OUTRAGE!

(SOCIAL) MEDIA

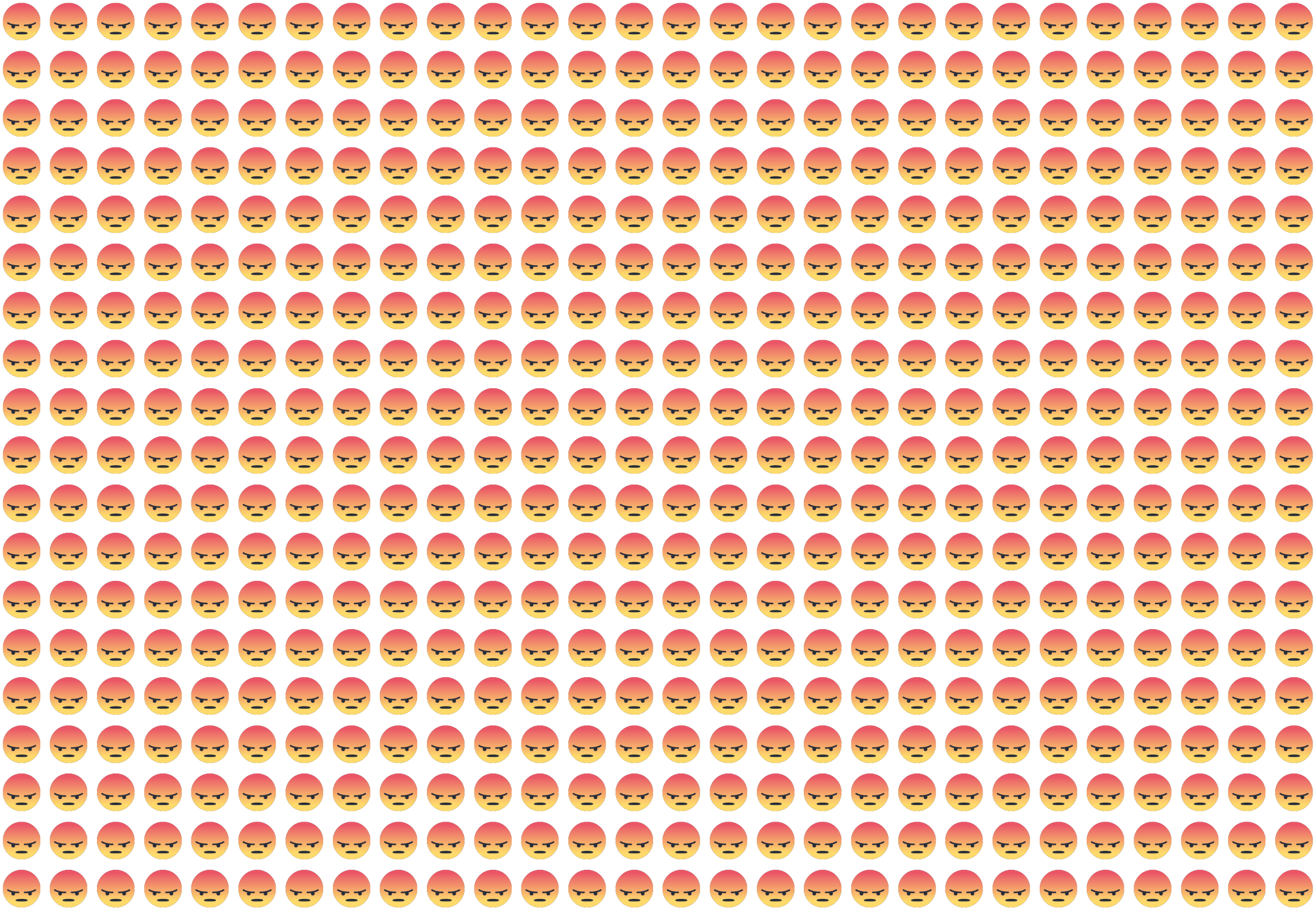
AND THE COAXING

OF THE MORAL MIND

Simon Pinkas

2017 – 19

HEAD – MA Media Design



Comment on Facebook post of a New York Times article

“HAVE NO WORDS. SHAME ON UNITED”

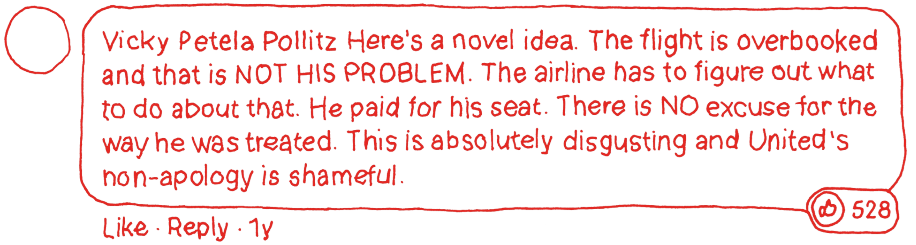
A CHANGE OF MOOD

It wasn't quite the evening rush-hour yet, but the Green Line train that was making its way through Portland, Oregon on May 26th, 2017, was teeming with riders nonetheless. It was an unusually hot day, so the air-conditioned car must have been a relief to the passengers. Far less pleasant, however, was the presence of a long-haired and thickset man who was – according to an eyewitness – "... being very belligerent and loud" (Bernstein 2017). In fact, Jeremy Joseph Christian was shouting anti-Muslim epithets toward two young women, one of whom was sporting traditional garb. Eventually, the train operator requested on the loudspeaker that Christian leave immediately. Undeterred, he instead continued to rant and rave about taxes, circumcision and Islam. Three passengers, namely Ricky John Best, Taliesin Namkai-Meche and Micah David-Cole Fletcher, took it upon themselves to confront the harasser in a bid to de-escalate the situation and make him exit the car. Accounts of the interaction depict the three men trying to calm Christian down and repeatedly urging him to leave, while simultaneously positioning themselves so as to physically shield the recipients of his fury. As the train settled into Hollywood station, Christian pulled out a foldable knife and swiftly stabbed Fletcher, Best and Namkai-Meche in the neck. The latter two would succumb to their wounds.

