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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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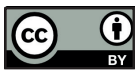

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The Political Is Affective

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Abstract

This paper develops a feminist affect-theoretical account of the relation between the affective and the political, advancing the double claim that the political is affective and the affective is political. Drawing on Baruch de Spinoza's relational ontology of power, I argue that the affective and the political are not merely intertwined but fundamentally co-constitutive: both are expressions of power, and neither can be adequately understood in isolation from the other. The paper proceeds in two parts. The first part elaborates a Spinozist framework in which affects are understood as relations of power that constitute the very fabric of political life, illustrated through the cases of incel communities and climate activism. The second part engages critically with feminist contributions to the public/private debate, particularly Susan Moller Okin's analysis of the structural flaws underpinning this dichotomy, in order to show how an affect-theoretical perspective both extends and radicalises these insights. Deliberately echoing the feminist maxim that the personal is political, this paper radicalises that insight by shifting the focus from the politicisation of a separate private sphere to the inherently political nature of affective relations themselves. By substituting the affective for the private in Okin's critique, I demonstrate that the categorisation of affect is itself a political process, and that its historical marginalisation has functioned as a strategic instrument of patriarchal and colonial power. The paper concludes by arguing that attending to the ambivalence of affect — its capacity to entrench domination as well as incite transformation — opens pathways toward a more intersectional and emancipatory political theory.

Keywords: affect theory, feminist political theory, Spinoza, Okin, public/private dichotomy, power

1. Affects and Politics: A Two-Way Street

"*Sine ira et studio*"—without either bitterness or partiality—expresses Tacitus's (2012, 1,1) ideal of jurisprudence and state politics. This phrase articulates an image of politics that has long shaped thought and action, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, and which continues to inform our understanding of politics, as well as its ideals and norms. This model of politics is one devoid of passion, impulse, or partiality. Politics, considered as the quintessential human activity, is the domain of reason, where rational decisions prevail. In other words, politics and emotion, or affect, have long been seen as antithetical.

This staged opposition forms part of a series of dualisms and dichotomies that have characterised and guided the canon of Western political theory, among them the contrasts between culture and nature, mind and body, and reason and emotion. From this angle, we can highlight a significant link between the problem of separating

politics and affect, and feminist philosophy: within this series of dualisms, everything on the right—nature, body, emotion—perpetually succumbs to what stands on the left—culture, mind, and reason (Lloyd 1984, 3). Importantly, throughout the history of Western thought, femininity has been associated with the right, subordinated side, with nature, body, and emotion; a connection that has ultimately been used to legitimise the exclusion of women from the realm of reason, mind, and, of course, politics (Lloyd 1984; Spelman 1988; Jaggar 1996). The exclusion or ignorance of the significance and function of affects in politics can thus be understood as an expression of patriarchal oppression and heteronormative structures. These structures were never exclusive to philosophical discourse, but have shaped societal life in their capacity as foundations of legitimacy and models of political institutions and structures.

In the past two decades, the intricate entanglement of affect and politics has been subject to renewed scrutiny, both within academic discourse—most notably through what has come to be termed the "Affective Turn" at the dawn of the twenty-first century—and beyond the confines of scholarly debate (see e.g. Massumi 2002; Connolly 2002; Clough 2007; Wetherell 2013). Public discourse, too, has increasingly grappled with the role of affect in shaping political life and collective imaginaries. This heightened attentiveness, however, is not incidental; it has been catalysed by profound transformations within the political landscape itself. The ascendance of populist movements across the ideological spectrum, the resurgence of nationalism, and the intensifying mobilisation and polarisation of social movements and political actors collectively testify to the constitutive role of affect in contemporary politics (Slaby and von Scheve 2019).

To be sure, neither populism nor nationalist agitation are novel phenomena. Yet their amplified visibility and resonance in recent years have sharpened recognition of affect's double-edged function in democratic life. On the one hand, affective energies possess a vital democratic potential—they can galvanise political participation, foster solidarity, and animate movements for justice. On the other hand, the very intensity that renders affects politically generative also renders them susceptible to manipulation, instrumentalisation, and co-optation by reactionary forces. In particular, the strategic mobilisation of emotions—whether fear, resentment, or even hope—can deepen societal fissures, fuel antagonisms, and erode the preconditions for democratic deliberation. Thus, while the presence of affect in politics is not in itself pathological, the way in which it is harnessed—whether to empower or to exclude—remains a critical question for any serious political analysis.

The inherent ambivalence of affect becomes particularly salient when we examine how affects—and those who express them—are judged within political and public life. As theorists such as Sara Ahmed (2014) and Lauren Berlant (2011) have incisively shown, affects are not simply private or spontaneous responses; they are deeply entangled with cultural scripts that encode certain emotions as either "strong" or "weak," in ways that are both gendered and hierarchical. Emotions such as compassion or care are frequently feminised and devalued, regarded as signs of fragility or irrationality, whereas affects like courage, especially in their assertive forms, are coded as masculine, and thus valorised as markers of political strength or leadership.

This dynamic is not limited to abstract discourses on affect; it manifests acutely in the differential treatment of emotional expression among political actors. The meaning and legitimacy of affective displays are often contingent on an agent's positionality—shaped by gender, race, class, and other intersecting social markers. In some cases, affective expression in politics is celebrated as a sign of authenticity, empathy, and accessibility, seemingly bridging the divide between representatives and the represented. In others, it is castigated as manipulative, inappropriate, or even undemocratic—especially when expressed by those who are already marginalised or subjected to gendered forms of scrutiny. Consider, for example, the divergent receptions of

emotional expression in U.S. political culture. The former U.S. president Joe Biden has frequently been lauded for his emotional openness, particularly in moments where he has spoken about personal loss and grief; his affective register is read as humanising, as a source of moral credibility and connection. By contrast, during her 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton's emotional expressions were often met with suspicion and derision. Her displays of affect were cast as strategic, insincere, or as signs of emotional instability—traits allegedly incompatible with leadership. Such starkly different receptions reveal how patriarchal norms continue to govern affective legibility in politics. Masculinised forms of emotional expression—particularly those framed as rational, contained, or empathetically paternal—are endorsed, while feminised affects remain suspect, coded as either excessive or deficient.

Thus, affective dynamics in the political sphere can function as diagnostic tools, revealing the sedimented structures of power that continue to underwrite notions of political legitimacy. The asymmetrical valuation of emotional expression underscores how appeals to neutrality or rationality often serve to obscure ongoing exclusions and inequalities. In this sense, the management of affect within political discourse is far from incidental; it reflects the contested terrain of democratic inclusion itself.

Moreover, affects tend to erupt most visibly—and gain particular traction—at moments of political rupture, when the stability of the political order is threatened or conventional forms of governance prove inadequate. It is precisely in such moments of crisis—during electoral upheavals, in the wake of state failures, or amid pervasive climates of insecurity—that emotions are explicitly mobilised, both by political actors and by publics themselves. These boundary situations lay bare the dual role of affect: they reveal both its disruptive potential and its instrumentalisation within political strategies of control or mobilisation. The sudden centrality of emotions in such moments is not an aberration. Rather, it points to the fact that affect constitutes a latent but constant undercurrent in political life—one that surfaces with particular intensity whenever the limits of established political orders are reached or transgressed.

Despite the increasing theoretical and public attention to the political force of affect, a deep ambivalence persists regarding its status within democratic life. Affects are often acknowledged as politically consequential, yet they continue to be treated with suspicion—as volatile, disruptive, or secondary to the ostensibly more stable terrain of rational deliberation. This residual distrust signals not only a persistent attachment to outdated dichotomies between reason and emotion, but also an unwillingness to confront the extent to which affect is not merely present in politics, but constitutive of it. Any attempt to sideline affect thus risks reproducing the very exclusions it purports to overcome, obscuring the complex affective economies that underlie contemporary political struggles.

Against this background, a feminist engagement with the relation between affects and politics proves both timely and necessary. As feminist theorists have long emphasised, judgments about the democratic or antidemocratic character of affects are neither neutral nor universal. Rather, they are shaped by power relations and the positionality of the individuals involved. A deeper analysis of the affect–politics nexus can thus reveal how seemingly neutral political norms reproduce unequal and unjust structures of domination—along the axes of gender, race, and class. This is especially relevant for feminist critique, given that the historical exclusion of emotions from the political sphere has been intertwined with the exclusion of women and other marginalised groups from political participation. In this light, rethinking—and ultimately overcoming—the separation of affect and politics is not merely a theoretical project; it also opens pathways toward more emancipatory forms of political practice and a more inclusive understanding of democratic agency.

My aim in this paper is to develop such a feminist account of the relation between affects and politics by advancing the double claim that the affective is political and the political is affective. In itself, this assertion is not novel. A wide range of affect theorists have articulated comparable claims—some diagnosing an emergent "affective regime" of governance, others showing how affects pervade political institutions, social movements, and forms of collective identification (Connolly 2002; Protevi 2009; Nussbaum 2013; Lordon 2016; Bargetz and Sauer 2015; Slaby and Bens 2019). Yet my approach differs in one crucial respect: I emphasise the co-constitutive and ultimately inseparable relation between affect and politics. My central argument is grounded in a relational understanding of power and the claim that both affect and politics are not simply influenced by power, but are themselves expressions of power. This insight is elaborated through a critical engagement with the political philosophy of Baruch de Spinoza (1985; 2016), who foregrounded the role of affect in the dynamics of political life. Within feminist Spinoza scholarship, affect and embodiment have been treated as central to political analysis, a line of thought to which the present argument contributes (see e.g. Gatens and Lloyd 1999; James et al. 2000; Gatens 2009; Sharp 2011).

An affect-theoretical approach to the political, then, does not simply add a feminist perspective to existing political theory; it also opens a more radical horizon for democratic thought. By insisting that the affective and the political are fundamentally entwined, this approach challenges the presumption that politics can be reduced to rational deliberation or procedural neutrality. Instead, it understands politics as an inherently ambivalent field of conflict and consent, shaped by competing affects and power struggles. Such a perspective necessarily contests core tenets of liberal thought such as the figure of the hyper-masculine, autonomous political subject, or the presumed separation between private and public life, between reason and emotion, between body and mind. These dualisms have long been problematised within feminist theory—including in liberal feminist critiques such as those of Susan Moller Okin (1989). However, I seek to push this critique further by arguing that the political is affective at its very core, a claim that unsettles the boundary between the personal and the political, the private and the public. In this regard, my proposal aligns with key insights from radical feminist traditions.

The paper proceeds in two parts. In the first part, I introduce central insights from Spinoza's philosophy to illuminate the entanglement of affect, politics, and power. I demonstrate how an affect-theoretical account, and especially the concept of affective disposition, enables a deeper understanding of political phenomena, including processes of association, dissociation, inclusion, and exclusion. In the second part of the paper, I extend this framework to advance my double claim: that the political is affective and the affective is political. Here, I critically engage with liberal feminist perspectives, including Okin's, in order to show that an affect-theoretical account moves beyond their limitations. In doing so, I challenge binary conceptions of political subjectivity and political space, especially those that sustain the division between private and public, mind and body, or reason and affect. Ultimately, I argue that by attending to the ways we feel power and the ways power is exercised through affective relations, we can develop more immanent and transformative critiques of existing political structures and interactions.

2. Relations of Power

My claim that the affective is political and the political is affective rests upon the assumption that affects and politics are interlinked because they are expressions of power. More specifically, I understand affects as relations of power and politics as the organization of co-existence via the governance of power relations. This

understanding follows Spinoza, whose philosophy of immanence revolves around the notion of power (Saar 2013). Before explicating the different dimensions of power in which the interconnection of affects and politics plays out, it is helpful to briefly explain some of the notions at stake.

For Spinoza, everything there is, human and non-human beings, as well as material and immaterial things, is caused by the power of nature (1985, 425/EIp16dem), and every individual has a power for activity, a power of acting. Importantly, this power of acting is bound to the capacity to affect and be affected (493/E3post1). This two-sided ability depends on interaction and mutual affection with others and it is the very basis for the affects we experience. For Spinoza, affects are interactions which lead to a decrease or increase in the individual's power of acting (493/EIIIdef3). Whenever something happens to us that increases our power, we feel joy or pleasure, and, vice versa, whenever something happens to us that decreases our power, we experience sadness or pain (500-501/ EIIIp11s). Affects, therefore, are expressions of power and indicate a change in power through interaction. Since they always involve the presence of, and an encounter between, at least two beings, they are themselves relations, affective relations, power relations which pertain to situations and circumstances and elucidate the type of encounter and relation. Spinoza also reminds us that every individual exists only through and with others (555/ EIVp18d). No being persists in isolation; rather, each depends on relations of interaction and mutual influence to endure and to act.

Yet Spinoza's political realism prevents any romanticisation of this interdependence. While coexistence, interaction, and mutual presence are necessary conditions of life, they are not inherently stable or harmonious. Affects, for Spinoza, are intrinsically ambivalent (514, 526/EIIIp39s, EIIIp56); they fluctuate, vacillate, and may just as easily fragment as unify. Joy and sadness, love and hatred, hope and fear—all of these affects are unstable forces that bind and separate, enable and destroy. It is precisely this volatility of affects that makes political organisation necessary. Without some form of collective ordering through laws, norms, and institutional frameworks, social relations would remain precarious and fragile, subject to the unpredictable oscillations of the affects. Politics, therefore, emerges not as a secondary or derivative sphere, but as a necessary response to the affective condition of human existence.

This perspective makes clear that the relation between affects and politics is not unilateral, but reciprocal. Affects are the very fabric through which political life is woven; they connect individuals, forming the basis of community and shared life (Spinoza 2016, 532/ TPVI.I). Yet their ambivalence also means that they contain the seeds of discord, conflict, and disintegration. As much as affects can unite, they can also divide. Politics thus arises from the need to manage these affective forces; to regulate, stabilize, and channel them toward forms of coexistence that enable collective flourishing (566–68/ EIVp37s; James 2020).

From this vantage point, politics can be understood as the art of organising coexistence under conditions of affective ambivalence. It is a field of competing and converging affective forces—sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony, and often suspended in a state of tension. Politics, then, is not merely the realm of rational deliberation or institutional procedure; it is fundamentally shaped by the passionate regimes that govern bodies and communities (Balibar 1989; Sharp 2005). In this sense, politics and affects are mutually constitutive. Politics must attend to our affective constitution, accommodating the desires, fears, and hopes that animate the body politic. At the same time, politics actively shapes and modulates these very affects, moulding the affective contours of collective life and determining the forms of attachment, belonging, and exclusion that define political existence (Spinoza 1985; 2016; Butler 2015; James 2020).

Two examples help to further illustrate the inseparability of power, politics, and affects, and to illuminate how an affect-theoretical perspective can illuminate political phenomena.

One striking example is the case of so-called incel (involuntary celibate) communities. These online groups organise themselves around shared affects such as resentment, self-pity, envy, and misogynistic rage. Their collective identity is grounded in the narrative of exclusion from sexual and romantic relationships; an exclusion they reframe as systemic injustice against them as (mostly white) heterosexual men. However, what on the surface presents itself as a space for sharing personal suffering quickly reveals itself as a community structured around affective violence and patriarchal entitlement. Affective belonging within these spaces requires the constant reaffirmation of feelings of hatred toward women and contempt for more sexually successful men ("chads"), alongside the normalisation of self-hatred and nihilism (Nagle 2017). Those who question these narratives or express alternative affects, such as empathy, accountability, or feminist critique, are swiftly excluded, ridiculed, or harassed. This shows how affects here act as gatekeepers not only of community membership but also of epistemology: they enforce a worldview that frames gendered relations as inherently antagonistic and hierarchical, reducing women to objects of desire and competition, and naturalising male dominance and violence (Srinivasan 2021). Far from being mere personal feelings, these affects sustain a deeply political, patriarchal imaginary that legitimises both personal and structural misogyny. In this example, affects do not simply organise collective identity—they actively reproduce and escalate gendered hierarchies and violence, revealing the dangerous political work that affects can perform. This case also demonstrates how certain affective regimes can foreclose solidarity, empathy, and democratic dialogue, instead reinforcing authoritarian and exclusionary social imaginaries.

Another instructive case is found in global climate movements such as Fridays for Future, which are significantly driven by affects such as fear, anger, and hope. Many activists are motivated by a profound fear of environmental degradation and the looming, catastrophic consequences of climate change. At the same time, their hope for a sustainable and just future, and their anger at political inaction and corporate exploitation, forms an equally powerful driver for collective action. These shared affective experiences do not merely accompany their activism but are central to how these movements organise, mobilise, and sustain themselves (Ray 2020; Malm 2021). Here, too, we see that collective belonging is shaped by shared affective orientations: those who do not feel a comparable sense of urgency, or do not perceive climate change as a pressing threat, often struggle to relate to or engage with such movements. Access is not merely formal but conditioned by whether participants share certain affective investments and a particular outlook on the future. In this sense, environmental activism leverages affect both to forge internal cohesion and to build pressure against external political forces, responding to the broader socio-political context shaped by global power relations, economic interests, and ecological crises.

Both examples—reactionary communities like incel groups and progressive movements such as Fridays for Future—reveal how affects operate as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, forming the very conditions of political belonging. In both cases, affects act as affective "passports" or "tickets" to a given political space. Participation depends on shared emotional investments, and entrance may be denied on the basis of conflicting feelings or divergent self-understandings. These two cases also vividly illustrate how affects are not only expressions of individual experience but also modes of organising collective life. They show that affects function as political forces: they generate belonging, exclude dissent, authorise worldviews, and mobilise action. In short, they constitute a central medium through which political life is formed, maintained, and contested.

To grasp the deeper dynamics at play here, Spinoza's ontology proves to be helpful: as noted earlier, for Spinoza, every individual is characterised by a twofold capacity to affect and to be affected. Crucially, this capacity is not exercised in a vacuum. It is shaped by the past—by the sedimented history of affective encounters that condition what we perceive as joyful, painful, desirable, or threatening. These histories inform our present affective dispositions and guide our orientations toward the future (Spinoza 1985, 550/EIVp6; James 2003, 147). Yet our affective capacities and dispositions are equally shaped by the present: by our environments, by the people and institutions around us, and by dominant collective affects (Steinberg 2018). In this way, our affective dispositions are not just personal or psychological; they are deeply political.

Part of our affective disposition is also an inclination to imitate the affects of those around us (Spinoza 1985, 508/ EIIIp27)—whether it be shared enthusiasm at a protest or shared resentment in an online forum. This responsiveness to others is not a passive mimicry, but a constitutive part of how subjectivity and collectivity are formed. Affective resonance is a social and political mechanism: it facilitates alignment and polarisation, cohesion and division.

Importantly, this means that affective dispositions emerge not only from ontological necessity, but from social conditions—from material constraints, cultural narratives, and institutional structures that differentially distribute whose affects are heard, legitimised, or pathologised. From this vantage point, affective dispositions are socio-politically coded (Mühlhoff 2019; 2020). They are shaped by positionality within intersecting structures of domination—race, gender, class, sexuality, ability—and become habituated in collective repertoires of expression, suppression, and responsiveness. This coding can take the form of racialised or gendered emotional norms that govern which affects can be expressed, by whom, and in what contexts. Intersectionality, in this sense, is not only a framework for analysing overlapping oppressions, but also an affective concept. It reveals how power structures inscribe themselves in bodies and subjectivities, shaping what can be felt, expressed, or imagined. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991) and others have argued, intersectional marginalisation is not simply a matter of legal or economic exclusion; it is affectively lived. Affective dispositions are therefore both products and instruments of political and intersecting structures.

This perspective provides a powerful analytic for understanding political subjectivity. It allows us to see that the formation of political agents is not primarily a matter of ideology or rational deliberation, but of affective investment, resonance, and attunement (Massumi 2002; Connolly 2002). It shows how certain political imaginaries become possible—or impossible—through the distribution and regulation of affect. It also explains how individuals come to identify with particular causes, communities, or movements: not only because they think something is right or wrong, but because they are moved by it. An affect-theoretical perspective, grounded in a Spinozist ontology of power, reveals how the political is affective at every level: in how subjectivities are formed, in how communities are constituted, and in how structures of domination and resistance are lived and reproduced. It allows us to trace the micropolitics of power through the felt experiences of individuals and collectives, and to understand how the struggle over affects is a struggle over political life itself.

What emerges from the analysis so far is that such affective dynamics are not incidental; they constitute the very texture of the political itself. Affects shape political subjectivities, collective imaginaries, and social alliances, making them fundamental to how political spaces are structured and contested (Gatens and Lloyd 1999; Ahmed 2014). In this sense, the political is affective and, conversely, the affective is political. This understanding is also indebted to, and remains firmly situated within, feminist critique. This formulation

deliberately echoes the now-canonical feminist maxim that "the personal is political." The foundational claim that the personal is political exposed how the intimate, the emotional, and the domestic are not apolitical zones, but sites where power is exercised and reproduced. The proposition that the affective is political seeks to radicalise this insight: it shifts the focus from the politicisation of a supposedly separate private sphere to the inherently political nature of affective relations themselves; relations that move across bodies, institutions, and collective life. In this way, an affect-theoretical approach deepens feminist commitments by foregrounding the ambivalent, relational, and structural role of affect in shaping political subjectivities, imaginaries, and alliances. To make this argument more concrete, I now turn to key feminist contributions around the slogan "The personal is political," before showing how an approach based on affects can not only push this insight forward but also open up an intersectional perspective on the entanglement of power, embodiment, and affect in political life.

3. From the Personal to the Affective

"The personal is political": this rallying cry emerged from the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, gaining theoretical force in the 1980s as a trenchant critique of the ideological division between the public and the private, the political and the domestic. This slogan was defended by feminists from diverse theoretical and political backgrounds, ranging from radical feminists such as Carol Hanisch (1970), Shulamith Firestone (1970), and Catharine MacKinnon (1989), to liberal theorists like Susan Moller Okin (1989). While their strategies diverged, they converged on a shared insight: ostensibly "private" matters—such as reproduction, sexuality, and household labour—are, in fact, sites of political struggle, structured by legal frameworks, economic systems, and deeply embedded cultural norms. The central claim was clear: gendered oppression is not an unfortunate accident of the private sphere, but an effect of structural, institutionalised power relations.

Radical feminists in particular exposed how patriarchal domination operates both overtly and insidiously within the intimate domain, rendering violence, coercion, and inequality invisible under the guise of personal choice or familial tradition. Thinkers like Shulamith Firestone (1970), Catharine MacKinnon (1989), and Andrea Dworkin (1981) exposed the ways in which patriarchy operates not only through explicit laws and policies, but through deeply ingrained affective and material relations, especially within the family, sexuality, and the body. Firestone (1970) radically reconceptualised gender oppression as rooted in the biological family structure itself, arguing that reproductive labour and the material realities of childbirth and caregiving constitute a primary site of women's subjugation. This structural critique implicates affective relations such as love, dependency, and desire, revealing them as entangled with domination, rather than separate from it. MacKinnon (1989) analysed sexual politics as a fundamental dimension of power, where affective experiences like sexual violence, desire, and humiliation are not merely private matters, but constitutive of systemic gender hierarchies and unequal power relations. These dynamics shape subjectivities and political agency, complicating any simplistic bifurcation between public and private spheres.

While radical feminists urge us to dismantle and shatter the foundational structures of gendered domination in patriarchy, liberal feminists insist on legal reform, policy adjustment and foreground rights, recognition, and redistribution. Susan Moller Okin's (1989) critique remains foundational in liberal feminist thought, as she meticulously exposed how the rigid public/private divide perpetuates systemic gender inequalities by obscuring domestic violence, entrenching gendered labour divisions, and shaping legal regimes around marriage and divorce. Alongside Okin, liberal feminists such as Martha Nussbaum (2000) and Elizabeth

Anderson (2010) have also emphasised the role of the state in rectifying inequalities by ensuring equal access to political and economic opportunities. Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities approach highlights how the political must encompass the conditions enabling individuals, particularly women, to flourish beyond formal legal equality, including in intimate and affective realms. Anderson (2010) further stressed the importance of recognising social interdependencies and the relational nature of justice, thereby challenging atomistic conceptions of the political that overlook the embeddedness of individuals within networks of care.

Yet, while this feminist critique of the domestic/public split uncovered a panoply of gendered injustices, it did not go unchallenged from within feminist thought itself. In particular, Black feminists and other feminists of colour raised compelling objections, demonstrating that slogans like "The personal is political" often reflected a narrow and racially specific experience; one largely shaped by the positionality of white, middle-class women. Writers such as Audre Lorde (1984), bell hooks (1981), Angela Davis (1981), and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argued that this formulation universalised particular forms of oppression while erasing the intersectional entanglements of race, class, and sexuality. Indeed, many of the "private" issues foregrounded in mainstream feminist discourse, such as housework or marital inequality, did not capture the lived realities of women whose struggles were inseparable from racialised exploitation, economic marginalisation, and state violence.

To ignore these intersecting forms of oppression is not simply to overlook nuance; it is to reproduce forms of epistemic violence. Any serious feminist agenda today must therefore remain attentive to these multiple axes of subordination, and it is precisely here that the reformulation the political is affective bears transformative potential. This perspective does not merely extend the feminist critique of the public/private divide; it reconfigures it by foregrounding affect as a critical site where power, vulnerability, and resistance coalesce—across and within differences.

To clarify the feminist critique developed here, I begin by revisiting Okin's incisive analysis of the four structural flaws underpinning the public/private dichotomy. Although grounded in a liberal feminist framework, Okin's critique serves as a conceptual springboard for examining how power operates through affective relations across domains conventionally coded as private or public. In doing so, I aim to show not only that the personal is political, but that the affective itself is inescapably political, and that attempts to cordon off affect from politics are conceptually untenable and politically consequential.

3.1 Dynamics of Power in Affective Lives

The first flaw Okin identifies in the separation of personal, domestic life and public, political life is that "what happens in domestic and personal life is not immune from the dynamic of power, which has typically been seen as the distinguishing feature of the political" (1989, 128).

Okin demonstrates that political decisions profoundly shape the private sphere, as is evident in cases where legal systems fail to intervene in domestic violence, thereby treating bodily harm within families as a non-political matter. This relegation of violence, particularly gender-based violence, to the private realm does not constitute a withdrawal of power, but an active political decision to ignore certain forms of domination. In this way, the non-intervention of the state sustains gendered structures of power both within and beyond the domestic sphere, simultaneously rendering certain bodies vulnerable in public life. The public/private distinction thereby functions as a mechanism of selective political recognition and protection (128–29).

While some aspects of Okin's analysis have been addressed in contemporary political discourse, the underlying logic persists: the designation of what counts as political, what is recognised as the proper object of law, rights, and public concern, continues to structure and shape the dynamics of everyday life, both within and beyond the so-called private sphere.

This critique can be deepened by extending it to the affective domain. In parallel to Okin's argument, it becomes clear that affective life is not immune from the dynamics of power. The earlier discussion has shown that affectivity cannot be disentangled from power; affective relations are always already relations of power. The capacity to affect and to be affected forms the very basis of social relations and, by extension, of political organisation. Power is not something external to affective life; it is immanent to it. Such a reframing allows for a significant departure from Okin's heteronormative and binary focus on the nuclear family. By centring affective relations beyond intimate or familial ones, this analysis encompasses a broader array of social encounters, including those beyond normative frameworks of kinship or partnership, through which vulnerability, attachment, and legitimacy are structured and contested, for instance through socially sedimented affective dispositions that distribute exposure to harm, authority, and recognition. Importantly, it shifts the focus from fixed social roles toward the lived, relational experience of power—toward the ways in which affects are mobilised, regulated, and distributed in various spaces and under varying social conditions.

This perspective foregrounds the affective dimension of political life, highlighting how political organisation is inseparable from the regulation and modulation of affect. The dynamics of vulnerability, attachment, fear, solidarity, and desire are not merely personal or psychological; they are deeply political: shaping and shaped by structures of domination and resistance. In this way, the affective critique expands Okin's initial insight: not only is the personal political, but the affective is irreducibly political, both as a site of power and as a condition of political possibility.

3.2 Borders and Dichotomies Are Based on Political Decisions

The second structural flaw identified by Okin concerns the fact that even the very separation between private and political spheres presupposes a political decision. Any act of demarcation, of designating which matters fall under the domain of politics and which remain confined to the private, constitutes a political process. The boundary between private and public life is not a natural or self-evident distinction, but rather a product of political judgements about what counts as a legitimate object of public concern and regulation. Hence, the supposed separation between the political and the private is inherently paradoxical. Political intervention must first draw the line that ostensibly shields the private from politics. No sphere, then, can claim to be pre-political or untouched by political dynamics (129–31).

