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Introduction: Feminist Philosophy of Emotion

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Feminist philosophers have long recognised that emotions are not merely private, incidental features of inner life. Rather, they are deeply entangled with the structures of power, identity, and social organisation that shape our collective existence. From Alison Jaggar's (1989) groundbreaking argument that emotions serve as indispensable epistemic resources under conditions of oppression, to Sara Ahmed's (2014) analysis of how emotions circulate through bodies and texts to produce surfaces and boundaries, feminist scholarship has consistently challenged the assumption that reason and emotion, the public and the private, the political and the personal, occupy separate and hierarchically ordered domains. These challenges have proven not only theoretically productive but politically urgent. In a world marked by intensifying polarisation, resurgent authoritarianism, and persistent structural inequalities along the axes of gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability, the question of what emotions do (how they are shaped, governed, weaponised, and reclaimed) is a question about how power operates at the most intimate levels of human experience.

This special issue of *Passion: Journal of the European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions* grows out of the rich and generative exchange that took place at the pre-conference workshop on Feminist Philosophy of Emotions held in Lisbon in 2024, organised in conjunction with the European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions (EPSSE). The workshop brought together scholars from diverse philosophical traditions to explore the intersections of affect, power, identity, and justice. The five papers collected here represent a range of approaches united by a shared conviction: that a feminist philosophy of emotion is not a niche subfield, but an essential lens through which to understand the political, epistemic, and ethical dimensions of affective life.

The contributions to this volume address several interconnected questions. How are affects and politics mutually constitutive? How do social norms shape which emotions are intelligible, permitted, and punished, and for whom? Through what mechanisms does ideology infiltrate the intimate terrain of emotional life? What epistemic and political possibilities emerge when the oppressed reclaim emotions (anger, hatred, rage) that dominant norms seek to suppress or delegitimise? Taken together, the papers trace a path from foundational questions about the relationship between affect and political life, through the normative and ideological mechanisms that structure emotional experience, to the resistant and transformative potential of politically charged emotions.

Marie Wuth's "The Political Is Affective" opens the issue by advancing a bold theoretical claim: that affect and politics are not merely related but co-constitutive. Drawing on Baruch de Spinoza's relational ontology of power, Wuth argues that affects are themselves relations of power, expressions of the capacity to affect and be affected that Spinoza places at the heart of all being. From this vantage point, politics is not a domain from which emotions can be excluded, or to which they are merely appended; rather, political life is fundamentally woven from affective relations. Wuth uses the concept of affective dispositions, understood as the socially

sedimented, historically conditioned orientations that shape what we feel, desire, and fear, to illuminate how processes of inclusion, exclusion, association, and dissociation operate in contemporary political formations. Her examples range from the reactionary affective economies of incel communities, where resentment and misogynistic rage function as conditions of belonging, to the fear, anger, and hope that animate global climate movements. In both cases, affects serve as what she evocatively describes as "affective passports": tickets to political community whose acceptance or denial is conditioned by shared emotional investments.

The contribution of Wuth's argument is sharpened through her critical engagement with the canonical feminist claim that "the personal is political." Revisiting Susan Moller Okin's analysis of the structural flaws underpinning the public/private dichotomy, Wuth shows that an affect-theoretical approach radicalises and deepens Okin's insights by dissolving the very boundary between affect and politics that liberal feminism sought to renegotiate. At the same time, Wuth integrates intersectional critiques, drawing on Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins, to show that the exclusion of affect from politics has always been entangled with the exclusion of women, racialised bodies, and other marginalised groups from political life. The insistence that affect is constitutive of the political, and the political constitutive of affect, provides a foundational framework for the more specific analyses that follow.

Arina Pismenny's "The Politics of Feeling: Emotion Norms and the Making of Difference" turns from the broad entanglement of affect and politics to the specific mechanisms through which emotion norms participate in the construction and maintenance of social identities. Pismenny's central thesis is that emotion norms and identity categories are mutually constitutive: emotion norms prescribe distinct emotional repertoires for differently positioned subjects (what women "should" feel versus what men "should" feel), while identity categories structure emotional life by determining how particular emotions are perceived and evaluated depending on who expresses them. A woman's anger may be dismissed as hysteria; a man's may be read as righteous indignation. These are not merely differences in interpretation, but are part of a broader normative system through which both emotions and identities are made.

The paper develops this argument through a careful engagement with constructionist theories of emotion and social identity, bringing these two bodies of literature into direct conversation. Pismenny draws on the work of Lisa Feldman Barrett, James Averill, and Batja Mesquita to establish that emotions are normatively structured and context-sensitive experiences, and on Sally Haslanger, Judith Butler, Talia Mae Bettcher, and Ásta to show how gender categories are produced through norms, practices, and relations of power. The paper's main contribution lies in its analysis of how these two constructive processes reinforce one another. Emotion norms help produce gender by making certain affective styles appear natural for men or women; gender categories, in turn, shape how emotions are perceived, reinforcing the norms that produced them. Pismenny further examines how this mutual construction operates as a mechanism of oppression, generating affective double binds (particularly for women of colour, who face compounded and intersecting demands) while also attending to the multiplicity of emotional worlds that resist hegemonic norms.

