

## ARTICLE

# Political anger

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**Abstract**

In this brief essay, I sketch out the philosophical landscape considering anger in general, and political anger in particular. I begin by sketching anger's profile and its relation to judgments. I also consider the role anger plays in moral life. I then consider how philosophers have conceived of political anger, particularly anger that arises in a context of oppression. I survey claims in support of anger's value, as well as debates around its counterproductivity. And I suggest that debates can benefit from taking seriously different species of anger, and the injustices and burdens that are implicit in our forswearing, eradication, or moderation recommendations. I conclude with reflections on recent research and suggestions for future research.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

People are sometimes angry and there's debate about if it's morally good or bad and politically good or bad. But what is anger? And is it a threat or beneficial to our moral and political lives? These questions are over 2000 years old. But new, diverse philosophers have taken it up, challenging the standard view of anger and reclaiming anger at the same time. With any philosophical matter, however, there is only some consensus on the details, and disputes remain. My aim is to provide an overview of them. I begin by sketching anger's profile and its relation to judgments and blame. I then briefly consider the role anger plays in moral life, as well as its dark side. In Section 4, I consider how philosophers have conceived of political anger, particularly anger that arises in a context of oppression. I survey claims in support of anger's value, as well as debates around its counterproductivity. And I suggest that debates can benefit from taking seriously different species of anger, and the injustices and burdens that are implicit in our forswearing, eradication, or moderation recommendations. I conclude in Section 5 with reflections on recent research and suggestions for future research.

## 2 | DESCRIPTIVE ISSUES: ANGER'S PROFILE

An exploration into political anger begins with an examination of anger. It seems only right that we begin with an understanding of anger as a moral emotion before we move to its political dimensions. In brief, to say that anger is a moral emotion is to suggest that its formal object is offense. And it contributes to morality in that it plays an important role in moral behavior and moral evaluation (Prinz, 2010, 522). Other moral emotions include guilt and admiration. Anger is also a political emotion in that it takes as its specific object “the nation, ... its institutions and leaders, its geography, and one's fellow citizens seen as fellow inhabitants of a common public space.... [It is] frequently intense, [and] have large-scale consequences for the nation's progress toward its goals” (Nussbaum, 2013, 2). Other political emotions include inclusive sympathy and compassion for loss.

So, what is anger? What specific role does it play in moral life? What moral risks accompany it? These questions lie at the intersection of moral psychology, ethics, and philosophy of emotion.

Anger has a profile. We can characterize it by its physiological responses, objects, action tendencies, and expressive behavior (Prinz & Nichols, 2010). Those who are angry typically experience a physiological response like increased heart rate, intense blood flow. Our voices may rise, and our facial expressions may change. However, we needn't feel all these occurrences though, and it is possible to be angry and not *feel* it (Roberts, 2003, 60)—although this claim is controversial. Also, recent research in neuroscience has led some to conclude that anger's bodily footprint is not consistent. When angry, some might cry instead of fume, and each of these behaviors will be supported by a different physiological pattern (Barrett, 2017, 14–15).

There are specific beliefs, appraisals, and evaluations involved in anger. Judgments about injustice, wrongdoing, and offense is an essential element of anger. The object of one's anger is what one thinks is wrong. Anger is also connected to what matters to us. For this reason, some thinkers have concluded that the appraisals and beliefs involved in anger are “eudaimonic” because they “register the agent's own view of what matters for life,” and that anger's core meaning is not just an offense but a “demeaning offense against me and mine” (Nussbaum, 2016, 16; Lazarus, 1991).

What separates anger from similar emotions like disappointment is a “judicial indictment” (Solomon, 1993, 228). To be sure, there is debate over whether anger is a judgmental emotion or *involves* judgment. However, philosophers agree that anger has a judgmental component to it. In anger, we appraise that someone has done something blameworthy. And our “angry” judgments have propositional content. We get angry at someone for something. (We become angry at *him*, for *violating our trust*.)