This argument becomes even more incisive when extended to the affective domain. If one substitutes the affective for the private in this critique, it follows that what is categorised as affective—whether fear, hope, love, or anger—is never simply given or natural. Instead, it emerges through political processes that establish which emotions, attachments, and responses are considered legitimate, intelligible, or politically significant. In this sense, the affective is not a realm apart from politics, but is always already politically mediated. The very act of distinguishing between "affective" and "political" domains is itself a political act—one that organises relations of power governing coexistence and legitimacy, and thereby shapes whose affects matter and under what conditions. Moreover, if the separation is in itself a political process, then this would imply that the political would constitute itself through its very demarcation from the affective– meaning the two realms would always be co-constitutive rather than truly separate. Thus, even if there was a demarcation of the political and the affective, this would demonstrate their interconnection much more than their separation.

Applied to the question of affect and politics, this leads to a crucial conclusion: the exclusion of affect from politics is itself a profoundly political manoeuvre. This observation also makes visible the longstanding parallel between the exclusion of affects and the exclusion of women from political life, both justified historically through appeals to emotionality and irrationality. Feminist analyses of the gendered and racialised politics of anger have long shown how such appeals operate to disqualify certain affects, and the subjects associated with them, from political legitimacy (Lorde 1984; Jaggar 1996). The marginalisation of affect thus appears not as a neutral or technical distinction, but as a strategic instrument of power, one that both enforces and conceals existing relations of domination. What is often dismissed as merely emotional or personal is, in fact, a site of political struggle.

3.3 Becoming Political Agents

The third reason why it is untenable to uphold a clear dichotomy between a supposedly non-political private sphere and a political public sphere, as Okin points out, is that domestic life is the primary site of socialisation. Okin focuses here on how we internalise and reproduce gender roles through private life, demonstrating how gendered socialisation shapes societal interactions (1989, 131–32).

However, an affective and intersectional feminist perspective radicalises this argument. Our socialisation does not merely occur through learning gender roles in the domestic realm; we become who we are through affective relations, which are themselves structured by power. Affective ties—our attachments, aversions, desires, and fears—are shaped within networks of domination and resistance that far exceed the boundaries of the nuclear family or heteronormative private life.

Crucially, approaching socialisation through the lens of affect allows us to decentre the family and the domestic as the sole or even primary sites of subject-formation. It highlights instead how processes of becoming—how we are formed and transformed as political subjects—are woven throughout broader social worlds, including institutions, media, labour, and community spaces. This perspective collapses the very distinction between public and private selves: we are always situated within affective economies that circulate through every domain of life.

Since affective relations are inseparable from power, processes of subject-formation must be understood as taking place within intersecting structures of oppression—those of gender, race, class, ability, age, and sexuality. Unlike Okin's relatively narrow focus on gendered socialisation within the family, an intersectional and affect-centred analysis recognises that these processes are not isolated or static. Instead, gender, race, class, and other social positions mutually constitute one another in the ongoing formation of political subjects.

In this view, there is no singular or finished "gendered self" to be attained through socialisation. Rather, the self is a shifting, unfinished constellation, marked by violence, desire, exclusion, solidarity, and resistance, reflecting both structural inequalities and collective struggles for freedom. The self emerges at the intersection of multiple, overlapping systems of power, and is continuously shaped through embodied and affective encounters. An affective and power-sensitive approach to the political thus understands subject-formation not as a closed process of learning fixed roles, but as an open-ended, contested terrain of becoming, where possibilities for resistance, rupture, and transformation are always present. This perspective makes clear that the affective is not simply entangled with the political; it is the very ground upon which political agency is forged.

3.4 Division of Labour

Okin's final critique addresses the psychological and material barriers created by the gendered division of labour between paid work and unpaid domestic work. She shows how assigning women to unpaid housework confines them to the private sphere, yet simultaneously deprives them of authority even within that space, precisely because their labour is neither socially nor economically recognised. This absence of recognition then reverberates in the public sphere, where women are underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making. In this way, Okin exposes the interconnection between public and private forms of authority and identity (132–33).

However, her focus on women's exclusion from paid labour has been widely critiqued for centring a white, middle-class perspective. Her analysis largely erases the long histories of women of colour, migrant women, and working-class women who have always been compelled to engage in paid labour; often in exploitative, racialised, and feminised sectors such as caregiving, domestic service, and reproductive labour. While these forms of labour sustain both private households and capitalist economies, they remain systematically devalued and politically marginalised. Furthermore, women positioned at the intersections of race, class, and citizenship face compounded barriers to political representation and public recognition—barriers which Okin's analysis leaves unexamined.

Still, there is a crucial insight to recover and radicalise from Okin's argument: the inseparability of public and private selves. From an intersectional and affective perspective, this inseparability must also extend to our affective lives: to our dispositions, attachments, desires, and capacities for affect and vulnerability. We do not shed our histories of subjection, our affective wounds, or our embodied capacities, when we enter or exit specific spaces. The workplace, the street, the home, and political institutions are not separate affective worlds; they are deeply interwoven sites where power moves through and shapes bodies, feelings, and relations.

Recognising this, we can articulate a more radical claim: the affective is political, and the political is affective, not through mere overlap, but as a fundamental co-constitution. This does not mean that the affective and the political collapse into an undifferentiated domain; rather, they name analytically distinct but inseparable expressions and relations of power. Understood in this way, the framework allows us to grasp how structures of power—white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, ableism—are continuously inscribed in and through our affective lives. It foregrounds not only the continuity of domination across different realms of life, but also the possibility of collective transformation through politicised forms of feeling, solidarity, and resistance that refuse the privatisation of affect.

4. Conclusion

Seen through the lens of power, the inseparability of politics and affect brings into view the exclusionary logics that have historically sustained their separation. These logics are deeply entangled with patriarchal, racist, and capitalist formations of power, which have repeatedly relied on the devaluation of affect to delimit political legitimacy. Claims to a separation between politics and affect are therefore not merely conceptually mistaken but function as instruments of patriarchal and colonial control. This has long been evident in the historical devaluation of affect, precisely because of its associations with femininity, racialised bodies, and those relegated to the margins of "rational" political agency.

Against this background, the affective approach presented here insists that we should not only recognise but value affect's constitutive role in political life. Affects are not secondary to politics; they are the very conditions of how political subjects emerge, act, and relate. Drawing on Spinoza's philosophy, we can deepen this insight: for Spinoza, we are not isolated rational beings who control our passions from above, but always already affective bodies embedded within a network of relations, shaped by the powers of other bodies, and constantly being transformed by encounters. Our capacity to act is inseparable from our capacity to affect and be affected. Spinoza's radical relational ontology thus aligns with feminist affect theory in refusing the fantasy of the autonomous, self-possessed political subject. It reveals that political agency is always a matter of situated, embodied, and affective entanglement. From this perspective, politics is not a sphere that we enter into despite our affects, but something we participate in through our affects. It also highlights that affects are themselves shaped by structures of domination, such as patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism, and thus become sites of both subjugation and resistance.

An affective feminist approach challenges hyper-masculine and dualistic ideals of political subjectivity. It foregrounds relationality, mutual implication, vulnerability, and interdependence as central to political life. It insists that political subjects are always in the making—constituted through their affective relations and their social, economic, and historical positionalities.

Claiming that the political is affective is thus more than a theoretical shift; it is a political intervention that contests the very foundations of dominant political imaginaries. It dissolves false separations between public and private, mind and body, self and other, reason and emotion. It calls for a reorientation of political theory toward the materiality of affects, the sociality of bodies, and the embeddedness of all political agency within histories of violence, care, and resistance.

By embracing the central role of affects, we move toward a more expansive, intersectional, and emancipatory vision of politics; one that does not merely "include" affect, but instead recognises that politics always already unfolds through affective, relational, and embodied worlds. Crucially, this approach resists any romanticisation of affect—it insists on attending to affect's ambivalence: how affects can entrench domination as well as incite transformation. In doing so, it opens the possibility for a political theory grounded not in fantasies of mastery, but in shared vulnerability, collective struggle, and the ongoing effort to increase our capacity to act together.

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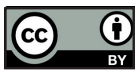

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The Politics of Feeling: Emotion Norms and the Making of Difference

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of emotion norms in constructing both emotions and social identities. Emotions are not biologically fixed or purely individual states; they are shaped by social expectations about what one should feel, how one should express what one feels, and whose emotions count. These emotion norms do not merely constrain expression—they shape which emotions are intelligible, permissible, and punished, thereby contributing to the formation and maintenance of social categories such as gender, race, sexuality, and disability.

I argue that emotion norms are key mechanisms through which social identities are constructed, regulated, and enforced. They naturalise dominant gender roles by prescribing distinct emotional repertoires and by penalising deviation. These norms also produce emotional double binds, particularly for marginalised individuals, by making all available emotional responses subject to sanction or misrecognition. However, emotion norms are not monolithic. In certain social contexts, alternative emotional repertoires emerge—ones that refuse the constraints of dominant expectations and make space for previously illegible emotions and identities.

Understanding the mutual construction of emotion and identity clarifies how power operates through emotions no less than through institutions and discourse. A feminist philosophy of emotion must take seriously the political stakes of affective life, not only by exposing the workings of emotional injustice, but also by affirming the possibility of constructing new emotional norms that support freedom, recognition, and collective transformation.

Keywords: social construction, emotion, emotion norms, gender, social identity

1. Introduction

What we feel, how we feel it, and whether our emotions are recognised as real or rational are never just personal matters. Emotions are deeply social phenomena, governed by implicit rules that shape what we are expected to feel, how those feelings are interpreted, and whose emotions count as intelligible, credible, or dangerous. Feminist theorists have long argued that emotions are entangled with structures of power: they are shaped by, and help to shape, systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability. Yet if emotions are socially

constructed, and if social identities are themselves constituted through norms of recognition and regulation, then an important question arises: what role do emotion norms play in the construction and maintenance of social identities themselves?

This paper argues that emotion norms are not merely constraints on emotional expression or background features of social life. Rather, they function as *constructive* mechanisms through which social identities are formed, regulated, and enforced. Emotion norms shape which affective repertoires are intelligible and livable for differently positioned subjects, and in doing so they help constitute what it is to be gendered, racialised, or otherwise socially located. At the same time, identity categories structure emotional life by determining how particular emotions are perceived and evaluated, depending on who expresses them. A woman's anger, for example, may be dismissed as irrational or excessive, while a man's anger is read as authoritative or justified. These are not merely differences in interpretation; they are part of a broader normative system through which emotions and identities are mutually constituted.

The central claim of this paper is that, just as emotions are constructed through social norms that determine what counts as a particular emotion in a given context, social identity categories like gender are constructed through norms that determine who counts as a particular kind of person. Crucially, these two constructive processes are *mutually constitutive*. Emotion norms participate in the construction of identity categories by prescribing distinct emotional repertoires for different social positions (what women "should" feel versus what men "should" feel), and identity categories structure emotional life by making certain emotions intelligible or unintelligible, depending on who expresses them (a woman's anger is "hysteria"; a man's is "righteous indignation"). Understanding this mutual construction clarifies how power operates through institutions, discourse, and the intimate terrain of affective life.

The contribution of this paper is to bring the two bodies of work—on the social construction of emotion and on the social construction of identity—into direct conversation. While there is a substantial literature on how emotions are socially shaped, and a separate literature on how identity categories are constructed, less attention has been paid to the ways in which these processes are mutually reinforcing. By showing that emotion norms function as a key mechanism through which identity categories are constructed and contested, this paper clarifies how power operates not only through institutions, discourse, and material arrangements, but also through the intimate terrain of affective life. This analysis also highlights the political stakes of emotion norms: if they help to constitute oppressive identities, then transforming emotion norms becomes central to projects of resistance and social change.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 defends a broadly constructionist framework for understanding emotions as normatively structured and context-sensitive experiences. Section 3 examines constructionist accounts of social identity, focusing primarily on gender, to show how identities are constituted through norms, practices, and relations of power. With both frameworks in view, Section 4 argues that emotion norms function as a crucial site where emotions and identity intersect, exploring how hegemonic emotion norms sustain oppression and how alternative affective worlds enable resistant forms of identity. The conclusion draws out the political implications of this account for feminist philosophy of emotion and social critique.

2. The Construction of Emotions

To understand how emotion norms shape social identity, we must first examine what emotions are and how they are constructed. The debate between basic emotion theorists and constructionists centres on the nature and origins of emotions: are they biologically innate and universal, or socially learned and culturally variable? Basic emotion theory maintains that certain emotions are hardwired, discrete, and expressed similarly across cultures, while constructionist theories emphasise that emotions are shaped by social norms, language, and cultural scripts.

Basic emotion theory (BET), developed most prominently by Paul Ekman (1982; 1999; 2003; 2017), holds that emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust, and surprise are universal affect programs—innate, automatic responses to evolutionarily significant stimuli. These emotions are said to be associated with specific facial expressions, physiological changes, and action tendencies. Ekman's early cross-cultural studies, using recognition tasks, seemed to show that people from disparate cultures could identify the same facial expressions as indicative of particular emotions. He later expanded the list of basic emotions to fifteen, including shame, guilt, pride, and relief, though he acknowledged that not all emotions have unique facial expressions and proposed that they may instead be expressed via body posture or vocalisations (2003). Theorists like Robert Plutchik (1980), Jaak Panksepp (1998), and Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (2000) have similarly argued that basic emotions are biologically determined and functionally adaptive, serving survival needs like threat detection and social coordination. These theorists often characterise emotions as modular systems: quick, domain-specific, cognitively impenetrable responses with distinctive neural profiles (Fodor 1983; Griffiths 1997).

BET has come under sustained critique for its failure to establish that the so-called basic emotions are either biologically or psychologically primitive. Andrew Ortony and Terence Turner (1990) have argued that no discrete neural or physiological signature reliably maps onto any single emotion, and the identified neural circuits such as "rage" or "panic" underlie broad affective systems rather than specific emotions like "anger" or "fear" (Barrett 2006a, 30; Scarantino and Griffiths 2011, 448). This undermines the idea of the biological basicness of emotions. In the psychological sense, basic emotions are meant to be irreducible primitive states not composed of other emotions or mental processes. Yet emotions like anger can often be broken down into more basic affective elements, such as distress or displeasure, making their status as psychological primitives questionable. Furthermore, facial expressions, often cited as evidence of emotional universality, also fail to provide support: the same expression (e.g. weeping) can occur across multiple emotional states, and cross-cultural recognition rates vary widely, undermining claims of universality (Ortony and Turner 1990, 321; Mesquita et al. 2015; Elfenbein and Ambady 2002). For these reasons we might deny that emotions are natural kinds.

Constructionists offer a different approach to emotions.[1] *Psychological constructionists* such as James Russell and Lisa Feldman Barrett argue that emotions are not biologically hardwired modules but are constructed from more basic psychological components. Russell developed a foundational version of this view in his Core Affect Theory, which posits that all emotional experiences are located in a space defined by two continuous

1. I do not mean to suggest that the three kinds of constructionism I discuss here—"psychological constructionism," "social constructionism," and "cultural constructionism"—as separate theoretical camps. Instead, it is more accurate to understand these as different emphases and methodological approaches within a shared constructionist framework. All emphasise that emotions are shaped by social norms, cultural practices, and learned concepts rather than being fixed biological programmes. They differ primarily in their research methods (experimental psychology, ethnography, cultural analysis) and in which aspects of emotional construction they foreground. Thanks to Anonymous Reviewer 1 for suggesting this clarification.

dimensions: valence (pleasure–displeasure) and arousal (activation–deactivation) (2003). Building on Russell's framework, Barrett defends the Conceptual Act Theory, which holds that the brain constructs emotions in real time by interpreting core affect through culturally learned emotion concepts (2006b; 2014; see also de Sousa 1987). On this view, emotional experiences are shaped by individual histories, linguistic resources, and social norms. Emotions are real, but not as biological universals. They are *social* kinds, constituted through conceptual and contextual processes.

Social constructionism emphasises the role of social norms, roles, and institutions in shaping emotional life. James Averill argues that emotions are not internal, private experiences but transitory social roles enacted according to cultural rules and expectations (1980; 1997). To be "angry," for instance, is to occupy a socially recognised role that carries expectations about how one should behave (e.g. confronting someone, raising one's voice) and what that behaviour signifies. Emotion terms, Averill insists, are *prescriptive* rather than merely descriptive: they guide and regulate behaviour by setting boundaries on what is appropriate to feel and express in particular situations (1997, 531). For example, "anger" is not a single internal state, but a social script enacted through socially recognisable behaviours such as shouting, withdrawing, or demanding redress.[2] Emotions, on this view, are not universal programmes, but social performances embedded in roles, norms, and institutions.

Cultural constructionism focuses on the ways that emotions are shaped by cultural models of the self, values, and social organisation. Batja Mesquita's cross-cultural work shows that emotions are culturally contingent relational practices (Mesquita and Frijda 1992; Mesquita 2001; 2022). Mesquita contrasts the Western "MINE" (Mental, Inside the person, and Essentialist) model of emotion, focused on internal, individual feelings, with the globally more common "OURS" (emotions as Outside the person, Relational, and Situated) model, where emotions are understood as socially embedded, context-dependent, and oriented toward relational goals (2022, 9–13).[3] Emotions like pride, shame, and anger do not have the same structure, meaning, or function across cultures (Mesquita 2001). Emotional experience and expression are shaped by culturally specific role expectations and moral values, making emotion both a product and reinforcement of cultural life.

Critics of emotion constructionism caution against wholesale rejection of the basic emotion framework, and raise concerns about the explanatory limitations of strong social constructionism. To be sure, these critiques identify legitimate questions about how to characterise emotion categories for scientific purposes, even if they do not undermine the core constructionist insight that emotions are culturally variable and normatively structured. For instance, Andrea Scarantino and Paul Griffiths (2011) argue that while discrete emotion categories may lack rigid biological signatures, this does not mean they cannot be treated as *natural kinds* in a looser, more pragmatically useful sense. Drawing on Boyd's (1999) theory of homeostatic property clusters, Scarantino and Griffiths propose that emotions like fear or anger may form scientifically valuable categories characterised by a cluster of features that tend to co-occur, even if they admit variation. They also emphasise that constructionist models often conflate folk emotion concepts with scientific emotion kinds, neglecting the possibility that scientific emotion categories can be refined while still preserving evolutionary and functional continuity.

2. For a more recent account of emotions as scripts, see Eickers 2024.

3. We should not be misled by the MINE model into thinking that emotions in the West are fundamentally private possessions, as this obscures the deeply social, normative, and, as we will see, political processes through which emotions become intelligible. Emotions do not originate solely within individuals, but emerge through interaction, recognition, and culturally available scripts. Treating them as purely "mine" ignores how power, identity, and history shape what can be felt, named, and understood as emotion at all (Scheman 1980; Munch-Jurisic 2023).

The disagreements between constructionists and basic emotion theorists reflect fundamentally incompatible scientific paradigms (Barrett and Theriault 2025). BET assumes that emotions are discrete, hardwired modules with unique neural signatures, while constructionists argue that emotions are constructed in real-time from more basic psychological components and cultural resources. BET seeks universal patterns that transcend culture; constructionists emphasise cultural variability and context-sensitivity. These are not merely different emphases: each view reflects different metaphysical commitments about what emotions are.

That said, the empirical picture is complex. As Mesquita et al. (1997, 266) observe, the degree to which emotional phenomena vary across cultures depends in part on the level of abstraction at which they are analysed: general descriptions reveal broad similarities, while more concrete, feature-specific descriptions highlight meaningful cultural differences. Both approaches acknowledge some role for biological mechanisms and some role for social shaping, even if they weight these differently.

For the purposes of investigating how emotions help to construct and enforce social identities, a constructionist framework is better suited than BET. While useful for understanding evolutionary affective mechanisms, BET is less well equipped to account for how emotions are shaped by norms, made intelligible through culture, and deployed within systems of power. Constructionist models, by contrast, illuminate how emotions are socially patterned and politically significant. This theoretical foundation is crucial for my central argument because it establishes that emotions are constituted through the same normative mechanisms—social norms, practices of recognition, and structures of power—that construct identity categories such as gender.

Having established this constructionist understanding of emotion, I now examine how identity categories themselves are socially constructed, before showing in Section 4 how these two constructive processes are mutually constitutive.

3. The Social Construction of Identity Categories

This section examines constructionist accounts of identity categories, focusing primarily on gender. Understanding how gender is constructed is essential for my overall argument for two reasons. First, it shows that identity categories, like emotions, are constituted through social norms, institutional practices, and relations of power. Second, and more importantly for my purposes, it reveals the mechanisms through which identity categories are constructed—mechanisms that, as I will argue in Section 4, operate in part through emotion norms. Just as different theorists disagree about *how* gender is constructed, they also disagree about what kind of entity gender is. These debates matter because they illuminate different aspects of how norms function in constituting both gender and emotions. By surveying this landscape, I prepare the ground for showing how emotion norms specifically participate in these constructive processes.

Contemporary debates about gender, as well as race and disability, take place against the backdrop of a now well-established rejection of essentialism. While few serious theorists today defend the idea that identity categories like "woman," "Black," or "disabled" reflect fixed, natural essences, essentialist frameworks still persist in common-sense discourse and institutional practices. On such views, gender is presumed to follow from gamete size, reproductive anatomy, or chromosomes; race from biological ancestry or visible phenotype; disability from objective bodily or cognitive difference. These accounts render identity inherent and

immutable, and often obscure the social and political mechanisms through which such classifications gain their force.[4]

In response, feminist, queer, critical race, and disability theorists have developed diverse accounts of social construction, shifting the focus from what these categories are "by nature" to how they are produced, sustained, and contested through norms, institutions, and power. Yet, within constructionist frameworks, deep disagreements remain about how identities are constructed, what kind of entities they are, and what political work they should do. Focusing on gender, this section sketches several influential responses to three central questions: (1) "What kind of construct is gender?" (2) "How is gender constructed, and by whom?" and (3) "Should we retain, redefine, or reject the category of 'woman' in feminist theory and politics?" Feminist theorists have offered a range of responses to these questions, shaped by different metaphysical, epistemological, and political commitments. I survey some of them.

One of the most influential responses comes from Sally Haslanger, whose ameliorative account has become a central reference point in metaphysical debates about gender (2000). For Haslanger, gender is a politically significant *social kind*. To be a woman is to be socially positioned as systematically subordinated due to perceived sexed features. Her definition is strategic: rather than capturing how people ordinarily use the term "woman," it offers a revision meant to illuminate and contest structural gender oppression. Since gender (like race) is characterised by structural inequality, Haslanger ultimately argues that justice requires its abolition, not by ignoring or denying its effects in the present, but by working toward a future in which such oppressive classifications no longer exist (2000; 2012).

This abolitionist stance has been subjected to numerous critiques. One of them comes from Mari Mikkola, who argues that defining gender entirely in terms of oppression risks erasing the identities many people continue to value (2011). In contrast, Mikkola proposes a trait/norm covariance model, in which gender is a pattern of traits, such as bodily features, behaviours, or social roles, evaluated through context-specific social norms. Gender, on this view, is constructed not by rigid structures of domination alone, but through the normative practices that give different traits gendered meaning. While she shares Haslanger's anti-essentialist commitments, Mikkola insists on preserving gender categories in ways that acknowledge their personal and political significance beyond systems of subordination.

Underlying this debate is a more general metaphysical question: "*What kind of thing is gender*?" Here, the distinction between realism and nominalism about social kinds becomes important. Realists, such as Haslanger and Mikkola, argue that gender is a *real* social kind—it has explanatory power, figures in causal explanations, and structures social reality in robust ways. Even if socially constructed, gender is "real" because of its role in shaping people's lives and organising social relations.

4. For foundational critiques of essentialist conceptions of gender and identity within feminist theory, see Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of *intersectionality*, which highlights how race, gender, and class intersect to shape the experiences of women of colour in ways that are obscured by single-axis frameworks of oppression (1989). See also Elizabeth Spelman's critique of the "generic woman" in feminist theory. Spelman challenges the assumption that all women share the same interests or experiences regardless of race, class, or culture (1988). For a very different kind of essentialist account of gender, see Charlotte Witt 2011, which develops an essentialist but non-biological account of gender as a unifying role—the role that integrates and organises an individual's other social roles, thereby shaping their overall social position. For criticism of race essentialism see Naomi Zack 2018; on disability, see Shelley Tremain 2001. For a critique of emotion and gender essentialism, see de Sousa forthcoming.

By contrast, Natalie Stoljar defends a form of *gender nominalism*. According to Stoljar, categories like "woman" do not name a unified kind with shared properties or causal powers. Drawing on intersectional feminist critiques, she argues that such categories are internally heterogeneous: attempts to define "woman" as a unified kind risk erasing crucial differences among women shaped by race, class, sexuality, and disability. For this reason, she endorses the view that "woman" functions more like a *series* than a group: a loosely connected collective formed through overlapping social positioning, rather than shared essence or experience (2011).[5] For her positive account, Stoljar draws on the idea of *resemblance nominalism*, according to which a category is constituted by overlapping similarities between individual instances. For nominalists like Stoljar, the point of grouping individuals under terms like "woman" is not to identify a metaphysical kind, but to support feminist political goals by recognising contingent, overlapping social similarities that allow for collective action without erasing difference.

This shift from realist to nominalist conceptions affects how we think about feminist goals. For realists, successful critique and resistance often depend on analysing and transforming the social kind itself. For nominalists, by contrast, it may be more fruitful to attend to the multiple, shifting ways people are grouped in different contexts, without assuming that "woman" must refer to a singular or stable entity. The stakes of this debate between realism and nominalism are not merely theoretical: they concern who gets recognised, how solidarity is forged, and what kinds of political interventions are possible.

Talia Mae Bettcher brings this concern into sharper focus by critiquing both the externalist emphasis of realist accounts like Haslanger's, which define gender in terms of how individuals are classified according to dominant social norms, and resemblance-based nominalist approaches such as Stoljar's. The externalist model, she argues, risks misrecognising trans individuals, particularly when their self-identified gender diverges from institutional or culturally dominant definitions. Likewise, she contends that family resemblance accounts of gender marginalise trans women by casting them as only borderline members of the category "woman," given that they often lack the biologically weighted features privileged in prevailing gender concepts (2017).

Drawing on both philosophical argument and trans community practices, Bettcher emphasises that gender terms like "woman" carry different meanings in different social and epistemic contexts, and that these meanings are often in conflict. Central to her view is the principle of ethical first-person authority ("ethical FPA")—the claim that individuals, particularly trans people, ought to be recognised as the primary knowers and legitimate definers of their own gender identities, especially when their lives are structured around those identities in socially meaningful ways (2009; 2024).[6] In *Beyond Personhood* (2024), she further develops the idea of existential identity, arguing that gender self-identification is a normatively significant act of avowal, rather than a mere description, embedded in communal practices of recognition and resistance. On this basis, Bettcher defends a form of *ontological pluralism*: gender is not a singular structural kind, but a contested, relational, and community-specific construct, whose meaning is shaped by the lived practices and norms of both dominant and resistant social worlds.

5. Stoljar adopts this view from Iris Marion Young (1997). Young distinguishes a *series* from a *group*: while groups involve shared goals or identities, a series is unified passively through members' actions being organised around common social objects or structures. Young uses this concept to avoid essentialism, and to make the category "women" intelligible without presuming shared traits.

6. To be clear, Bettcher's account is not internalist because her endorsement of FPA is political and ethical, not metaphysical. For yet another account of gender identity, see Katherine Jenkins 2016; 2018.

Ásta develops a *conferralist account* of social kinds, according to which gender is a context-sensitive, socially conferred property: one is gendered through interactions shaped by norms about which features matter in a given setting (2018, 58–59). Her approach is descriptive, not ameliorative, aiming to reflect how gender functions across varied social contexts, rather than prescribing a politically unified definition (94). Ásta is also a *realist* about gender as a social kind: although socially constructed, gender is real because it plays a concrete role in shaping people's lives and social positions (9). Her account is thus compatible with Bettcher's ontological pluralism: "woman" can name different social kinds in different communities. But she places more weight on external ascription and contextual normativity than on lived self-definition and resistant community practices.

