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Anger's Value in the Context of the Climate Movement

Sigrid Wallaert – Ghent University, Belgium

Abstract

This article examines the role of eco-anger in climate activism, focusing on Greta Thunberg and other young activists. The article challenges two common arguments against anger as a communicative strategy: that it is inherently retributive and counterproductive, and that it reduces the uptake of the speaker's message. Instead, the article proposes that anger involves a triad of desires: retributive desires, recognitive desires, and desires for future change. While recognizing the potential for testimonial injustice due to stereotypes surrounding young women expressing anger, the article argues that climate anger functions as an outlaw emotion with the potential to advance testimonial justice. The article argues that climate anger offers several advantages: it can motivate people to join the climate movement, it has revolutionary potential to challenge the status quo, and it is well-suited to building community among activists. Ultimately, the article concludes that anger can be a powerful tool in addressing the climate crisis, particularly when used strategically by activists like Greta Thunberg.

Keywords: eco-anger, epistemic injustice, retribution, recognition

"How dare you!" Greta Thunberg left little room for interpretation at the 2019 United Nations climate summit in New York. The then-sixteen-year-old climate activist did not hold back during her speech to the assembled world leaders. She continued:

> You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are at the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you![1]

Thunberg, the face of worldwide youth protests against the climate crisis, is without question a remarkable figure. Young, slight, and female, she in no way conforms to the stereotypical image of a leader. And yet, she does not shy away from expressing her candid message, often packaged in a clear emotion: anger.

In this article, I will examine the use of anger as a communicative strategy in the context of the climate movement, as represented by Greta Thunberg and other young activists. I start by challenging two common counter-arguments against the use of anger, namely that it is unproductive because it is (1) retributive or (2) reduces the uptake of the speaker's message. In response to the retributivism claim, represented here

1 A transcript of the speech can be found in Thunberg 2019 (https://www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763452863/transcript-greta-thunbergs-speech-at-the-u-n-climate-action-summit).

principally by Nussbaum (2016), I outline my own view of anger's triadic desires. In response to the uptake claim, while I recognise the risks of testimonial injustice, I show how climate anger can function as an outlaw emotion and might even contribute to testimonial justice. In the second part of the article, I go on to propose three potential advantages of anger: its motivational powers, its revolutionary potential, and its suitability to community building. While similar arguments have been made for other types of anger (notably by Cherry (2021) on the type of anti-racist anger she calls "Lordean Rage"), I look specifically at climate anger, in order to present a largely positive view on its uses[2] and potential value in this context. There is also a growing body of literature on eco-emotions, such as eco-anxiety, eco-guilt, ego-grief, or eco-anger (Ágoston, Csaba, et al. 2022; Ágoston, Urbán, et al. 2022; Borter 2019; Clayton and Karazsia 2020; Kurth and Pihkala 2022; Sims, Rocque, and Desmarais 2020; Verplanken, Marks, and Dobromir 2020). In what follows, I will focus on eco-anger, using the theoretical lens of philosophy of anger.

1. Responding to Anger's Opponents

While anger is usually not valued highly as a communicative strategy—common wisdom advises counting to 10, taking deep breaths, trying to calm down before speaking—in certain contexts, the opposite might hold true. In the context of the climate crisis, for example, anger might actually be a valuable, apt, and useful strategy in communicating concerns and spurring on activism. As I will show below, not only are some common arguments against anger not justified, there exist good arguments *for* the use of anger that position it as a potential way of raising awareness around the climate crisis.

1.1 First Counterargument: Retributivism

1.1.1 The Orthodox View: Nussbaum et al.

The first counter-argument I want to discuss is that anger is inherently retributive in nature, which, according to these voices, is a bad quality to have. This idea has been around since antiquity, and has constituted the orthodox view[3] on anger since (Silva 2021b). It can be traced back to Aristotle's definition of anger:

> A longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight, affecting a man himself or one of his friends, when such a slight is undeserved. (Aristotle 1926 tr. Freese, Rh. 2.2.1.)

Here, the retributive aspect can be found in the words "a real or apparent revenge." The angry person may really take revenge, which is by definition a retributive act. Alternatively, the revenge may not be carried out (cf. Konstan 2003), remaining only "apparent revenge," which is nonetheless considered. In this case the "longing" for revenge is still present; only the practical execution is missing.

In the present day, a prominent voice in this tradition is Martha Nussbaum.[4] In *Anger and Forgiveness* (2016), Nussbaum writes: "Anger is always normatively problematic, whether in the personal or in the public realm" (Nussbaum 2016, 5). She sees two possibilities. Either the angry person chooses the "road of payback," and

2 I use the word "use" here, in the tradition of Audre Lorde's Uses of Anger (Lorde 2017), in an authentic rather than a manipulative manner: real, felt anger is put to use in climate activism. It is not the case that anger is fabricated as a rhetorical tool to serve the goals of the movement; rather, authentic anger is utilised to advance the movement.