If Pismenny's paper maps the normative landscape in which emotions and identities are co-constructed, Denish Jaswal's "Emotional Contingency and Ideological Curation" asks how ideology operates within this landscape at the level of individual emotional experience. Jaswal introduces the concept of emotional contingency (the idea that at any given moment, a range of emotional responses is psychologically available to us) and argues that ideology intervenes precisely at these moments of contingency through a process she terms "ideological curation." This curation operates in two modes: first, by shaping the very set of emotional

possibilities available to a person—the "menu" of emotions from which one might respond; and second, by exerting pressure toward or away from particular emotions on that menu.

Through a richly developed case study of a woman subjected to catcalling, Jaswal demonstrates how patriarchal ideology can make shame and guilt psychologically available as responses to harassment, emotions that would be unintelligible in a non-patriarchal context, while simultaneously guiding women away from anger, which would be the fitting response. The paper's analysis is enriched by Jaswal's own first-person account of the ideological curation of emotions surrounding body hair as a woman of colour, lending the philosophical argument an existential urgency. The framework of ideological curation contributes to growing literatures on emotional injustice and psychological oppression by providing a mechanism, a "how," for understanding the processes by which ideology infiltrates and reshapes affective life. It also highlights a distinctive harm that has received insufficient attention: the psychic toll exacted by the ongoing effort to resist the emotional directions that ideology imposes.

The question of resistance moves to the foreground in the final two papers of the issue, which examine the positive epistemic and political potential of specific emotions, anger and hatred, in contexts of social injustice. Butel-Gans's "It is Humanising to Resist It with Rage" argues that the experience of anger at social injustice is humanising in a specific and philosophically precise sense: it enacts a subjective and political reassessment of oneself as entitled to respect, capable of appropriate emotion, and legitimate in opposing injustice. Against the widespread "counterproductivity critique"—the claim, associated prominently with Martha Nussbaum, that anger is irrational, self-defeating, and counterproductive to social justice—Butel-Gans contends that this critique rests on an impoverished conception of what counts as politically productive.

The paper develops the concept of anger's "reconnecting ability": its capacity to restore the oppressed to an awareness of their own embodied, affective presence, against the alienation that oppression characteristically induces. Drawing on Naomi Scheman's analysis of consciousness-raising, Céline Leboeuf's phenomenology of anger at racism, Marilyn Frye's account of anger and domains of respect, and Elizabeth Spelman's analysis of anger as a form of moral judgement, Butel-Gans traces three "moments" of anger's humanising work: the politicisation of one's experience; the assertion of one's legitimacy as an epistemic and political agent; and the acquisition, through the expression or suppression of anger, of knowledge about one's social position. The paper's vivid illustration of Adèle Haenel's public expression of rage at the 2020 César Awards ceremony, and Virginie Despentes's incandescent response, powerfully demonstrates how anger can function as both a reconnection with one's own political subjectivity and as a form of collective resistance.

Katelyn Antilla's "For the Love of Hate: Hatred as an Emotive Tool Against Injustice" pushes the rehabilitation of negative political emotions further still, by defending a role for hatred, an emotion that even most defenders of anger have been reluctant to endorse. Antilla argues that philosophical treatments of hatred have been impoverished by their failure to recognise its varieties, treating the emotion monolithically as destructive and dehumanising. Through a careful taxonomy inspired by Myisha Cherry's analytic methodology, Antilla distinguishes prejudicial hatred, retributive hatred, misanthropic hatred, and clash hatred from what she terms "Beauvoirian hatred": a morally grounded form of hate directed at those who are complicit in or perpetrators of the degradation of persons into things, inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's reflections on the trial and execution of the Nazi collaborator, Robert Brasillach.

Beauvoirian hatred, Antilla argues, is not aimed at eliminating or destroying its target, but at improving the moral community by signalling that a certain character is morally unacceptable. It is self-affirming, defending the hater's (and the victim's) sense of moral worth; it creates a "normative chasm" that asserts the rightness of justice against the wrongness of injustice; and it grants a sense of finality that other emotions, such as anger and contempt, cannot provide. In its symbolic force and its refusal of further engagement with the target, hatred offers an emotional resource that is distinctive and, Antilla argues, sometimes indispensable. The paper thus rounds out the issue's arc from the structural co-constitution of affect and politics, through the mechanisms by which ideology shapes emotional life, to the reclamation of emotions as instruments of resistance and moral community.

Read together, the five contributions make a compelling case for the centrality of emotion to feminist philosophy and politics. Emotions emerge not as secondary to political analysis, but as integral to the operation of power, the formation of identity, and the possibility of resistance.

The collection is unified by three themes: a rejection of entrenched dualisms between reason and emotion, the personal and the political; sustained attention to intersectionality in shaping emotional life; and an emphasis on the ambivalence of affect, as both a mechanism of domination and a resource for resistance. Taken together, the papers establish emotion as a crucial site of philosophical and political inquiry.

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References

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