It's this judgmental and blameworthy aspect that has been of interests to moral philosophers working on blame and moral responsibility. Peter Strawson's (1962) seminal paper “Freedom and Resentment” argues that if it's appropriate to respond to others with reactive attitudes—attitudes that we express in response to someone's good will (gratitude) or ill will (resentment)—then it's appropriate to hold them morally responsible. To be morally responsible is to be an object of reactive attitudes. Strawson's account has inspired contemporary affective accounts of blame that argue that to blame is to have an emotion toward a person (Pereboom, 2014; Wallace, 2011), as well as alternatives that claim that blame doesn't require this emotional aspect (Fricker, 2016; Scanlon, 2008). Such a debate has not stopped some philosophers from thinking of anger as an emotion of blame though. When angry at an object, “we regard them with blame ... we regard them as morally faulty” (Prinz, 2010, 523).

It's worth noting that although injustice is the most common object of anger, it is not the only one. For Prinz and Nichols, we also get angry at transgressions of hierarchy or physical attacks (Prinz & Nichols, 2010, 128–29). However, we can categorize injustice *and* physical slights as “violations of autonomy norms.” These are “crimes that harms or threatens to harm an individual” (Prinz, 2010, 524). Injustice is simply a paradigm case of autonomy norms. Margaret Walker claims that resentment “responds to perceived threats to expectations based on norms that are presumed shared in or justly authoritative for common life” (Walker, 2004, 146). It not only sends a message to wrongdoers and others but it invites a response from them of assurance that they can be trusted to respect norms and boundaries.

Anger is also motivational. This means that it has an action tendency or a desire that can motivate action. For some, anger generates or contains desires for punishment. Many philosophers, inspired by Aristotle, agree with this description. Aristotle claimed that anger is “a desire accompanied by pain for an imagined retribution” (Aristotle, 1984, 1378a31–33). And there are economics and social psychology studies that confirm this.<sup>1</sup> As a result, philosophers like Martha Nussbaum (2016) conclude that anger *conceptionally* has a payback component. Owen Flanagan (2018) argues that this action tendency to punish depends on the type of anger. Flanagan divides anger into seven types and concludes that payback anger and pain-passing anger are morally problematic because their aims are to hurt people. He notes that other kinds of anger such as recognition respect or instrumental anger are good forms because they aim for change, equality, and justice (xvi). However, he warns us to make sure that the aims of payback and pain-passing anger doesn't pollute these good forms. Eighteenth-century British Moralist Joseph Butler (1897) denies Nussbaum's conceptual picture, claiming instead that our anger is often directed at close intimates like children for whom we have no desire to payback, and anger can be directed towards goodwill. More recently, Laura Silva (2021a) claims that a distinct desire for recognition rather than retribution is central to anger.

### 3 | NORMATIVE ISSUES: ANGER'S MORAL ROLE AND MORAL PROBLEMS

Strawson believes that our world would be richly impoverished if we were to do anyway with reactive attitudes like anger. This leads us to ask then, what moral role does anger serve that explains Strawson's belief and how anger has been so adaptive and defended?

Anger plays an important role in moral judgment (Gibbard, 1990). Our anger can lead us to attend longer to the causes of injury, fix it in our memories so that we can avoid them if possible in the future. When others are angry, their anger alerts us to destructive behaviors that can negatively impact how we live with each other. And when we experience anger on behalf of others, we can become motivated to intervene and attend to important features of their lives (Pettigrove & Tanaka, 2014).

Prinz believes that anger plays a role in moral motivation. It “serves to underwrite external enforcement of morally valued behaviors. And the awareness of anger serves to provide further motivation for prosocial behavior” (Prinz & Nichols, 2010, 131). That is to say, anger can indirectly motivate cooperation. If anger drives punishment, and punishment increases cooperation then anger has an indirect role in securing cooperation. In addition, if a person knows that their noncooperation will cause anger and thus punishment, they are likely to cooperate as a way to avoid these punitive responses (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004; Fehr & Gächter, 2000).

Anger can also motivate good behavior such as the actions taken to rectify injustices (Fehr and Fischbacher (2004); Prinz & Nichols, 2010, 131). Butler (1897) claims that nature gave us such an emotion “as a weapon ... against injury, injustice, and cruelty” (VIII.11) to “prevent or to remedy injury or produce a greater good” (IX. 8). Prinz claims that anger “may also be a necessary component of morality.... A world without anger is a world where nothing is wrong. Without it, we would be like asteroids colliding indifferently in space... We cannot relinquish anger without our moral sense” (Prinz, 2020, 58). Anger is also a proper way to value persons and relationships. Therefore, “we can't extricate feelings of anger from proper appreciation of such genuine values” (Kauppinen, 2018, 46).