3 Also represented by, for example, Pettigrove (2012) and Callard (2020).

4 I will largely base my argument on a critique of Nussbaum's work in *Anger and Forgiveness* (2016), but other work in the same tradition has been done by, for example, Leon (1935) and Königs (2013). According to these scholars, anger is a reaction to some slight, aimed at inflicting suffering onto the actor(s) involved.

they try to do an equal harm onto the person who harmed them. Here, Nussbaum says, the issue is that this second harm does not undo the first harm, which makes it an ineffective strategy. Alternatively, the angry person chooses the "road of status," and they try to gain status relative to the perpetrator by discrediting them. This might be effective, Nussbaum says, but the focus on relative status remains normatively problematic and cannot be encouraged in others: "Status-obsession [disfigures] many societies" (Nussbaum 2016, 178). Because, on her view, (almost) all cases of anger can be explained by one of these two roads, it follows that (almost) all cases of pure anger are normatively problematic. After the pure anger stage, however, there can follow a subsequent, more productive stage. This is what Nussbaum calls the Transition: the shift from pure, retributive anger to a more future-oriented way of thinking. In most cases, these two stages are completely separate, only linked by the moment of Transition. There are, however, certain cases—very rare, according to Nussbaum—where the two stages run together. This is what Nussbaum calls Transition-Anger, characterised by anger in combination with the realisation that something is wrong and needs changing. Nussbaum stresses that this only happens in a small minority of cases. Most frequently, the future-oriented aspect of anger remains restricted to a sort of desire for revenge (Nussbaum 2016).

It is not very difficult to see how Nussbaum's theory might apply to Thunberg's climate anger, leading to accusations of retributivism (see e.g. Segers 2019). "We will never forgive you," Thunberg warns the world leaders in her speech, if you do not take action right now. Attributing blame and withholding forgiveness are strongly retributively coded, focusing on past wrongs and potential punishment.[5] However, when seen in the broader context of climate activist discourse, accusations of full-on retributivism do not make so much sense anymore. It is clear that Thunberg and other climate activists are very well aware that the climate crisis needs to be addressed in the future, and that focusing on past wrongs is generally not the best way to solve problems in the future. This sentiment is characterised by a remarkable fragment from Thunberg's speech at the London Houses of Parliament: "Avoiding climate breakdown will require cathedral thinking. We must lay the foundation while we may not know exactly how to build the ceiling" (2018, 67). Here, a cathedral is the perfect metaphor for future-oriented thinking, and for having faith in the future and our own future capabilities. Thunberg and other climate activists are angry, yes, but their anger is not necessarily defined by retributive sentiments—as I will endeavour to show below, their anger can involve a more complex mix of desires, some oriented towards the future, and some towards the past.

1.1.2 An Alternative View: A Triad of Desires

Silva (2021b; 2021a; 2021c) proposes an alternative to the orthodox—i.e., retributive—view, as held, among others, by Nussbaum. On Silva's view, anger "aims for recognition of harms done, as opposed to aiming for the punishment of its targets" (2021b, 2). In preliminary work (Silva 2021a; 2021c), Silva argues for a pluralist view, allowing the aim of recognition to exist alongside the aim of retribution, but later on Silva argues that "punitive aims are either uncommon in anger, or entirely instrumental towards attaining recognitional goals" (2021b). In related research, Cherry (2023) argues that the relationship between anger and feeling revengeful is not one-to-one: feeling revengeful does not have to mean feeling anger, and feeling anger does not have to mean feeling revengeful. Silva then builds on empirical evidence to show that "retribution is typically sought in scenarios where recognitional aims are impeded or have been exhausted, suggesting that recognition is primary in anger" (2021b, 3). In essence, Silva argues that the desire for recognition amounts to a desire for epistemic changes, whereby the target of anger is influenced a) to believe that their actions which caused the anger were wrongful, and b) to communicate this belief to the angry party. This view goes against the dominant view of anger as a

5 In practice, this punishment could take many forms, starting with social condemnation on the part of the climate activists.

retributive and punitive emotion. Callard (2020) calls recognitional anger a "fiction," whereas for Nussbaum (2016) it might remain a marginal possibility in her concept of Transition-Anger.

While, for Nussbaum, Transition-Anger is extremely rare, I argue that this type of anger (anger focused on effecting future change) is less exceptional than she states. I want to argue that, ordinarily, anger involves a mix of desires, some of which are directed towards the future. In fact, Nussbaum goes part of the way to admitting this herself already. In *Anger and Forgiveness*, she writes that:

> In a sane and not excessively anxious and status-focused person, anger's idea of retribution or payback is a brief dream or cloud, soon dispelled by saner thoughts of personal and social welfare. (2016, 31)

On her view, anger disappears along with the cloud of retribution, but I do not think this has to be the case. I believe that it is very much possible for future-oriented thoughts and actions to be fed by anger, even if, perhaps especially if, there are still some retributive aspects present. Audre Lorde wrote:

> I have lived with [my] anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. (2017, 107)

In her essay "The Uses of Anger," (1984) Lorde clearly argues for anger's usefulness in change-making, whether that be in anti-racism, feminism, or elsewhere. More recently, Cherry (2021) has built upon Lorde's work to construct the concept of Lordean Rage, which is a uniquely powerful anti-racist anger. Anger can serve as fuel, as kindling, spurring on future-oriented thought and action. In this way, anger can feed social activism in a sustainable manner (Goodwin and Jasper 2006), including climate activism (Bergman 2023).