A few months before the Portland tragedy, passengers on a flight set to travel between Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and Louisville were subjected to a relatively common annoyance. United Express 3411 was overbooked, which is a widespread and legal practice aimed at hedging the risk of no-shows (Aratani 2017). Regularly – albeit not often enough to render this strategy futile – the approach backfires. All ticketed passengers show up, and the airline has to look for volunteers willing to surrender their seat in exchange for compensation in the form cash or a cabin class upgrade on the next flight. On April 9th, 2017, there was no one to take the airline up on their offer. They proceeded by randomly selecting four passengers for immediate disembarking. The first three complied, but David Dao would have none of it. Eventually, agents of a security firm mandated by the airport made their way into the plane. They violently – to the point of rendering him unconscious – removed Dao from his seat before dragging his unanimated body back to the gate under the aghast gaze and cries of other passengers. The bloody scene was captured on a smartphone camera and subsequently shared on Twitter with mentions of @United, @FoxNews and @CNN.

The tweet went viral: as of today, the video has been viewed 24 million times, retweeted 159'000 times and replied-to over 7'500 times. The Facebook post of a New York Times article about this story was shared and commented over 10'000 times, with just under 15'000 angry "likes".

The comments are overwhelmingly indignant: "Shameful, disgusting behavior.", "Have no words. Shame on United." The public relations nightmare that ensued did have some impact on the industry. The practice of "bumping" passengers, for example, has significantly decreased. The calls to boycott United Airlines, however, were short-lived and did not make the slightest dent in the company's market capitalization.



The work presented herein is not about a rise in racist sentiment in the United States. Nor is it about transportation design and its effect on uncontrollable rage – although that would be interesting. It isn't either about corporate malpractice. It is instead about the underlying emotion that pushed thousands if not millions of people to take to their keyboards to denounce what they perceived as a violation of moral norms. The same passion which enticed three good Samaritans to castigate a bad actor and put their livelihoods at risk in the process. It is about moral outrage. Or to be more precise, how moral outrage is expressed.

I joined Facebook in 2007, and around 2014 I started noticing a change of mood on the platform. Fewer animal videos, more angry posts and venting. I was studying in the Design Media Arts department at the University of California, Los Angeles back then. So it was conceivably the case that the new classmates with whom I connected online were more politically active and used Facebook to express their opinions. Maybe it was a deterioration of the actual state of affairs which pushed people to speak up. Perhaps it had always been that way after all. I didn't think much of it then. Nevertheless, I stopped posting anything remotely salient so as to avoid any faux-pas. I became a fly on the wall, so to speak.

In a special end-of-year editorial, *Slate* dubbed 2014 "The Year of Outrage." The publication tracked what people were outraged about on social media for every day of the year, documenting each case in a calendar-like format. Regardless of how one thinks about these individual issues, I believe that it is fair to say that they range anywhere from the trivial (the casting of Ridley Scott's Exodus does not look Egyptian enough) to the profoundly upsetting (The murder of Eric Garner by an NYPD officer). By presenting these 365 little vignettes in a grid, the

editors at Slate successfully evoke the overwhelming and sprawling nature of the phenomenon (Turner 2014). In any case, the journalists at Slate had echoed how I felt about the trajectory of discourse on social media. If the phenomenon broke into mainstream consciousness in 2014, it has continued to gain steam. If 2014 was the year of outrage, then what to make of 2015, 2016 and so on? In a cover article for the *New Statesman*, Private Eye editor Ian Hislop goes as far as stating that we are now living in an Orwellian age of outrage, a feature of which is the impossibility of substantive debate between people harboring opposing viewpoints (Hislop 2016).

Facebook in 2010 vs. Facebook in 2014

As a fervent follower of all-things politics and as a student of mass communication technologies in the context of Media Design, I wanted to write my master thesis on this aspect of our current condition. In essence, I longed to address the following question: Why is it that moral outrage has become the default mode of political speech on Facebook? Stumbling upon an article by Dr. Molly Crockett published in the journal *Nature* was a turning point in my research. In "Moral Outrage in the Digital Age," the Yale neuro-scientist posits a framework through which the expression of outrage is amplified by increased exposure to morally arousing content, lower risk of harmful retribution and higher reward in the form of positive reinforcement from peers. Her analysis of a dataset which samples participant's exposure to immoral acts brings about counter-intuitive results. It is to be expected that people would learn more frequently of immoral acts online than in person or in traditional media (print, television and radio). What is surprising however is that the acts encountered online brought about substantially more powerful feelings of outrage than those experienced in person. Food for thought when examining the two cases which open this introduction. She posits: "If moral outrage is a fire, is the internet like gasoline?" (Crockett 2017, 3).

If media designers strive to come up with exciting, relevant and thought-provoking digital experiences, then they must consider the state of

mass communication platforms such as Facebook. They mediate so much of our culture and politics, that understanding their dynamics is – I believe – a worthy, if not critical endeavor for the field. Yet nowhere have I found a comprehensive, albeit non-technical account of one of our age's defining features. I am not setting out to answer Molly Crockett's question. There will be no new empirical evidence presented in this work. Instead, the goal here is to synthesize existing literature emanating from a multitude of fields of study, to lay-out something akin to a map of the phenomenon. I will argue that the increase in expression of moral outrage online emanates from the interplay of three separate but complementary mechanisms: the evolutionary propensity of humans to feel and express moral outrage; a media landscape whose economy has favored the emergence of outrage arousing content; and a social network that thrives on engagement, of which moral outrage is a reliable and potent purveyor.

We will go about exploring the components of the outrage machine in three parts: The first will focus exclusively on morality and emotions. We will define moral outrage and look at evolutionary arguments for its existence. The second part of this work will look at how outrage emerged and spread as a genre in the United States post-deregulation media landscape. In the third and final section, we will see how Facebook's architecture encourages the spread of arousing content and standardizes the expression of moral outrage.

It is probably worth noting that this is a somewhat of a *hot* topic. I will do my best to treat the subject from a bird's eye view, instead of examining individual cases. I will occasionally indulge in referencing some outrage events and given their salience, you might be offended by what you read. In no way is it my intention to be hurtful or insensitive. Hopefully, gaining a better understanding of how outrage works can help us get a little less outraged ourselves. But if you must, I have provided some blank pages at the end of this publication for venting. An outrage diary of sorts. That being said, let's move on to our first topic of inquiry, in which we will try to answer the following question: why do get outraged?

WHY WE GET OUTRAGED

The "extremely graphic and violent imagery" advisory could not do justice to the investigative report I had watched a few months ago. Perhaps the most horrific in the litany of terrors depicted in *Myanmar's Killing Fields* is Aïsha's testimony (Wells 2018). She recounts her ordeal as the military attacked the village of Chut Pyin, in northern Rakhine state. While attempting to flee, she is shot in the back, brought into a house along with other villagers and repeatedly raped by soldiers who then proceed to light the structure on fire. She manages to escape to neighboring

Bangladesh but has lost many family members in the rampage, including her infant child. Watching this exposé of systematic oppression, killing, grief and official disingenuousness left me with a set of familiar but overwhelming feelings. Anger, first and foremost. Anger towards that military for committing such heinous acts; toward the international community for letting it happen; toward Aun San Suu Kiy for barring a United Nations investigation and betraying the saintly image that many had bestowed upon her. The anger was accompanied by something else. I was also feeling sick, almost nauseous. Disgusted. Outraged.