Despite these claims, the role and place of anger in moral life have been contested. One of the oldest and loudest critics of anger is the Stoic philosopher Seneca. He compares the angry person to a madman. Those who are angry are also lacking in self-control. Seneca credits the destruction of cities and the transformation of friends into enemies and Kings into tyrants, to anger. For these reasons, he doesn't think we should preserve an emotion that aims for payback—despite objections that anger can be useful. Rather than attempt to control anger, we should do away with it. He warns, if we allow it, it will have its way with us. Instead, we should keep anger out, “fight against its first sparks, and to struggle not to succumb to it” (Seneca, 2010, 21). Buddhist philosopher Santideva thinks we should stop anger early before it rises fully so that we can prevent more suffering. This occurs by focusing on the cause of

the anger (suffering) and using this information to help break our patterns of attachment. One way to stop it early is to exercise patience (Huebner, 2018: 92).

However, some philosophers maintain that anger is not always as Seneca and Santideva describe. Anger can go well, and it can go bad. When anger goes well, it holds people morally accountable, makes us attentive to harms, leads us to seek reparative goals. But when it goes bad, it can evoke aggression and make us punitive in our judgments (Huebner, 2018). Prinz defends anger but also recognizes that not all anger is good. Anger that falls in the bad basket is anger that is misdirected, misattributed, widely spread, abusive, self-destructive, reflects undue entitlement, and triggers cycles of revenge (Prinz, 2020). For this reason, some philosophers have been careful to differentiate between the good and bad kinds like “vicious and virtuous anger” (Bommarito, 2017; Cogley, 2014) and “deliberate and sudden anger” (Butler, 1897). (I shall return to this strategy in Section 4.)

Although Nussbaum (2016) thinks anger involves payback and is status-focused, she advocates for transitional anger—an anger that is forward-looking. However, whether she believes transitional anger is a type of anger is ambiguous since in the same text she refers to it as anger, borderline species of anger, and quasi-anger (262). Flanagan (2018) acknowledges that pain-passing and status-focused anger are morally problematic and can infect other versions. But he claims that there are good forms. Recognition-respect is one type. Contemporary philosophers are not the only ones to make distinctions between anger types. Seneca does too. Unsurprisingly, he does not recommend any types.

Glen Pettigrove (2012) contends that there are epistemic, evaluative, and communicative advantages to responding to wrongdoing with meekness. Although the same can be said of anger, he claims that meekness can do it without the moral risks that accompany anger, and meekness is a virtue that can help correct anger. And Nussbaum (2016) suggest that in the interpersonal realm, instead of anger, we should adopt a gentle temper, “an amused detachment towards ourselves,” turn towards constructive thoughts and the future (168).

As we shall see, debates about anger's role in the interpersonal realm, and possible alternatives to it extend into the political realm.

## 4 | POLITICAL ANGER

Political anger is anger directed at structures, policies, or laws (and those who create and enforce them). It involves an evaluation of racist, sexist, or dehumanizing practices (Flanagan 2018, xvi). Herein, I will focus on appropriate political anger in general, and anger at oppression in particular.

Céline Leboeuf (2018) describes political anger by the role it performs. On her account, political anger is anger that awakens a person to their oppression and leads to reflection on oppressive conditions. It's also absent of vengeful desires. She uses the racist experiences of Franz Fanon to illustrate this. When angry in response to racism, he experiences a bodily change (i.e., he feels restrained and a surge to act). He also gains insight into his oppression. She then contends that “anger is revealed to be a political emotion in the sense that it enables members of oppressed groups to reaffirm themselves under oppressive conditions” (Leboeuf, 2018, 24).