Silva argues either for a pluralist view (2021a; 2021c) whereby anger involves both retributive and recognitive desires, or for a fully recognition-based view of anger (Silva 2021b). To construct the latter view, Silva builds on empirical research concerning aggression to argue first that recognition is a more central desire than retribution, and second that desires for retribution in anger are instrumental to those for recognition. In my view, however, a pluralist account is most promising. Rather than imposing a fixed hierarchy on the desires involved in anger, I propose an anger spectrum (which, as I will show below, might be better thought of as having a triadic structure). As a first step, building on Silva (2021a; 2021c; 2021b), this spectrum goes from a desire for recognition on one end to a desire for retribution on the other end, with each individual instance of anger falling somewhere in between. On my view, it is possible for anger to fall at either extreme end of the scale, but that is rather rare: most instances of anger will fall somewhere nearer the middle, and will carry elements of both extremes inside them, potentially leaning more one way or the other.

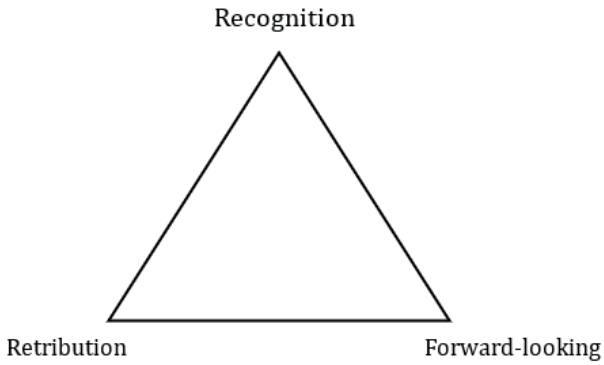
I do not think it useful to argue for retributive desires to be either absent or secondary in anger: it is not necessary or even desirable to strive towards "completing" the Transition and moving anger entirely in the direction of the future. Retributive sentiments do not necessarily have to be bad or impede progress. Retribution does not have to be absent—or even secondary—in anger for it to be apt; my view is a more ameliorative approach that goes some way towards bridging both sides of the retribution debate. As Cherry (2023, 28) argues:

> In the lives of the oppressed, the success model of feeling revengeful runs alongside other feelings and plans such as love for oneself and joy despite oppressive conditions as well as desires to survive, thrive,

honour one's ancestors, and leave a legacy. In this way, feeling revengeful is part of the story of the oppressed, but is never the whole story.

When anger strives towards social justice, as climate anger does, retributive desires often exist alongside other desires. In this context, when they are part of a mix of desires, I argue that retributive desires or revengeful feelings do not have to be morally problematic. And, following Srinivasan (2018), rather than focusing on the usefulness of particular types of anger, it might be more fitting to look at their aptness. Does this person have a good, personal reason for their anger? If so, their anger is apt, and they have a basic right to feel and express it, and take appropriate action on that basis.

As a second step, however, I want to add a third dimension to the anger spectrum: forward-looking aims and desires. Many cases of anger involve at least an element of desiring future changes, not just in the epistemic state of the opponent, as Silva would have it, but in the state of the world.[6] Anger often builds on a feeling of, as Nussbaum puts it with regards to Transition-Anger, "How outrageous. Something should be done about that" (2016, 6). As I already argued above, this attitude should not be limited to a small minority of cases of anger, and indeed it can be relatively prevalent. These desires are separate from retributive desires in the direction of their action tendency: rather than aiming to attain revenge for past wrongs, they aim to stop similar wrongs taking place again in the future. Future-oriented desires are also separate from recognitive desires, mainly in the type and scope of the change they wish to effect: rather than aiming for epistemic changes in the wrongdoer, these desires aim for concrete changes in the state of the wider world. These concrete changes might start with epistemic changes as well—with a recognition of what went wrong in the past—but they go both further (towards effecting structural, often societal change) and wider (in not only relating to the wrongdoers themselves). In this way, individual cases of anger can be situated within a triad of desires: retributive desires, recognitive desires, and forward-looking desires. While some instances of anger will undoubtedly fall at extreme ends of this triad, I argue that it is far more common for instances of anger to contain at least some measure of all three desires—not necessarily in any hierarchical order. This more nuanced view of anger's desires suggests that putting aside anger because it might involve retributive desires masks other desires that are at work.



In the case of climate anger, it is probable that one's anger will contain retributive desires towards past government actions which led to the climate crisis, and the desire for recognition of those wrongs, as well as future-oriented desires which strive towards change and a better future. This complexity of anger is characterised nicely by Sara Ahmed:

6 These types of desire in anger are prevalent in feminist discussions on the subject, both traditionally (Lorde 2017; hooks 1995) and recently (e.g. Chemaly 2018; Cooper 2018; Traister 2018; Dancyger 2019; Fahs 2020; Cherry 2021; Wood 2019).