In the background of these debates is the question of the relationship between sex and gender. While Haslanger embraced the slogan that "gender is the social meaning of sex" (2012, 7), Judith Butler challenges the very usefulness of the sex/gender distinction. Because Butler argues that both sex and gender are socially constructed, the idea that sex is a biological foundation upon which gender is built becomes untenable. On their view, sex is not a pre-discursive, natural fact, but is itself constituted through discursive and institutional practices (1999). Treating sex as biologically given, Butler argues, obscures the power structures that produce and enforce normative categories of identity.[7]

Rather than conceiving of gender as something that one is or has, Butler offers a *performative account*: gender is something one does repeatedly through socially regulated acts. These acts produce the *illusion* of stable identity, even though gender is always in the process of being constituted through repetition. What appears as a coherent gender identity is, in fact, the sedimentation of these acts over time, made intelligible within a normative cultural framework (1999; 2011). On this view, there is no "true" gender behind the performance—only a socially intelligible set of behaviours that are cited and reiterated.

Butler is especially critical of state-backed gender essentialism and anti-trans legislation, arguing that trans and nonbinary identities are not threats to feminism but vital sites of resistance to gender authoritarianism (2024).[8] For Butler, categories like "woman" should neither be rigidly defined nor abandoned, but rather held open as contested and evolving political sites—continuously reworked through critique, solidarity, and inclusive coalition.

Across these thinkers, we see a shared rejection of essentialist accounts of identity and a recognition that gender categories are produced through social norms, institutional practices, and contested forms of recognition. Yet they differ in how they conceive the nature of these constructs, the mechanisms by which they are conferred or claimed, and the political strategies they recommend, ranging from strategic redefinition to pluralisation and abolition. These debates underscore that social identities are not merely classifications imposed from above or passively inhabited; they are shaped and reshaped through lived experience, normative expectations, and power-laden practices of recognition and resistance. In what follows, I build on this analysis by turning to emotion norms as active forces in the construction of social identities. Just as gender, race, disability, and

7. While Butler's point about the social construction of both sex and gender is now something of an orthodoxy in feminist philosophy (for instance, Ásta, along with many others, embrace it), others have claimed that even if both are socially constructed, they are constructed differently such that the sex/gender distinction is still a theoretically useful one (see Dembroff 2016).

8. In that spirit, Robin Dembroff introduces critical gender kinds: categories such as "nonbinary" or "agender" that resist binary norms and expose the ideological limits of "man" and "woman." Rather than remodelling traditional categories, Dembroff advocates for recognising new ones that reflect the structural exclusion of nonbinary people and challenge the binary system itself (2018; 2020).

sexuality are shaped by norms of intelligibility, so too are emotions structured by cultural expectations that govern how we feel, what we express, and which emotional lives are rendered livable.

4. Emotion Norms as a Constructive Force

To understand how emotion norms participate in the construction of identity, we must first say more about what social norms are and how they function. At their core, social norms are informal but widely shared expectations about behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, and affect that are reinforced through social sanction and reward. They are maintained through mutual (often implicit) recognition and compliance: people typically conform to them because they believe others do, expect others to do so, and anticipate approval for conformity or disapproval for deviation (Bicchieri 2005; Bicchieri et al. 2023).

Social norms both describe what people typically do and prescribe what they ought to do. They guide everything from mundane habits (like not sitting too close to a stranger in a nearly empty bus) to deeply entrenched expectations of the very intimate aspects of our lives (such as the expectation of sexual and emotional exclusivity in romantic relationships).

Social norms are maintained through a complex web of expectations and preferences, structured by mutual beliefs about what is done and what is required. Norms are situational: they are often activated only in particular contexts and can coexist with conflicting norms in other domains of life (Bicchieri 2005). Importantly, people often follow norms not because they believe them to be morally right or rationally optimal, but because of a desire for social coordination, approval, fear of sanction.

Social norms are *constitutive*: they regulate behaviour while simultaneously shaping what actions are thinkable, appropriate, or intelligible within a given social field. They do this not by coercion, but by structuring expectations and perceptions. In this way, norms help to construct both situations and selves. To inhabit a social role, whether as a teacher, friend, woman, man, is to participate in a norm-governed system of expectations about how one ought to feel, act, and respond.

This conceptual framework is crucial for understanding how *emotion norms* contribute to the construction of identity categories. Like other social norms, emotion norms function by creating shared expectations about appropriate behaviour; but their power lies in their capacity to regulate what we do, what we feel, express, and understand as emotionally appropriate. In what follows, I build on this model to argue that social identities are constructed in part through these affective expectations, and that emotional legibility plays a central role in subject formation.

4.1 The Normative Co-Construction of Emotion and Gender

Recall that on the constructionist view, emotions are not biologically fixed responses but socially patterned experiences shaped by norms, scripts, and cultural practices. As Barrett argues, emotions emerge when core affective states are interpreted using culturally acquired emotion concepts—concepts that vary across time, place, and identity. Averill similarly describes emotions as transitory social roles governed by collective expectations about how one ought to feel and act in specific situations.

As I have argued, norms operate through shared expectations of conformity and conditional preferences to conform. Arlie Hochschild's (1983) concept of *feeling rules* aligns closely with this framework: emotion norms function as shared expectations about what we ought to *feel* in particular contexts. These norms are learned through observation, reinforced by social approval or sanction, and sustained through what Hochschild calls *emotion work*—the active effort to manage one's internal affective states to meet normative demands. In this way, emotions are shaped by cultural narratives, personal history, and the ongoing, situational feedback loops that govern social life. Emotion norms, like other social norms, do not merely constrain expression—they help to construct the very shape, meaning, and felt texture of emotional experience. To feel a particular emotion is, in many cases, to occupy a socially meaningful position within a normative framework that defines what kinds of feeling are appropriate, intelligible, or even possible.

Emotion norms play a central role in the construction of gender by shaping the emotional repertoires that are expected, cultivated, and intelligible in a social context. These norms do more than reflect "natural" gender differences; they actively *produce* them. In particular, they sustain and naturalise[9] hegemonic femininity and hegemonic masculinity, the culturally dominant forms of gender that are positioned as normative and ideal. Women are expected to be kind, nurturing, empathetic, emotionally expressive, and attuned to the feelings of others. They are praised for being caring, cooperative, and emotionally available, and often penalised when they display anger, assertiveness, or emotional withdrawal. This emotional profile is not incidental to femininity; it is part of what it *means* to be a woman in the dominant social context. Conversely, men are expected to be emotionally restrained, stoic, independent, and in control. Emotional expressiveness, especially in the form of vulnerability, sadness, or fear, is often discouraged or even stigmatised in men, while anger and pride may be perceived as acceptable or even affirming of masculinity. These affective expectations are deeply woven into broader gender norms, reinforcing a binary in which emotional expressiveness is feminised and emotional containment masculinised. Through repeated enactment and reinforcement, these emotion norms help to *constitute* gendered subject positions, making certain emotional styles seem natural for men or women, and shaping the possible ways in which gender can be lived, recognised, and understood.

Two mechanisms play a key role in the shaping of gender by emotion norms.

First, emotion norms make affective experiences intelligible or unintelligible for different social positions. Being recognised as a woman requires conformity to affective expectations: expressiveness, empathy, care. Consistent violation—being stoic, aggressive, emotionally unavailable—leads to questioned gender identity or "defective" femininity. Gender isn't prior to emotion norms: conformity with emotion norms partially determines who counts as properly gendered.

Second, emotion norms shape how emotions are perceived. The same anger reads as righteous indignation in men, hysteria in women, threatening violence in Black men,[10] the "angry Black woman" stereotype in Black women. These differential interpretations don't reflect pre-existing categories—they actively constitute them by producing different social realities and consequences. When women's anger is systematically dismissed as irrational, this enforces femininity as emotionally unstable while limiting political action.

9. Some evolutionary psychologists have argued that the stereotypical emotion profiles of men and women are biologically determined, thus affirming BET (see e.g. Buss 2000). Such an approach might commit one to gender essentialism because it treats emotional dispositions as innate, sex-linked traits rooted in reproductive biology, thereby reinforcing the view that men and women have fixed, natural emotional profiles.

10. Tommy Curry argues that Black masculinity is constructed through what he terms "misandric anti-Black racism," whereby Black men's emotions—particularly anger—are systematically read as violent threat. See Curry 2017.

These mechanisms operate through repetition and sedimentation over time. As Butler argues, gender is continuously produced through repeated acts made intelligible within normative frameworks, and emotion norms are central to this process. Learning to be a woman involves learning to feel empathy, suppress anger, perform emotional labour—not as additions to an already-gendered self, but as constitutive of becoming gendered. Through this iterative process, gendered emotional patterns come to feel natural, automatic, and inevitable, obscuring their constructed character. What begins as conformity to external expectations becomes incorporated into one's habitual affective responses and sense of self.

In sum, emotion norms and gender identities are mutually constitutive: emotions are made intelligible through gendered frameworks, while gender itself is partly constituted through conformity to or deviation from affective expectations. Through repetition, these patterns become naturalised, creating the illusion that gendered emotional repertoires are innate rather than socially produced. Yet this mutual construction is not politically neutral. As the next section shows, emotion norms function as instruments of oppression, creating double binds that penalise marginalised individuals regardless of which emotions they express, and distributing emotional legitimacy unevenly across intersecting identity categories.

4.2 Gender, Emotion, and Oppression

Having established that emotion norms and gender are mutually constitutive, I now examine how this mutual construction functions as a mechanism of oppression. Emotion norms operate as tools of gender-based control through at least two pathways: by creating affective double binds that penalise all available emotional responses, and by differentially distributing emotional legitimacy based on intersecting identity categories.

Note first that gender itself functions as a system of social constraint. Iris Marion Young defines oppression not as a matter of individual acts of cruelty or exclusion, but as a structural phenomenon—a network of forces and barriers which immobilise and reduce the agency of certain social groups, particularly women, people of colour, and disabled people (1990; 2011). Oppression, on this view, is reproduced through everyday habits, norms, and institutional arrangements that are so deeply embedded that they often appear natural or inevitable.

We have already discussed Sally Haslanger's political construction of gender according to which "S is a woman iffdf S is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.), and S is 'marked' as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction" (2000, 39). The core criticism of this ameliorative definition is that it makes oppression a necessary condition for being a woman (Mikkola 2011). Yet, it cannot be denied that gender has been the site of oppression for women, trans, and gender-nonconforming individuals. While oppression may not be a necessary consequence of gender categories, these are in fact often constructed within dominant social contexts in ways that are themselves oppressive.

This is especially evident when we examine the affective dimensions of gender: the ways in which norms around feeling, expression, and emotional comportment function as mechanisms of control. Marilyn Frye's concept of double binds, in which all available options result in penalty, exposure, or diminished agency, is particularly illuminating here. Women are often caught in *affective double binds*: if they express anger, they are dismissed as irrational or dangerous via the "Women are emotional" stereotype; if they remain calm, they are accused of complicity or passivity (1983). This is problematic, as anger is fitting when it picks out a wrong or an injustice. Delegitimising women's anger deprives them of a means of recognising injustice and undermines its

motivational power to confront wrongdoing and signal to others that harm is occurring, thereby obstructing the possibility of support or intervention. On the other hand, men's anger is typically treated as righteous indignation, an emotion which men are entitled to express, and one that enhances rather than diminishes their credibility and agency.[11]

Sexuality, dress, and speech are also governed by contradictory norms for women—"too sexual" and one is shamed as loose; not sexual enough and one is dismissed as prudish. These binds are not accidental but *constitutive* of the structure of female gender under patriarchy.

Different emotional double binds are observed when examining the intersection of gender and race. Black women, in particular, are often positioned in ways that deviate from the expectations of hegemonic femininity, which idealises emotional delicacy, vulnerability, and deference.[12] Instead, they are subjected to the "strong Black woman" ("SBW") stereotype, which constructs Black women as emotionally resilient, self-sacrificing, and perpetually caregiving—demanding emotional stoicism and the suppression of vulnerability (Collins 2000, 159).[13] This positioning not only denies them access to the emotional repertoire prescribed by hegemonic white, middle-class femininity, but also imposes conflicting emotional demands. Failure to conform to the SBW ideal risks being read as weak, irrational, or "angry"—itself a racist and gendered stereotype. Here, emotional expression is policed through gender norms that are simultaneously racialised, reshaping what kinds of emotional life are deemed acceptable, legible, or threatening.[14] The result is a compounded double bind, where Black women are expected to be both invulnerable and accommodating, invisible and overexposed, emotionally restrained and always available to others.[15] Because hegemonic femininity is racialised, these norms do not merely constrain Black women, they also marginalise them from full inclusion in the category of "woman" itself.[16]

Similarly, Asian women may find themselves in an affective double bind due to the so-called "Yellow Fever" preference—a racialised sexual fetishisation of East and Southeast Asian women (and sometimes men) by non-Asian, often white, people, particularly in the context of romantic or sexual attraction (Zheng 2016). Under this normative schema, Asian women are often hypersexualised through "Orientalist" stereotypes that cast them as sexually available, exotic, and submissive. If they express sexual desire, they risk confirming this stereotype and are viewed as lacking agency or self-respect. If they withhold or reject sexual advances, they are seen as cold, repressed, or ungrateful for the attention. Asian women subjected to "Yellow Fever" fetishisation fail the standard of hegemonic femininity not by being insufficiently feminine, but by being hyper-feminised in racialised and dehumanising ways that mark them as erotic objects rather than full subjects.

11. See Srinivasan 2018; Manne 2017.
12. For discussion of the unique oppression faced by Black women, see Crenshaw 1989; 1991 and Bailey 2021.
13. While the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype often functions as a controlling image that demands emotional stoicism and self-sacrifice, it is also an emotional ideal that emerged from African American resistance and survival. For many, it represents strength, endurance, and care within a legacy of collective struggle. The challenge lies in recognising the empowering dimensions of this figure without allowing it to justify the denial of vulnerability, support, or full emotional expression. For an in-depth discussion of double-binds that arise with coping mechanisms under oppression, see Silva et al. forthcoming.
14. For discussion of adverse psychological effects of SBW, see Burnett-Zeigler 2021.
15. The Mammy and Jezebel stereotypes also form a racialised double bind for Black women: the Mammy demands emotional selflessness and desexualisation, while the Jezebel portrays them as hypersexual and morally deviant. Resisting one risks being cast as the other, constraining Black women's affective and embodied expression.
16. Similar points can be made about other intersections, such as when gender intersects with sexuality, disability, class, or neurodivergence. In each case, dominant norms of femininity operate to exclude those who do not conform to white, cis, heterosexual, abled, and neurotypical ideals.

In sum, the intersection of race and gender constructs women of colour differently from white cis middle class heterosexual women. It generates distinct emotional expectations, affective constraints, and modes of misrecognition. Furthermore, while Frye's concept of the double bind is one powerful way to illuminate the affective dimensions of gender oppression, it is not the only framework through which such oppression can be understood. Not all mechanisms of gender-based constraint take the form of paradoxical or no-win choices. Some operate through systematic exclusion, misrecognition, disciplinary regulation, or material disadvantage without necessarily placing individuals in situations where every option is penalised. Indeed, various accounts of emotional and affective injustice and oppression have been emerging in the literature, examining the many ways in which affective expectations can function as tools of injustice and oppression, rendering some emotions unintelligible, others compulsory, and still others punishable.[17]

4.3 Multiplicity, Resistance, and Contextual Emotion Norms

While much of this discussion has focused on how emotion norms constrain and oppress, it is important to resist the temptation to see normativity as inherently disciplinary or unidirectional. Emotion norms can also be plural, context-sensitive, and enabling. Drawing on María Lugones's concept of "world travelling" and Talia Mae Bettcher's critique of "reality enforcement," we can begin to see how emotional life may be shaped by hegemonic norms or, depending on the social world in which one moves, by norms of resistance.

Lugones (1987) develops the concept of "world travelling" to capture the experience of moving between distinct normative worlds, each with its own logic, affective expectations, and modes of recognition. These "worlds" are more than mere metaphors: they are real social and cultural formations with their own standards of intelligibility, including emotion norms. Lugones emphasises that for women of colour, queer people, and others who live at the intersection of multiple marginalised identities, traveling between worlds is often necessary for survival. But it can also be a source of joy, playfulness, and resistance, especially when one enters a world where one is not reduced, misunderstood, or constrained.

For example, a queer Latina might feel out of place in a white-dominated academic institution, where her emotional expressions are misread or othered, but at ease among chosen family or in activist spaces where forms of affect like rage, grief, or exuberance are recognised, welcomed, and shared. The emotional fluency required to navigate multiple worlds is itself a form of knowledge, but it is often undervalued or rendered invisible. Lugones insists that "world travelling" is not just about code-switching; it's about engaging different worlds with *loving perception* (a mode of attention that seeks to understand others on their own terms, without distortion, superiority, or assimilation), and finding in them new possibilities for affective selfhood and mutual recognition.[18]

Bettcher extends this framework by offering a metaphysical account of plural realities (2024). For Bettcher, different social groups may operate within different sets of metaphysical and normative assumptions about what exists and what matters. These social realities are not illusions or mere perspectives; they are ontologically real for those who live within them. This is especially salient in the case of gender: for many trans people, different communities hold radically incompatible views about what gender is, how it should be recognised, and what emotional expressions are deemed legitimate. In one world, a trans person's gender and emotional life may be affirmed; in another, they may be erased, mocked, or medicalised. Such plural realities invite us to consider how entire affective social worlds—different ways of feeling, expressing, and being moved—can be sustained within communities that resist dominant norms.

17. See, for instance, Whitney 2018, Srinivasan 2018, Archer and Mills 2019, Gallegos 2021, Pismenny et al. 2024, and Stockdale 2024.
18. See also von Maur 2021.

A wide range of queer, feminist, and radical subcultures cultivate emotional social worlds that depart from hegemonic norms. Some are forged intentionally by marginalised communities as spaces of resistance, healing, and affective possibility. In drag culture, for instance, gendered emotion norms are often inverted, parodied, subverted, and creatively expanded. Drag performance makes room for joy, flamboyance, rage, pride, and grief in ways that would be unintelligible or stigmatised in dominant gendered settings. Similarly, mutual aid networks often operate as emotionally supportive worlds grounded in solidarity rather than charity, where emotions like dependency, care, fear, and hope are not only expressed but met with reciprocal concern rather than judgement. In queer joy rituals such as Pride celebrations, dance parties, or communal mourning spaces, feelings of exuberance, desire, and grief become intelligible and politically powerful in ways that challenge both heteronormative affective expectations and respectability politics.

However, these alternative emotional worlds often come into conflict with dominant institutions that attempt to enforce a singular, authorised account of reality. This is what Bettcher terms *reality enforcement*: the imposition of one metaphysical and normative framework as the only legitimate one, typically through medical, legal, or bureaucratic institutions (2024, 17–18). Reality enforcement does not merely misrecognise; it invalidates entire affective worlds. For instance, a trans woman whose identity and emotional experience are affirmed within her queer community may find those same experiences denied or pathologised in a clinical or legal setting where she is treated as "really a man."

This enforcement extends beyond pronouns or paperwork; it structures which emotional expressions are deemed rational, authentic, or permissible. A trans person's grief over being misgendered, their euphoria at gender affirmation, or their rage at institutional gatekeeping may all be rendered unintelligible or dismissed under dominant emotion norms. In this way, reality enforcement operates as a form of emotional injustice, erasing not only identities but entire affective social worlds.

Thus, emotional life is shaped by hegemonic norms and co-constructed within alternative social worlds that cultivate resistant forms of affective expression and recognition. Emotion norms are not inherently oppressive; they are sites of political struggle, capable of both constraining and enabling emotional agency. By attending to the multiplicity of emotional social worlds and to the violence of reality enforcement that seeks to erase them, we gain a deeper understanding of how emotions are entangled with identity, power, and the ongoing project of social transformation.

In this section I have argued that emotion norms are active forces in the construction of identity, shaping how people are expected to feel and what kinds of selves can be recognised, affirmed, or marginalised. By examining how emotion norms co-construct gender, intersect with race and sexuality, and operate across multiple social worlds, we have seen how emotions are implicated in both the reproduction of oppression and the possibilities for resistance. While dominant norms often regulate emotional life in ways that uphold existing power structures, counter-normative affective worlds—whether found in queer kinship, drag culture, or mutual aid networks—reveal the potential for alternative emotional vocabularies and creative modes of being.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that emotions are socially constructed experiences shaped by norms, scripts, and cultural expectations, rather than simply internal, biologically fixed states. I have aimed to show how emotion norms participate in the formation and intersection of social identities such as gender, race, sexuality, and disability

by determining which emotions are intelligible, livable, and actionable.[19] Emotion norms do not merely regulate expression; they constitute the emotional texture of subjectivity and help to sustain systems of power.

While much of the discussion has emphasised the ways in which emotion norms constrain and oppress, I have also highlighted how communities generate multiple affective worlds—some of which cultivate resistant emotional repertoires. Emotions like rage, grief, joy, and care take on different meanings and political potentials depending on the normative world in which they are situated.

In these alternate affective worlds, gender constructs can be more or less liberating. Under the neoliberal logic of "girl power feminism," "woman" is framed as empowered primarily through confidence, consumption, and individual success, while systemic injustice and collective struggle are left unaddressed (Hay 2022). In stark contrast, Myisha Cherry's account of Lordean rage offers a vision of womanhood grounded in collective resistance and moral clarity. It reclaims anger as a site of agency, knowledge, and transformation, rooted in the lived experiences of Black women, and rejects the emotional docility demanded by dominant gender norms, opening space for subversive emotion, radical solidarity, and a feminist identity capable of confronting structural oppression (2021).

Although our identities and emotional repertoires are shaped by emotion norms, they are not determined by them. Individuals and communities actively interpret, negotiate, and resist these norms, creating possibilities for emotional lives and identities that challenge and transform the very structures that seek to contain them. Recognising this is both politically urgent and philosophically generative: it invites us to reimagine emotion and identity as sites of struggle and possibility. A feminist philosophy of emotion must continue the work of uncovering oppressive affective regimes, and of building new ones that are emancipatory, plural, and just.[20]

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19. Although this paper has focused on the ontological and ethical–political dimensions of emotion norms, these issues are also deeply entangled with epistemic concerns. See, for instance Jaggar 1989 and Silva 2021.

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Emotional Contingency and Ideological Curation

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Abstract

Our daily lives make evident that ideologies of all kinds can impact our emotions. Consider, for example, the self-directed shame a working class person might feel when paid too little to make ends meet, the intense anxiety a person of color might feel when entering a majority white space, or the discomfiting pride a woman might feel when she senses a male gaze ogle her body. In each example, classism, racism, and sexism seem intimately connected with how these emotions are generated. What can we say about the role ideology might play in these cases?

In this paper, I offer an explanation of how ideology generates such emotions by proposing a process I term *ideological curation*. Ideological curation centrally locates the intervention point of ideology at moments of contingency within our emotional lives, where our emotions are generated or become something different than what they were. Focusing on this space of contingency enables us to understand how ideology might impact our emotions because it brings into view the overall mental playing field in which ideology operates. Ideological curation occurs within such spaces to subtly guide our emotions towards ideological meanings by:

1. Significantly impacting the set of emotions available to us; or,
2. Significantly exerting pressure towards which emotions we feel.

An analysis of ideological curation, I suggest, provides explanatory benefits that reach beyond the current literature on the interface between ideology and emotion, contributes to growing literatures on emotional injustice, psychological oppression, and finally, can aid in our individual journeys of psychological resistance.

Keywords: Emotion, ideology, ideology critique, psychological oppression, injustice, resistance

> "The ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently." – David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*

1. Introduction

In *The Second Sex* ([1949] 2010), Simone de Beauvoir remarks on a certain kind of older woman who, near death in our patriarchal world, finally realises that "they have been duped and mystified their whole lives" (637). A main project of de Beauvoir and other theorists of ideology critique is to uncover these harmful social mystifications before our lives end—that is, to know if, when, and how certain beliefs, values, goals, or attitudes that we

hold are mistaken or disvaluable for us as individuals and/or our pursuit of a just world. This paper aims to contribute to this project by focusing on how emotions can be such a site of harmful ideology.

Our daily lives make evident that ideologies of all kinds can impact our emotions. Consider for example, the self-directed shame a working-class person might feel when paid too little to make ends meet, the intense anxiety a person of colour might feel entering a majority white space, or the discomfiting pride a woman might feel when she senses a male gaze ogle her body. In each example, classism, racism, and sexism seem intimately connected with how these emotions are generated. What can we say about the role that ideology might play in cases like these? While most accounts of ideology admit that emotions can be subject to ideological influence,[1] the literature within ideology critique focuses less on emotions and more on delineating or defending accounts of ideology critique[2] or otherwise analysing how other mental states or phenomena such as beliefs,[3] preferences/desires,[4] goals,[5] implicit bias,[6] or language practices[7] may be ideological. Outside of ideology critique, significant research confirms robust connections between harmful ideologies and various negative effects on our emotions,[8] but remains wanting in two main respects: first in explaining exactly *how* ideology might influence our emotions, and second in answering questions of emotional *variance*, which arise when we wonder why not all working-class persons feel shame even when in the same environment, or why a person of colour only sometimes feels anxiety when entering white spaces.

In this paper, I offer an understanding which speaks to this "how" question and issues of emotional variance by proposing a process that I term *ideological curation*. Ideological curation centrally locates the intervention point of ideology at moments of contingency within our emotional lives, where our emotions are generated or become something different than what they were. By introducing and focusing on this space of contingency, I suggest we are better able to understand how ideology impacts our emotions because we bring to view the overarching mental playing field in which ideology operates—we take a look beneath the hoods of our minds, so to speak, and understand ideological influence within the broader context against which all our emotions are being generated or transformed. I argue that the role of ideology in this space is curational, insofar as it subtly guides our emotions towards ideological meanings by:

1. Significantly impacting the set of emotions available to us; or,
2. Significantly exerting pressure towards which emotions we feel.

In addition to its explanatory benefits, I argue that an analysis of ideological curation contributes to growing literatures on emotional injustice and psychological oppression, and can aid in our individual journeys of psychological resistance.

1. For an exception, see Shelby 2003.
2. See Eagleton 1991, Larrian 1979, and Rosen 1996 for helpful surveys; more contemporarily see Shelby 2003, Haslanger 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2021, Jaeggi 2009, Celikates 2006, Stanley 2015, and Bremner and de Canson 2025.
3. See Shelby 2003, Elster 1982, Stanley 2015, Wilson 2021, and Dror forthcoming.
4. See Nussbaum 2000, 2001a, Khader 2009, 2011, 2012, Elster 1983, Stoljar 2014, Bruckner 2009, and Levey 2005.
5. See Jost 2020 for an overview.
6. See Brownstein 2025 for an overview.
7. See for example Haslanger 2007, 2010, and Beaver and Stanley 2023.
8. See for example Wilkins and Pace 2014, Carretta 2018, Banks 2014, Bonilla-Silva 2019, Szymanski et al. 2009, Wei et al. 2010, Szymanski and Feltman 2014, Harper and Tiggemann 2008, David et al. 2019, and Russell 1996.

I proceed as follows. In Section 2, I set out the world of "emotional contingency" in greater detail and canvass existing work on how ideology might operate in such spaces. I focus on ideology in the pejorative sense,[9] and follow Sally Haslanger's view whereby ideology is defined as those social meanings which undergird social practices and social structures such that they prevent us from recognising or creating forms of value and/or organise us in unjust ways (2017a; 2017b; 2021). In Section 3, I offer my argument for ideological curation, centred around a case of patriarchal ideology. In Section 4, I argue that an analysis of ideological curation can provide several contributions to the growing literatures on psychological oppression and emotional injustice. I conclude in Section 5 by extending my discussion to other forms of ideology (e.g., racism, classism) and discussing what bearing this argument has on our ability to resist.

2. Emotional Contingency

2.1 Contingency Across Our Lives

Before all our angers, humours, joys, and surprises is a moment where our emotions could have been otherwise—anger instead of disappointment in reply to a rude remark; humour instead of disgust towards an off-colour joke; joy instead of anxiety in navigating a new city. Each scenario draws attention to a kind of contingency in our emotional lives, where our emotional responses do not necessarily follow a singular, predetermined path. There is, rather, a moment that contains many possibilities for how we might feel in response to the same situation.

This moment captures the central notion of *emotional contingency* that this paper rests on, which we encounter throughout our lives. Say a colleague made a strange comment about me, and I feel odd about it. What am I feeling? Confused? Angry? Disappointed? Anxious? Many options seem possible. Interpersonally, we notice this contingency when comparing how different our emotionality is from others'. I feel quite ashamed when I fail to respond to an email or text message quickly, but when my friend is confronted with the same situation, he approaches the notifications calmly. What makes me ashamed and him not, and could the roles be reversed? And perhaps most readily, such contingency becomes apparent through emotional regulation.[10] In the face of too much anxiety, anger, and jealousy we take deep breaths, count to 10, divert our attention, or recontextualise our environment. With practice, we are surprisingly able to change how we feel.

