity of climate emotions, see Mosquera & Jylhä (2022). See Cherry (2021) for an overview over political anger. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. For alternative, non-cognitivist theories of emotions, see the opening chapters of Rick Furtak's Knowing Emotions (2018) or Charlie Kurth's Emotion (2022). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. For classic arguments against individual efficacy, see Sinnott-Armstrong (2005) and Cripps (2013), as well as Broome (2015), Kagan (2011) for arguments against individual inefficacy. Nefsky (2019) provides an excellent overview of the debate. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Also compare to Srinivasan (2017: 131), where she discusses a similar charge against the emotion of anger. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. E.g. Lorde (1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Incommensurability generally refers to goods that can be compared, but not scaled up against each other in a clear way that makes us immediately see which good is better or worse. See Chang (2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See Arno Lustiger’s (1994) “Zum Kampf auf Leben und Tod! Vom Widerstand der Juden 1933-1945” for an excellent overview on Jewish resistance against the Nazis, taken at every opportunity and often against all odds. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. See Whyman (2021) for a reflection on Sitting Bull as a leader who might have felt hope in a way that was not “active” in representing and changing reality. Also compare with Van der Lugt (Forthcoming) on Sitting Bull as a hopeful pessimist. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)