> Anger is not simply defined in relationship to a past, but as opening up the future. In other words, being against something does not end with "that which one is against". Anger does not necessarily become "stuck" on its object, although that object may remain sticky and compelling. Being against something is also being for something, something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet. (2010, 175)

Looking at Greta Thunberg's anger, the triad of desires is clearly visible. As is apparent from her speech at the United Nations, a focus on retribution for past wrongs is not entirely absent from her thinking ("We will never forgive you"[7]). However, following Ahmed, Thunberg does not become "stuck" on the past. As evidenced by her metaphor of cathedral thinking, of striving for a better future before you know what exactly what such a future would look like, Thunberg very much has future-oriented desires in her anger. In fact, this is quite obvious, given that the central aim of the climate movement is to safeguard a liveable future from complete climate disaster. This future-oriented desire is also intrinsically bound up with a desire for recognition. Recognition is needed, Thunberg says, but it is not enough: it needs to be accompanied by action.

> You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that. Because if you really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe. (Thunberg 2019)

Recognition is important, but it cannot come alone: it needs to be accompanied by action. And that action is, at least in the context of the climate movement, fundamentally future-oriented.

Moreover, in holding onto and harnessing her anger, Thunberg's future-oriented desires manifest in another way. As Osler (2023) argues, Thunberg refuses not to be surprised. The science on the climate crisis is not new, and neither is the lack of a suitable response by those in power. Still Thunberg reacts to it with genuine anger or, Osler argues, with another emotion: indignation. It could be construed as naiveté that Thunberg reacts with a degree of surprise to fairly predictable wrongs, but in fact, it could be a strategic rhetorical choice.

> [Thunberg's] indignation does not arise out of an ignorance of on-going injustice. . . . It is born out of a refusal to allow our depressing reality to dictate what in of world she thinks we should strive towards. . . . Thunberg's disbelief, then, does not seem to be grounded in ignorance but in hope. (Osler 2023, 1231)

And, as Solnit (2016) argues, hope should not be a passive desire for a better future. Instead, it should be fundamentally connected to action tendencies, both to keep holding onto hope as a moral duty, and to strive towards a future where what one hopes for might become a reality.

1.2 Second Counterargument: Reduced Uptake

1.2.1 The Risks of Testimonial Injustice

A second common counter-argument against anger is that an angrily expressed message will, because of this anger, be met with reduced uptake. Bailey (2018), for example, warns against the credibility deficit that anger, and especially women's anger, can be met with. This argument has been used against the anger of Thunberg and other climate activists. Especially on social media, Thunberg and others have received significant backlash

7 This rhetorical strategy might also be used to give rise to a sense of shame in the perpetrators who are addressed—which, one might think, could motivate them to try and compensate for their past behaviour. It would, however, lead me too far astray to try and comment on the potential effectiveness of such a strategy.

against their eco-anger (Ardehali and Ruiz 2019; Lenthang and Evans 2019; Morgan 2019; Smith 2019). Because of their anger, the reasoning goes, their audience will be less receptive to their message and will not take it as seriously (Novak 2019). This happens when the audience affords less credibility to the speaker than they deserve, a so-called credibility deficit. These credibility judgements are made on the basis of stereotypes about the speaker that the audience holds, whether consciously or not. Anger is the subject of such stereotyping—by itself, but especially when expressed by already marginalised groups, such as women and people of colour. This phenomenon, of stereotype-based credibility deficit, is what Fricker (2007) calls testimonial injustice. Not all messages receive the same kind of uptake.

Alison Bailey writes that "all testimonial exchanges take place on an unlevel knowing field" (2018, 94). An important factor in determining the slant of the knowing field is social power, specifically power inequalities on the side of the speaker and their audience. Fricker specifies the importance of identity power, based on the various factors of one's social identity. Social power is strongly connected to the concept of credibility, which sits at the core of testimonial injustice. Marsh (2011) calls credibility a kind of social power, but I argue that this can work in two directions: social power creates more credibility, but increased credibility can also cause increased social power. For example, if one is more likely to be believed, one is also more likely to move up in the social world through interpersonal and professional connections and roles. This means that credibility and social power can build on each other into a vicious cycle, pushing each other further and further in a certain direction.

An important nuance to make is that, when an angry message isn't taken seriously, often this is not purely because of any intrinsic quality of the anger, but rather because of testimonial injustice. There exist certain stereotypes about the identity of the speaker which ensure that the audience gives less credibility to them, and not just because of their anger. Audre Lorde writes about a conference where she tried to voice her anger, but was told by a white woman: "Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you" (2017, 108). In this case, various factors of Lorde's identity, combined with her anger, made it so that the white woman in the audience afforded her a credibility deficit. Black women's anger is quickly dismissed through the caricature of the "angry black woman" (Cooper 2018), and (white) women are called hysterical when they voice negative emotions (Cleghorn 2022). In these cases, anger plays a role in the credibility deficit that these women receive, based on what Fricker calls identity prejudice: systematic testimonial injustice based on stereotypes about aspects of a speaker's social identity. Greta Thunberg is also not spared from the phenomenon. She is not only angry, but also young and female, two factors which substantially shape her identity power.[8] The way in which her identity is perceived by her audience has a large influence on the credibility her climate message receives.