There are many metaphors we can use to capture such contingency—Robert Frost's diverging roads, the plump fruit adorning Sylvia Plath's fig tree, Jorge Luis Borges' winding labyrinths, or the paths traced forward in the potential growths of a plant. Across all metaphorical rendering, this space of possibility puts forward the essential situation of contingency: myriad pathways or directions are available that, when followed, route us to a distinct place. And while a single emotional response does not determine something deep about who we are, a lifetime of particular responses can shape our self-constitution.

In the next sub-section, I distinguish various aspects of such contingency and explain how it may resolve into what we feel.

9. See Geuss 1981.
10. For an overview, see Gross and Ford 2024.

2.2 Contingency and Resolution

Emotional contingency[11] is the idea that our emotions can arise or develop to become one of many psychological possibilities.[12] The *contingency* involved describes the set of emotional possibilities one might feel in a given situation, and its *resolution* describes how these possibilities are influenced to yield the concrete emotion(s) a person comes to feel. I take most movements from contingency to resolution as outside of conscious control, but at times consciously manipulated through regulation techniques. While I believe there are many kinds of contingency in our emotional lives,[13] in this paper I focus on the contingency contained within synchronic cases of emotion generation where:

> *Emotion generation:* S goes from feeling no emotion to feeling one or multiple emotions.

For example, we may imagine S not feeling anything before a joke is told, but upon hearing its punchline, becoming amused. This process of going from feeling no emotion to feeling an emotion is what occurs in emotion generation. Its contingency is all the other emotions S could feel instead or in addition to amusement (e.g., upset, embarrassed, angry, surprised), and its resolution is the path taken to feeling amusement instead of other possibilities.

This description of emotional generation, contingency, and resolution is consonant with research within psychology, psychotherapy, and philosophy. Research into emotion regulation, for example, assumes emotional contingency—many possibilities *must* be open if we can change how we feel. Similarly, in philosophy, emotional contingency is assumed by most, if not all, theories of emotion—cognitivist theories,[14] evaluative perception theories,[15] affect program theories,[16] attitudinal theories,[17] and constructivist theories,[18] for example, all accept contingency. Even in situations where we might think an emotion inevitable, like fear in the face of imminent danger, we can imagine persons with biological mutations or deep emotional training not feeling that emotion. Shared across theories of emotion, then, is the thought that, under the right conditions, we could feel other than what we do. Given this broad compatibility, I do not take a stance here on what an emotion is, and move forward with this general overview of contingency, which will enable us to better understand its normative contours and stakes.

We might now consider two further questions: what helps determine the set of possibilities? And what mediates the transition from contingency to its resolution? Here, psychology and philosophy present a suite of influences: we may be influenced by our personality traits or temperaments,[19] various biological or

11. For space considerations, I restrict my discussion to contingency only as it arises in relation to and between our emotions. I do not discuss other kinds of contingency in our affective lives—e.g., going from no affective state to a certain mood, feeling, or other affective disposition, or other such transitions.
12. Psychological possibility picks out what may be psychologically instantiated as a real feeling that an agent could feel in this world. Compare this to a more capacious metaphysical or logical possibility, where one can feel things that one has never been taught given one's cultural background, or that agents in nearby possible worlds could feel.
13. In addition to emotion generation, I suggest that contingency also underlies *emotion maintenance*, where an agent goes from feeling an emotion to either ceasing or continuing to feel that emotion, and *emotion progression*, where an agent goes from feeling one emotion to feeling a distinct emotion.
14. See e.g. Solomon 1980, Neu 2000, and Nussbaum 2001b.
15. See e.g. Prinz 2004, Roberts 2003, and Tappolet 2016.
16. See e.g. Tomkins 2008 and Ekman et al. 1972.
17. See e.g. Deonna and Teroni 2012, 2015.
18. See e.g. Barrett 2017 and de Sousa 1987.
19. See Costa and McCrae 1980, 1995, Shiota et al. 2006, Marengo et al. 2021, Revelle and Scherer 2009, and Kagan 1994.

evolutionary imperatives (e.g. hunger, survival, reproduction),[20] goals or practical incentives,[21] perceived norms of all kinds (e.g. moral, fittingness, aesthetic),[22] paradigm scenarios from which we learn to match emotions to particular contexts,[23] or beliefs reflective of broader cultural worldviews or political orientations.[24] These influences can help generate what we do feel (as when a norm of fittingness inclines us to admire an admirable person) as well as what we are unable to feel. The Korean emotion of *han*,[25] for example, captures a complex sense of loss, grief, and resentment resulting from an absence of collective identity in the wake of colonialist violence. There is no American or British equivalent, as Americans and British people lack the relevant cultural background to feel *han*. Every metaphysically or logically possible emotion one could feel, therefore, is not psychologically relevant. Rather, what is relevant are the emotions one could feel given the various influences one has in their mind.[26]

These influences contain dissimilarities. Some are perhaps innate (e.g. neurobiology, arguably some personality traits) while others are learned (e.g. standards of fittingness, goals, worldviews). Some may be more salient or determinative than others (e.g. our hunger moving us towards annoyance, despite efforts to the contrary). But what these influences share is defining what is possible and moving us from our range of emotional possibilities to our realised feeling. In the next section, I canvass several ways ideology may play a role in this mediation.

2.3 Ideological Mechanisms

In this paper, I adopt Sally Haslanger's definition of ideology, where ideology is understood as social meanings which undergird social practices and social structures (*cultural techné*), and are ideological when they prevent us from recognising or creating forms of value and/or organise us in unjust ways (2017a; 2017b; 2021). This definition is meant to functionally pick out pejorative instances of ideology, leaving aside forms of consciousness which may operate similarly (e.g. some forms of religion or culture)[27] but fail to be objectionable insofar as they do not hamper our ability to create or recognise value or lead to unjust social organisation. On this view, such social meanings may be internalised to generate various emotions.[28]

For example, Sandra Lee Bartky (1982) argues that women's disproportionate feelings of narcissism are not innate, but rather result from an internalisation of messages delivered by the "fashion–beauty complex" of the United States. This complex blends patriarchal incentives with economic incentives of the fashion industry to inundate women with magazines, advertisements, self-help books, and other popular media that tell us to obsess about our appearance (and buy this workout plan or makeup in turn). Frantz Fanon ([1952] 2008), similarly, puts forward French colonialist education as the explanation for why Black Antilleans feel inferior to their white European counterparts: "We said rather too quickly that the black man feels inferior. The truth is that he is made to feel inferior" (127). Iris Marion Young (2005), Carol Ryff et al. (2003), and Sandi Nenga (2003)

20. See Swami et al. 2022, Groër 2005, and LeDoux 2012a, 2012b.
21. See Carver and Scheier 2013, English et al. 2017, and Mauss and Tamir 2014.
22. See Haidt 2003, Packard and Schultz 2023, D'Arms and Jacobsen 2000, 2023, Gallegos 2021, Srinivasan 2018, Vishkin and Tamir 2023, and King 2021.
23. See de Sousa 1987, 1990.
24. See Mesquita and Frijda 1992, Mesquita, Frijda, and Scherer 1997, Eid and Diener 2001, and Jost and Amodio 2012.
25. See Shin 2019.
26. One could, over time, develop the capacity to feel more emotions than what was originally possible; for example, the cultivation of an Epicurean sense of savouring might produce emotions one has not felt before its cultivation. Since this paper only considers movement from contingency to resolution synchronically, the development of our emotional capacities over time is outside our scope. However, there are many interesting questions to explore about the relationship between ideology and emotion diachronically—how, for example, might ideology impact the capacities we have to develop certain emotions and not others over time? Thanks to Lucas Stanczyk for discussion on this point.
27. See Geuss 1981.
28. Though my argument should be compatible with any account of ideology that does not exclude emotion as a potential vehicle.

provide arguments about the relationship between patriarchy and shame, racism and emotions associated with well-being, and classism and disgust, respectively.

Building on these insights, others have proposed several ways these social meanings are mentally taken up to generate emotion. For example, norms against menstruation can lead those who menstruate to feel guilt, shame, and disgust during their periods,[29] system-justification goals can decrease negative affect (e.g. outrage) and increase positive emotions towards the status quo,[30] various kinds of "feeling rules" imposed in workplaces can induce particular feelings in workers (e.g. cheer in airline hostesses),[31] adaptive preferences can lead oppressed women to not feel angry or upset at gendered economic inequities,[32] and learned paradigm scenarios can signal the appropriateness for a white person to feel fear in an all-black neighbourhood because of previous modelling by their parents. On each account of how ideological influences operate, ideology is not its own distinct influence on emotion; rather ideology resolves moments of contingency by corrupting, creating, or otherwise making its way into mentally instantiated norms, goals, political perspectives, etc. that lead us towards certain emotions.

These accounts both provide an explanation for why we might feel emotions with ideological social meanings and how we might go about changing them. If I ask why I feel shame for menstruating, I can point to the bad norms or adaptive preferences making me feel this way. If I ask how to rid myself of these emotions, I will be led to think about how I can get rid of the grasp these bad norms and adaptive preferences have in my head or as socially transmitted through broader cultural education.

I think these accounts are on the right track in helping us to better understand the relationship that ideology bears to our emotions. However, on their own, they fail to speak to several important issues. First, they do not provide an informative answer to how ideology generates our emotions. Take, for example, a woman who has within her mind an ideological norm which holds that it is appropriate for women to feel disgusted when menstruating. On these accounts, this woman could feel disgust because the ideological norm is in some sense operative. This is helpful, but much more needs to be said—what, exactly, is meant by operative? These accounts do not often explain in virtue of what they generate emotion, and we thereby only know *that* these influences are related to generating emotions, not *how*.[33] Second, and correspondingly, these accounts do not help us to understand questions of emotional variance—why do I feel disgust when I menstruate but my

29. See Roberts 2004. See also Pismenny et al. 2024 for more examples of unjust norms, and Archer and Matheson 2020, 2023 on emotional imperialism.
30. See Jost 2019, 2020.
31. See Hochschild 1983.
32. See Nussbaum 2000.
33. Could we appeal to a general account of what makes norms psychologically operative, i.e., by positing that they satisfy some basic psychological needs (for predictability, belonging, etc.)? See Michael and Tummolini forthcoming and Gelfand and Harrington 2015. This response assumes that what makes norms generally operative makes ideological norms operative. However, this assumption requires further defence, as in virtue of having ideological content or aims, ideological norms may function differently to satisfy psychological needs than other norms, or may come at the cost of other psychological needs not in the picture with non-ideological norms. For example, following this sexist norm about disgust may help a woman feel a greater sense of belonging in her sexist environment, but at the cost of her self-esteem. This cost would not be incurred if she were to follow other kinds of non-ideological norms, e.g. norms about which side of the road to drive on, how to evaluate evidence, etc. So absent further argument, we lack a satisfactory answer to what makes ideological norms operative. We similarly could not appeal to general accounts of what makes ideology psychologically operative, as they would lack the specificity of how ideology gets incorporated into particular influences to generate emotion(s). What we need is an answer to what makes ideological influences operative such that emotions are generated. Could system-justifying goals be a potential solution, as system-justification theory is specifically concerned with how these goals generate ideological responses? I think it is tenuous to draw an explanatory link from the motivation for system-justifying tendencies to a motivation for various emotions that only sometimes result from those tendencies, but even if we could do so, this would explain only a minority of cases where ideology generates emotion and would not meet our third concern.

friend does not? And why, even intra-personally, do I not always feel disgust at my menstruation? The variance on these accounts would be explained as the ideological norm not being operative, but in virtue of what is the norm operative for some and not others, or operative for one only at some points in time? We are left again with an explanation which is on the right track, but for which much more needs to be spelled out.

Third, even provided an explanation of what makes ideological influences operative, this would only provide a partial explanation of what led to a certain emotion or set of emotions. Influences do not work in a vacuum, and a full explanation of how ideology generates emotion requires an understanding of how the many influences vying to impact our emotions work together. Even if an account were, for example, able to fully articulate how an ideological norm generates disgust, this account would only provide the connection that holds between that norm and the emotion. It would not tell us anything about how other influences, like those motivated by one's personality, level of hunger, or other competing norms, might motivate against, further motivate towards, or otherwise make a difference to the disgust that the ideological norm motivates towards. So even with a good understanding of how a particular ideological influence might operate, absent an understanding of how it would work within a broader sphere of influences we lack a comprehensive understanding of how ideology generates emotion. And absent an explanation containing the full story of how various influences work to generate emotion, we fail to understand how ideology overall generates emotion. For that story, other influences, both ideological and not, need to be in focus.

Building upon existing accounts to speak to these issues, in the next section I present my argument for ideological curation. In my explanation, I provide a framework for how we might explain how ideological and non-ideological influences can operate alone and in relation to each other to generate emotional responses. The framework highlights broad intervention points for conceptual clarity and identifies where experimental work is still needed.

3. Ideological Curation

3.1 Ideological Curation—Sophie

To develop the argument for ideological curation, I focus on the following case of Sophie. Consider this episode from her life:

> *Catcalling.* Sophie is walking home from her job at a biotech startup. She's just finished a presentation to potential investors she thinks has gone well and is recounting how it went to her partner on the phone. She passes through a park, and as she walks, a group of men in front of her seem to get louder and louder. She can't quite make out what they are saying, so she pauses her story to her partner and listens. The smile leaves her face as she begins to hear what they're saying. They are in fact addressing their remarks to her, with familiar epithets—"Hey baby, how you doin'?" "Where ya going, dressed all sexy like that?" "C'mon sweetie, come over here and give me a smile" "Why don't you come over here and talk to me instead?" Her partner, confused by the long pause, asks her what's wrong. She rushes away as quickly as she can, with the jeers and whistles still ringing in her ear until she's left the park. She feels sick to her stomach all the way home.

The catcalling Sophie experiences is an uncomplicated episode of sexism, which leaves her with a bad feeling. That feeling could be one or more of many possible emotions: anger, sadness, shame, guilt, hurt, confusion, rage, objectification, disgust, or fear. What leads her to feel how she does?

I suggest ideology functions to guide Sophie to what she ends up feeling through curating both (1) her set of possible emotions and (2) what she is moved to feel or not feel. To understand both modes, it is helpful to think by analogy to ordering food off a menu at a restaurant.[34] When your waiter comes by, the menu lists all the options from which you can choose. You can order one thing or many, but your choices are constrained by this menu. Your waiter offers recommendations—what customers love the most and what the chef suggests. You similarly see the menu annotated with notes by certain dishes, indicating some reserved for "risk-takers." Ultimately, you pick something that has been highlighted for you. The first curational mode is like ordering off a pre-set menu which ideology helps curate, and the second curational mode is like being guided toward options on the menu by ideology.

Of course, there are important disanalogies with the largely unconscious process of moving from contingency to resolution. We do not choose our emotions like we choose dinner, and while there is debate over the extent to which emotions are subject to rational control, we can minimally say that how these two movements occur are likely quite distinct. Furthermore, at a restaurant one can go "off-menu," which is not possible in my model of emotional contingency, as the set of emotional possibilities an agent has should exhaust every psychological possibility. But, while imperfect, thinking in terms of this analogy helps us understand these two modes of curation, which we can consider in turn.[35]

3.2 Mode 1

The first mode of ideological curation occurs when ideology significantly influences the set of emotional possibilities open to us. This mode is the affective version of being presented with a pre-set menu. What is presented to you is not something you have had any direct control over—it is crafted by the chefs and owners of the restaurant. Similarly, the options Sophie has for what she might feel are not options she has control over in this immediate situation. Rather, the influences canvassed in Section 2 will set her range of emotional possibilities—the various norms, goals, larger worldviews, etc. will determine what she can feel.

What makes ideology a factor which curates the menu, significantly influencing the set of affective possibilities she may feel? This explanation comes into focus when we home in on the emotions of shame and guilt that present as options for Sophie to feel. Shame, as Vida Yao (2020) offers, is

> the painful experience of being viewed in "the wrong way" by a real or imagined (internalised) other, where this other is (i) a person whose view the agent recognises as partly authoritative, (ii) an embodiment of a real social expectation, and (iii) a person with whom the ashamed person can partly identify. (26)

34. Thanks to Quinn White for this analogy.

35. I do not think the mechanism of curation would necessarily vary for non-pejorative forms of ideology or other socially-based influences; however, the normative upshots I highlight would not follow. It is not obvious that all influences on our emotions are curational, however—hunger or hormonal influences, for example, need not work this way. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for asking for clarification on this point.

In contrast, guilt is typically about specific actions one has taken. As June Price Tangney et al. (2007) explain, "the most dominant basis for distinguishing between shame and guilt centers on the object of negative evaluation and disapproval. Shame involves a negative evaluation of the global self; guilt involves a negative evaluation of a specific behaviour" (349). But Sophie has done nothing but walk through the park—why would she feel there is a real social expectation to have acted otherwise, or negatively evaluate actions she took?

I propose that one plausible answer is patriarchal ideology, which, following Haslanger, is a set of social meanings which aim at and maintain the subordination and domination of women and gender minorities. In Sophie's case, we can easily imagine how patriarchal ideology might lead Sophie to have internalised various relevant patriarchal social meanings. Through her years becoming a woman, Sophie has likely learned what most women learn about harassment—"If you didn't want to be whistled at, why'd you wear that skirt?" "Why would you be there in the first place?" In her own and other women's experiences with harassment, these judgmental epithets reinforce the claim that women are responsible for, or "asked for," their harassment. Of course, these responses make no sense; women are harassed regardless of what they wear, and if the advice is to avoid locations where harassment occurs, then there is quite literally no place for women to go. But this is what women hear, and how we learn it is our responsibility to not be harassed. When every time a woman is harassed and the finger immediately gets pointed to her and not her harasser—to her actions, her inactions, her clothes, her expressions, her affect—we create and cement the association that situations of harassment are women's responsibility, where they must have violated social expectation through some behaviour or another. This education is then taken up and internalised by individuals as practical norms, norms of fittingness, goals, paradigm scenarios, or any of the ways we have canvassed ideology to influence our emotional lives. These influences finally, in turn, make shame and guilt psychological possibilities for what Sophie might feel in this scenario.[36]

We can also see how patriarchy explains why shame and guilt appear as possibilities if we compare Sophie's menu to a cis, heterosexual man, or a woman living in a non-oppressive world in the same situation. If such a man were catcalled, it seems unlikely that shame or guilt would be emotions he would feel, as there would be no frame of reference to social expectations he may have violated, or behaviour for which he would negatively evaluate himself. While he may feel anger, confusion, fear, or many other feelings Sophie could also feel, I do not take shame and guilt to number among them. Similarly, a woman raised in a world free of patriarchy and its rationales for why women who are sexually harassed should feel shame and guilt would not find these emotions to feel. And so, by focusing on shame and guilt, we are in a good position to see how ideology can be the factor responsible for creating these emotions in Sophie's affective menu.

Could we not claim that guilt and shame are possibilities for what Sophie might feel for reasons that have nothing to do with ideology? Perhaps, for example, Sophie is excessively shy; any time someone pays any kind of attention to her, she feels she is doing something wrong, making guilt and shame enter the picture. Why claim patriarchal ideology is *the* explanatory factor? And similarly, couldn't this cis, heterosexual man or woman in the non-oppressive world not feel guilt or shame because of particular parenting practices or certain disorders? I don't deny that other influences can, as these cases show, also help curate emotional possibilities. However, the presence of non-ideological influences leading to the same emotional possibilities does not undermine the claim that ideological influences can, and often do, perform this work. My argument

36. This connection should not be surprising; feminist thinkers have long pointed out that shame and guilt are often affective states used to maintain patriarchal oppression—see Shefer and Munt 2019 and Fischer 2018for overviews, but also Calhoun 2004 and Thomason 2014, 2018 for ways these emotions can have resistant and/or moral functions.

is not that *only* ideological influences can curate what is possible for us to feel, just that they can so curate. It is not that the cis, heterosexual man and the woman in the non-oppressive world can *never* have shame or guilt as possibilities for what they might feel; it is rather that *patriarchy* will not be the influence that leads them to shame or guilt as possible feelings. And in the shy Sophie case, patriarchy can explain why shame and guilt feature as possibilities for her to feel, even if it may not explain in every instance, or even if it is overdetermined that she may feel shame or guilt. What I am aiming for is relatively modest—simply the claim that ideology can at times be the explanatory force for what is possible for us to feel.

3.3 Mode 2

The second mode of ideological curation occurs when ideology significantly exerts pressure towards what Sophie comes to feel. Following our restaurant analogy, this likens the movement of ideology to how the waiter and menu guide our choices towards certain dinner options. To depict how and why this might work, we can first extend our discussion of shame and guilt whereby patriarchal ideology not only makes shame and guilt possibilities for what Sophie feels but also motivates her towards these emotions. Because of various ways Sophie has learned that women are responsible for their harassment, she not only potentially feels these emotions but will, in some cases, *in fact* feel shame and guilt. Patriarchal norms, paradigm scenarios, or whatever influences ideology has embedded itself in can exercise force or pressure towards these options.

But ideology does not merely guide Sophie toward certain feelings—it can also guide her away from other feelings, like anger. Feminist philosophy canvasses[37] many ways that anger in women is educated against; I discuss two ways this education might play out in Sophie's case. First, we can compare Sophie to Laura Bates, quoted in Soraya Chemaly 2018. Bates recounts her experience after being sexually harassed and assaulted on a train:

> At first, I felt fear, I felt embarrassment, shame, anxiety, all these other emotions that we feel when we are experiencing these things . . . [but] *I didn't feel like I had the right to be angry at the time*. . . . We are so socialized to accept this treatment that we don't realize we have the right to anger in the moment. I thought, "This is the way things are. This is what it means to be a woman. I just have to deal with it." (151; emphasis added)

Bates highlights how women—especially when harassed—are often socialised to think no normative violation has happened when it has. It is the natural rite of being a woman to find yourself subject to the jeers of men, and so being angry can seem as nonsensical as being angry at the sun for setting at night. Such social meaning arises out of patriarchal ideology because it leads women in particular away from true normative contours of the world, and such socialisation is not present for men.[38] Thus, even if anger is a possibility for women like Sophie and Laura, ideology can exercise force against feeling it through this internalised norm that it is unfitting (even if this norm is itself normatively mistaken).

Second, we may consider how stereotypes about certain emotions can affect which ones Sophie feels. As Leslie Jamison (2018) writes, the angry woman "conjures a lineage of threatening archetypes: the harpy and her talons, the witch and her spells, the medusa and her writhing locks" (9). She continues to discuss how, in comparison, the aesthetics of sadness have a comparatively stronger pull:

37. See Frye 1983, Spelman 1989, Cherry 2020, Brown 1998, Scheman 1980, and Brody 2010.
38. See Shields 2002. Following Gallegos (2021), this would also be an example of affective injustice.

> If an angry woman makes people uneasy, then her more palatable counterpart, the sad woman, summons sympathy more readily. She often looks beautiful in her suffering: ennobled, transfigured, elegant. Angry women are messier. Their pain threatens to cause more collateral damage. (10)

Given these stereotypes, we can imagine their uptake via various internalised norms and goals moving Sophie away from anger, and perhaps instead towards sadness. Insofar as these stereotypes limit what make women "real" or "better" women, we can find such a pull being routed by ideology.[39]

The internalisations which could move Sophie away from anger are not absolute claims about what all women feel in these circumstances. Many women do get angry at their harassment, making it clear that ideology does not always succeed in moving women away from anger. However, even without an absolute claim about how all women feel, the above internalisations are still *actual reasons* women cite for why they do not feel angry when being harassed. And so, it remains true that ideology can move women away from anger, even given the many angry women in this world. And even if ideology fails in moving some women to not feel angry, it can still exercise significant pressure against anger which women may have to overcome to feel angry. I explore the implications of such pressure in the following section.[40]

Overall, then, another way ideology impacts our emotional lives is by exerting significant pressure towards or against certain emotions. The precise way this pressure works requires empirical investigation—we will need to understand how different internalisations of ideology exercise pressure towards and away from various emotions, and more broadly how these ideological influences may interact with other influences which are also operative, both ideological and non-ideological.[41] But what I have attempted to provide here is a framework that highlights a few kinds of investigation we should pursue to better understand how ideology impacts our emotional lives.[42]

3.4 Explanatory Upshots

Analysis of Sophie's case illustrates ho modes of ideological curation can occur: ideology can both curate the possibilities for feeling and exert pressure towards which emotions we might come to feel or not feel.[43] Not every instance of coming to feel or not feel a particular emotion will be curated by ideology in the way

39. Stereotypes will change given intersectional considerations; for example, Monet Patrice Thomas (2019) writes that, as a black woman in the US, her anger is perceived as an "attitude" (32), with authors like Pilgrim, following Hill Collins (2000), relatedly arguing the trope of an "angry black woman" "is a social control mechanism that is employed to punish black women who violate the societal norms that encourage them to be passive, servile, nonthreatening, and unseen" (2015, 121). See also Cherry 2020, 2023.

40. But I offer one implication here, nicely brought out through the case of anger. Anger is a well-recognized form of emancipatory change, helping to tell us when injustice is occurring, motivating us to take actions against it, bringing us closer with those who share in it, and empowering us as full normative agents in the world (see Silva 2019, Cherry 2021a, 2021b). Anger does not always have these results, but could in Sophie's case—for example, by alerting her that some normative violation was occurring or encouraging her to act against harassment as other victims of harassment and assault like Bates (see her Everyday Sexism Project at everydaysexism.com). Insofar as ideology precludes anger and other emotions which may have emancipatory value, it will function to reinforce oppression and will thereby be a form of psychological oppression, as discussed in the next section.

41. See Rangel et al. 2008 for helpful discussion.

42. We might also wonder how ideology influences the strength/behavioural expressions of emotions in this vying with/against other influences. I unfortunately lack space to discuss this here.

43. Why not think that ideology provides reasons that make certain emotions more or less apt (in a broad sense) to feel, rather than operating on possibilities for feeling? While I am sympathetic to this approach, I have two reservations. First, this approach would collapse Modes 1 and 2, leaving us without a clear denotation of how ideology *creates* certain emotional possibilities for us. As I continue on in Section 4, there are forms of psychological oppression and emotional injustice which arise from both modes of curation, and thus collapsing Modes 1 and 2 might risk neglecting these various forms of harm. Second, to be a sufficiently general claim, it will need to be shown that *every* influence ideology embeds within to exert pressure on our emotions is reason-giving, which I am sceptical of in cases of habit and affective conditioning (unless "reason" is just taken descriptively to be any consideration in favour of or against certain emotion(s), in which case reason and influence can be used interchangeably). I thank Lucas Stanczyk and Quinn White for raising versions of this objection.

described. Sophie might feel how she does out of hunger or personality traits unaffected by ideology. And nothing I have said here immediately helps to sort out the difficult task of knowing whether and when ideology routes our emotions compared to other influences.[44] But through ideological curation, we have a clearer grasp on the causal psychological mechanism by which ideology generates our emotions,[45] which helps us with the three issues raised in Section 2.

First, ideological curation provides a theoretical framework for how ideology operates. This secondarily helps us to diagnose why there is variance between individuals who may have the same ideological influences in their minds, or even within a single individual at different points in time. The variance will be explained either by a difference in what is possible for individuals to feel or how effectively ideology pressures towards/against certain possibilities. Lastly, as both modes of ideological curation are situated within a broader environment of influences that can lead one to feel or not feel certain emotions, this framework enables us to further investigate how ideological influences work within a larger nexus of influences. The ways that influences can work dynamically with or against one another are myriad, but my analysis sets us up for reaching a more comprehensive understanding. Ideological curation provides not just a specific understanding of a particular way ideology can influence our emotions (e.g. through a particular norm or stereotype), but a holistic picture of how ideology can impact our emotions.