In the 1980s, feminist philosophers began to give philosophical attention to political anger in the context of gender oppression (Frye, 1983; Lorde, 1984; Scheman, 1980). They began to show how anger is gendered; the necessity yet obstacles to its uptake; its resistant components; and its uses. Anger, according to Alison Jaggar (1989) is an “outlaw emotion” for women because it is unacceptable by the dominant society, and it acknowledges and challenges oppression. Given this context of oppression, María Lugones (1995) distinguished between two types of anger: first-order and second-order anger. First-order anger is communicative. It aims to be heard by the oppressor. It protests, makes demands, desires uptake. On the other hand, second-order anger is uncommunicative. It is anger that is hard to handle. It refuses to be toned down. Some thinkers have suggested that there is a politics of emotions in which there exist the “systematic denial of anger [of oppressed groups] ... as a mechanism of subordination, and the existence and expression of anger as an act of insubordination” (Spelman, 1989, 270).

Lisa Tessman (2005) lists political anger as a burdened virtue. It is burdened in the sense that it impedes on the moral flourishing of the individual, however, it is a virtue because it is appropriate and useful in the context of oppression. Although political anger can be consuming and unhealthy, even misdirected and excessive, it nevertheless serves the struggle. And resistance is praiseworthy. Nussbaum (2020) has questioned this claim. She thinks that Tessman's account of anger is still retributive and therefore Nussbaum thinks it is not virtuous, nor useful for liberatory struggle. On her account, it can even inhibit progress. Since her target is retributive anger, she recommends transition-anger, a pure form of anger. Only this pure form is a virtue according to Nussbaum. Moreover, it's a virtue that is not burdened. It is forward-looking, and it does "not risk becoming obsessive or distorted" (Nussbaum, 2020, 128).

## 4.1 | Intrinsic and instrumental value

As we just seen, the political value of anger has been contested. This is also due in part to how we conceive of democratic politics. The deliberative model of democracy paints our polity as consisting of active associations. Citizens participate in the decision-making process by casting their vote, informing themselves, persuading others through reasons, and responding to the reasons of others. It seems, therefore, that negative emotions (emotions that have an unpleasant and often disruptive feel like anger, fear, and sadness) have no place since it may be a distraction to rational thinking. Since deliberative democracy requires reasons and reasoning, one might worry that citizens' anger can be manipulated for disruptive means.<sup>2</sup> And if anger is a desire for retribution, perhaps we should be cautious in defending or recommending it since it may motivate citizens to use aggression, threats, or violence as a persuasive tool, or to overthrow democracy. For others, anger is ubiquitous in politics and a seed to emotions and attitudes like fear and enmity that contribute to political polarization (Nussbaum, 2018). It's worth turning our attention to how philosophers have considered the value of political anger despite these worries. I will focus on the value of appropriate anger for oppressed citizens. Then we will turn to debates concerning anger's productivity in the public sphere.

Some philosophers have argued that anger has intrinsic and instrumental value. Macalester Bell (2009) claims that appropriate political anger expresses love for virtue (the good) and hatred for vice (evil). "Loving the good and hating the evil is itself non-instrumentally valuable" (Bell, 2009, 177). Bell's thinking is based on the Appropriate Attitude Account whereas a virtuous person would hate evil and love good. And if a person's political anger no longer loves the good, their anger is no longer virtuous (Bell, 2009, 179–180). This conception of virtue is different from the Eventual Flourishing Account relied on by Nussbaum and Tessman. Whereas Bell's account of value is intrinsic, Nussbaum's and Tessman's are instrumental. On their view, anger is a virtue if it leads to the future good of an individual or community. In this way, they base the value of anger on its instrumental uses. As we shall see, this is a popular move.

Feminist and political philosophers have argued that anger has instrumental value, particularly in a context of oppression. Anger is a way to protest injustice and oppressive norms. This protest is a way to resist oppression. In doing so, the oppressed protest via political anger. And since anger is a form of protest, it is likely to help the oppressed maintain self-respect, and see themselves as self-respecting (Boxill, 1976; Dillon, 1997; Murphy, 2003). Political anger can also help the racially oppressed resist racial rules (Cherry, 2021). Racial rules are cognitive, affective, and behavioral rules that are socially constructed and endorsed to maintain white domination. When a non-white person expresses anger at racism, they break rules that says that they have no right to dignity and thus anger, and that they should respect the inherent superiority of another race.