In general, whether someone identifies as (or is perceived as) male, female, non-binary, or another gender identity, inevitably calls on the "shared imaginative concepts of social identity" (Fricker 2007, 14) that form the basis of the stereotypes we use to assign credibility. This is the case for all genders, but the way in which gender tilts the scales of credibility varies (and, importantly, gender is never the only factor to be taken into account). In a patriarchal society, then, a (perceived) male gender identity tends to contribute to a credibility excess, while a (perceived) non-male gender identity tends to contribute to a credibility deficit. Bailey's (2018) "unlevel knowing field" tends to tilt parallel to the playing field of gender, with males at the top, and non-males at the bottom. As Kate Manne puts it:

8 Arguably, Thunberg is also affected by ableist prejudice in response to her autism diagnoses (Thunberg herself is known to use the term "Asperger's Syndrome," but this term is outdated and no longer an official diagnosis (National Autistic Society 2023)).

> When it comes to a "he said"/"she said," "her word against his" scenario, there are obvious reasons to give him testimonial priority, from the point of view of upholding patriarchal order. For what if she is right? Then he would stand to be proven wrong. She would have the power to take him down with her word, when she is the more credible. And that power does not tend to be granted to historically subordinate people vis-à-vis the dominant without a fight. Such flipping of gendered hierarchies is part of what misogyny is effectively meant to prevent from happening. (2018, 52)

Greta Thunberg not only has her gender identity contributing to testimonial injustice, but also her young age. At the moment of her UN speech, Thunberg was 16 years old, situating her under the minimum voting age in Sweden. The traditional, strictly democratic means of letting her voice be heard was therefore not yet available to her. To get around this issue, she created her own solution: the school strike. By strategically refusing to attend class she made a clear statement, and she inspired countless young people to follow her example. She utilised the fact that people of her age (at the time) are denied democratic participation as an opportunity to think up new strategies, instead of being discouraged. But even if Thunberg could turn this perceived weakness into a strength, her young age and appearance continue to be causes of testimonial injustice. A young girl without relevant degrees or experience to speak of will mostly be seen as less credible than an older white man in a suit who has completed higher education. This means that it's not simply anger contributing to a credibility deficit—in fact, stereotypes are at the basis of this judgement, and these stereotypes have more to do with Thunberg's identity factors than with her emotional expression. It is not so much her anger that is at issue here, but common stereotypes about the irrationality of, for example, young women like her. This might suggest that, for such climate activists, anger is not a helpful communicative strategy. Their calls to action—along with their identities as young people without much societal power—challenge many aspects of the patriarchal/capitalist order, which means that those in power will likely be even more hesitant to afford them credibility. Climate activism is uncomfortable to those in power, so dismissal on the basis of stereotypes can provide an easy way out.

1.2.2 Outlaw Emotions and Testimonial Justice

However, even if anger can potentially hinder uptake due to its susceptibility to testimonial injustice, it also has the potential to increase uptake. Anger can be a divisive communication strategy, but for certain groups it can be very effective.[9] Anger can be what Jaggar (1989) calls an "outlaw emotion," which isn't permitted to certain groups of people in certain contexts.[10] They "stand in tension with a large set of an agent's beliefs" (Silva 2021d, 664). Such outlaw emotions have strong subversive potential, and can play a crucial epistemic

9 As Harris writes, "to be angry . . . is to put oneself in the position of the judge, which for a woman in a patriarchal society means to be insubordinate" (2001, 275). Often, anger is about control, and gender is an important factor in who gets to have control and who does not. In a patriarchal society, men tend to have more control than women. Therefore, men often get to use anger as a communication tool, while women's anger is dismissed as misplaced or illegitimate. According to Nussbaum (2016), this link between legitimate anger and masculinity is the main reason why women feel like they should strive to claim the emotion for themselves. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is presented as the end goal, and anger is part of that picture. However, I argue that anger could just as well be desirable as a gender-neutral emotion, simply part of human existence. The fact that, in a patriarchal society, access to this emotion is restricted according to gender, does not have to imply that this restriction should remain in place. The contingent link between anger and masculinity is certainly present, but this does not mean that its connection to masculinity is the only way in which anger can be valued. Maybe women don't want access to anger in order to get closer to the ideal of the powerful man, but simply because they want the right to experience and express the full spectrum of human emotions (and the full spectrum of desires in their anger), including those traditionally seen as masculine.

10 Anger is not the only ecological outlaw emotion to have been theorised; cf. for example the literature on eco-grief and eco-miserabilism (Mihai and Thaler 2023; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018; Thaler 2024). While the literature on other eco-emotions is vast and exciting, it falls beyond the scope of this article to do it justice.

role—especially for those people experiencing them under conditions of oppression. In feminist philosophy, it has been recognised that outlaw emotions allow a person to respond to reasons they otherwise may not have tracked (Silva 2021d; Jaggar 1989), by virtue of the emotion's conflicting nature. As Silva points out, this claim does not have to be overly strong in order to be significant: it is enough that outlaw emotions sometimes track reasons better than our belief systems do; it is not necessary for them to always track reasons or for them to always track reasons better than our belief systems can. This is enough to underline their epistemic importance (Silva 2021d). Interestingly, Silva argues that "emotions can often aid reasoning by responding to reasons *despite* what the agent already believes" (684), which makes them "often more reliable than non-emotional processes at generating true beliefs under conditions of oppression" (685). People living under epistemic oppression often hold certain dominant oppressive beliefs, which stand in tension with their outlaw emotions—which can in turn lead to certain outlaw beliefs.