There is debate among social psychology scholars as to what moral outrage feels like. The most widely accepted definition postulates that it is anger at the violation of a moral norm. Further research seems to indicate that "moral outrage is distinguishable from pure anger" in that it "results from a combination of anger and disgust" (Salerno et al. 2013, 6). Regardless, if you are human, reading this, and not suffering from debilitating psychopathy, odds are you know how I felt watching that documentary. I do not mean to say that the internal qualities of outrage are to be disregarded, but what concerns us here is what we do with the feeling. How we express it. In this section, we will explore just that. First, we will look at the role of morality in moral outrage. This will help us understand why different people get outraged about different things. Then we will examine the characteristics of outrage expression and the evolutionary mechanisms which have led to it being part of our emotional palette.

If outrage is anger at the violation of moral norms, then we must take a moment to understand how these come to be. From Aristotle's virtues to John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism by way of Kant's absolutism, the study of morality – or ethics – is a topic which has preoccupied western thinkers since antiquity. Are there universal moral principles from which we can derive right from wrong? Is morality innate, nurtured or rationally acquired through reasoning? Big questions indeed. Their transmission from the field of philosophy to that of psychology in the 20th century has perhaps brought us closer to concrete answers. By introducing empirical evidence to the study of morality, scholars such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg developed theories that aimed to explain how children develop ethical notions such as justice. Seminal as these thinkers may be, the study of moral development is by no means a closed book. And the framework which appealed most to me is at odds with these eminent rationalists. Indeed, Kohlberg is a universalist, a position which states that what is right, is so across societies. Yet it is a matter of simple observation to realize that much of societal debate is based on moral quarrels, especially considering the language which is often used online. I may support LGBTQ rights, and some arguments by those who oppose them might make me outraged. But the same can

Morally dumbfounded study participant

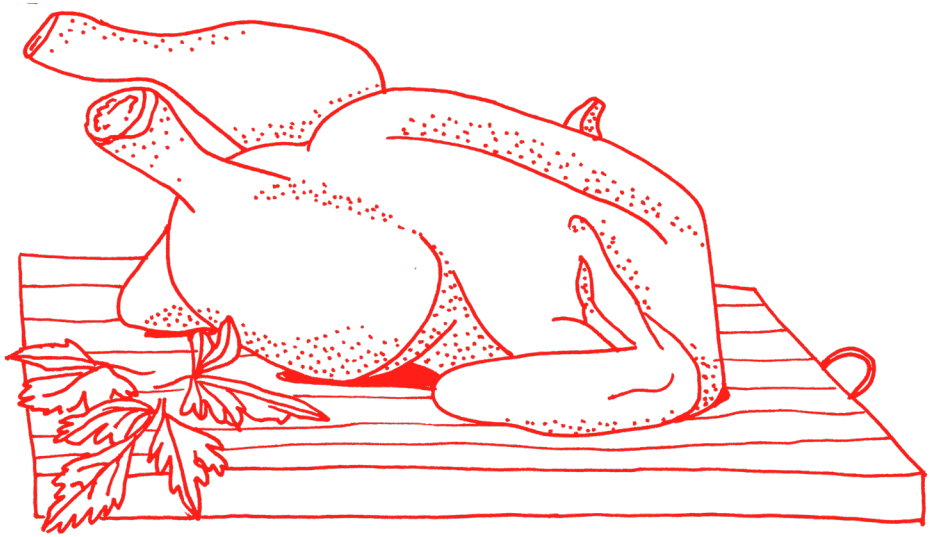
"UH, UH... I DON'T KNOW IT'S JUST WRONG AND NOTHING COULD CHANGE MY MIND"

be said of people on the other side of the issue. Is the outrage they express just... fake? Are they immoral, if not amoral? Did those who disagree with me on moral grounds skip a step in their moral development? No, there must be more to morality than a universal right and wrong. And Johnathan Haidt's social intuitionism and moral foundations theory gave me a glimpse of what that may be.

"A man goes to the supermarket once a week and buys a chicken. But before cooking the chicken, he has sexual intercourse with it. Then he cooks it and eats it." (Haidt 2012, 4) These are the kinds of prompts you are likely to encounter in a study conducted by Johnathan Haidt. Subjects are meant to answer whether the little stories are fine or objectionable, and then justify their answer if they are the latter. What he discovered is that interviewees would regularly do so by contradicting the premises of the question. When confronted by the interviewer about that very fact, participants would often be left "morally dumbfounded." That is, they would be without reasoned arguments for their answer, but still find the situation morally reprehensible. From these experiments, Haidt concludes that the reasoning which occurs serves as post-hoc justification for judgments which are made intuitively and unconsciously (Haidt 2012, 55). This is the basic tenet of social intuitionism: "intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second." This would explain why it is so difficult to change an already made-up mind on a moral question; why online arguments so often descend into so-called flame wars: when dumbfounded, resort to ad-hominem attacks.

In a study of the type described above, but comparing answers between Americans and Indians, Haidt found discord between the two groups. To the prompt "After defecation, a woman did not change her clothes before cooking" (Haidt 2012, 19), Americans usually found the situation acceptable while Indians usually did not. If moral judgments come from intuitions, what is it that makes these intuitions vary across cultures? Haidt is not a relativist. Not everything goes. Instead he posits that our moral minds can be represented as a matrix composed of five oppositional foundations, each emerging from an evolutionary adaptive challenge: care/harm from the challenge of protecting and caring for children; fairness/cheating to reap benefits in two-way relationships; loyalty/betrayal to form cohesive coalitions; authority/subversion to forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies; sanctity/degradation to avoid contaminants (Haidt 2012, 146). These foundations can be thought of as modules, all innate, but reconfigurable by cultural variables and life experience. This pluralist lens allows us to see that those who disagree with us are not immoral, but instead have moral matrices which emphasize different foundations.

Is having sex with this chicken morally reprehensible?



If Haidt's moral foundations emerge from adaptive challenges, so do emotions. We know for example that disgust – through facial communication – warns others of potentially dangerous foods and behaviors (Shariff, Tracy 2011, 4). But what about moral outrage? What is the evolutionary rationale for humans to possess the ability to feel and express it? In the following paragraphs, we will explore a few hypotheses that may elucidate those questions.