4. The Harms of Ideological Curation

Given this understanding of ideological curation, what might we say about the harms that arise from it? Most broadly, these harms are those of psychological oppression or emotional injustice. There are a few accounts of psychological oppression. Bartky, following Fanon ([1952] 2008), holds that "to be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem" (1990, 22). The oppressed themselves "become their own oppressors" (22) by internalising stereotypes, their sexual objectification, or mystifications about their capacities which ultimately make them unable to exercise their full agency. Bartky's account collapses psychological oppression into internalised oppression, but others have wider-ranging accounts. Ann Cudd (2006), for example, presents both "direct" and "indirect" psychological forces whereby in virtue of one's group membership, harms are imposed either directly by a dominant group or indirectly via the oppressed's internalisations of beliefs and values which harm them and benefit the privileged. Direct forces can inflict emotions involved with trauma, humiliation, and degradation, whereas indirect forces can lead the oppressed to feel shame and emotions associated with low self-esteem. Katie Stockdale (2024) similarly proposes psychological oppression as "the ways oppression takes up residence in people's minds through mental states and processes that reinforce their oppression" (5). Generally, then, we can classify as psychologically oppressive any mental state or process inflicted upon the oppressed *qua* membership in an oppressed group or that the oppressed internalise in ways that reinforce or support their oppression *qua* membership in that group.

44. In other work, I explore how critical genealogical investigations of our emotions can help us with this practical endeavour. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to consider this point.

45. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to clarify this point.

"Emotional injustice" is a concept developed by Arina Pismenny et al. (2024) as an attempt to organise into a cohesive literature various ways in which the treatment of emotions is unjust or emotions are used to treat people unjustly (154).[46] They present seven different categories of how emotions can be treated unjustly (misinterpretation, discounting, extraction, policing, exploitation, inequality), and one by which emotions are used to treat people unjustly (weaponising), with copious examples of each category. While there is considerable overlap between the examples of emotional injustice and psychological oppression, the two differ insofar as theorists understand the scope and application of oppression and injustice differently. In what follows, I suggest three ways ideological curation contributes to discussions of psychological oppression and emotional injustice.

First, ideological curation builds out how psychological oppression works by offering an understanding of the underlying process by which the emotional ends of psychological oppression are achieved. For example, on Bartky's theory, ideological curation can be understood as the mechanism by which stereotypes, sexual objectification, and self-mystification influence how our emotions arise. Similarly, on Cudd's theory, ideological curation underlies how indirect psychological forces yield various emotions. On both accounts, ideological curation helps answer questions of "how" the emotions involved in psychological oppression can arise and what we might look to so as to explain emotional variance. Ideological curation also provides a basis for how "emotion policing" might work under Pismenny et al.'s taxonomy. "Emotion policing" encompasses efforts made to distort the emotions an individual or social groups are disposed to feel, through, for example, the use of stereotypes or hegemonising certain emotions (e.g. encouraging patriotic feelings, love of one's parents, admiration for one's colonisers). Ideological curation similarly explains how these efforts to police emotions work within individual minds.

Second, ideological curation enables us to see an oppressive harm arising from the psychic effort required to emotionally overcome the forces of ideology. To speak more candidly to this harm, it is helpful, perhaps, to move away from Sophie and place myself into the story. As an Indian-American woman, racist, patriarchal ideology has featured heavily into many feelings about my body, particularly feelings about my body hair. The hair that grew naturally across my legs, arms, and face has been taken both as a sign of unfemininity and the inability to remain within civilised, kempt patterns of hygiene. These ideological social meanings have moulded significant aspects of my life—perhaps most starkly, the fifteen years of daily rituals where I shaved my whole body, compelled by feelings of disgust, shame, guilt, self-hatred, and anxiety. These negative emotions were only possible because of the grasp that racist, patriarchal ideology had on my life; absent a culture where the existence of my body hair signified transgression of ideological norms, why would this natural feature be such a source of cruel feeling towards myself? I have now spent many years trying to "unlearn" these responses, but even now as a dedicated feminist, I look at my body and feel the pull of these negative emotions. Ideology places them as possibilities for me, and it remains horribly difficult on many days to overcome its force and the painful emotions it guides me towards, to feel neutral or maybe even happy at the sight of healthy, growing hair.

In my case, one of the functions of psychological oppression is to place me in a seemingly endless struggle against these forces embedded within myself. I did not choose to be born in the body I was, nor in a world where such bodily functions are so stigmatised, and yet I am forced to deal with significant amounts of mental and emotional toil that must be actively tended to. This example also draws out the deep-seated way that ideology does not just at a single moment guide our decisions and choices, but moreover how it can

46. This concept builds on existing work about affective injustice offered by Srinivasan (2018), Whitney (2018), Archer and Mills (2019), Archer and Matheson (2020), and Gallegos (2021).

fundamentally change our basic emotional orientation towards the world through the possibilities it enables or disenables. The feelings that ideology curated within me did not just impact me in a single moment like our case with Sophie; for my entire life, it has impacted my basic emotional dispositions towards my body, and it becomes difficult to imagine who I might be without this endless source of negative feeling. What more could I have done with my time not spent mechanically shaving, what more could I have dreamt or mentally worked towards without so much mental and emotional energy depleted?

As the pressure that ideology exerts over emotions can require extensive psychological resistance, it is a form of psychological oppression insofar as it is a harmful mental process inflicted upon oppressed groups *qua* membership in that group. This need for resistance can also be theorised as "emotion exploitation" as it involves emotions as a form of labour that oppressed individuals must take on (164). This harm is not as easily seen on other accounts of the interrelationship between ideology and emotion—on existing views, because we do not see a wide expanse of emotional possibilities in front of us, we do not immediately see how ideology exerts power in this landscape which we must struggle to overcome. Ideological curation, however, places these possibilities in sight, allowing us to quickly and easily locate this harm.

Third and lastly, ideological curation can extend what might count as psychological oppression. On each account of psychological oppression, what is most pertinent is that certain mental states are concretely produced—one is psychologically oppressed when one actually feels guilty, ashamed, inferior, etc. An analysis of ideological curation, however, highlights that ideology can influence our emotions even when it fails to produce them. For example, we can imagine a version of Sophie's case where patriarchal ideology puts guilt and shame on the menu and guides her towards these emotions, but she does not end up feeling them. I want to suggest there is reason to think that, even without actually coming to feel an emotion, the sheer presence of ideology in our minds is also psychologically oppressive.

Ideology enters our minds aiming to work against our interests as individuals and the world we want to build. While other non-ideological influences on our emotions can also work against our interests—e.g. if one's volatile temperament leads them to feel angry at the smallest excuse—ideological influences present a distinctive harm, as they contain social meanings which operate structurally on a society and lead us, collectively, to organise our social structures unjustly. Its sheer presence makes it more likely that one will feel in accordance with it. Compare, for the sake of analogy, a person with a volatile temperament. Given this temperament, they have a greater propensity to feel angry in a broader range of situations. We would consider it harmful not only when the temperament succeeds in producing anger in inappropriate contexts, but also when the temperament is itself present, as it is likely to be the root cause of anger in inappropriate contexts. That is why the work of anger-management therapy is to calm one's temperament in response to certain triggers, so that one is angrier in fewer situations. Similarly, given an ideological influence curating one's emotions, one has a greater propensity to feel an ideologically-driven emotion in a broader range of situations. Just as the angry temperament is itself a source of harm, so too is the ideological influence's presence in one's mind. As such, the mere presence of ideology is an oppressive harm, as it raises the likelihood that one will feel an ideologically-driven emotion.

Another reason hinges again on the thought that ideology often requires significant force to overcome. As depicted in my case, substantial time, effort, and energy can be required to weaken the grasp that ideology has on our minds. Anything that aims at an ideological result and requires this level of resistance should clearly count as oppressive. Compare the situation to if one verbally told a victim of sexual harassment that they deserved what happened to them. That verbal utterance is a clear instance of oppression, insofar as the goal

is to dominate women and other victims of harassment. Even if the verbal utterance fails in imparting that meaning to its audience, the utterance itself is still oppressive because of the force it has attempted to exercise upon its audience to accept its patriarchal meaning.

While this extension of psychological oppression is not directly stated in existing accounts, I do not take it to be at odds with central theoretical goals. As Bartky states at the end of her paper, psychological oppression is akin to the alienation a worker may face when estranged from their labour:

> Alienation is not a condition into which someone might stumble by accident; it has come both to the victim of psychological oppression and to the alienated worker from without, as a usurpation by someone else of what is, by rights, *not his to usurp* . . . to be a victim of alienation is to have a part of one's being stolen by another. (32)

This is precisely what ideological curation does, even when it fails in producing emotion—part of one's being, one's very emotional constitution, is at stake when ideology is simply present and aiming to exert its force upon one's emotional life. It is essential to acknowledge this intervention into our emotional lives to fully canvass its deleterious effects.

Overall, ideological curation can therefore help explain how mechanisms of psychological oppression and forms of emotional injustice might operationally work, and can help extend our understanding of psychological oppression.

5. Conclusion: Resisting Fatalism

Thus far, we have mostly spoken about ideological curation as it applies to Sophie and my case. But these are two of countless examples. Another version of Sophie could leave the scene of her harassment with a good feeling instead of a bad one; here, ideological curation could explain how she might feel emotions like flattery or pride. Men and non-binary persons, too, are impacted by patriarchal ideology in a way explained by ideological curation. We might imagine patriarchal ideology curating the emotional landscape of men whose wives earn more than them by making possible and guiding them toward emotions like resentment, shame, guilt, anger, or feelings of emasculation. We might also imagine various emotions involved in gender dysphoric situations reflecting forms of patriarchal ideology for non-binary persons.

The range of cases extends to many other forms of harmful ideology. Racist ideological curation can help explain both Malcolm X's prescient proclamation, "Who taught you to hate yourself?" (1962), as well as the phenomenon of white grievance as analysed by Juliet Hooker (2017; 2020; 2023), where white Americans who expect white dominance experience a grave sense of loss at gains in representation of non-white populations. Similarly, we might understand ideology as curating a broad set of social meanings which incline working-class persons' various negative affects towards their economic situation as disappointment (a negative response to how one *wishes* the world would be), over anger (a response to a perceived normative *violation*)[47] or feelings of shame when they fail to meet middle-class norms.[48]

47. I take this distinction from Srinivasan (2018).
48. See Scheff 2002.

When ideological curation occurs to oppressed individuals, I have argued that it can both be an explanation and a form of psychological oppression. In the cases of men being upset that their wives earn more than them, or of white grievance, is psychological oppression an apt label for what ideological curation does? Following Aimé Césaire ([1955] 1972), who sees colonialism as an oppressive system which includes the degradation and deformation of colonisers, I think it might. But, absent the space to defend such a view, one can understand these cases of ideological curation under different terms—perhaps as a description of how structural affective justice advocated for by Stockdale (2024) can impact the mental lives of everyone living under unjust conditions.

No matter how we categorise the harms of ideological curation, in closing, I want to suggest that its analysis can aid our individual journeys of resisting ideology. What is distinctive about ideological curation is that it locates ideology in a space of broad emotional possibility. On this view, ideology does not necessarily determine, repress, or suppress any particular emotion; it functions, often with force, but nevertheless within a broader set of other influences which also vie to impact how our emotions are generated. This vantage point first allows us to be freed from a sort of determinism about ideology and our emotions. It is easy to fall into despair imagining ideology as a brute force hammer—that ideology sinks into our emotional influences and, somewhat inevitably, makes it so that we must feel the way we do.[49] This analysis of ideological curation aims to not invite such fatalism. Thinking in terms of ideological curation necessarily invites reflection on the many possibilities for feeling that can be flipped into a liberatory register. Some emotions on our affective menu are curated by ideology, but we can bring into focus plenty of others which aren't—the ideological, non-ideological, and liberatory emotional options sit side by side. And so, in imagining ideology's role in generating our emotions, it need not seem as inevitable that ideology will always prevail. The possibilities for what it could otherwise be like are in sight.

Relatedly, the contingency space that ideological curation brings into focus is a helpful location of mental resistance.[50] On existing accounts of how ideology influences our emotions, the primary fault-line and intervention point is the set of values and norms congruent with ideology. To intervene on ideology would mean cultivating liberatory beliefs, preferences, paradigm scenarios, etc.[51] Whatever its other virtues, this analysis is not always the most useful advice. In my own case of trying to overcome my negative orientation towards my body hair, for example, I certainly had feminist values and norms internalised, but when it came to apprehending my body, they simply were not operating strongly enough to overcome the ideological influences in play. Simply trying to rationally pick the right values and norms or otherwise inducing myself to such change via alterations to my environment or conceptual repertoires did not change how I felt.

Instead, what did help was focusing on my emotional responses. First, with a pause to notice what I was feeling; and then, second, an apprehension of everything else I could be feeling instead. With time and practice, understanding that my emotions could be otherwise, that I could focus on the influences which *might already be present* in moments of contingency and bring them more fervently to life, ultimately led me to some of the first moments of breakthrough. The focus on possibility was vital, highlighting that ideology's grasp on

49. The worry is similar to Uma Narayan's (2002) "engulfing view," where patriarchy is seen as an inevitable, overwhelming force in the lives of third world women, which they lack the agency to overcome.

50. Here I am narrowly discussing methods of resistance that agents can employ towards ideology within their own minds; resisting ideology overall will require fundamentally changing the material conditions which make it possible through collective action.

51. For how to do so, see Bicchieri's (2017) excellent analysis of how we might change social norms like those around child marriage.

our emotional lives is merely one of many possible sources of feeling. To echo Graeber: we make our emotional lives, and if we try, we can make them differently.[52]

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"It is Humanising to Resist It with Rage": Getting Angry at Social Injustices as a Subjective and Political Reassessment of Oneself

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Abstract

Recent philosophical contributions have underlined the epistemic value of anger experienced at social injustice (Romano 2018; Srinivasan 2018; Cherry 2021). These publications participate in opposing and refuting the traditional philosophical argument according to which anger would be an obstacle to the elaboration of any rational thinking or set of claims concerning political life, in which social injustice occupies a central role.

The victims of social injustice are constantly denied respect, recognition, and apology, as well as any form of epistemic or political participation that would threaten the *status quo* of their oppression. In this regard, the experience of self-respect, the acquisition of further knowledge about one's social situation, and the expression of one's political demands of respect are essential features of resistance to oppression. They are *humanising* experiences, in the sense that they restore one's essential dignity, abilities, and rights as a subject.

Therefore, in line with the contemporary efforts to question the potential role of emotions in one's opposition to injustice, this paper argues that the experience of anger at social injustice is humanising, as it enacts a subjective and political reassessment of oneself as entitled to respect, capable of appropriate emotions, and legitimate in opposing present and future wrongs.

Keywords: anger, social injustice, self-respect, epistemic feelings, oppression

1. Introduction

Recent philosophical contributions have underlined the epistemic value of the emotion of anger experienced at injustices of a political nature.[1] Among them, Benedetta Romano (2018) has exposed the role of emotions' evaluative knowledge in one's political sensibility and commitment; Amia Srinivasan (2018) has detailed the aptness of anger in responding to injustice and the distinctive value of feeling angry at injustices compared to grasping them in a mere rational way; and Myisha Cherry (2021) has advocated for the essential role of rage in the anti-racist struggle and underlined its epistemic potential. These publications participate in opposing and refuting the widespread political idea and traditional philosophical argument according to which anger would

1. among other advocates of anger's epistemic political gains, see hooks (1995) and Lorde (1997).

be an obstacle to the elaboration of any rational thinking or set of claims concerning political life, in which social injustice occupies a central role.

Typically, the philosophical literature which supports the value of emotions in political matters addresses the latter through the lens of social injustice. Broadly speaking, social injustice is a system of injustices which is based on constructed hierarchies elaborated within constructed social characteristics (such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, origin, etc.). Social injustice targets the social groups and individuals who bear non-dominant social characteristics (such as Black women, trans men, immigrants from the Global South in a Western country, etc.) in both retributive and recognitional ways (Fraser 2005). In this paper and elsewhere, such injustice is also referred to as *systemic*, to emphasise its hegemony and heterogeneity. Indeed, unlike incidental, "bad luck" forms of injustice which can also occur in social relations, social injustice interferes with the victims' subjectivities, opportunities, and relations, in every aspect of their lives.[2]

One of the essential features of social injustice is that it is always hidden under the label of "natural," "normal," or "incidental," and is therefore not discussed, recognised, or acted on. Its manifestation in interpersonal wrong, endemic violence, or epistemic exclusion is either masked as unfortunate or minimised as unproblematic. Furthermore, the victims of social injustice are constantly denied respect, recognition, and apology, as well as any form of epistemic or political participation that would threaten the *status quo* of their oppression. They are thus structurally deprived of essential components of what makes one a *subject* in relation to others: capacity for self-respect, entitlement to respect, recognition, reparation, and equal access to collective discussion about one's experience and conception of justice and injustice. Consequently, the experience of self-respect, the acquisition of further knowledge about one's social situation, and the expression of one's political demands of respect are essential features of resistance to oppression. I coin such experiences as *humanising*, in the sense that they restore one's essential dignity, abilities, and rights as a subject.[3] They can also be conceived of as necessary conditions for engaging in an active and efficient struggle against social injustice. Indeed, it is only when one truly believes in and assesses one's humanity through one's entitlement to expression, equality, and respect, that one can fully engage in political action.[4]

Therefore, in line with the contemporary efforts to continue questioning the potential role of emotions in epistemic and political participation, and in one's opposition to injustice, this paper argues that the experience of anger at social injustice is humanising, as it enacts a subjective and political reassessment of oneself as entitled to respect, capable of appropriate emotions in regard to one's social situation, and legitimate in opposing present and future wrongs. I thereby wish to contribute to the ongoing reflection on the epistemic value of political angers by examining the distinctive, humanising potentials of feeling anger at social injustice, and by arguing that such humanising abilities are essentially political.

To do so, I will first explore the ability anger bears to relocate oneself in the present of the wrong and to (re) assess one's domain of respect. I will begin by summarising the usual argument of anger's counterproductivity, and will propose an alternative framing of what is considered productive in the realm of social injustice (2.1). I will then explain how exposure to social injustice itself makes it difficult for victims of such wrongs to feel

2. The "bad luck" expression is borrowed to Miranda Fricker's typology of injustices (2007).

3. The word "humanising," throughout this paper, is to be understood as referring to what shapes, restores, or affirms one's existence as a *subject*. I do not mean, by using this term, to draw a natural or essential opposition between humans and non-human beings or to suggest that the latter would be unentitled to respect, recognition, repair, nor some sort of political participation.

4. If, when speaking of the political value of anger, one primarily has in mind anger which emerges from one's own experience of injustice, rather than from witnessing injustice being inflicted upon others, I believe feeling angry at a social injustice that one doesn't suffer from, but only witnesses, can also bear subjective and epistemic values that are similar to the ones I will explore in this paper.

angry at their experience (2.2). From there, I will proceed to an analysis of anger's reconnecting ability (2.3) and examine the (re)assessment of one's entitlement to respect that is entailed by the emotion (2.4). This will lead me to explore, in the subsequent section, one's affective understanding of one's own position within an oppressive social world. Following three analytical steps, I will demonstrate how the epistemic dimension of experiencing anger is both a cause and an effect of the politicisation of one's life (3.1). I will proceed by arguing that anger further reassesses oneself in the social world by making one aware and in control of one's ability to judge wrongdoers and their actions (3.2). Finally, I will expose how the very expectation of one's expression of anger completes the apprehension of oneself in relation to others and enables one to envision the disruptive potential of one's emotions (3.3).

2. Anger's Reconnecting Ability and the Appreciation of Oneself as Worthy of Respect

To initiate this section on anger's potential to restore one's self-respect, I will explain the most common critique of expressions of anger at social injustice. This will allow me to introduce the topic of the oppressed's self-respect as a blind spot in the way that political angers are usually framed and addressed.

2.1 Beyond the Question of Counterproductivity: Questioning Anger's "Psychic Possibilities"

The main argument against the expression of anger at social injustice is that the emotion would be counterproductive to the aims pursued by the subject who displays it.

Amia Srinivasan (2018), in questioning the aptness of anger in responding to social injustice, casts this argument as the "counterproductivity critique." She examines its tenets in the works of Martha Nussbaum, whose reflections encompass the most common features of both traditional and contemporary critiques of political anger. I will not go into a detailed account of the counterproductivity critique of anger, as it is not of direct interest for my present reflection, but I will outline its main features. Most philosophers and other individuals who dismiss anger's political legitimacy rely on the emotion's alleged counterproductivity, and formulate a political warning to angry activists for social justice: their anger will undermine their struggle instead of benefitting it. The argument is that anger bears essential traits, or core ideas—such as the desire for payback and a focus on downgrading the wrongdoer's social status—which make the emotion ineffective regarding the injustice it denounces, and even counterproductive in the struggle for justice. Because such intentions, entailed in the emotion's very nature, are both inapt to correct the harm inflicted and normatively flawed, anger is necessarily counterproductive in situations of injustice. Anger is not only cast as irrational, but also as severely damaging to the struggle for justice: Nussbaum (2016) explains that, in the political realm, expressing anger is likely to dissuade potential allies from joining the cause, to be the occasion for repressive policies aiming to shut down people's rage, and to enforce stereotypes surrounding minorities and activism.

Regardless of whether anger's expression is indeed counterproductive or not, there is a further question in what Martha Nussbaum, as well as the other critics of anger's political potential, consider to be valuable in the opposition to injustice.[5] In other terms, it seems that the value of one's political expression is calculated

5. I sympathise with Srinivasan's remark on how to convincingly evaluate whether anger has or has not been politically productive in a restricted sense: "The question of whether, on the whole, anger has been politically productive or counterproductive in the long struggle against oppression is an empirical question, and one that cannot be settled from the philosopher's armchair. Certainly it cannot be settled by a handful of historical cases that are all too easily treated as liberal fairy tales about the power of civility" ("Would Politics Be Better Off Without Anger?" *The Nation*, November 30, 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/a-righteous-fury/).

based on the effects that this expression will have on the overall unjust configuration of the world. Yet, one could argue that one's contestation of injustice can be politically valuable at the prior level of one's ability to express oneself, to voice one's emotions, to think of oneself as a political subject and to act accordingly. In other words, experiencing the ability to identify and express oneself as a full, legitimate political subject can be considered enough to make such experience politically constructive. Let's imagine that one's anger at an instance of injustice was met with further disrespect, hostility, and/or repression, but was nevertheless the occasion for one to experience one's own political voice for the first time. Would it still be considered counterproductive? How about if one's expressed anger, regardless of the sanction it would be met with, had resonated with a witness who would thereby foster a new sensitivity to similar instances of social injustice? To challenge the common, widespread opposition to anger, there is no need to go through the everlasting debate of whether disruptive modes of expression are destructive or productive forms of political participation. Instead, one could shift the focus and ask: what do we consider to be politically productive? Does the value of political protest depend solely on the effective realisation of the tangible, material, or legal advances that this protest demands? Aren't the transgression of affective injustice (Srinivasan 2018) and challenges to epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007) already political themselves?

Arguing against the counterproductivity argument, Amia Srinivasan formulates an objection which I consider to be a good starting point for reflecting on the humanising potential entailed in the experience of one's anger. She writes that "it is perhaps similarly naïve to think anger contains no salutary psychic possibilities for someone whose self-conception has been shaped by degradation and hatred" (2018, 126). Srinivasan interestingly establishes a connection between the perception that the oppressed have of themselves, which has been shaped by dominant narratives of being worthless and voiceless—and what the emotion of anger may generate in one's psyche. In other words, Srinivasan seems to argue here that feeling anger counterbalances the deprecation instilled in the oppressed, through which they see and consider themselves to a certain extent. This suggests that anger could play a role in healing self-hatred, simply by providing the person who feels it with a sense of their own worth that challenges and contradicts how they have learned to think of themself. Similarly, while bell hooks argues for the uses of Black rage in the struggle against racism, she affirms that "racial hatred is real. And it is humanising to be able to resist it with militant rage" (1995, 17). hooks' reflections already draw a connection between oppression, its influence on one's self-perception, and the humanising ability of anger to replace hatred with some sort of self-respect. In the following paragraphs, I will show the ways in which anger, when experienced at social injustice and from a situation of oppression, bears several distinctive and politically valuable humanising abilities.

2.2 On the Obstacles to Feeling Angry in Situations of Oppression

However, before further investigating the humanising abilities entailed by feeling anger at social injustice, I should emphasise the inherent difficulty of feeling angry at social, systemic injustice.

To do so, I will rely on Naomi Scheman's (1993) paper, and particularly on the case of Alice, the fictive character she elaborates on to exemplify her thesis. Alice is an American woman in the '80s; she is a mother, lives in a normal heterosexual marriage, and fulfils what society expects from her given her gender. Alice might feel frustrated about staying at home while her husband is working; she might feel tired of taking care of everyone and everything with no reward or recognition. Even as Alice believes she owns everything she needs to make her happy and fulfilled, she still experiences constant dissatisfaction with her life. She feels guilty for feeling unhappy while her situation is all of what a woman of her age could expect; she usually blames her period, believes her husband when he says she's moody, and constantly overcomes her negative emotions without

properly identifying them or considering their value. The ability of Alice, and of any victim of social injustice, to *express* and even to *feel* anger at her situation prior to any politicisation is largely inhibited by the very nature of social injustice. On the one hand, if we conceive that her situation would eventually lead her to feel angry, it is easy to imagine she would probably *resist* her anger because gendered feeling rules (Hochschild 1979) taught her, throughout her life, that she should not be angry. As Scheman writes, indeed, the ability to identify and name one's emotions is "less an individual achievement than a social recognised right, and, as such, people with social power tend to have more of it" (28). Expecting her anger to be mocked, blamed, or simply ignored, Alice would also likely *repress* the expression of her emotion. This is, in essence, what Amia Srinivasan coins as affective injustice: "victims of injustice often face a conflict between getting aptly angry at injustice, and bettering (or at least not worsening) their situations" (2018, 131). Thus, the political and unjust nature of what she experiences would likely remain unaddressed due to the affective injustice which prevents Alice, along with other women, from freely experiencing and expressing anger and its claims.

On the other hand, even prior to repressing anger, Alice might *not get angry* at all. Why would she, when everything she is and does is in line with what she *should* be and *should* do to be happy? In this text, Scheman questions Alice's ability to get angry at the gendered contingencies which determine and shape her life. To make the point clearer, one could wonder: would Alice even be able to feel angry at, for instance, her husband's constant and insistent demands for sex? Analysing the status of such an experience—considered here as a typical instance of social injustice—in Alice's life, amounts to outlining the main features of social injustice and grasping its induced perversity. The experience is *recurrent*—the same scenario being reproduced frequently. It is also *common*—some of Alice's friends having told her they were experiencing the same thing. It is even *banal*—with advertisements and TV shows normalising the representation of a docile wife who is either happy or indifferent about her sexuality. These three dimensions of the experience actively inhibit its framing, by anyone, as an instance of injustice. During Alice's lifetime, sexual duty to one's husband has always been, is, and will always be presented and thought of as a given. Never (or never loudly enough for it to become common knowledge) has this dynamic been framed as the unjust product of a binary, gendered vision and division of sexual roles within heterosexual marriages. Yet it could have been otherwise: Alice, her friends, and female characters from the pop culture of the time would have good reasons to experience anger at such a situation and to refuse giving up their desire for the sake of the heterosexual norm. But if the experience is *hard to grasp as an instance of injustice*, and *thus to hard feel angry about*, it is precisely because it is presented as a necessity, like any social norm. Indeed, social injustice is maintained unaddressed through an associated system of *hermeneutic injustice* (Fricker 2007).[6] This system is structured around the alleged normality of injustice, the structural rejection of criticism of the norms and systems of power, and the inhibition of individual and collective reflexivity. It prevents victims of oppression from understanding the political nature of what they endure. Thus, it makes it even harder to believe and to feel that anger is a possible and legitimate response to such experiences. In brief, in a society where members of socially oppressed groups learn that they must silently accept injustice and violence as the normal state of the world, it is simply difficult for them to feel angry about what they endure.

6. There is hermeneutical injustice whenever someone lacks the words, concepts, tools, to understand an aspect of their experience, and when such lack is not only imputable to the subject's weak interpretive ability but to a collective deficit of conceptual knowledge regarding this very social experience. History abounds with examples of hermeneutical injustice, such as the inability of women to understand the ongoing remarks and jokes they endured at work as *sexual harassment* due to the absence of such a category in both legal and social vocabulary before its conceptualisation in the 1980s (Fricker 2007, ch. 7).

This section has proven one's experience of anger, as well as its identification as such, to be largely inhibited by the very systems of oppression which impoverish and weaken the emotional range and expressions of the oppressed. Yet in this paper I investigate the humanising potential of feeling angry at social injustice because I acknowledge, along with many contemporary philosophers, that anger can still find its way into a subject's experience of oppression.[7] I will therefore proceed by examining what anger produces, epistemically and subjectively, when experienced at a social injustice.