Importantly, Silva argues that the oppressive belief does not then defeat the justification of the outlaw belief, appealing to insights from standpoint epistemology:

> Belief in the conflicting oppressive proposition occurs disproportionately in members of groups that lack epistemic privilege, as compared to those that have epistemic privilege relative to that domain. (2021d, 686)

Beliefs do not arise in a vacuum: they do so in a social context, which is always implicated with power. In this vein, women's beliefs concerning gender oppression are more reliable than men's beliefs typically are, by virtue of their lived experience.

This also has a bearing on gendered outlaw emotions. According to Jaggar, emotions become feminist "when they incorporate feminist perceptions and values" (1989, 166). On my view, feminist perceptions and values might be those that a) value conditions of gender-based oppression negatively, b) value social conditions of gender equality positively, and c) aim to strive towards social conditions of gender equality and away from those of gender-based oppression. Some emotions, such as anger, are traditionally seen as masculine-coded privileges (Manne 2018): the epistemic and moral domain of men, to use for their own rhetorical ends and purposes. When women claim such a masculine-coded emotion for themselves, and use it for their own ends and purposes, this constitutes a radical act. A single woman making this rhetorical move can be a powerful signal, but especially when done collectively, these outlaw emotions can help influence the tilt of the epistemic playing field. This anger can then quickly become feminist anger, in being collectively utilised to counteract patriarchal gender norms pertaining to emotion. This amounts to a latent revolutionary potential.

So how should one work towards realising this revolutionary potential, and towards counteracting testimonial injustice? It might be more fitting to argue for testimonial justice on the part of the audience—to strive towards a personal commitment to taking anger more seriously and compensating for any stereotype-based credibility deficit afforded to it—than to argue for anger management on the part of the angry speaker. In order to ensure that communication runs smoothly and effectively, the burden of change should not be on the shoulders of the party in the most disadvantaged position. In the case of activist anger, such as climate anger, this anger arises in response to (societal) injustice, which puts the angry person on the side of the victim—whether as an ally or because they are directly victimised by the climate crisis. Thunberg speaks in anger not because she is personally victimised by the climate crisis (not yet at least), but because she empathises with those (present or future) people who are. It is then the task of the audience, who tend to perceive themselves

as more distant from the injustice at hand, to change their behaviour and to practice the virtue of testimonial injustice—rather than it being the task of the angry person to manage their anger in order to appease their audience. Thunberg's audience includes both her supporters, who recognise her anger in their own and grant her uptake, and the general public, who might be more likely to react with (often well-intentioned) caution and questions around productivity.

Importantly, anger does not need to be productive in order to be worth valuing and listening to. When certain groups of people experience systemic injustice which makes them angry, their anger is apt: they have a good, personal reason for it (cf. Srinivasan 2018). Arguably, this is the case in the context of climate anger. The climate crisis constitutes a real moral violation, in that certain powerful parties deliberately act in ways which harm other, less powerful parties. This harm is a good reason for climate activists' anger. And even if, at this point, the reason is not strictly personal for the activists (for example, Thunberg's own house has not flooded and her own harvest has not failed due to increasingly extreme weather conditions), a basic level of empathy with those who are directly victimised and/or with their future selves who will be directly victimised, suffices. This aptness in itself should be enough for their anger to be listened to. It is what Srinivasan (2018) calls an affective injustice[11] to force marginalised people to choose between expressing apt anger (even if it is unproductive) and pragmatically self-silencing. It is therefore of the utmost importance that allies consciously strive towards empathetic listening in order to enact testimonial injustice when faced with marginalised people's apt anger.

2. Some Arguments for Eco-Anger

Greta Thunberg has been criticised for being too angry. Above, I have suggested that the criticism that anger is too retributively focused, or leads to reduced uptake, can be responded to. Now, I want to move on from merely defending the voicing of anger against critics to a more positive consideration of the potential advantages of anger—both for Thunberg and for the wider climate movement. Anger can be a productive, powerful tool for the orator. In the feminist tradition, the value of anger has long been recognised. More recently, several books have appeared arguing for the value of women's anger in particular (Chemaly 2018; Cooper 2018; Dancyger 2019; Fahs 2020; Traister 2018). In philosophy, the most prominent voices arguing for a revaluation of anger have been Srinivasan (2018) and Cherry (2021). My argument runs parallel to theirs to some extent, but focuses specifically on anger in the context of the climate movement and its uses. I will discuss three potential benefits of anger in turn: it can be motivational, revolutionary, and community-building.