Remember my emotional reaction to the Myanmar documentary? I may have kept all that outrage inside, but what would it have looked like had I expressed it? Physical confrontation was out of the question for obvious reasons. Perhaps I could have told a friend or family member how aggrieved I was by the situation. I like to think that cool indignation is the form my outrage would have taken, but that probably isn't how things would have panned out. My outrage compass had a north: the direct and indirect perpetrators of the injustice I had witnessed on my television screen. And I would have directed that outrage toward them, seeking payback for the crimes they had committed. My outrage would have taken the form of retributive anger (Nussbaum 2018, 74). This goes to the core of how outrage is expressed: it can be physical or verbal; direct or by proxy. But when we express outrage, we are generally engaged in tarnishing the reputation of those who have infringed upon moral norms. In other words, outrage is expressed through punishment. Why in the world do we behave this way?

Most of what we know about the expression of moral outrage comes from lab experiments examining punishment within a game theoretical

framework. It is straightforward to understand why somebody would punish a person who has directly caused them harm (or reduced their payoff, in game theory lingo). Indeed, this behavior known as second party punishment has evolutionary advantages since it signals to a group that one shouldn't be "messed with". It also serves as an effective social norm enforcement mechanism (Fehr, Fischbacher 2004, 30). Yet, all of the outrage events chronicled in these pages have been examples of people expressing outrage from a different perspective. The people filming the airline incident, as well as those commenting online, were not direct victims of the security agents. And they engaged in punishment nonetheless. This behavior is referred to as third-party (or altruistic) punishment and is more difficult to explain.

If the Portland rail tragedy illustrates anything, it's that punishment is costly. We know this intuitively: everytime we see somebody doing something reprehensible to another person, our brains perform a risk assessment. Most times we think better of confronting them. But the fact that we sometimes do take that risk is quite astonishing. Especially when we punish on behalf of complete strangers. This behavior manifests itself across cultures (Henrich et al. 2006, 4) and seems at odds with the theory of kin selection (Fehr, Gächter 2002, 1). How could this conduct have emerged? There are two schools of thought on this question, each representing a fundamental divide in the field of evolutionary psychology: the group selection hypothesis, and the costly signaling hypothesis.

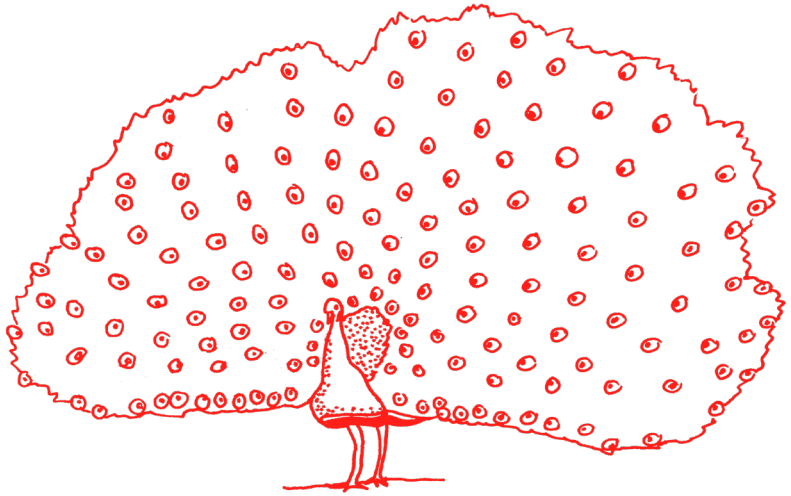
"Although a high standard of morality gives but a slight or no advantage to each individual man and his children over the other men of the same tribe [...] an advancement in the standard of morality will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another." (Darwin 1871, 89) With this observation, Charles Darwin hypothesizes an explanation for how pro-social behavior could have evolved. This idea has intuitive appeal. We know that groups who are better at cooperating, are more likely to thrive. Since third-party punishment (as an expression of moral outrage) increases cooperation within groups (Fehr, Gächter 2002, 2), we can see why this behavior would have evolved, despite being detrimental to the individual. There are a few problems with this account, however. First and foremost, there is little empirical evidence of group selection on any trait or behavior. Secondly, delimitating what constitutes a group isn't an easy task. And finally, groups dissolve or reproduce much slower than individuals. Individual-level selection would thus counteract any group-level adaptation. Even if there are counterarguments addressing these criticisms (Wilson, 2002), establishing an individual-level framework for the evolution of third-party punishment seems necessary. The costly signaling hypothesis tries to do just that.

In Roman mythology, Juno's spirit animal is the peacock. It is also the national bird of India. Lord Krishna in Hinduism is represented with peacock feathers. There are lots of myths and beliefs surrounding this bird. Presumably due to that its unusual and extravagant looks are responsible for that. It turns out that the peacock's tail also inspired Darwin to come up with the theory of sexual selection. (Wade 2009) The idea goes like this: peahens find peafowls with the most "eyes" on their tails to be the most attractive. They will go on to procreate, while lesser-endowed peafowls will eventually be eliminated from the gene pool. Growing such grandiose tails is not free, however. It takes vast amounts of energy and the resulting appendage makes the bird less capable of flying, and thus more vulnerable to predators. A group of evolutionary psychologists makes the case that the same mechanism is at the root of third-party punishment and moral outrage: "Based only on decision-making efficiency, acting in an uncalculating way should be equally valuable, regardless of who is watching. Thus, the fact that uncalculating decision-making is sensitive to observability suggests it represents a costly strategy that risks making a suboptimal choice but has the benefit of signaling trustworthiness." (Jordan et al. 2016, 4) In other words, third-party punishment and moral outrage are not so much about enforcing moral norms as they are about reputation-building. This is not to say that people who express their outrage are solely interested in showing off, but this theory helps to explain why that behavior came to be in the first place.

The costly signalling and group selection hypotheses give us a picture of how the expression of moral outrage could have evolved. The debate between these two views is still taking place and is not really for me to arbiter. I do, however, edge toward the costly signaling hypothesis given how accurately it can account for the way people behave online. Further research indicates that the propensity to punish on behalf of others varies slightly between cultures (Henrich et al. 2006, 3). Nevertheless, evolutionary psychologists are clear on one thing: moral outrage and third-party punishment are part of our evolved emotional palettes.