Political anger also has communicative value. It tracks moral truth and allows us to bear witness to injustice. In the words of Amia Srinivasan (2018), it's a way to "appreciate injustice." But it's also a way to acknowledge that what is missing (justice) is desirable and needed (Cherry, 2021). Political anger also has epistemic advantages. It's a way to gain knowledge (Narayan, 1988) and a way to confirm knowledge (McWeeny, 2010). It can also provide a distinct kind of knowledge. Political anger can also grant us indirect knowledge. I can gain insight on my status in a community by witnessing how others respond to my anger (Campbell, 1994; Frye, 1983). And such a reception can also help clarify for the oppressed whose one's enemies and allies are (Lorde, 1984). Political anger can also be epistemically valuable

in other respects. When used in political speech it can help audiences recognize previously overlooked injustices and gain a finer understanding of them (Lepoutre, 2018). And it does this by helping audiences to empathize and perceive things they hadn't before.

The most popular, yet controversial value is motivational. What kinds of action does political anger motivate? Are they productive or destructive? Even if we accept the motivational value of individual anger, what problems might occur when members of collectives are angry? And is this reason to recommend its eradication?

Audre Lorde believed that "every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions ... which brought that anger into being (1984, 127)." She thought the anger could become "a powerful source of energy serving progress and change." The change she thought anger could serve was a radical alteration of our unjust world. In this way, she believed that women's anger could be used to improve and alter their lives. In isolating anger's profile, we can understand the productive actions of freedom fighters like Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Martin Luther King, Jr. by understanding their anger (Cherry, 2021). If anger not only has an approach tendency but can also increase self-belief, optimism, and risk-taking, then we can see how important anger played and continues to play in fueling the confidence and audacity of those who dare to challenge oppressive systems.

The question of motivation and action falls under the counterproductive debate concerning political anger.

## 4.2 | The counterproductive debate

Defenders and critics alike, provide warnings concerning anger. What are the worries and the assumptions underlining them? And what recommendations do they tend to provide?

Critics' accounts of political anger impact their recommendations. For example, if you think anger is *conceptionally* about payback, then you will be hesitant to recommend it. Although Nussbaum (2016), thinks that anger can arise in a context of oppression and be focused on justice, this anger (noble anger) can be a false guide to revolutionary justice. She supports her argument by invoking the lives of revolutionary figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela—whose commitment to non-anger and forward-looking thinking opened-up avenues of trust for their former enemies, as well as freedom for the oppressed. This, Nussbaum believes, shows that anger is not necessary to the struggle for freedom. And she suggests we follow Mandela and King by replacing anger with love and generosity. Some reject this autobiographical evidence. The fact that anger inspired King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", and that King exhorted resisters to use the civil rights movement as a constructive channel for their anger are examples that disrupt this picture (Cherry, 2021). In addition, David Adams (1986) have argued that anger has played a role in raising the consciousness of peace activists like Gandhi. He points to the anger Gandhi experienced after being forced into the colored section of the train. Gandhi admitted that the event enraged him but that he sought to reserve the anger and use it to fight bigger battles. Still, one might still ask, should the emotive standards and effectiveness of vindicated leaders apply necessarily to ordinary citizens?

Owen Flanagan concedes that anger serves a purpose for the oppressed. But he is worried that we are excessive in our anger and rely on anger as a given. He is explicit in declaring that he is not trying to tell oppressed folks what's required for their liberation when he writes: "some friends who have suffered those kinds of harms say anger is required, others not so much. Their voice are the ones to listen to most carefully in our world" (Flanagan, 2017, 215). However, he claims that we should explore other moral possibilities, and acknowledges that Seneca and Santideva provide us with many reasons to eliminate anger and imagine a world without it (Flanagan, 2017, 216).

Some defenders of anger believe—given its profile—that it should not be eliminated but rather managed. When Bell (2009) argues that appropriate anger is a virtue, she challenges replacement arguments offered by critics. She claims that in some cases, anger does the best job of responding to slights because it does the best job of: "(1) fitting the failure; and (2) expressing the victim's integrity, respect for the object of her anger, and commitment to the moral standards in question" (2009, 177). It is not the only appropriate way but is a more excellent response than other emotions and attitudes like disappointment or sadness. This is because, Bell believes, it responds better to slights and

expresses respect. Using Frederick Douglass's anger against his slave breaker Covey as an example, she illustrates that appropriate anger is the best response to cruelty, and therefore shouldn't be eliminated or replaced by other emotions. It has also been argued that political anger is compatible with positive emotions (Cherry, 2019b). It is compatible with compassion and love, and it often expresses it.