2.1 Motivational Anger

Emotions play a crucial role in social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 2006; Flam 2015; Eyerman 2005; Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004). The motivational force of anger specifically is often mentioned in the context of the climate movement (see e.g. Bergman 2023; Nguyen 2019; Westervelt 2019; Rozuel and Bellehumeur 2022).[12] Anger shakes people up and spurs them to action, as was the case in the climate marches that took place around the world. One study showed that anger in response to climate change was the only eco-emotion studied that actually had a reliable effect on people's future behaviours and intentions (Contreras et al. 2024). Another study found that eco-anger, more so than eco-anxiety or eco-depression, was suited to motivating people to engage

11 While I do not have the space here to go into depth on the topic of affective injustice, for more on the rapidly expanding literature on the topic, see Archer and Matheson 2022; Archer and Mills 2019; Gallegos 2021; Plunkett 2021; Srinivasan 2018; Whitney 2018; 2023; Zembylas 2022; 2023.

12 It is important to note that research on eco-emotions such as eco-anger is largely centred around Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) countries (Voşki, Wong-Parodi, and Ardoin 2023).

in climate activism, and predicted better mental health outcomes (Stanley et al. 2021). This motivating effect appears in definitions of anger as far back as ancient Greece. As I discussed above, Aristotle defined anger as "a longing, accompanied by pain, for a real or apparent revenge for a real or apparent slight" (Aristotle 1926). In interpreting this, Konstan focuses on "accompanied by pain," and links this element to Aristotle's definition of *pathè*: an audience's anger, like other emotions, can be manipulated by the orator (Konstan 2003). A similar political strategy is still used today (Ost 2004). In the context of the climate movement, another element of Aristotle's definition stands out: "A longing . . . for real or apparent revenge," and thus a desire for action.

At first glance, it is not obvious how a motivation towards revenge, whether real or imagined, could be considered a benefit of anger. However, as I indicated above, retributive sentiments do not necessarily have to be problematic when they arise in the context of apt anger. Moreover, when seeing anger according to the triadic model I proposed above, it becomes clear that retributive sentiments are far from the only motivation that anger strives towards. Retributive desires can certainly be present, but they exist alongside desires for recognition and forward-looking desires. This complexity is captured nicely by Chemaly (2018, xx):

> Anger has a bad rap, but it is actually one of the most hopeful and forward thinking of all our emotions. It begets transformation, manifesting our passion and keeping us invested in the world—as also evidenced by Aristotle's definition. It is a rational and emotional response to trespass, violation and moral disorder. It bridges the divide between what "is" and what "ought" to be, between a difficult past and an improved possibility.

When it comes to the climate movement, this is the standpoint I want to emphasise as well. In her speech to the UN, Thunberg stated, "We will never forgive you." But in spite of this retributive aspect, Thunberg's metaphor of cathedral thinking and her very much future-oriented and motivated campaign for change show that her anger is more complex. At its core, climate anger is a hopeful, forward-looking emotion. It is crucial for climate activists to be aware of this motivational, productive potential that their anger carries, so they can confidently and strategically use it to reach their goals.

2.2 Revolutionary Anger

The motivational power of anger can be deployed in many directions, including political protest. In this way, anger can serve as fuel for resistance movements against all sorts of oppression, whether personal or political, motivated by sexism, racism, or other intersecting forms of injustice. Important to note here is that, while anger can help fight powerlessness and oppression, a distinction has to be made between the feeling and the reality of powerlessness. In cases of what Kimmel (2017) calls "aggrieved entitlement," angry white men feel like they are being denied power to which they are entitled—but this feeling does not correspond to the sociopolitical reality in which they live. When it comes to the climate movement, on the other hand, its proponents start from the reality of (relative) powerlessness: activists are not those in positions of sociopolitical power; rather, they attempt to influence those in power, bottom-up, through grassroots activism. Activism is almost by definition a means for those without structural power—those with structural power do not have to resort to activism as a means to reach their goals.[13] Because anyone can experience and potentially use anger, Lyman (2004) argues that anger is fundamental in moving from oppression towards liberation. The first step is simply feeling anger. Next, this personal, individual anger has to be mobilised in the context of a protest movement. This requires

13 Activists themselves might feel hesitant about eco-emotions such as anger and guilt, preferring to focus on hope (Kleres and Wettergren 2017)—yet, as I have shown with the triadic model, anger and forward-looking desires such as hope do not have to be mutually exclusive.

transforming "private anger" into "collective anger" (Bernandez 1987). A one-person revolution will likely only make a small impact, but a revolution of many can accomplish much more. Through the community-building aspect of anger, which I discuss below, a one-person revolution can snowball into a revolution of many.

In order to achieve anger's revolutionary potential, however, a specific type of anger is needed. Not every instance of anger will be equally suited to revolution. Wood (2019) introduces the category of "irreverent rage." This anger is not directed inwards as is expected by dominant social norms, but rather outwards, to confront ruling power and the status quo directly. To be used strategically, anger may need to be tempered in some way: blind fury is poorly suited as a strategic tool, and in order to be rhetorically effective, some anger management might be required. However, anger management should never become a standard expectation.[14] For marginalised people especially, who are victims to injustice and are therefore aptly angry, it is unfair to expect them to manage and shape their own anger so it becomes productive enough to counteract the injustice they are victimised by. This would amount to an affective injustice: asking aptly angry marginalised people to change their apt anger in order to fit an ideal of productivity. Moreover, the responsibility of counteracting injustice should not fall on the shoulders of those victimised by it. Rather, this should be the task of allies, who empathise with the victims of injustice but are not themselves directly victimised by it. From allies, we can expect some anger management. Because their anger is of the second degree, on behalf of victims of injustice, their personal involvement with both the injustice and the anger is lesser. They are in a more privileged position, which means that it is not necessarily an injustice to ask them to manage and knead their anger to make it more productive.