Before moving on, let's recap what we discussed in this section. From our summary of Jonathan Haidt's work, we can gather a few insights. If moral intuition precedes moral reasoning, then moral outrage is intuitive and occurs when moral norms are infringed. These moral norms are not universal: people get outraged about different things. There isn't an infinite variety of ethical systems, however. Our moral minds are made of five modules or foundations, each of them having evolved from adaptive challenges. The second part of this section outlines how third-party punishment is the principal mode of expression for moral

outrage, and why this behavior is difficult to explain from an evolutionary standpoint. We then looked at two potential explanations, group-level selection, and the costly signaling hypothesis. The big question now remains: what is it about Facebook that makes this evolved behavior more widespread? In the following section, I will argue that we can trace the origins of this phenomenon to transformations in the traditional mass-media landscape.



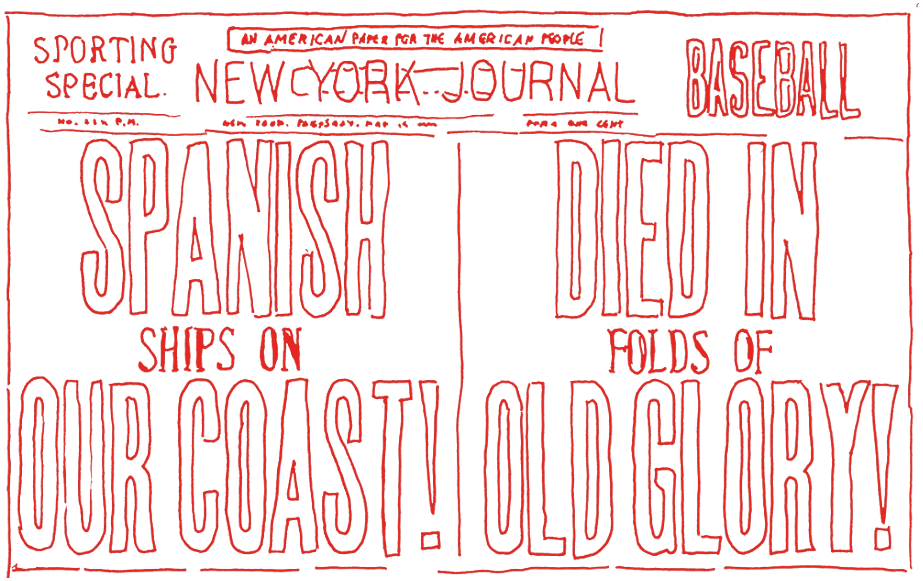
A very sexy peafowl

THE EMERGENCE OF OUTRAGE AS A GENRE

I'm pretty sure that my transition from disagreeing with to despising the Grand Ole Party, had something to do with my media diet. I became interested in American politics through Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert in the W. Bush years. Their brand of satire resonated with me, but it was pretty apparent that I was not consuming news per se. There was a laughing audience, musical acts and lots of props. While I do not remember exactly when I started watching *The Rachel Maddow Show*, I'm pretty sure it was at some point during the 2012 election cycle primary season. Barack Obama was up for reelection, so the main question was who he was going to run against. Boy was that process entertaining. From Rick Perry' infamous "oops" moment to Herman Caine's bizarre campaign, by way of Rick Santorum's "Spreading Santorum" Google Bomb (Karch 2018), the whole thing was just too much of a shitshow to look away. And these legitimately embarrassing moments are what Maddow covered the most.

How could anybody, let alone close to half of the United States support these working class hating, homophobic, racist fools? What is fascinating

about *The Rachel Maddow Show*, is that it shares many traits with late-night peers. The snark and ridicule; the props and cartoonish graphics even. It is broadcast on a cable news network, and to some extent, the news is what it offers to its audience. I learned a lot by watching Maddow. But it is not a news program, even if it masquerades as such. It is instead part of what can be called an outrage industry (Berry, Sobieraj 2014) which jockeys our collective propensity to feel and express moral outrage, for profit.



The bombast of front pages in the Yellow Press era

Outrage-arousing media is nothing new. Perhaps the most infamous period in the history of the American press is that of Yellow Journalism. In the late 19th Century, newspaper magnates Joseph Pulitzer (of prize fame) and William Randolph Hearst each bought themselves publications. *The New York World* for the former and *The New York Journal* for the latter. New printing technologies drastically reduced the price of newspapers, and it became necessary to attract ever-larger readerships for the businesses to remain profitable. Owners thus waged circulation wars on one another for market supremacy (Udeze, Uzuegbunam 2013, 70). What characterized these publications was their practice of sensationalizing stories, their excessive use of imagery and colossal print. In fact, they have long been accused of starting the Spanish-American war by fomenting public opinion against Spain in its editorials. Contemporary historians now dispute that view, however (Campbell 2001, 122). So, if Pulitzer and Hearst's ultimate goal wasn't to take over Cuba, what was at the root of such bellicose publishing? The answer is quite straightforward: outrage sells. In this section, we will see that economic changes brought about by technological disruption – not unlike

"WHAT DOES THAT MAKE HER? IT MAKES HER A SLUT, RIGHT? IT MAKES HER A PROSTI-TUTE"

Rush Limbaugh reacts to Sandra Fluke's congressional testimony advocating for contraceptive subsidies

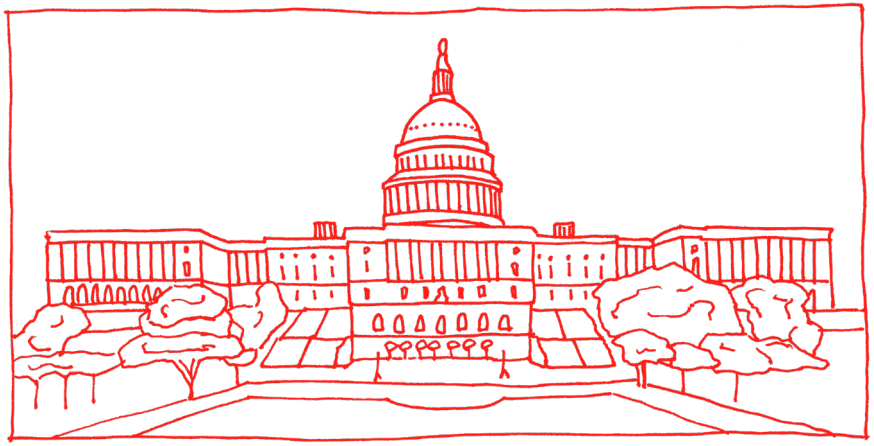
those which gave rise to the yellow press – are fertile ground for the growth of outrage media.