Some defenders of political anger do not appeal to issues of productivity to make their case. For example, Srinivasan (2018) thinks the counterproductivity critique does not provide a "dispositive reason not to get angry" (2018, 3). She also believes it "turns on suspect empirical assumptions" since critics are unlikely to deny that our nation would not have accepted King's ideals without taking Malcolm X's anger seriously. And they are naïve to think anger does not do the psychic work that is needed to help the oppressed express or restore their dignity and self-esteem. Even if anger is counterproductive, anger is apt, she argues. And its apt when it responds to a genuine moral violation of how things ought to be, is motivated by the right kind of reason, and is proportionate to the reason (2018, 8). On her view, critics have not shown that "prudence will trump reasons of aptness" (2018, 5). Without it, there is no "obvious inference to be made from the counterproductivity of one's anger to an all-things-considered prohibition on ones getting angry" (Ibid.). For Srinivasan, whether anger is apt doesn't "turn on the consequences, good or bad, of that anger (2018, 9). On the other hand, Silva (2021b), citing empirical evidence, argues that anger motivates collective political action, and the communication of anger "correlates with increased support for constructive and conciliatory action tendency on behalf of dominant groups" (2021b, 39).

Rather than defend or argue against anger, and then offer up arguments for or against its productivity, some believe it's best to take species of anger seriously, and to begin to examine the possibilities of each anger type. This is the approach Nussbaum seems to take in her account of transition-anger as a species of anger that lacks the payback wish. However, her account is quite narrow and limited. It is the only option, and a rare one, she admits. It will be best if philosophers theorize different types of anger and offer recommendations that are not rare but experienced in oppressed communities. And from this philosophers can make the claims about their productive possibilities. It will also be worth expanding our imaginations of how positive and negative emotions can and often do work together. This will help move us beyond the positive or negative emotion dichotomy.

Emily McRae (2018) moves in this direction in her account of tantric anger. This political anger lacks the payback wish. It is the "virtuous channeling of the power and energy of anger without the desire to harm or pain pass" (113). It is productive anger in that it transforms anger, it uses it for good. Contrary to Nussbaum, it is not rare. She believes it is anger that many oppressed people have experienced. Those with tantric anger are fired-up to engage in social and political progress. It's an anger that shouldn't be reduced to compassion, although it is grounded in it. Instead of a quasi-anger that is simply another attitude, tantric anger is metabolized anger, grounded in positive attitudes.

McRae thinks this view of anger can escape the worries of pro and anti-anger philosophers concerned with the moral burdens that hinder flourishing. Tantric anger increases flourishing given its desire to help rather than harm, and is productive in that it provides energy to engage in positive change. It also escapes the moral dangers of misplaced anger since it lacks the desire to harm people just because we have been harmed (pain-passing anger). Although this can be exhausting, causing the oppressed to have to constantly work at metabolizing their anger, this is not a reason to abandon or criticize it. Instead, McRae suggests that philosophers think "of ways to dismantle oppressive systems [and] ... for moral theories to meaningfully speak to the burdens borne by the members of oppressed groups that prioritize nourishing and inspiring us in our continued fight for justice" (2018, 118). Tantric anger is one way.

There are many types of anger that can arise in the context of racial injustice (Cherry, 2021). Among them are narcissistic, wipe, rogue, resentment, and Lordean rage. They can be distinguished and evaluated by their targets, aims, action tendencies, and perspectives. These categories help us distinguish anger types and help make clear which ones are helpful or unhelpful in the fight against racism. For example, rogue rage is targeted at everyone; its aim is to hit back for being hit; its action tendency is isolation; and the perspective that informs it is nihilism. On the other hand, narcissistic rage's target is "those who target me"; its action tendency is to express one's place within a hierarchy; its aim is to be treated better than those beneath them; and its perspective is an egocentric self-entitlement. I argue for Lordean rage (named after the poet and scholar Audre Lorde) (Cherry, 2018). While its target is

racism; its aim is change; its action tendency is to metabolize anger; and it has an inclusive perspective, it is not rare. It is anger that many resisters have. Given these features, one can predict the kinds of productive action a person with the respective rage is willing to engage in. For example, a person with rogue rage is likely to engage in violence, while those with Lordean rage is likely to engage in peaceful protest. Anger management, instead of elimination, is recommended in order to help Lordean rage maintain its positive features. These anger types improve on other accounts that seek to distinguish anger by its intent, concern, or dichotomized picture. It introduces new categories to evaluate political anger and helps us decide which ones are beneficial to political struggles—while resisting painting anger in broad strokes.