2.3 "It Revived Within Me a Sense of My Own Manhood": Anger's Reconnecting Ability

The sections above showed that a central feature of social, systemic injustice is that it negates one of the main components of the oppressed person's humanhood—their subjectivity—and that such negation strongly relies on an ongoing alienation from their emotional responses to wrongs (Cherry 2021; hooks 1995; Scheman 1993). Therefore, enduring injustice often means being estranged from one's emotional life and struggling with the experience of certain emotions considered excessive, ridiculous, or violent. Suffering oppression, as seen in the first section, also has consequences for one's self-esteem and confidence: the perceptions of oneself as unworthy of respect, justice, and unconstrained emotional expression are interiorised over time, and limit one's possible responses to injustice.

It is thus striking to note that first-person testimonies of social injustice often highlight that the experience of anger bears what I call a *reconnecting ability*. In other words, it seems that anger has the potential to make one aware of one's affectivity while one, in situations of oppression, is expected to passively and uncritically endure any sort of wrong. Amia Srinivasan addresses this matter: she blames Nussbaum for not taking into consideration the numerous works which demonstrate the psychic value of anger for victims of injustice, nor quoting anyone who has argued in favour of the empowering dimension of anger. Nussbaum indeed raises the question of anger's effects on one's self-esteem, yet she affirms that "following the lead of anger and its promise of self-respect is usually counterproductive" (2016, 107) and that "anger looks like a childish and weak response, not an expression of self-respect" (119). For Nussbaum, because rational beings are expected to contain their negative emotions, or to favour forgiveness over rage, displaying anger at injustice amounts to a failure in one's self-respect. Yet on the contrary, many philosophers have shown anger to be an actualisation and an affirmation of self-respect.

The *reconnecting ability* firstly refers to anger's potential to revive one's sense of one's own presence and affectivity. Céline Leboeuf explores this dimension in her phenomenological study of anger as a political emotion. Relying on texts by Fanon and Yancy, through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's concept of focal disappearance, Leboeuf argues that anger at racism counters the internalisation of the dominant white gaze which alienates Black people from their embodiment and subjectivity. She explains that both testimonies of the emergence and expression of anger at racism testify to the emotion's ability to "wrest [both subjects] from the disorientation and incapacitation that the white gaze provokes" (2017, 52). This is so because anger is described as a grounding emotion, which provides subjects with an embodied sense of their worth and of the seriousness of the wrong, thereby turning them *present* to the situation and *aware* of the injustice. When one feels anger, indeed, one responds to the present situation in a direct emotional way—the sudden, overwhelming nature of the emotion makes it hard to ignore. One suddenly feels agitated, the heartbeat accelerates, the body gets tense and the temperature rises, all of which forces the subject to experience how the situation affects them.

7. I leave unaddressed in this paper the question of how anger can indeed be experienced in situations of oppression. Yet in the following section, a paragraph will develop on one possible means by which one can learn to identify anger as such, or even to feel it: the collective sharing of common experiences, in an environment where unconstrained emotional expression is guaranteed.

Anger therefore bears an ability to make someone present to themselves again, despite the possible alienation induced by being repeatedly wronged in both one's body and subjectivity.

Anger also reconnects the person to their humanhood by making them aware of how they are affected by their environment—one is no longer an object of unjust gazes, contacts, and remarks, but becomes a subject who is able to feel such instances of injustice and to feel them as wrong. Acknowledging anger is part of a larger subjective process that everyone can go through, which consists of identifying one's emotions and learning how to express them, despite feeling rules and the expected rejection of one's emotions by others. If this process is not in itself of a political nature, it becomes so when addressing the virtues of anger in situations of social injustice in particular. Indeed, while physical and emotional alienation are essential components of racial oppression, Leboeuf concludes that such potential to reconnect a subject not only to their embodiment and affectivity, but also to the value and legitimacy of these experiences, is deeply humanising and intrinsically political.

Indeed, beyond this embodied relocation that the experience of anger allows, the emotion can also reconnect with a deeper level within oneself, by providing one with a sense of self-worth. Relying on both Audre Lorde and the writer and former slave Frederick Douglass, Macalester Bell (2009) shows that, throughout history, anger often helped oppressed subjects gain awareness of their own worth, while altogether reframing their experiences as unjust. She quotes Douglass, who recalls the emergence of his anger at his enslaved condition in these terms: "It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free" (1997, 79; quoted in Bell 2009). This quote points to the idea that anger, being the embodied experience of having been wronged, altogether consists of the embodied awareness of one's entitlement to being treated right.

In one's feeling of anger, one recognises oneself as a subject whose worth has been dismissed by the very wrong to which one's anger responds. Anger is therefore an emotion which can reconnect one not only with one's embodiment, but also with one's subjectivity, and which therefore counters the physical and psychic alienation induced by systems of oppression. These two aspects of anger's reconnecting ability constitute one of the emotion's humanising potentials, and bear an essential political nature. Indeed, anger is here shown to help one become aware of one's embodiment, of one's present situation, and of the injustice one has experienced. As such, anger opposes the dehumanising project of oppression, which relies on the oppressed's physical alienation in situations of heightened injustice or violence, on their confusion regarding their emotions, and on their inability to think and name injustice as such. In an embodied and straightforward way, anger can provide one with a new comprehension of oneself and of the wrong, which does not rely on words or concepts but is nonetheless real and effective. Not only is the experience of one's anger in a situation of oppression humanising, as it allows one to become consistent with oneself and to embrace one's affective presence, but such humanising potential is also already politically significant, as victims of social injustice are constantly estranged from their sensations and emotions and therefore left unable to identify and denounce injustices.

This section has detailed the first humanising potential of feeling angry at social injustice: anger bears a reconnecting ability which overcomes the physical and emotional alienation usually induced by enduring social injustice. Such reconnecting ability can lead a person to experience themself as an affective subject, in a situation where their subjectivity and embodiment are typically being neglected by others. Feeling angry therefore enables one to resist at least one aspect of social injustice: the affective and physical alienation of the oppressed.

2.4 Getting Angry as Affirming One's Domain of Respect

The reconnecting ability of anger is a first aspect of its humanising, political value—it occurs affectively, at the level of a given instantiation of social injustice, and allows the subject, through the experience of their physical and affective presence, to wrest themself from the alienation induced by oppression. The question I would like to raise now is how such reconnecting ability may lead to further, broader understanding and affirmation of oneself as entitled to respect, beyond the mere *feeling* that one is worth such respect.

How anger enhances self-respect is the core topic of Marilyn Frye's "Note on Anger" (1983). For Frye, anger arises as a response to an offence and implies the identification of the one who is thought to be responsible for such offence. The emergence of anger therefore relies on the gap between one's expectation of how one should be treated and the reality of how one *is* being treated. When a subject is treated in a way that fails to meet their expectations, they become angry and hold the agents of the mistreatment accountable for not having met the standards of treatment they thought themself to deserve. From this framework, Frye concludes that anger is appropriate whenever what one expects, but does not experience, is *respect*. Not only is anger legitimate when it entails a claim for respect, but also, any anger that is legitimate is a claim of one's domain of respect. I should explain what Frye has in mind here: for the philosopher, appropriate angers (those which arise from an experience of disrespect) consist of the acknowledgment, affirmation, and demand for the respect of one's domain, i.e., one's limits, possessions, rights, and abilities. In being angry, identifying this anger and expressing it, one becomes aware of what should have been respected but has been neglected. This idea recalls Myisha Cherry's case for the positive epistemic load of anger (see Cherry 2021, ch. 2): just as anger appreciates justice in its absence, it also appreciates one's worth and right to respect whenever this right is being negated.[8]

Anger therefore appears to be a straightforward clarification of one's sense of oneself as a subject who deserves respect and justice. How is that so? If Frye is implying that anger at disrespect essentially contains an acknowledgement of self-respect and a claim for respect, she does not further develop *why* the emotion bears such potential. In my view, anger's potential to enhance self-respect is precisely to be found in the emotion's reconnecting ability, which was examined in the previous section. Indeed, the fact that anger, when felt at an instance of injustice, relocates oneself in the interaction, revives one's sense of embodiment, and reactivates one's affectivity, conditions one's apprehension of oneself as worthy of respect. It is through one's grasping oneself as present, embodied, and affected, that one comes to experience and acknowledge both one's subjectivity and the consequent demand for respect that it entails. Anger not only *arises* from the lack of respect, but it also *makes that lack of respect perceptible* to the person who experiences it. One's anger clarifies one's being as a subject; such subjectivity is threatened by the experience of injustice; one's anger is therefore altogether an expression of one's self-respect and a demand for one's subjectivity to be respected.

It is important to note that while one's domain of respect could be thought to mainly concern one's physical and psychological integrity, Frye writes that a person's "attention, her confidence, her sense of well-being, her freedom to speak her mind, her access to knowledge and skills, are all matters within her domain" (87). This passage is interesting, because it points to the various ways in which one can suffer from a social injustice: one can be wronged in one's self-esteem, social abilities, health, freedom of speech, epistemic agency, and so on. Thus, one can feel anger at, for instance, doubting oneself, being told to stay silent, or being deprived from

8. "Lordean rage is a way of appreciating racial justice in the sense of recognizing its worth. Just as anger registers injustice, it also expresses that there is a better choice, a better alternative. Apt Lordean rage appreciates racial justice by recognizing it when it is not there. . . . In being angry at that which we want to overthrow (injustice), rage points to something that is worth having" (2021) (53).

gaining and sharing knowledge. In each case, the very fact of feeling angry strengthens one's awareness of one's domain of respect. As Frye phrases it,

> To get angry is to claim implicitly that one is a certain sort of being, a being which can (and in this case does) stand in a certain relation and position *à propos* the being one is angry at. One claims that one is in certain ways and dimensions *respectable*. (90)

This leads me to mention here the existence and importance of typical cases in which the reconnecting ability of anger is partly or fully inhibited. If one's ability to recognise and feel anger at injustice enables the clarification of one's affectivity and unconditional right to respect, then the lack of (proper identification of) anger at injustice can be understood as a sign of one's serious alienation. Indeed, if one is not able to be angry when inflicted an injustice, it means one does not consider oneself to be worth the respect and justice which such injustice deprives one of. I have argued in the second section that situations of oppression precisely complicate one's ability to feel angry at injustices: the oppression might be internalised to a degree where the very feeling of anger at instances of injustice is inhibited. In this first context, one experiences social injustice through ongoing alienation from one's physical and affective sensitivity to wrongs. One can also experience anger but decide, even unconsciously, not to trust the emotion's legitimacy, nor to give it any credit or uptake. One therefore overlooks the claims for (self-)respect entailed in the emotion, and silences anger instead of embracing it. In this second case, habituation to feeling rules and affective silencing leads one to fail to experience anger's subjective claims. The emotion might reconnect oneself to one's bodily and affective presence when experiencing an instance of injustice, but such reconnection is restricted and does not culminate in the recognition of oneself as entitled to respect.

A third obstacle I see to anger's reconnecting potential, and to its subsequent reassessment of oneself as worthy of respect, is one's inability to properly understand the status and value of such reconnection. Indeed, if one has been habituated into believing that anger is evil and violent, or that emotions are necessarily irrational and misleading, then one could experience one's own anger as dangerous, explosive, or delusional. Therefore, the reconnecting potential of anger would be cancelled by one's previous beliefs regarding the emotion: when experienced, the anger would be grasped as a further confirmation of one's weak rationality, over-sensitivity, and propensity for excessive reactions. This third example makes it clear that reconnection to one's body, affectivity, and self-respect is a *potential* that anger bears, rather than a necessary trait of the emotion that would be displayed any time a person experiences anger at social injustice. The actualisation of such reconnecting ability therefore carries the prerequisites that the subject feels angry at injustice; that they are connected and attentive to such emotion when it arises; and that they trust its legitimacy and acknowledge its claims for respect. Under such conditions, feeling angry can rescue one from the passive endurance of the unjust situation: the emotion allows one, on the one hand, to grasp oneself as a subject while the wrongdoer participates in one's dehumanisation, and on the other, to reassess one's domain of respect while the injustice functions as a negation of one's rights and dignity.

In sum, this section has exposed that anger is, under certain conditions, able to reconnect the person who experiences it to their embodied and affective existence and unconditional value, while social injustice continues to threaten or negate the affectivity and subjectivity of the oppressed.

3. Three Moments of Anger's Role in Reassessing One's Social Situation

Anger bears the potential to restore one's own sense of being a subject through one's embodied and affective experience of social injustice; this reconnection may lead one to grasp one's legitimate right to respect as a subject. This humanising potential of anger also transcends one's present situation: being reconnected to one's subjectivity and to the actuality of the wrong endured paves the way for a critical understanding of oneself, of others, and of one's experience as essentially tied to social injustice. Anger in situations of oppression is not only an affective experience, but also an epistemic one: the emotion may lead subjects to acknowledge and act upon the political dimension of their situation. This ability, which this section will explore, falls under the humanising potentials of anger as understood in this paper. Indeed, one's critical understanding of one's social existence, and one's partaking in the definition and denunciation of such social relations of power, are essentially humanising, as they enforce one's self-confidence, epistemic agency, and political participation. These abilities strengthen one's subjective and collective sense of humanhood by consolidating one's chance to live a respected and just life despite injustices, and by enhancing one's capacity to interact with others and to make them understand one's emotions and experiences.

In this section, I therefore wish to insist on the epistemic aspect of anger's potential in reassessing oneself as a subject. What I will question here is how anger allows one to grasp one's situation in the social world, and in which ways such understanding is politically valuable. Specifically, I will argue that getting angry helps one to assess one's equal entitlement to justice against and despite social injustice, and to gain further knowledge about the political dimension of one's emotions by acknowledging how other people consider and respond to one's anger. This section will be organised into three moments, which correspond to analytical distinctions rather than to the actual temporality of anger's identification and expression. Indeed, anger's identification and expression often occur simultaneously and generate simultaneous epistemic, subjective, and political appraisals.

3.1 Feeling Angry as "Changing the Nature of One's Situation"

The experience of getting angry at an injustice allows for a reassessment of oneself as socially situated, which occurs in three analytical steps—the first is the political understanding of one's experience, which is sometimes entailed in feeling angry at social injustice.

To illustrate this aspect, and to thereby present one central way for a victim of injustice to *start either feeling angry, or understand one's past emotions as anger*, I continue to rely on Scheman, who goes on imagining that her fictive character Alice happens to participate in a consciousness-raising group organised by and for women.[9] Listening to their anger and witnessing their ability to identify this emotion, to name and endorse it freely and without guilt, Alice not only meets people with whom she shares experiences and a social position. She also strikingly discovers that some women react to such shared experiences with an anger that they consider legitimate. While she used to silence her own emotion and believe she should not be angry, Alice begins to understand that anger emerges from situations which other women find equally revolting despite having repeatedly been told that they were normal, acceptable, or even desirable. With the help of others, and in

9. In the 1970s consciousness-raising groups emerged, in which women gathered to share their experiences of domination. In addition to the therapeutic effect of speaking out and recounting traumatic events, these consciousness-raising groups were and still are important analytical tools for recognising the structural dimension of gender inequalities and sexual violence. In 1979, two nurses in psychology wrote an article in which they encouraged their peers to rally to the feminist cause and movement; the paper provides a clear explanation of the purposes and value of consciousness-raising groups and highlights the importance of anger in such gatherings, arguing that "anger is an important, necessary, and productive aspect of a CR group" (Randolph and Ross-Valliere 1979).

the framework of the consciousness-raising group which functions as an alternative realm of interpretation of emotions, Alice redefines certain emotions that she has experienced and still experiences as anger, and reconsiders her social situation as unjust.

Scheman explains that while we are usually taught to question the legitimacy of our emotions, consciousness-raising groups encourage focusing, instead, on the contingency of one's social situation and of the consequent way one is being treated and considered by society and its members. She writes that "one's discovery of anger can often occur not from focusing on one's feelings but from a political redescription of one's situation" (1993, 25). This quote is crucial, as it emphasises the role of political knowledge in the identification of one's anger. Scheman later writes, on this matter, that "substantive political considerations are prior to the correct identification, even to the identity, of the emotions" (33). For Scheman, the way one conceives of one's own emotions does not lie in the emotions' alleged natural and essential features, but rather in the historical and social context in which such emotions emerge and are apprehended and labelled by others. Therefore, the meaning of anger has not only changed over time, but can also change for oneself, throughout one's life. It is through the political understanding of her situation that Alice is able to cast her emotion as anger and to assess the legitimacy and value of such a reaction, while she used to repress it. It seems that it is only by being enabled to analyse the content of one's life in a political way that one can grasp one's past emotions as anger, thereby reconsidering the nature and meaning of one's social situation and previous experiences. Within this framework, Scheman's argument is that secondary instances of socialisation like consciousness-raising groups provide occasions for oppressed people to reassess their lives in a different, political way, and to therefore identify their negative emotions as legitimate responses to social injustice.[10]

I believe Scheman's thesis helps us to grasp what is at stake when one is able to identify anger as such. Indeed, Alice's alienation from her emotions and her constant denial of their legitimacy make it impossible for her to grasp, alone, the political value of her anger. Yet, as soon as she meets other women whose emotions are being identified, named, and expressed, Alice is enabled to reconsider her own experiences of injustice, and her feelings at such experiences, in light of the similar experiences related by her peers. In other words, whenever one finally knows that what one has been feeling is anger, then one begins to understand oneself as a political subject, and one's emotions as politically relevant. Such epistemic inputs deeply change the nature of one's relation to injustice, to anger, and to the experience of oppression. Alice no longer blames herself for being unsatisfied at a life she endures rather than fully chooses, nor does she feel guilty for having desires and limits of her own regarding sexuality. Her anger, and the anger of other women, play a part in enabling her to understand that her identity as a woman in a patriarchal society exposes her to instances of injustice that she is not responsible for. Consequently, anger recognised as such allows an understanding of oneself and of the wrongs endured as socially situated, and therefore leads one to envision one's relations, experiences, and choices in light of the oppression which conditions and determines one to a certain extent.

Scheman interestingly suggests that while political knowledge often precedes and enables the experience of anger, it is also inversely in *the experience of anger as anger* that a person redefines themself and their emotions in a political way. She writes that "to see some state of affairs count as oppression or exploitation, or that one's own feelings count as dissatisfaction or anger is already to change the nature of that situation or those feelings" (29). I take this nuance to be crucial: we can believe that prior political understanding participates in and facilitates the evolution of one's conception and experience of certain emotions while also conceiving

10. Scheman's present reflection could be the starting point of an entire development on the power of the community to help in identifying and expressing one's emotions in a political way.

of the possibility for such evolution to happen without politicisation, and even for it to further enhance and allow politicisation in some ways. What I argue here, based on Scheman's somewhat ambiguous account of the causal relationship between politicisation and anger, is, on the one hand, that the former is not a necessary condition for the latter. One can get angry at an injustice without possessing the epistemic resources that would facilitate making sense of such an experience as unjust. I also consider, on the other hand, that identifying anger can have a retroactive effect on one's epistemic sophistication regarding injustices and regarding one's situation as an affective and political subject. Whether it is by a straightforward subjective understanding of one's emotions as anger, or by a collective project of sharing experiences and identifying how they affect us, acknowledging that anger is one's possible and legitimate emotional reaction to social injustice enables one to grasp one's experience as unjust and as an instance of oppression. It therefore leads one to understand to a certain extent that one's life and experiences are socially situated, and largely depend on the contingent, yet systemic injustice which weighs upon the existences of the oppressed. In this first sense, feeling angry at an injustice confers a political dimension to one's experience; it also, as I am about to argue, positions one as a legitimate participant in the opposition to social injustice.

3.2 Getting Angry or "to Make Myself Their Judge"

This last idea of anger as triggering a sense of one's political legitimacy is what I consider to be a second phase in the understanding of oneself as a socially situated subject.

Indeed, after having understood that one's emotions emerge from one's social situation as oppressed and from the correlative wrongs that one endures, one is enabled to consider oneself as possessing knowledge about social injustice, and therefore as legitimate in denouncing it. More precisely, this renewed sense of epistemic agency is acquired as one feels anger and identifies it as such. Elizabeth Spelman (1989) in particular argues for this idea: for her, being angry at someone for the offence they inflicted upon one means allowing oneself to *judge* them, to hold them accountable for what they did and thereby not only to assess oneself as equally entitled to respect, but also to reclaim such respect. She writes that "to be angry at him [the wrongdoer] is to make myself, at least on this occasion, his judge—to have, and to express, a standard against which I assess his conduct" (266). The argument is no longer about anger as allowing self-respect, but about anger as an occasion for taking one's own beliefs seriously and assessing their value in a political way. Indeed, Spelman argues that being angry at social injustice is already an act of insubordination insofar as it means judging the wrongdoer and therefore taking oneself seriously in one's ability to judge a wrong and to reclaim the respect of one's domain and values. (Here again, the epistemic potential of anger is conditioned: one must already believe in one's own capacity to judge the behaviours of others for anger to enhance one's further epistemic agency.) Spelman explains the ongoing attempts to reject and inhibit the oppressed's angers in light of the emotion's epistemic and subjective potential to turn oneself into a legitimate opponent to offences, and assessor of values. She argues that the oppressed's emotions are perceived as a threat, for they signal that the subject believes in the accuracy of their judgement of others, "even of those who are said to be their superiors" (267). She explains,

> The capacity to be angry just doesn't fit in as part of a personality profile designed by dominant people for those they see and wish to maintain as subordinate to them. For it would mean both that the subordinates would have standards of conduct applicable to the dominants, and express and apply those standards; and that dominants would thereby be subject to the judgments of those they've deemed to be beneath them. (267)

It is in this specific way that anger elicits a relocation of oneself on the social and moral scene: from the understanding of their position of oppression, victims of injustice oppose the order to stay where they are and lift themselves up to be on equal terms with those who expect them not to stand up. Furthermore, judging a social oppression allows the oppressed to rise above the dominants by asserting moral standards that the latter are unwilling or unable to respect and meet.

A compelling example of anger as the expression of moral and political judgement of the oppressor by the oppressed is the 2020 César Awards final ceremony. When Roman Polanski received the Best Director award, despite having been convicted by a US court of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, and accused by several other women of sexual violence, the French actress Adèle Haenel stood up, shouted "Shame!" ("La honte"), gave the middle finger, and left the ceremony. A few months earlier, she had publicly testified in an exclusive Mediapart interview to the sexual assaults and harassment that the French director Christophe Ruggia had inflicted on her for years when she was a minor, during and after her time acting in his film. Her effort to tell others what she had been through despite shame and guilt, and to make it a political case of power abuse over young people, especially women, in the film industry, amounted to nothing in front of the consecration of an alleged multi-recidivist rapist director by the whole cinema community. Adèle Haenel left the room out of anger, thereby affirming that victims of abuse expected respect, trust, and reparation, and would not silently endure the ongoing contempt for their words and their demands for sexual violence to cease. The fact that she stood up when everyone stayed silent; that she called the situation shameful while Polanski was honoured as a director that should make France proud; that she used her middle finger, thereby signifying her rage at the entire assembly and industry which remained silent or complicit; and that she left the room, turn this event into an exemplary illustration of the ability of anger to lift the oppressed above the unsatisfying double standards of recognition and retribution held by the oppressors. Haenel's anger *animated* her, literally set her in motion when she was expected not to move; it gave her, during the César Awards and in front of Mediapart's cameras, the strength and legitimacy to judge instances of injustice, to name them, and to refuse to endure them in silence.

I take this example to be a good illustration of the philosophical necessity to broaden the scope of what we consider to be productive in the context of social injustice. Indeed, we can wonder: would such an event be considered counterproductive by Nussbaum or other advocates of the counterproductivity argument? Certainly, Haenel's behaviour did not undo the harm allegedly caused by Polanski's acts, nor did it lead the Academy to take the award away from him. One could further argue that she behaved as the stereotypical angry feminist, incapable of containing her emotions, choosing emotional outburst over rational argumentation. As such, one could say that Haenel's reaction was counterproductive, as it enforced stereotypes surrounding women's emotions or the feminist struggle. I would object that the latter argument reinforces affective injustice: advising the victims of social injustice to privilege silence over disruptive emotions amounts to taking the constraining, restrictive feeling rules as necessities rather than as constructed, unjust emotional norms that should be overcome and challenged. As for the former argument, regarding the ineffectiveness of Haenel's acts in constructing justice for victims of sexual abuses, I argue that her behaviour was still productive: by expressing her rage and choosing to leave, she performed a moment of epistemic and political agency that produced images, discussions, reflections. More importantly, her anger presumably led her to subjectively experience her ability to denounce and refuse the injustice at stake, and the legitimacy of doing so. Whether or not Haenel's act ultimately affected sexual violence against minors in the film industry, or the legal advances on the matter, are unsolvable questions which exceed the philosophical frame. Yet one should recognise that her behaviour was productive at another level, as it participated in the subjective and intersubjective assessment of the victim's capacity to refuse to stay silent in the face of injustice.

The following day, the French feminist novelist Virginie Despentes signed an article entitled "We Stand Up and We Leave" ("On se lève et on se casse"[11]). She denounced the violence of the decision to give Polanski the award, and contrasted it with the strength of Haenel's act, which "moves forward with her back straight, her neck stiff with anger and her shoulders open." For Despentes, Haenel's behaviour goes further than the César Awards: it paves the way for resisting oppression and the ongoing violence of a system which is built on "so much silence, so much submission, so much willingness to serve." Despentes' text, much like, I believe, most of her writing, is driven by anger; hers, Haenel's, every other oppressed person's or ally's anger, are established as the means to reject the laws of silence and submission of the patriarchy. What she describes is precisely the ability Haenel had, through the expression of her anger, to refuse such rules and to affirm the unconditional superiority of justice over violence. She compares her to a "recidivist employee, who can't bring herself to smile when she's splashed in public, who can't bring herself to applaud the spectacle of her own humiliation." This event, completed by Despentes' analysis, illustrates the second analytical moment of the political reassessment of oneself entailed in the experience of anger: the emotion enhances one's unconstrained epistemic political agency in refusing instances of injustice, shedding light on their violence and judging those who perpetuate, deny, or accommodate their existence. Indeed, through Haenel's act and through Despentes' words, what clearly appears is the epistemic and agentive power of anger that Spelman described: the power to affirm one's and others' subjectivities when they are being neglected; the power to identify and judge social injustice and those responsible for it; the power to take oneself seriously and to rise from a position of submission and silence to acts and speech of insubordination and refusal.[12]

3.3 Anger's Apprehension or Appreciation as Evidence of One's Social Position

Lastly, in what I consider to be a third analytical moment of the political reassessment of oneself that anger enables, I will argue that the emotion allows one to grasp one's own social position in the very way one and other people apprehend one's anger.

One can express one's anger, think about what reactions its expression would generate, or simply examine the reasons that would lead one to repress it. In any of these cases, I argue that the subject learns something new about how others conceive of one and one's emotions, about the extent to which others' gazes influence one's own, as well as about one's emotional autonomy and expression. On this matter, Frye presents anger as containing an epistemic value, in allowing one to grasp who one is for others. For her, anger is comparable to philosopher J. L. Austin's concept of a speech act; she writes that "being angry at someone is somewhat like a speech act in that it has a certain conventional force whereby it sets people up in a certain sort of orientation to each other; and like a speech act, it cannot 'come off' if it does not get uptake" (88). Just like a speech act, anger functions as a self-contained expression which demands an uptake (acknowledgment of the injustice, apologies, reparation, for instance). In Austin's typology, the speech act is considered non-played when the demand it entails is left unanswered and is not met with any satisfactory uptake. Frye affirms that anger can similarly be non-played whenever its expression does not result in the expected uptake. Yet, the very absence of such uptake is still epistemically relevant: the reactions that people have towards one's anger indicate what sort of relations they are ready to enact, how they conceive of the person's claims, and whether they are ready to acknowledge and act upon them. Frye argues that "the patterns of claims someone can and cannot countenance, of the acts one can and cannot give uptake to, is a partial map of one's world view. It reveals

11. "Césars: «Désormais on se lève et on se casse», par Virginie Despentes," *Libération*, 1 March, 2020, https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/03/01/cesars-desormais-on-se-leve-et-on-se-barre_1780212/. The quotations that follow are my translations.