The content produced by the outrage industry has such recognizable features that it can legitimately be called a genre unto itself. Just like a Western, when you're consuming capital-O Outrage, you know it. What are its hallmarks? First and foremost, it has a discursive style, described by Mathew M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj – two prominent scholars on this topic – as involving "efforts to provoke emotional responses" through tactics which resemble those ascribed to Yellow Journalism: "sensationalism, misrepresentative exaggeration, mockery" (2014, 7). But there are notable differences between the Outrage of the 19th century and that of today. While the same discursive style can – then like now – be found in newspaper opinion sections, nothing quite translates Outrage like sound and vision. Radio and television enable another characteristic of the genre: its personality-centeredness.

When you listen to or watch an anchor like Rachel Maddow, you get the sense that she is talking to and for you. Walter Cronkite might've been a great reporter, but was he a trustworthy friend? Which brings us to another trait of Outrage: the way it employs emotional displays. While covering immigrant family separations at the U.S. – Mexico border on her June 19th, 2018 broadcast, Maddow wept on air. While I do not think that the display was disingenuous (the story is indeed outrageous), it is clear that producers throughout the Outrage industry tolerate – if not encourage – behavior which is entirely at odds with journalistic deontology. This takes us back to the signaling hypothesis. By expressing her moral outrage, not only does Maddow say: "wake up, this is outrageous!". She also increases her trustworthiness capital. The final, but perhaps most important feature of Outrage is its partisanship. Instead of handing out boring reality, Outrage takes our confirmations biases and gives them purpose by introducing narrative, antagonists and heroes. This set of characteristics makes Outrage wholly engaging. Much more so than network news broadcasts like the *PBS Newshour* or the *NBC Nightly News*. To quote Berry and Sobieraj: "In outrage, there is performance. There are jokes. There is drama. There is conflict. There is fervor. There is even comfort, as audiences find their worldviews honored" (2014, 8).

So far, I have only talked about *The Rachel Maddow Show* for the simple reason that she is the anchor I know and love. But not all Outrage shows are created equal. They may use the same tactics, but they do not use them to the same extent. And on the acidity spectrum, Maddow is in the alkaline end. Berry and Sobieraj's study indicates that outrage incidents are 40 percent more frequent in shows which can be identified as right-wing. (2014, 40). Sean Hannity, Fox News's most successful anchor with an average of over 4 million viewers per weeknight, greets

his audience with monologues such as: “We’re almost a year and a half into the Trump presidency. Many on the left... this is now serious. They are totally, completely, utterly psychotic and unhinged. Now remember, that was not supposed to happen. Donald Trump was never supposed to be elected by *you, the people*. In fact, when he was inaugurated in January of last year. Remember ? Many on the left, many Democrats melted down, they lashed out with threats of violence against President Trump and the White House.” Prototypical Outrage. And there is so much of it. That was not the case just 20 years ago.



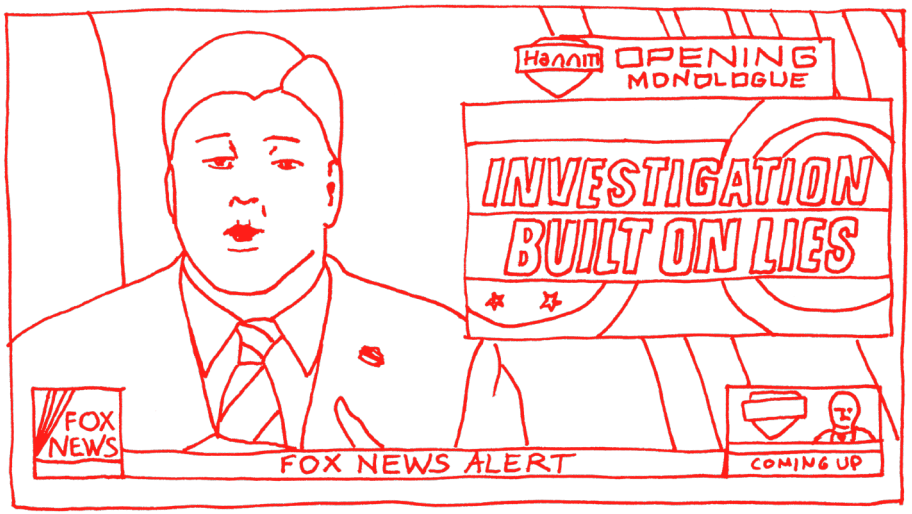
Between the 1920s and 1990s, the vast majority of Americans got their news from one of three sources. Broadcasts were usually centrist, so as not to alienate vast swaths of the market. Niche shows that dabbled in Outrage existed of course, but those never attained noteworthy penetration rates. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center suggests more Americans get their television news from Outrage merchants than from the major networks as of 2017. (Matsa 2018) So what changed between then and now? Has the media landscape just adapted to a more politically divided audience? Perhaps. But there has to be other factors at work given how Outrage has proliferated, especially considering the lack of evidence regarding media reactivity to polarization (Prior 2013, 119). Furthermore, if that were the whole story, we would expect other countries to have gone through similar media transformations. So why is it that Maddow and Hannity have become the Cronkites of their time? The answer has to do with regulatory policy, new technologies and the way broadcasters make their bucks.

Until the late 80’s, broadcasting in the United States was subject to the Federal Communications Commission’s Fairness Doctrine. Its precepts were informed by the treatment of airwaves as utilities. Frequencies to establish new stations were in short supply, and the FCC established

the doctrine to make sure that stations would provide a public service if licenses were granted. To comply, stations would have to “devote some of their programming to controversial issues of public importance” and “allow the airing of opposing views on those issues.” (Matthews 2011). The abolition of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 on 1st amendment grounds, is often held accountable for the existence of Fox News and media polarization. This is a bit of a misrepresentation. The doctrine only applied to government-held spectrum, and Fox News is a cable network. Nevertheless, this change in regulatory mindset did play a part in the growth of talk radio (Clogston 2016). AM and FM operators could now offer purely liberal or conservative stations without the threat of retaliation from the FCC. While talk-radio giant Rush Limbaugh shot to fame in that era, the outrage industry only really came into its own after the Telecommunications Act of 1996 made it through Congress and past president Bill Clinton’s desk. This piece of legislation loosened rules limiting the number of broadcast channels individual companies could own. In the 18 months following the passage of the bill, a quarter of radio stations in the United States were under new management (Berry, Sobieraj, 2014, 86). An industry which was mostly operated by small and local businesses was consolidated to the point of being owned by only a handful of corporations within a matter of months. Their aim was pretty simple: make these stations profitable. To that end, they put an emphasis on Outrage.