When we take forms of anger seriously instead of painting anger as one thing, we are better able to make sense of the diversity of our affective experiences and reflect the real lives of the oppressed. Recommendations that derive from these distinctions are also less likely to constrain the moral and political choices of the oppressed and lead to more injustice, for which I will describe in the next section.

## 5 | RECENT AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There is new work being explored on the topic of political anger. Most notably, this work is happening in, and at the intersection of social epistemology, social philosophy, and moral psychology.

Philosophers have begun to provide accounts of injustices that occur in response to emotions in general, and anger in particular. Several accounts of “affective injustice” has been theorized as a result. Affective injustice occurs when a person has been wronged in her capacity as an affective being. For Shiloh Whitney (2018), “affective injustice damages the weight afforded one’s feelings. The weight at issue is not that of belief, but of affective force: when my anger is unjustly refused uptake, it is not appropriately *moving* to others; it does not *affect* them as it should” (495). Srinivasan (2018) claims that affective injustice occurs when an oppressed person must choose between being appropriately angry and improving her life. Alfred Archer and Georgina Mills (2019) consider Srinivasan’s account and then ask how the anger of the oppressed might be emotional regulated. As they consider popular regulations suggestions such as reappraisal and attentional deployment, they conclude that these strategies create further problems for the oppressed. When the oppressed are called to regulate their anger, Archer and Mills contend that it can make the oppressed ignore their oppression and thus hinder attempts to remedy the situation. These regulatory strategies can also place the oppressed in a worse epistemic position, and distract them from action. More questions along this topic are worth exploring. What are some anger management strategies that can help fight against rather than reinforce oppression? How might we reconceive of anger management? What must we do or become in order to refrain from perpetuating affective injustice? What other injustices haven’t been accounted for as it relates to anger?

Recent research has explored the ethics of anger evaluations, questions that lie at the intersection of moral psychology and social epistemology. Acknowledging that there are silencing practices, Alison Bailey (2018) recommends we respond with knowing resistant anger. She defines it as “a rebellious anger attentive to the epistemic terrains where it is and is not intelligible. It recognizes the hostile ‘worlds’ that make it heavy, but retains the memory of ‘worlds’ where its rebelliousness is intelligible” (106). When communities engage in silencing practices and ignore the epistemic tools found in anger, the outraged may experience emotional despair: “a condition that happens when epistemic communities swallow their anger, surrender to silence, and lose hope of ever being heard” (Bailey 115). I (2018) argue that it’s difficult to evaluate the political anger of others. This is due to what I refer to as the sympathy gap and the anger difficulty, as well as social discursive practices such as tone-policing and gaslighting. I recommend that we direct our efforts at listening. And when we tire of that, perhaps the best evaluations we can make are those concerning political behavior. In other work (Cherry, 2019a), I also urge us to be attentive to gendered and racial stereotypes and assumptions when engaging in extrinsic emotional regulation, particularly when that emotion is anger. I recommend feminist emotional intelligence which is “the ability to effectively reason about emotions through an intersectional lens and use emotions to inform how we think and react to the world. This includes being attuned to the



ways in which the world and our emotional lives are structured by and favor men. It stresses the need to be attuned to, as well as resist and challenge gender-based stereotypes and attitudes around emotions, paying close attention to the ways those stereotypes and attitudes differ across race, class, ethnicity, so forth" (105).

Future questions remain. What are the criteria for judging angry behavior? How can we do this without repeating the ills of the counterproductive debate? How might anger evaluations obscure or distract from injustice? How might anger evaluations transform into silencing practices?

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> We also shouldn't make payback and violence synonymous. Violence is not part of anger's profile, although angry people, like excited or hopeless people—might engage in violence.
- <sup>2</sup> At least this is the accusation of Trump by some of those who stormed the nation's capital on Jan. 6, 2021.

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