12. We could also understand Adèle Haenel's recent choice to desert the cinema industry as an act of denunciation of the latter's complacency towards sexual abusers. This choice falls under the scope of what I consider to be conversions of anger: it consists of a political, reflected, dissident act, which stems from the repeated experience of angers expressed and left unanswered.

something of one's understanding of the essential natures and relations of things" (90). Let us imagine that Scheman's character Alice, after her consciousness-raising group sessions, gets openly angry at her husband as he initiates sex without asking for her consent. Let's assume the husband responds by asking her to calm down, arguing that she must be crazy to suddenly react this way, and blaming the consciousness-raising group for giving her silly ideas of rebellion. He does not acknowledge that he has wronged her, nor does he apologise. Thus, Alice's anger might be the occasion for her to understand what her husband considers to be wrong, the extent to which he is open to criticism, and the way he perceives her emotions and women's anger in general. Frye would argue that the husband's response to Alice's anger makes her grasp his conception of her domain of respect and, I would add, of her emotional autonomy. Her expression of anger is therefore an instrument for mapping implicit and unspoken aspects of his relation to her which influence the way he perceives her and responds to her claims.

Frye's thesis is also relevant at the mere level of the *identification* of anger, prior to its potential expression. Indeed, it seems to me that when in a position of oppression, the identification of one's own anger at a social injustice often comes with the intuitive intention to negate, minimise, or repress it. Those very inner movements, which sometimes effectively inhibit the expression of anger, are still interesting sources of self-knowledge for the person who is ready to question their causes and their political meanings. Indeed, we could also assume that Alice does not object to her husband even if a sudden feeling of anger and an urge to protest arise when he starts touching her. It is not because she is now able to identify such a reaction as anger, and to acknowledge the political reasons which make such anger legitimate, that Alice will decide to get openly angry and to refuse her husband's behaviour. Her expectations about her husband's denial of her protest, his mocking of her emotional reaction—in short, his inability to give her anger proper uptake and to acknowledge the wrong he is responsible for—are legitimate reasons for her not to display her anger.

If feeling anger does not necessarily imply expressing anger, then we must question which motives would lead one to repress one's anger. As I explained in the beginning of the paper, such a decision often stems from being accustomed to, and constrained by, affective injustice which teaches members of oppressed social groups that their emotions will be welcomed with mockery at best, and violent repression at worst. Such affective injustice, as well as additional feeling rules, are interiorised, coercing one into containing and suppressing one's own emotions. In the choice of refusing to express one's anger based on the expectation of seeing one's emotion dismissed and being denied a proper uptake, a person who suffers from a social injustice still learns something about who they are for others. One indeed learns, in an embodied and subjective way, the extent to which one's emotions are inhibited and considered forbidden. Therefore, it is not only in the effective reaction of others that one's anger teaches one about one's social position. Rather, in the very expectation of this reaction, anger conveys knowledge about how social injustice is fuelled by further, affective injustice which restricts one's ability to express oneself, one's claim for self-respect, and one's epistemic and political agency. Ultimately, either in expressing one's anger *even if* one is expected to stay silent, or in repressing one's anger *because* one is expected to stay silent, one still learns about the disruptive nature of one's emotional reactions, expressions, and autonomy. One additionally learns about the actual threat that one's anger represents to the *status quo* of social injustice. Finally, one affectively experiences that one's position of oppression can foster the ongoing and active refusal of such injustice, a refusal that is felt, stirred up, shared, and expressed in the wake of, and echoing, other angers.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analysed anger's epistemic political potential to oppose social injustice by developing and affirming self-respect, autonomous and legitimate affectivity, and political subjectivity. Anger can disrupt the usual alienation, repression, and silence induced by social injustice. Thereby, anger is already productive in the broader sense of being politically relevant and efficient, insofar as it challenges oppression through one's reassessment of oneself in a political way.

Indeed, when one succeeds in overcoming the obstacles of its identification, anger has been proven to bear the potential to convey precious knowledge of an affective, straightforward kind. Such knowledge concerns one's worth as a subject, one's derived legitimacy in feeling angry at having been wronged, and the gap between what is inflicted upon one and one's right to respect, justice, and political agency. The epistemic value of anger thereby culminates in the oppressed person's reassessment of themself as an affective being, social agent, and political subject. In feeling anger at social injustice, and in grasping the correlative affective injustice which often results from anger's expression, one can experience further confidence in one's own value as a political subject entitled to fair treatment, to negative emotions and their unconstrained expression, and to the claim for recognition and reparation.

While social injustice alienates the oppressed from their physical, emotional, epistemic, and political capacities, and aims to render them confused, silent, and insecure in the face of such injustices, anger has been shown in this paper to restore one's self-esteem, emotional autonomy, and political agency. This paper has thereby demonstrated anger's ability to humanise the oppressed, despite, and in the context of, social injustice which functions as a system of dehumanisation. In doing so, it has complemented the existing accounts of the epistemic and political value of anger in contexts of social injustice by encompassing their main feature in the larger frame of the emotion's political potential to restore the humanity of the oppressed.

While this paper has focused on the first-person, subjective potential of experiencing anger at social injustice, the fact that anger can be humanising for the oppressed sheds light on the intersubjective dimension of the emotion. Indeed, the affective and epistemic experience entailed in anger is not only central for one's political growth and potential agency, but also for the collective aspect of resistant struggle. Grasping oneself and others as partaking in a dynamic of oppression paves the way for understanding that such oppression exceeds individuals and must therefore be addressed in a collective way. It is thus left for another paper to investigate how anger builds bridges between subjective and collective experiences of feeling, understanding, and opposing injustices.

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For the Love of Hate: Hatred as Emotive Resistance

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Abstract

Philosophers have focused a great deal of attention on the moral dimensions of our emotions, but relatively little on the value of hatred. This is a significant oversight, as there are serious implications for how we treat victims of gross injustice who respond or cope with hate. And although many variations of hatred are not liable to any genuine defense, this is not true for all varieties. While it stands against common positions within the literature, I argue that hatred is not always vicious, and that there exist varieties which are valuable to our moral lives. To establish this, I first taxonomize a few varieties of hatred, identifying a moral kind termed "Beauvoirian hatred" – inspired by the influential work of Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoirian hatred, as I conceive of it, is a form of hate which we do no wrong in feeling—and perhaps is even good to feel in the face of serious injustice.

Keywords: Hatred, Moral Emotion, Moral Psychology, Fittingness, Ethics.

> "I was sad that summer was over.
>
> But I was happy that it was over for my enemies, too." – B.J. Novak

1. Introduction

It's a hard thing to defend hatred. Hatred is supposedly too poisonous, too corrupting, and solely a motivator of ill-will. In fact, Royzman et al. (2005) describe hatred as "the most destructive affective phenomenon in the history of human nature." Painted like this, it is no wonder why many people hate hatred. Yet, it isn't immediately clear what is so wrong with hating our moral foes or those who are hatemongers themselves. In other words: what is so wrong with hating agents who are vicious or evil? In the 1946 essay, "An Eye for an Eye," French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir argues for the role of emotion, specifically of hatred, in politics and our social lives; concluding that hatred is, in fact, the metaphysical basis of the idea of justice (2004, 249).

In early 1945, Beauvoir attended the public trial of the well-known author and vitriolic anti-Semite, Robert Brasillach. In his weekly column *Je Suis Partout* (*I Am Everywhere*), Brasillach exposed the pseudonyms, names, and locations of French Jews in hiding. He was unremorseful for his treason and a passionate ally to genocide and was ultimately sentenced to death.

Following the trial, French intellectuals circulated a petition urging General de Gaulle to pardon Brasillach from the death penalty. Sponsors of the petition argued in a series of essays that the Nazi occupation was a reign of hatred that only love and clemency could combat. When asked to sign herself, Beauvoir explicitly refused, citing that people like Brasillach deserved neither her support nor the chance to live. Rather, Beauvoir was confident that she "knew how [Brasillach's] political attitudes were situated in the ensemble of his life" (257).

In response, Beauvoir was told that she should have stayed away entirely from the proceedings, as she had no business in tainting politics with her own personal feelings. Yet, Beauvoir was certain there was something overlooked both by the apathy of the trial and by the crusade of love by her fellow intellectuals. Just a year after Brasillach's execution, Beauvoir set out to clarify her refusal to sign the petition, and to register the role of dark emotion in our political lives.

This brings me to the main target of this paper: defending hatred. Although there are many forms of hatred that deserve no moral defence, hatred should not be painted in these broad monolithic strokes, given no nuance or differentiation. And while it stands against common positions within the literature, I argue that hatred is not always vicious. By painting hatred in this way, we ignore how it can be a powerful tool in defence of morality and in defence of our own self-worth, and as such deserves recognition as an emotive tool against injustice.

I proceed as follows. In Section 2, I begin by considering the current literature on hatred and where I think they get it wrong. In Section 3—using Myisha Cherry's analytic methodology—I go on to classify some of the varieties of hatred, examining why we ought to avoid treating hate monolithically. Here, I introduce a moral hatred, which I refer to as Beauvoirian Hatred, and Section 4 will focus the remaining defence of its value. Finally, in Section 5 I address challenges that arise from emotional overlap, and which call into question hatred's moral efficacy, and as such clarify hatred's value. I conclude in Section 6.

2. What It Means to Hate

Hate has been described widely as an emotion, but also as an attitude or a sentiment. My provisioned account of hatred sees us understanding it as an emotion, one which targets a person or thing in virtue of some enduring quality of the hated's identity.[1] Hatred as an emotion can be directed toward one's character, dispositions, or even at everything which one is. Conversely, a denotation of negative preference can be directed toward a being, object, or concept, which spurs aversion on non-moral grounds. For the purposes of this paper, I only speak to hatred which is directed toward agents, ignoring instances such as *I hate Dr. Pepper* or *I hate the Star Wars prequels*.

Further, due to its focus on an enduring quality, it is important that hatred is directed at character, rather than at mere action. We hate one for who they are or who they are becoming, but to hate an action is effectively to hate the actor's character for being disposed to take that action. Damian Cox and Michael P. Levine set this point out clearly (2021, 171):

1. For more exploration on why hatred is a moral emotion, rather than a sentiment or other affective property, see, e.g., Vendrell Ferran (2021), Szanto (2020).

> To say "I do not hate you, I hate what you have done" is to refuse personal hate. It is to attempt (perhaps disingenuously) to rise above personal hate. This is important for the fittingness or appropriateness of attitudes of hate since it is unfitting to hate a person on the basis of a single act when that act is wholly out of character.

Take, for instance, a characteristically compassionate and accepting boss who makes an offhanded offensive joke. They are not a fitting object of hate (though they do seem to be in need of reflection). However, a misogynistic boss who routinely undermines your professional development and takes steps to publicly belittle you does seem to be a more fitting target of hatred. Note that by "fitting" I am referring to Cherry's (2021, 36) definition of fittingness. On this account, to say that an emotion is fitting is to say that it makes sense to feel it toward a particular kind of thing.[2]

There are many different understandings of hatred both within and beyond philosophy. Often, philosophers renounce hatred that is directed at individuals, believing that it involves immoral and dehumanising methods of disvaluation. According to Roseman et al. (1994, 206), the motivational goal of hatred is to eliminate or destroy the target, either mentally (through humiliation, or by harbouring feelings of revenge), socially (excluding, ignoring), or physically (killing, torturing). Cherry (2019, 15), who is particularly focused on defending anger at injustice, similarly defines hatred as "a wish to eliminate the object. [Thus], the object of hate is not change or reconciliation." Again, we are prompted to associate hatred with the annihilation of the enemy, whereby elimination alone satisfies hatred's aims. Feminist theorist Audre Lorde's (1984, 152) words echo these thoughts: "Hatred is a death wish for the hated, not a life wish for anything else." These accounts of hatred criticise it on the belief that hatred is fundamentally destructive, not constructive—and is therefore lacking in moral value.[3]

When philosophers describe hatred as *fundamentally destructive*, they mean that, unlike more "engaging" emotions, it is not oriented toward improving its target. On these accounts hatred halts dialogue and reform, thereby impeding social and moral progress. It is often argued that, unlike hatred, "moral anger" is an expression of love that expresses active concern for the moral improvement of the target. In this sense, moral anger is critical and constructive. It signals that the object of anger has work to do and that the angry one cares enough to see that they do the work (Cherry 2019, 17). The central distinction, then, between the two ways of criticising a target lies in each emotion's aim. Anger seeks transformation; hatred, allegedly, seeks annihilation.

I agree that hatred does not aim to make the target better (if hate does spur the moral growth of its target, this is surely an unintended consequence or byproduct). But I don't think it follows that hatred is therefore destructive in every morally relevant sense. Hatred need not aim at reforming the target's moral character to be considered constructive. Rather, hate is focused on making the moral community better by signalling that this character is unacceptable. Whereas anger or love may engage the offender in hopes of change, hatred seeks distance. It withdraws dialogues, intimacy, and care for the target's growth. That distancing can itself carry constructive moral content, so we should be careful to not associate hatred solely with destruction.

2. For other accounts of fittingness, see Amia Srinivasan's "Aptness of Anger" (2018) and D'Arms and Jacobson's "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the "Appropriateness" of Emotions" (2000).

3. I do not have the space here to fully develop the globalist dimensions of hate; however, I am grateful to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to several valuable considerations on this point. One further concern is that hate's globalised nature may undermine its representational fittingness or appropriateness as a response to value, thereby grounding criticisms of hate that are not merely about its destructiveness. For example, Thomas Szanto (2020) argues that the globalised nature of hate blurs its focus and target, such that the hater becomes committed to hate itself rather than to the underlying values.

Of course, it *is* possible to wish for the total elimination of the hated. It is possible to wish for those you hate to die, or worse. However, not all hatred is like this. We can and do hate people without wishing severe punishment on them. Humiliating a target does not equate to their mental elimination and ignoring someone is not a social elimination.[4] It may be a diminishment of their social standing, of their confidence, or of their reputation, but it isn't right to paint this as a "death wish" for the hated. Simply put, hatred should not be understood in this way.

There is precedent for defending hatred. Notably, Jean Hampton sees hatred as a valuable emotion in our moral lives. Instead of seeing hatred as the desire for the destruction and elimination of the enemy, Hampton's understanding of hatred presents it as "a desire to triumph over him and his cause. . . .There is no desire to hurt the person *simpliciter* but only a willingness to allow such hurt if unavoidable in the pursuit of victory over his cause" (1988, 88). Understanding hatred in this way, hate is not necessarily a desire to harm or eliminate the enemy; however, it is distinctively coupled with ill-will.[5]

In recent work, Berit Brogaard (2020) also offers a defence of hatred. To do this, Brogaard grounds hatred as a Strawsonian "reactive attitude"—referring to our emotional reactions to wrongdoings or good-will within our social relationships. Brogaard identifies that hatred can mark a respectful reactive attitude which recognises the humanity within the hated target. While this work is incredibly valuable in defence of hatred, I seek a different mechanism of trying to convince the enduring hate-haters. Whereas Brogaard finds that certain types of hatred are valuable, considering their non-dehumanising expressions (and correct targets), I expand this position to capture how hatred can also be valuable in its *fittingness*. Moreover, by teasing out varieties of hatred, and by expanding on what a moral hatred will actively look like, I identify additional goods of hatred—namely, its finality.[6]

In sum, on my view, hatred is an emotion which targets a person in virtue of some enduring quality of the hated's identity, disposing us to withdraw from the target and to regard such withdrawal as appropriate. It includes a desire to triumph over the enemy and his cause, a condemnation of the hated's moral character, and is likely coupled with ill-will for the offender.

3. Giving Hatred a Chance

Hatred typically gets painted in broad strokes, all of which roughly communicate the badness of the emotion. The stereotypical image of hate is unchecked, all-consuming, and results in devastation. But we would be mistaken to assume that this is all that hatred is. I don't mean to say that hatred has not earned its vile

4. It is possible that the goal for removal of, or distance from, the hated *is* a kind of elimination; however, I'm unconvinced that this is the right way to characterise it. Part of why hate gets a bad reputation is the destruction it is associated with, but this is only warranted if said elimination is an overwhelmingly bad thing; ostracism and similar avenues of hatred are not, so we should not associate hate only with these extremes.

5. I am not convinced that it is a necessary condition for hatred to hold ill-will toward the target. For example, I may wish well on the hated for my own pragmatic purposes (to make their role in my life easier, to help the moral community by having an easy scapegoat for our negative emotions, etc.). For the purposes of this paper, I will stay neutral on the matter, as the view will be consistent with either conception.

6. Others have also defended the value of hate or paved the way for some such defence. Murphy (1988b) cautions against thinking that all kinds of hatred are immoral; instead, he claims, hate can be morally deserved. Hamilton (2021) construes hatred as a "burdened virtue" which, though corrosive to the agent, might be virtuous if directed against severe wrongdoing. Bell (2011) argues that "globalist attitudes" (i.e., attitudes which have whole persons as their targets) can be fitting. My argument is unique in suggesting that a kind of hatred is not just good or rational, but fitting, despite involving a complete disengagement from the target.

reputation. We do not need to look hard for examples of hatred gone horribly and violently awry (or perhaps horribly correct on some views). However, not all hatred looks like this; instead, hatred exists in varieties and can be a force against injustice and moral wrongs. Some views dismiss this, believing that hatred, in any form, is harmful and poisonous. For instance, Martha Nussbaum (2016, 50) argues that "hatred is *always* a bad emotion to have." Ideas like this, or the common colloquialism that *if you hate them, you're no better than them*, suggest that hatred comes in only one flavour. Yet, this is misguided. Intuitively, my hatred for a friend's cheating ex-partner is not the same as my hatred of a Nazi. My hatred for a coworker on the grounds of unpleasantness is wildly different than if my hatred were for moral concerns. Further, a racist's hatred is not the same as the responsive hatred for the racist.

In arguing that there are many types of hate, I want to make it clear that there are varieties of hatred that are not liable to any serious moral defence. Varieties of hatred have unique aims, perspectives, and action tendencies; and as such, they are all morally different. Yet, one could accept that hatred admits of varieties, but still argue that none of them warrant specific attention—that regardless of these varieties, hatred is still an inappropriate and immoral response.

Why, then, is it so important to recognise different varieties of our controversial emotions? Well, it is valuable to appreciate them for many reasons, notably because we can come to better criticise and value the emotion for its different forms. Further, there exists great emotional diversity, with many ways to respond to injustice (i.e., love, anger, pity, etc.). Hatred is one of these ways, but it has been largely ignored because of its distorted image. Thus, there are implications for how we treat victims of serious wrongs who respond to those harms with hatred. If hatred is someone's way to cope with injustice, then appreciating hatred's varieties can affect how we treat those who experience it.[7] As I will later consider, a hater's emotive evaluation of the situation (and of the hated) is potentially accurate and should be treated as such. People should not be urged to unanimously suppress or repress their hate; rather, we should take care to not broadly devalue hatred.

3.1 Varieties of Hatred

Here, taking cues from Myisha Cherry's analytic methodology, I taxonomise some of the varieties of hatred. Before beginning, it is important to note that this taxonomy is not exhaustive; we can, and should, recognise the other types of hatred that we engage in. I am also inclined to believe that there are other positive varieties of hatred, though I only identify one.

Some of these hatreds will overlap with one another, as when we hate we may do so with several motivations. *Pace* Cherry, emotive distinctions are not neat (2021, 15). Even so, it is helpful to see these types as separate varieties, all with unique *targets*, *action tendencies*, *aims*, and *perspectives*. The "target" of hatred concerns whom it is directed at (e.g., a homophobe, a boorish coworker, or even a certain group of people). By "action tendencies", I mean the particular behaviours that are typically motivated by hatred, though this motivation need not be actualised. The "aims" of hatred capture what the hate hopes to accomplish, or what end the agent is working toward, relative to their hatred. Lastly, the "perspective" which informs hatred is the unique way of thinking which allows the hatred to arise—meaning that hate is partially constituted by its judgements. All of this is important to consider because our emotions do not merely appear out of the blue; rather, they express who we are and motivate us to action.

7. Archer and Mills (2019) argue that demanding that victims of oppression feel less anger constitutes an affective injustice, by unfairly burdening them and ignoring the legitimacy of their emotions. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

Prejudicial hatred. As has been discussed *ad nauseam*, hatred often raises concerns about prejudice and injustice, conjuring up glimpses of bigotry, genocide, and other hate crimes. Let's start by considering a variety of hatred of this sort.

Prejudicial hatred is targeted and often weaponised against groups or classes of people, those who are deemed by the hater to be social "others." Those with prejudicial hatred hate people in virtue of a group status, one which has no bearing on their respective moral character. Seeing as this hatred is not based on one's moral character but rather features beyond one's control or perhaps arising from bad moral luck, those targeted with prejudicial hatred become scapegoats for the hater's needs.

The action tendency of prejudicial hatred is to eliminate the perceived opposition: the "others." This elimination may take numerous forms, either mental (through humiliation and degradation), social (exclusion—take, for instance the segregation that forcibly exists in apartheid states), or even physical (killing, torturing, and at its most extreme, genocide). In this variety of hatred, the action tendency is identical to its aim for the targets: both seek elimination.

The perspective that informs prejudicial hatred is a belief that social relationships are a zero-sum game (Cherry 2021, 19). Thus, when it comes to social or political ascent, one group's gain is equivalent to another's loss. As such, there is a belief that others rising socially must leave others behind—that one's well-being within society is designated by competition.

From this perspective, the prejudicial hater sees some of their peers as competition, rather than as social collaborators. (Think of the politics of blame in anti-welfare culture, in which tax breaks for the rich may go unnoticed, but welfare and resources for the unemployed are seen as "taking" from working people. Income is flowing up, but the hatred points downward.)

Ultimately, prejudicial hatred chooses an unfitting target for hatred and holds morally objectionable action tendencies and aims. As such, it is not worthy of any moral defence.

Retributive hatred. In 1912, W. E. B. Du Bois began publishing an annual issue of the NAACP's *The Crisis* entitled "The Children's Number." This issue aimed to raise racial consciousness within young Black Americans, and as such felt obligated to report on the country's harrowing state of racial violence: the lynchings, the race riots, the public beatings. Yet, following the "Red Summer" of 1919, which saw white supremacists incite waves of violence and massacre within Black communities, Du Bois publicly announced his hesitations in sharing such reports with the young. He feared the effect it may have on the children, believing it may only foster hatred within them. To his point, he quoted with concern a letter he received from a 12-year-old girl who wrote, "I want to learn more about my race, so I want to begin early . . . *I hate the white man just as much as he hates me and probably more!*" (1920; emphasis added). "And yet," Du Bois asked, "can you blame the child?"

The hatred that this young girl displays is in the spirit of retributive hatred, which is hatred that targets a social group in power and is expressed by those without that power. Retributive hatred lacks the precision of hatred of an individual, and as such it is quite likely that this hatred will be directed at all members of the oppressive social group. The retributive hater won't see any path to forging peace with the enemy. Rather, the aim for those with retributive hatred is revenge against the social group in power. The hater wishes for some form of payback in response to the oppressors stripping their group of power, and this payback may emerge as a physical, mental, emotional, or social harm. In this sense, those with retributive hatred resent the position

of their oppressors, and their hatred fuels thoughts of revenge that they could carry out with the oppressor's own power.

The action tendency of retributive hatred is reactivity; these haters are defensive and responsive to moves made by the social elites. This variation of hatred parallels the emotive features of Cherry's Ressentiment Rage, echoing the sentiment that "they define themselves only against the other. . . . Reactive people can only see themselves as a response to and in opposition to others" (2021, 20).

Regarding their perspective, retributive haters embody the same kind of "zero-sum game way of thinking" as the oppressive group. These haters structure their understanding of power around those who have it. For this reason, they believe that they cannot win unless their oppressors lose. From this perspective, the only path to social ascent is through the oppressor's sharp descent.

Their group's minoritised status prompts them to have an overly wide scope for their hatred. Unlike prejudicial hatred, this hatred is always steeped in moral reasons, and the haters have legitimate reasons to judge the oppressor's character. However, the target lacks a certain degree of moral precision, and thereby includes unfitting targets within its scope.

Misanthropic hatred. In many variations of hatred, the wrongness of the emotion stems from its targeted nature; when hatred focuses on certain individuals or groups, it can be judged on issues of fairness, or for failing to uphold notions of justice. Yet, some forms of hatred cannot be criticised for their lack of fairness, mainly because the hatred is targeted at just about everyone. This is the case for misanthropic hatred, whereby the agent feels slighted by the world, and as such holds an uncompromising hatred for all humans.[8] At its broadest, the target of hatred is not humans, but human vices. These haters may believe that humans are characteristically too vicious to be loved, and that their viciousness warrants one's hatred. Other misanthropic haters may zoom into specific human vices, basing their hatred on vices such as poor treatment of the environment or cruelty to animals. The most sympathetic cases of misanthropy will likely be those of people who are broken by the horrors and atrocities of the world around them, to a point where they struggle to recognise any good within it.

The action tendency for the misanthrope is to isolate themself from others. This is not to say that they always opt to physically remove themself from others' company, as they may find comfort in emotionally distancing themself and feeling superior around others.

The aim of misanthropic hatred is to turn away from society, either through isolation or violence to others. Take, for instance, Theodore "Ted" Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber. Kaczynski resolved to fight industrialisation and environmental destruction, spending almost two decades targeting people in a nationwide bombing campaign (FBI 2021). On the one hand, Kaczynski isolated himself, seeking solitude away from others, but at the same time he felt compelled to communicate his message and hatred through violence onto the public.

8. It is important to note that not all misanthropy is characterised by hatred. For instance, in "Misanthropy and the Hatred of Humankind" (2019), Ian James Kidd argues that hateful misanthropy is quite uncommon.

Naturally, a dark stance on our moral condition can mutate into harmful and violent ends. Bernard Williams warned that hatred of human failings can devolve into a "desolating misanthropy which can itself be a source of cruelty . . . [and] destroy almost any virtue" (1985, 6). Ironically, through misanthropic hatred, one can become an exemplar of the vices that one hates.

Clash hatred. Sometimes when we hate it doesn't feel righteous nor world-echoing—it seems small, perhaps even a bit petty. The truth is that our hatred does not always mark a moral preference, but sometimes a personal one. Think of the rich neighbour who is chronically and exhaustingly lucky. Or consider the customer who is consistently difficult (but not rude) to his barista. Or sometimes we can hate someone purely because *they hated us first*. Truthfully, it is not hard to find examples where we exhibit clash hatred, where we hate individuals whose character unbearably rubs us the wrong way, clashes against our own, or reliably infuriates us.

Clash hatred is targeted at individuals rather than groups or types, and as such may look wildly different in each case. Despite this, a few factors seem to remain unchanged; for instance, the aim of clash hatred is to limit our contact with the hated as much as possible. Perhaps the hater bows out to the backroom when they see the customer enter, or they intentionally avoid events where they may interact with the hated. In line with this aim, the action tendency of clash hatred is aversion. This may manifest as aversion to the individual, to their help and contributions, or even to their cause.

Clash hatred is fuelled by a perspective of self-importance, specifically the belief that one should not be subjected to this sort of unpleasantness in their own circumstance. This hatred may be accompanied by thoughts such as "I shouldn't have to deal with this," and as such the hater centres the value of the hate onto themself. I do not take this variety of hatred to mark a moral sentiment about the hated individual, but rather to denote a highly negative preference toward their company. Thus, those with clash hatred hate for an amoral reason, one which is ultimately a morally bad reason to hate.

Beauvoirian hatred. Beauvoirian hatred, as I conceive of it, is morally unique compared to other varieties of hatred. Beauvoirian hatred is one variation (there are others!) which can be morally valuable to us. As such, this is the variety that I set out to explore and defend. Named after feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, Beauvoirian hatred is a moral response to moral abomination and is valuable in defending the just. Though Beauvoir's own work on hatred inspires many of my sentiments, the conception and formulation of Beauvoirian hatred is my own, and does not fully reflect Beauvoir's views. Rather, I give it this name to honour Beauvoir's intuition on how hatred legitimises our negative thoughts towards others. Hatred is how we emotively sign our name against a target, allowing us to morally stand apart.

In "An Eye for an Eye," Beauvoir tells the story of how she learned to hate. She claims that prior to World War II she could not truly understand what hatred was. Rather, she assigned enemies or criminals feelings of contempt or pity, and while murderers may have filled her with horror, she was unable to hate them. Yet during and following the war, Beauvoir believes, she and many others learned to hate a certain kind of enemy (2004, 246), namely, those who are "conscious authors of genuine evil . . . [those who treat] fellow men like objects, when by torture, humiliation, servitude, assassination, one denies them their existence as men" (248).

In line with this, the targets of Beauvoirian hatred are those who are complicit in, or are perpetrators of, the degradation of an agent into a thing.[9] (Consider the hatred one feels, and *should feel*, for a human trafficker. Or the hatred held for a serial abuser.) This hatred focuses and condemns an individual agent's moral character.