MTV hit American television screen at midnight on the 1st of August 1981. Their choice for the first music video to be aired on the channel was one of remarkable bravado. They went with none other than The Buggles 1979 one-hit wonder “Video Killed the Radio Star.” While the radio DJ did succumb from his wounds, the British band pointed its finger toward the wrong culprit and a bit too early; although there’s no way they could have known better. In fact, MTV itself left the music video business for the same reason. I am talking of course about new audio technologies. The iPod only hit mainstream adoption around 2005, but the radio conglomerates – unlike their counterparts in the music industry – had identified the downward trend of curated musical stations early and applied a strategy that transformed struggling music stations into all-talk outlets. If talk-radio is anything, it is cheap to make. There are no royalties to pay, and production expenses are almost non-existent. And with the practice of airing a single show on multiple stations, costs could be cut even further. That’s all well and good, but airing content on the cheap isn’t a sound strategy in and of itself. For the stations to accrue revenue, they need to move advertising space. And if nobody is listening, then that is going to be a tough sell. What makes people pay attention ? In entertainment, it is sex, violence and over-the-top displays of ostentatious wealth. In political media, it is provocation and demagogy (Berry, Sobieraj, 2014, 82). It is Outrage.

Advertisers do not care exclusively about raw numbers. Specific demographics are more attractive than others. While political talk-radio essentially gives up on younger and more profitable demographics, it also offers advertisers a "relatively well-educated" audience which has enough income to attract ad buys. Those who listen to the format are "uniquely attentive [...] less likely to channel surf" (Berry, Sobieraj, 2014, 89). Furthermore, nothing quite sells like fearmongering. Here's an ad by conservative talk-radio superstar Michael Savage, illustrating how Outrage personalities can twist the genre to push product: "Look, I know you worry about what's going on in Afghanistan, what's going on the Gulf, and what's going on in the White House, but with everything going on you shouldn't have to worry about your computer on top of everything else, so go visit Carbonite.com... enter my offer code Savage" (as quoted in Berry, Sobieraj, 2014, 109).



Sean Hannity on any given weeknight on Fox News

The radio Outrage model worked. At least for a time. The number of stations tripled between 1998 and 2010. And the more Outrage shows popped up, the more they needed to find a competitive advantage to thrive in that marketplace. And those who pulled through were usually the most outrageous. In those boom years, listeners got acquainted with ever more provocative voices: Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Laura Ingraham, Mark Levin... These shows were so successful that the model was replicated in television, giving rise to the current iterations of Fox News and MSNBC. But there is trouble on the horizon, audiences for talk-radio and cable news are getting older, and there is no sign of younger demographics increasing their consumption of aging mediums. The largest radio conglomerate – iHeartRadio – is in a world of trouble as it filed for bankruptcy in March of 2018. Outrage isn't going anywhere, however. The format may change, but in unregulated and ad-driven media industries, Outrage is profitable and thus inevitable.

In this section, we looked at the characteristics of Outrage as a genre and the type of conjuncture favorable for its spread. We saw that Outrage is nothing new and that it is more a product of technological and regulatory change then a consequence of political polarization. In the grand scheme of things, the outrage industry is a relatively small one. When Rush Limbaugh screams bloody murder, only a few million people are listening on the radio. Even if some Outrage hosts provide call-in segments or have dedicated internet forum boards, the shows offer little in the way of interactivity. The experience is intrinsically one-to-many, limiting its range. There is no doubt that outrage arousing content on "traditional" mass media has impacted political discourse in the United States. But the increase in expression of moral outrage we can witness today occurs well beyond Sean Hannity's sphere of influence. We can repurpose Molly Crockett's analogy to include what we have discussed so far: if moral outrage is a fire, Outrage media is the kindling and our moral minds what allows the chemistry to happen. Gasoline or not, we will see in the final section that much of the combustible resides online.

THE OUTRAGE PLATFORM

If you worked at Facebook in the late aughts, it must have been hard not to drink the young company's Kool-Aid: "To give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" proclaimed its mission statement. It goes to the core of the technological optimism that permeates Silicon Valley. An ethos which dictates that more information and more technology unquestionably and inevitably makes the world a better place. Fast-forward to April 2018 at a blockbuster hearing organized by the Senate Judicial and Commerce committee: "It was my mistake, and I'm sorry" asserted Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook founder and CEO in his opening remarks. He was apologizing for his company's mishap with Cambridge Analytica, whose business it was to create psychological profiles of voters with data surreptitiously purchased from third-party app developers. Valley idealism would not do in this chamber; the honeymoon was over, and lawmakers grilled the entrepreneur for five hours on data gathering, Russian interference and a host of other issues. What they failed to appreciate, however, is that while Facebook can conceivably patch its privacy issues, it cannot mitigate the spread of outrage without either regulating speech or completely overhauling its business model. In the previous section, we examined how deregulated and ad-driven media business models were fertile ground for outrage. Here we will see why that is also true for social media companies, only on an incommensurably larger scale.

Mark Zuckerberg at a congressional hearing

In its early days, Facebook was hardly a platform at all. It was a rudimentary set of profiles that could communicate with messages and photos, on the condition that users had "befriended" one another. As the user base grew, so did the feature set. In 2006, Facebook introduced and started rolling out News Feed. From then on, those accessing the website would be greeted by a timeline of algorithmically selected activity within their network. The addition of the "like" button a couple of years later was the secret ingredient to the company's relentless growth. It provided a treasure-trove of data about user preferences, enabling the feed to reflect the interests of individuals more accurately. It also had an effect on how people used the platform. Soleio Cuervo, a product designer at the company between 2005 and 2011, describes it as a "social lubricant [...] driving this fly-wheel of engagement. People felt like they were being heard on the platform." (as interviewed in Jacoby 2018). By then, Facebook was already in the ad business, but these new features provided the company with two competitive advantages: space for advertising as large as the user's willingness to scroll through it, and data so plentiful that advertisers could target audiences with unprecedented granularity. New tools built around these concepts unleashed a paradigm shift in how businesses could push their product – even if that were a website with more ads on it. Every republication of a "sponsored" post through the share button, equals free eyeballs and thus more return on investment. When advertising on Facebook, virality is the name of the game.

A study published in 2011 looked at the *New York Times* most shared list for three months, in an attempt to understand what articles were more likely to "go viral." The researchers coded the emotional characteristics of each story. They discovered that articles exhibiting anger were 34% more likely than controls to make the list (Berger Milkman, 2011, 8). This is hardly surprising, given our discussion of outrage in traditional media. But the success of outrage online is another ballgame: anybody can create the content, and the content can reach anybody. The barrier of entry has been drastically lowered. Furthermore, speech in the digital domain is completely unregulated. Facebook cannot be liable in the United States for content posted on its website. The platform has a code of conduct, but its doctrine can essentially be boiled down to "no overt threats of violence, no nipple".