Circling back around to Greta Thunberg, she can be seen as a kind of in-between case. On the one hand she is a direct victim of the climate crisis, because she lives on a planet which is affected by it in its entirety. But on the other hand, her social and geographical position ensure that the direct damage she currently incurs is less than if she were living in, say, Sudan. This puts her in the position of having a personal connection to the injustice at hand while still retaining enough privilege to be able to speak up about it relatively comfortably. Her gender and age make Thunberg vulnerable to testimonial injustice, and technically, if she pre-emptively manages her anger in order to avoid losing credibility, that amounts to testimonial smothering (Dotson 2011), which is an epistemic injustice in itself. However, to get her message across, a certain degree of anger management is crucial to Thunberg in her role as a public speaker. When Thunberg expressed her anger during her speech at the UN, she did not do so in an uncontrolled manner. She carefully adhered to a previously prepared script, but let her emotion shine through clearly in her voice and facial expressions. She could not be accused of losing control. Rather, she used her anger as a strategic tool, as a means of persuasion. Not just on this occasion, but also in her school strikes, as well as other speeches and talks, her anger peeks through. This anger, authentic yet strategised to a certain extent, appealed to and motivated other young people around the world to follow in her footsteps. Managed anger can be effective, Thunberg shows, but still caution is warranted in universalising the expectation of anger management to include the apt anger of marginalised communities as well.

2.3 Community-Building Anger

As discussed above, collective anger might have more potential than isolated anger. Fortunately, anger about a shared injustice lends itself well to being collectivised. We tend to see emotions as individual experiences, but they can also be a means of finding connection with other individuals experiencing the same emotion with the same cause. Through finding each other in their shared emotion, angry people can come together and

14 It should also be noted that eco-anger might in a way be well suited to keeping eco-anxiety at bay, and therefore to protecting against the paralysing effects this anxiety brings (Rozuel and Bellehumeur 2022).

collectivise in other ways as well. Young climate protesters, for example, found each other because they were all angry about the way their governments were (not) addressing the climate crisis. They recognised their own anger in the anger of Greta Thunberg and felt connected to her message and, by extension, to each other. They were spurred on by the motivational power of both their own anger and Thunberg's, and proceeded to take action. Moreover, research has shown that:

> Frustration and anger about the climate crisis are adaptive responses. Experiences of injustice or unfairness tend to provoke group-based anger, motivating collective (and not individual) action. (Stanley et al. 2021, 4; see also van Zomeren et al. 2004).

Additionally, climate activists' anger helped lead them to common concepts and frameworks that they might otherwise not have had access to. Anger can function as an epistemic bridge (Wallaert 2023) between people and concepts. Through connecting people in their shared emotion, anger creates the community environment in which conceptual frameworks can be shared and/or developed. This is especially useful in the context of anger in response to injustice, such as climate anger. People who are victims to various kinds of injustice might also be marginalised in other ways, including epistemically. Those most strongly impacted by the climate crisis, for example, also tend to be marginalised in other domains, an intersectional analysis shows (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014; Heckenberg and Johnston 2012). The common frameworks and concepts that we can use to understand ourselves and our experiences are not neutral, and often exclude more marginalised lives and experiences. In this way, marginalised people can be subject to a double injustice: the injustice contributing to their marginalisation, and the hermeneutical injustice which makes it more difficult for them to grasp their lived experience within epistemic frameworks. Felt anger in response to injustice can be easier to grasp, and people can find each other in their shared anger, even if they do not have access to more formalised epistemic frameworks which would allow them to understand their situation. Once they connect through their anger, these marginalised people can then work together to build their own epistemic tools to understand what they are living through.

3. Conclusion

In this article, I have presented an argument in favour of the use of anger in the climate movement. In the first part, I addressed two common counter-arguments to anger. First, I discussed the argument that anger is unproductive because it is retributive. I argued that a) this is not the case nearly as often as, e.g., Nussbaum argues, and b) that in fact, anger's desires can be situated along a triadic model of retribution, recognition, and forward-looking desires. Second, I looked at the argument that anger is counterproductive because it reduces uptake of the speaker's message. While I recognised that testimonial injustice is a real risk for angry communication, I ultimately argued that anger's potential as an outlaw emotion can outweigh that risk. In the second part of the article, I discussed three arguments for the use of anger in climate communication. I argued that anger has motivational value, revolutionary potential, and is well suited to community building. Ultimately, I want to conclude that anger can be a powerful tool in addressing the climate crisis. Greta Thunberg is justified in utilising it, not only because of its potential productivity, but also simply because her anger is apt, and she (along with the other, often young, climate activists) deserves to voice it. Anger can motivate people to join the climate movement, and it can build strong connections within that movement. Anger can be dangerous and slippery, but those qualities are exactly what makes it powerful.

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