Beauvoirian hatred is not directly focused at changing or reforming the hated, but rather aims at improving (or sustaining) the moral community by signalling that this type of character is unacceptable.[10] Here, hate's role is to assert the absolute necessity of respect for persons and to condemn and disavow those who fail to uphold this principle. This hatred declares to the hated, "Your moral character is not fit for, nor welcome in, my moral community. Back off." With Beauvoirian hatred, one treats injustices seriously within one's community, and aims to make it clear that the offenders (the hated) and us (the haters) do not just have different opinions but are in normative opposition to one another. Not only are they opposed, but Beauvoirian hatred asserts the rightness of justice and the wrongness of injustice; and by *hating*, it condemns the character of those who share this viciousness.[11]

In line with its aim, Beauvoirian hatred's action tendency is to signal one's own moral intentions, or more particularly to signal moral disdain of the hated character. It motivates us to "get the word out" and to communicate that the hated is morally unacceptable. This may be through publicly criticising the hated, taking steps to not include them within the moral community, or even to support the hated's removal from said community. While these actions may seem quite varied, the key similarity is that all of them are motivated to signal staunch condemnation of character. The behaviours motivated by this hatred will persist until the threatening moral character has either adjusted or vacated the moral community.

The perspective of Beauvoirian hatred is that justice without hate is a pretense. Or, to echo Beauvoir, it is to see emotion as "the metaphysical basis of the idea of justice" (249). This perspective is fuelled by the belief that perpetrators, victims, and others in the community are capable and worthy agents, whose actions and beliefs have moral weight and social consequence. Emotions can often reveal our values in the world; feelings express who we are and motivate our actions. In this case, to hate is to reveal what one holds worthy of hatred. It is to show what one finds morally abominable and unacceptable within a moral community. My point, and Beauvoir's as well, is that some people *should* be hated. And that we, as a moral community, must create and maintain the good by hating the evil. In this sense, hate is an essential moral emotion, so much so that a failure to hate may constitute a failure to take injustice seriously on an emotional level (Cox and Levine 2021, 178). In this way, hatred is not just powerful in that it asserts the wrongness of injustice, but it is also the only way in which we can properly address the severity of it.

In this section, I have taxonomised hatred to highlight why we should avoid treating hatred as a monolith. Next, I argue that Beauvoirian hatred is valuable to moral agents.

9. One might worry that some forms of injustices will not be captured by Beauvoirian hatred, and they would be right! The scope of Beauvoirian hatred is narrow, and as such, many cases of injustice and bigotry will not be captured by this variation. However, I do not take this to be a fault of Beauvoirian hatred, but rather an indication that there is a need for further inquiry on variations of hatred, those which are better situated to identify other injustices.

10. Additionally, it's important to note that although Beauvoirian hatred does not aim at changing the hated, it may consequently spur moral growth through its effects on the community.

11. Despite Beauvoirian hatred being a fitting response to injustice, this does not mean that it will always be a morally appropriate emotion to have. The hater may incorrectly identify her target or the injustice at stake. In other words, she can be wrong about who is a fitting target for Beauvoirian hatred, or why they are a fitting target.

4. Beauvoirian Hatred

4.1 Hate's Benefits

In this section, I briefly examine the numerous benefits and values of Beauvoirian hate, which will often be referred to simply as hate from this point on. I argue that hatred can (1) be a self-affirming (or allying) response, (2) create a normative chasm between the offenders and us regarding notions of justice, and (3) grant the hater a sense of finality.

Firstly, hating can be understood as a defensive and self-affirming response to injustice. As Pamela Hieronymi highlights, unchallenged wrongs against us in our past can stand as present threats to self-esteem (2001). By seeing moral injuries as communicative messages of worth, a failure to address the moral harm of the wrong (rather than seeing it as just another hurt) is also a failure to acknowledge one's own value. Thus, hating those who are characteristically vicious—a rapist, a zealous homophobe, or a coworker who intentionally undermines one's projects—is a defensive response for one's conception of self-worth, esteem, and value. Jeffrie Murphy (1988a, 35) emphasises this point, saying:

> If I count morally as much as anyone else (as surely I do), a failure to resent moral injuries done to me is a failure to care about the moral value incarnate in my own person (that I am, in Kantian language, an end in myself) and thus a failure to care about the very rules of morality.

Similarly, sharing the attitude of hatred with a victim of serious wrongs can defend a conception of their worth and value within the moral community or within one's own eyes.

Thus, hatred can be a powerful tool with which to reassert value and moral worth within a community. By hating, I am not only condemning the hated, but I am affirming the victim's moral value. This hatred is infused with moral content because it tracks that the hated has committed a serious moral wrong; that this wrong proceeded from morally wicked character; that the victim deserved better, and so on. All of this is to say that hatred may positively spur a sense of allegiance to ourselves and to the victims of injustice, through which we challenge the offenders to defend a conception of moral worth.

4.2 The Fittingness Objection

At this point, someone may agree that hating can be good in this way but argue that the right way to hate is not by targeting an individual (or their character), but by hating the wrong itself. After all, people are rarely, if ever, monolithically bad. One may have an overarching vicious character but not be inherently evil; and even so, people's characters can certainly change. Hence, one might note that we can hate the moral injury without hating the injurer, doing as Cherry suggests and morally "[redirecting] our hatred from vicious people to the vice" (2021, 148).

From this reasoning, a person comes to hate racism rather than racists. Yet, when saying that we hate the vice, we can conceive of vice in at least two different ways: either conceptually or in action. For instance, one can either hate racism as a concept or hate the perpetuations of said concept. Taking hate conceptually seems both unproductive and vague, as it is not explicitly clear what the value of hating a concept is. My hatred of racism *simpliciter* does not feel particularly targeted toward any instance of it. Further, it seems impersonally related to the moral injury at hand, and it is our hatred spurred by these moral injuries that defends self-worth.

It seems more productive that those who suggest hatred of the vice (rather than of the vicious) suggest hating the vice in action. Continuing with this example, it is to hate that racist things happen. However, my hatred that racist things happen is intimately connected to *someone* acting. Racism is indexed to actors and institutions, so to hate that racism happens is also to hate the agents responsible for perpetuating it. To expand on this point, we can consider the Dormant Racist. This individual is staunchly racist but does no racist acts and therefore does not perpetuate racism. If my hate is of perpetuations of racism or *racism in practice*, then I should hold no hatred for this vice, seeing as no action has been committed. However, I can (and should) just hate that a person is racist. I can hate an individual for identifying with awful principles that are telling of their moral character. Hampton (1988, 61) notes that values people champion become "tangled up" with their character "in the same way a cancer can get mixed up with the healthy cells of one's body." In this sense, whether we hate the vice conceptually or in practice, hating the principles entails hating the person who holds them. As Beauvoir (2004, 248) puts it:

> Neither death nor suffering nor captivity are abominable in themselves. An abomination arises only at the moment that a man treats fellow men like objects . . . when one denies them their existence as men.

In this sense, it is not the act alone that is hateful, it is the injustice that comes from the cruelty of the actor. Only agents are "conscious authors of genuine evil," and as such they are the only fitting targets of personal hate.[12]

Ultimately, it seems that we can have good reasons to hate someone (e.g. a cruel racist). So, if we tell people to redirect their hatred from the agent to the vice, we are putting the burden on the victim to change their mindset. This is a difficult project to assign. Thus, if philosophers do want to encourage the redirection of hatred from the vicious to the vice, they will need good reason to justify burdening victims with this task.

Those who argue that we should resist hating individuals do highlight something important that we can learn from: we must be careful to not portray those that we hate as *all-evil beings*. Hatred can be valuable in combating unjust characters, but by describing hate like "a righteous cosmic drama—as a holy war against ultimate sin and evil" (Murphy 1988b, 100), we seem to miss something important about the hated. Namely, that despite being unjust or morally abominable, they are human.

This point is compelling to me, in part because it is rather poetic. But acknowledging that someone is human does not require us to suspend or halt our deepest moral responses to them. In fact, hatred can function as a recognition of moral agency, rather than a denial of humanity.

The danger that Murphy warns of does not lie in hatred itself, but rather in mythologising the object of hatred, transforming them solely into an evil abstraction, a process that likely justifies extreme cruelty to the target. However, rejecting hatred entirely based on this risk produces a different problem: it risks trivialising profound injustices by demanding emotional regulation where the moral gravity calls for stronger responses. Crucially, hating a person does not entail denying their humanity, so despite this risk we will need better reasons to burden victims with this task.

As it stands, I believe we have reason to hate the vicious, and as previously stated, our hatred of them can protect our self-worth and moral value. This feature does not need to be unique to hatred to be valuable from it.

12. We can also consider Jeffrie Murphy's work here—"It is, of course, impossible to hate the sin and not the sinner if the sinner is intimately identified with his sin" (1988a, 24)—or Beauvoir's belief that "one also does not judge the act without judging the man: one does not have meaning or reality without the other" (2004, 256).

4.3 Hating as Love of Justice

In addition to hatred as a self-affirming response, hate is further valuable in that it creates a normative chasm between us and the offenders. Hatred disengages its target; it pushes the offender away from oneself (and perhaps others). This normative chasm draws the line of justice, making it clear that we are not just of different opinions, we are in normative opposition. Recalling that hatred targets those with persisting characters, this normative chasm is valuable, serving as a reminder to treat injustices seriously within our communities. As such, hatred which is born to protect justice holds decisive love for a moral community, and acts as a tool against wrongs. This is a great value of Beauvoirian hatred: it affirms the role we all have in maintaining respect for one another as agents and for morality and justice *simpliciter*.

I should be clear about what exact role hate plays within justice. According to Beauvoir, hatred is foundational to justice (2004, 168). That is, hatred does emotive work that other emotions are unable to accomplish. I argue that hatred's power comes from the unique symbolic force that it lends.

At this point, readers may agree that hatred's aim of "signalling one's moral intentions" is laudable, but argue that this function is shared by most moral emotions; so, what does hate, specifically, bring to the table?

The difference between hate and other means of vice signalling lies in what is being signalled and how that signal functions socially. In the face of moral harms, we can respond with resentment, anger, contempt, or the like. But at times, all of these can feel emotionally insufficient. Sometimes the moral gravity of a situation (or individual, injustice, etc.) can demand more of us.

When we are young, we constantly hear about why we ought not hate. We train people that hatred is powerful, that it is consuming, and that it is *wrong*. Considering this social caution, the mere presence of hatred is a kind of rebellion—its mere existence is enough to clearly communicate strong passion or an indication of one's values.

In a society that cautions hatred, hating becomes emotionally akin to someone softspoken using a cuss word. It elevates the stakes because of its unique force—only through hatred can the hated understand how serious you are about the values at stake. Only through hatred will the hated appreciate how unwavering and great the chasm between you is. And the rarity of the emotional expression leads to greater social disruption.

One may wonder at this point: does hatred offer something that mere vice signalling does not? The difference here is that hatred emotionally backs our vice signalling, by aligning oneself rationally and emotionally with it. Hatred is telling of one's fundamental values, and as such it is deeply personal. As Damian Cox and Michael Levine (2021, 178) consider:

> A failure to hate evil may be a failure to take evil fully seriously at an emotional level. It may be to treat evil as merely a problem to be overcome, not as a phenomenon to be lamented and a battle to be fought.

This is why hatred stings so deeply, leaves such a lasting mark, or, as Beauvoir phrases it, "bites into the world" (2004, 258). Hatred is powerful for its ability to symbolically set us apart from one another, to create a normative chasm, and to maintain an unwavering position against degradation and abuse of another. Thus, it is only justice founded on hatred which properly condemns and champions moral values.

4.4 Hating with Finality

Lastly, underlying hatred's aversive tendencies and its absence of good-will is evidence that there is *finality* in hatred's judgement. Hatred does not merely register wrongdoing or demand repair; it settles on a judgement about the target. This sense of finality greatly benefits the hater as, unlike with other emotions, hatred does not seek to keep an agent in relationship with its target. Hence, hate frees us from caring and worrying about the moral improvement of the hated. We can disinvest.[13]

The notion of disinvestment needs some sharpening. The idea is not that hatred frees us from cognitive preoccupation. On the contrary, hatred can be obsessive and consuming. The disinvestment concerns a specific dimension: the withdrawal of any commitment to the target's moral transformation as something one remains relationally answerable to.

And this disinvestment appears to be unique among the reactive attitudes. Unlike other emotions, hatred actually represents the target as irredeemable, due in part to its fittingness features. While other emotions may become less fitting over time, once you have good reason to hate, you will *always* have reason to hate. In this sense, our reasons for hatred will not expire in light of our target's growth or moral repair. Similar backward-evaluations of emotions have been defended for the emotions of anger, resentment, and particularly for grief (see e.g. Callard 2017, Shoemaker 2018, and Marušić 2018). This reasoning, in brief, goes that hatred is rationalised by facts about a person which have endured in their target, and that these facts are entirely based upon the past or present of one's character (considering that we do not hate one for who they *may* become). And because the facts of the past are unchangeable, hatred can be said to remain forever fitting. Some agents can be so abominable that this gives us a reason to hate forever, regardless of what may happen next. Thus, on my view, the grounds of one's fitting hatred cannot be truly eliminated, giving us reason to hate forever.[14]

Some readers may resist this claim, as to some this may seem harsh. Yet, the characters that inspire hatred are often harsh themselves. Consider the child who grows up with an abusive mother. Even if decades later the mother apologises and shows genuine moral growth, the hatred her child feels is still apt, as we cannot always separate who someone was from who someone is. For those unconvinced, consider the multitude of Nazis who later apologised, perhaps sincerely, for their atrocities. Surely, forgiveness is optional for their victims, but should we demand they let go of their hatred due to a new character? Certainly not.

Finality is demonstrated best by Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes, a clinical psychologist and womanist theologian. In her piece, "Prayer of a Weary Black Woman," Walker-Barnes asks God to:

> Please help me to hate White people. Or at least to want to hate them. At least, I want to stop caring about them, individually and collectively. I want to stop caring about their misguided, racist souls, to stop believing they can be better, that they can stop being racist.[15]

13. One might argue that hatred is compatible, and perhaps intimately causally related to, the hater being incredibly engaged with the hated, though their irredeemable flaws would serve as the focus of our attention rather than their moral improvement. On this view, the hater does not divest from the hated, but could in fact be all-consumed by them. While this is no doubt true of many forms of hatred, I do not take this to be a feature of Beauvoirian hatred, whose central aim is the protection of the moral community from the hated. To the extent that Beauvoirian hatred draws our attention to the hated, it does so with the goal of protecting ourselves and others from the hated's vicious ways. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.
14. Other philosophers have criticised hatred for being inherently unfitting (see, e.g., Szanto 2020, 2021).
15. This piece does go on to clarify which White people she wants permission to hate, and ultimately concludes in her choosing to align herself with love. However, it does powerfully demonstrate all of the benefits and reasons one may have to hate. In an effort to be transparent with this piece, please read more from the author here: https://drchanequa.wordpress.com/2021/04/08/prayer-of-a-weary-black-woman/ (*Dr Chanequa's Musings*, April 8, 2021).

The exact benefit that Walker-Barnes seeks through hatred is its finality. The appeal to hatred is an appeal to finality—to the possibility of ceasing to hope, to desire, to remain affectively tethered to those who cause harm; the powerful ability to disinvest, to withdraw care, and to move forward with a life no longer defined by one's relationship to the hated.

As a humorous case, consider the scene from *Mad Men* in which Michael Ginsberg confronts Don Draper in an elevator, upset because Don rejected Ginsberg's idea and went ahead with his own pitch. Ginsberg, angry and frustrated, says to Don, "I feel bad for you." Don turns to him coldly and delivers the line: "I don't think about you at all."[16]

Don's line strikes me as compatible with the finality of hatred. The cold-blooded line's power comes in part from its ability to dismiss someone as inconsequential, as someone who has no impact on the hater's life, let alone their thoughts. It is to dispute or dispel thoughts of active engagement with the target.

Importantly, I am not taking Don to be a moral hater, but I am taking him to be an agent who understands and values the finality associated with hatred. We don't need to think about, nor care for the hated's role in our lives. They do not inform our thoughts.

5. Emotional Counterparts Objection

At this point I have argued for the distinct benefits of hatred. There may remain a concern that we can get the same benefits via less risky emotions.

> I'll formalise this criticism to allow for a more in-depth analysis.
> [P1] Hatred provides certain benefits *x* (e.g., defends self-worth, offers finality, etc.)
> [P2] Emotions such as anger or contempt can offer the benefits *x* offered by hatred.
> [P3] Anger and contempt are less risky than hatred.
> [P4] If a less risky emotion can offer the same benefits as hatred, then hatred is not unique in its value.

Thus, if that is so, then:

> [C] Hatred is not unique in its value.

But this reasoning is flawed; it is a mistake to conflate the similarities of these emotions with their ability to do the same emotive work. In this section, I will address these emotions in order of their increasing relevance to hatred, showing how although these emotions are similar, they each carve up unique and valuable emotive space (*contra* premise 2). This section also serves to clarify the value of hatred, making it clear that it is the *appropriateness* of hatred, and not solely its benefits, which make it valuable.

5.1 Anger

Anger has been brought up several times throughout this paper, but there is good reason to further explore the differences between anger and hatred; especially considering how many who defend anger reject hatred, and argue that anger can be used in similar (and allegedly better) manners.

16. AMC's Mad Men (Season 5, Episode 9, "Dark Shadows"). Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this example.

Anger and hatred are similar in several respects. Both emotions are powerful, negative evaluations which are critical of their respective targets. Yet, the similarities largely stop there. Regarding their appraisals, anger differs from hatred because its target is appraised as being capable of change (Fischer et al. 2018, 139). Hatred, however, represents the target as incapable of change. Further, unlike hatred, anger does not necessarily focus on the global target itself, meaning that its appraisals can target characteristics or actions carried out by the target, but do not need to be directed at one's character or being. Further distinctions between anger and hatred can be found in their action tendencies—while hatred is an aversive emotion, one which disengages from its target, anger is engaging.

We can plainly see the ways in which anger differs from hatred. Anger often (but not exclusively) focuses on actions rather than character and spurs *active engagement* with its target. Additionally, anger is not associated with a finality of judgement for its target; rather, it invests in its target's growth through engagement.

5.2 Contempt

In many ways, contempt seems to be the emotion most akin to hatred: it's evaluative of character, aversive, and it allows the agent to somewhat disinvest from its target. Yet, although there has been a recent surge of philosophical defences of contempt, these works have largely neglected or mischaracterised hatred.

Let's begin by considering the nature of contempt, as characterised by Macalester Bell. Contempt is an aversive emotion which targets a person in virtue of some enduring quality of their identity. The target is taken to be inferior to the agent and, like with hatred, contempt takes whole persons as its target. In cases of contempt, the emotion's target is necessarily seen as inferior. This is due to contempt's hierarchical and comparative elements, such that the contemptible is fundamentally relational and reflexive (Bell 2013, 97). While this downward-looking evaluation may be a common theme within hatred, it is not a constitutive element of the emotion. Bell makes this point clearly in saying that "[hatred] doesn't always presuppose a comparative evaluation of the target in the way contempt does" (58). We may even feel hatred for those to whom we assign an upward-looking evaluation. In fact, we can hate someone because they are *better* than us. Consider the clash hatred one may feel for their overachieving, high energy peer. Maybe the target has done nothing morally wrong in behaving this way, but I do think it is possible to hate them for embodying qualities that we crave but do not possess. As stated, I don't mean to offer up a moral defence of hatred of this sort, but I think it is reasonable to say that we *can* hate in this way, in a way that could be reduced to simple thoughts like "Hey man, you're making me look bad."[17]

In addition to hating people for being seemingly better than us, we can also hate people for being *too much* like us—for presenting the same relevant faults of character that we hate in ourselves. These haters may know that they are targeting another for a character that they share, and others may recognise this too. Yet, through internalised hatred, the hater hates a person without necessarily making the object of their hatred inferior to themself—rather, both are held in equally low standing. Author Herman Hesse echoes this sentiment, writing: "If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself. What isn't part of ourselves doesn't disturb us" (2017). Hesse is right to insist on the feasibility of hatred of this sort, though I am sceptical that we necessarily hate for this mirroring. Unlike contempt, hatred does not entail a necessary comparative evaluation of the target, so it follows that we do not always label our hatred's targets as inferior.

17. A concern I find interesting is whether someone can have Beauvoirian hatred for an agent who they take to be better than themselves. While I imagine it would be incredibly rare, I do find this cognitively and emotionally consistent.

Another feature that discerns hatred from contempt is the finality of hatred's evaluation. While hatred represents the target as irredeemable, contempt does not judge one way or another about a target's redeemability. In fact, contempt's aptness is reflexive to change upon the moral growth of the target. Regarding the aptness of contempt as an emotion, Bell (2013 247–48) writes:

> If someone has undergone a total moral transformation, then it seems inapt to continue to harbor feelings of contempt toward her. If contempt would no longer be appropriate, then it may seem that we have an obligation to overcome our contempt for her.

Though Bell does later note that a person cannot be fully separated from who they once were (and as such our concerns of aptness will be confusing to navigate), contempt still overly burdens the contemptuous agent with the target's moral growth. In the case of hatred, once we have *good* reason to hate, our target's moral growth does not need to concern us anymore. We are freed from caring whether the hated morally improves because, regardless of their improvements, we have disinvested ourselves from the target. Thus, despite the close parallels these emotions share, hatred differs from contempt in that it is neither hierarchical nor comparative, and because of its emotive finality.

5.3 Emotional Overlap

Ultimately, despite their similarities, hatred is *not* the same emotion as anger or contempt. Further, because of its contrastive properties and motivational force, hatred can do unique emotive work. As discussed in Section 4, only hatred can offer this finality of judgement and, as such, it releases the hater from concerning themself with their target's moral growth.

Yet, while we have reason to separate hatred from these other emotions, it would be wrong to dismiss their overlap, as our emotive lives are not orderly. People will often feel more than one emotion at the same time, which can lead to difficulties with conflicting emotions.[18] Take this case:

> *The College Roommate:* Evelyn's roommate, Deidre, is a nightmare to live with. She's rude, belittling, racist, and constantly making a mess of their shared space. Evelyn hates Deidre, and has given up on Deidre ever being a respectful roommate or person. Yet, whenever Deidre refuses to clean her overflowing, unwashed dishes, or makes degrading comments to Evelyn and her friends, Evelyn finds herself incredibly angry at Deidre.

Evelyn's situation is sympathetic, and for many, I assume, it is unfortunately familiar. Despite the finality of Evelyn's judgement of Deidre, she still finds herself angry about Deidre's disrespect. In this way, Evelyn finds herself with conflicting motivations (engagement *versus* aversion) and may have trouble deciding which action to perform. She may toggle through different emotions, switching between anger and hatred at any given moment. When we have a lot of reasons that spur warring emotions, we can suffer with emotional and motivational conflict. We may see our target as both inside and outside of our moral community (both within and without our sphere of change). Thus, we may be stuck on how to feel or act toward the respective target. In Evelyn's case, these thoughts may include, *Do I even bother discussing this with her? She's a horrible person; nothing will change that. Yet don't* I *still deserve the chance to voice what's bothering me?*

18. While discussing overlapping and warring emotions, one might question whether we can feel both love and hatred for an individual. Although this argument is outside the focus of this paper, I am inclined to believe that we can both love and hate an individual at the same time—though only one of these will be fitting.

It seems clear that hatred and anger can be felt simultaneously, and I suspect that some individuals may find this troubling for hatred. After all, if hatred can do these unique, powerful things, is it only valuable when it isn't put into conflict with a competing emotion?

This is an important challenge, and one that deserves further attention, considering how often we do face emotional overlap. To first address this challenge, I must admit that I am not convinced that the presence of conflicting emotions truly eliminates the usefulness of each emotion. I am inclined to believe that some benefits of hatred will remain, regardless of muddling emotions. For instance, hating still seems to condemn the hated, and it also still affirms the victim's moral value, regardless of the paired emotions that it wars with. While the finality, or the ability to fully disinvest from someone, will surely be limited, I do believe that hatred is still able to lessen the burden of more active emotions. Nevertheless, I will address this challenge as if the benefits of hatred are truly eliminated when we face emotional conflict; thus, I will question whether there is still value in feeling hatred when its benefits are fully stifled.

Call this the "Emotional Overlap" criticism.

> [P1] Hatred is valuable for its unique ability to offer finality from its target.
> [P2] Anger involves being engaged with its target.
> [P3] Anger and hatred can be felt for the same target at the same time (*t1*).
> [P4] If the unique benefits of hatred are eliminated, then there is no value in feeling hatred.
> [P5] Feeling both anger and hatred for the same target at *t1* eliminates the unique benefits of hatred.

Therefore:

> [C] There is no value in feeling hatred when it emotionally overlaps with relevant emotions.

The argument assumes that hatred's value lies solely in its unique ability to offer finality (P1) and then claims that if this unique benefit is eliminated, hatred has no value (P4). But this is far too restrictive.

This argument is misguided in part because premise 4 is false. If the emotion is morally apt, there is still value in feeling it, beyond its mere usefulness; when we evaluate value, we are not only concerned with benefit, but also with justification. Consider a different case of emotional overlap, this time where an individual struggles with warring emotions of guilt and pride:

> *The Salesman:* Bill sells fake pharmaceutical products to customers at his job. He is extremely good at it, so much so that his boss announces him as the company's top seller. Bill is proud of this—he worked hard and takes pride in having high sales. At the same time, Bill notices that his thoughts are laced with guilt due to the nature of his job. Overall, Bill considers himself proud of his work.

I take it that in cases like this, the efficacy—and therefore the benefits—of guilt are weakened by Bill's pride. Similarly, his pride is likewise made more confusing and thereby weaker by the presence of his guilt. Yet, it's still good that Bill feels guilt, despite the lack of instrumental benefit that the emotion has for him. In a similar way, it also seems good that Evelyn has thoughts fuelled by hatred, as far as Deidre is a proper target for it. What College Roommate and The Salesman both have in common is that they highlight how our emotions can give us conflicting tendencies, aims, and perspectives toward people and situations. Notably, these cases may

be deemed asymmetrical because, in College Roommate, both of Evelyn's emotions are morally apt, while The Salesman sees Bill with a morally inappropriate emotion for his situation: pride.

As it is, I am sympathetic to the idea that if an emotion is *morally* apt, then it is good to feel it, even if the emotion does not prove useful to us.[19] For this reason, it can be said that Evelyn's anger and hatred are both appropriate, while Bill's pride is inappropriate. Bill ought to feel guilty for his job and, morally, he should not feel proud of his work.

Ultimately, hatred can be accompanied by a multitude of feelings, and will often relate to contempt and anger. The overlaps of these emotions make them particularly likely to be felt in tandem, and this may at times dampen the benefits that these respective emotions provide. However, this overlap does not diminish the value of our distinct emotions.

Sometimes hatred will win in cases of emotional overlap, trumping its adversarial emotions. However, it doesn't need to win to be valuable. It can even be granted that hatred will not always be valuable to us. As it stands, I am merely motivated to argue that hatred *can* be valuable in certain cases and, as such, deserves recognition as a legitimate tool to be used against injustice. As I argue it, hatred has a legitimate—or moral, important, or indispensable—role to play in our emotive lives. While the strength of its benefits largely depends on its efficacy, the justification for hatred comes from the *appropriateness* of feeling it, not from the benefits it may provide.

Thus, while I have set out in this paper to examine the many benefits and values that hatred can provide, to perhaps win over those who are intuitively against hatred, I do not take these benefits to justify the existence of hatred. I take it that the existence of injustice and the authors of evil justify our hatred, and that the benefits I have outlined in Section 4 merely create instrumental value.

6. Conclusion (A Hard Truth Made Softer)

The hard truth: sometimes haters get something right about their respective targets. Sometimes people deserve to be hated. Hatred will not always be fitting, and when it is fitting it will not always be appropriately expressed or manifested. Yet, when we give hatred this one-dimensional treatment, we do not allow ourselves to appreciate the nuanced ways in which hatred can be valuable.

My goal has been to not only get a better understanding of the varieties of hatred, but also to encourage this important part of our moral lives that has gone under-theorised: the ways in which we may hate *rightly*. Beauvoirian hatred is one of these ways. I hope that further investigation into hatred captures something important about the way in which hatred may serve us in the unending fight against injustice.

19. For further exploration of fitting-attitude theories of value, see Howard 2023.

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