Given these circumstances and a good dose of hindsight, it is straightforward to understand how "fake news" proliferated on the platform. The Russian misinformation campaign which occurred during the 2016 election brought the issue into the limelight. But most of the fake stories originated elsewhere. In Vales, Macedonia for example, where teenagers made fortunes by maintaining websites discussing the election, Outrage style, and then sharing those often-fabricated articles through Facebook Pages (Subramian 2017). They had no interest in the outcome of the election: whatever made them a buck was a shot worth taking. Or take Mad World News, a website operated from a garage by "Corey and Christy Pepple, an ordinary American couple in Pennsylvania who wanted to share their thoughts on current issues through their worldview as Christian Conservatives."

The publication deals in gossip and conspiracy theories. But above all, it deals in anger. In an interview with *Times* journalist Kevin Roose, the Pepples reveal their editorial modus operandi: "If you can make a good story sound like a bad story, you'll have a viral story." (Roose 2018) That's how you get headlines like "Americans send George Soros EPIC message that could put an end to this terror sponsor." Or "Americans are dying after Trump-hating Houston mayor defied president's hurricane warnings." Mad World News has – wait for it – over 2 million followers on Facebook. When there is an incentive to manufacture the most outrageous, most shocking stories, the truth is utterly irrelevant. What some call post-truth, I call an Outrage arms race.

Molly Crockett's paper suggests that people learn more regularly about immoral acts online, than off. I declared early within these pages that this fact had nothing surprising. That was an intuitive judgment based on my experience of social media. In our discussion of the Outrage genre, we have – I think – clarified this point. There isn't more exposure to arousing material just by the sheer volume of stuff that is posted on these platforms. There are also business incentives to create and spread outrage-provoking content. But this only concerns those involved in content creation. What about regular users? What is it about Facebook that entices so many to respond? Our review on the psychology of moral outrage addresses why people would express themselves in that mode at all. But it does not account for the piling-on and retributive-ness of online shaming. Crockett makes the following observation: "people can express outrage online with just a few keystrokes, from the comfort of their bedrooms, either directly to the wrongdoer or to a

broader audience. With even less effort, people can repost or react to others' angry comments. Since the tools for easily and quickly expressing outrage online are literally at our fingertips, a person's threshold for expressing outrage is probably lower online than offline." (2017, 3) This has intuitive appeal, but I would add two additional factors to account for the nature of responses: the standardization of the expression of moral outrage through user experience cues, and the moral grandstanding which occurs within like-minded communities.

Interactions with Facebook are threefold: you can browse, post and react. And for every one of these actions, there is a button or some other interface element which expedites the expression of moral outrage. Navigating the endless assortment of memes, pictures and advertisements presented at any given moment on the News Feed, off-site links particularly stand out. The use of 16-point type makes headlines pop; in contrast to the 14-point, regular weight text presented above, which is often used to comment and maybe contextualize the articles. Crucially, the source of the material is even smaller, obfuscating the origin of the link. But it is the response interface attached to posts that really change the nature of outrage expression online.

Offline, the expression of moral outrage is context-dependent. We discussed how it is expressed through acts of punishment like shaming. But the way we punish – the tone of voice, the language or physical threats we might use to communicate that punishment – is altered by the characteristics of the offense, relationship to the offender and the environment in which the offense has taken place. Facebook changes that. A press on the "angry like" button, and *poof*, outrage has been communicated, just stripped of any legible meaning. The share button works as an instant gossiping instrument. Comment boxes are small, so as to encourage the shortest, least nuanced and hottest takes. One impetus ties all of these things together: expediency. Facebook wants you to spend as much time on its platform as possible. But it also wants you to do so as impulsively as possible. Everything is placed such that one need not think twice before sharing or liking. And impulsive choice is correlated with the likelihood of somebody engaging in third-party punishment (Crockett 2010).

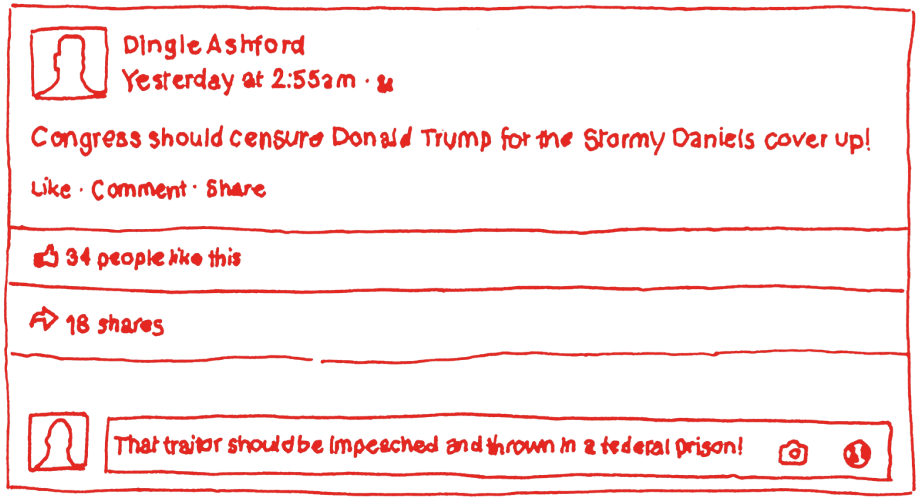
As I mentioned before, Facebook's News Feed is algorithmically generated. While it may seem like posts are sorted chronologically, they are instead churned out by a kind of engagement estimation machine. Posts which are already popular by a measure of likes, comments or clicks, are more likely to be presented near the top of a user's feed. A study has shown that good ratings beget good ratings online, with little regard for substance. It also uncovered evidence of parochial bias. In other words, the "herding" behavior on display, was accentuated by the

A Facebook call to action from the Occupy Democrats page

"SHARE IF YOU'RE OUTRAGED THAT TRUMP JUST ORDERED BORDER PATROL TO FIRE TEAR GAS AT DESPERATE CHILDREN SEEKING ASYLUM."

relationship of the subject to the commenter whose post they were asked to up or down-vote. (Muchnik, Aral, Taylor 2013) While that research was not conducted on Facebook, the quantification of interactions displayed at the bottom of every post serves as a rating mechanism. And since the News Feed algorithm also takes who we are "friendliest" with on the platform (by analyzing Messenger interactions, for example), it is likely that this dynamic, often referred to as an "echo chamber", is present on Facebook. And in those quarters, moral grandstanding thrives.

In their discussion of moral grandstanding, philosophers Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke describe the behavior in the following terms: "one grandstands when one makes a contribution to public moral discourse that aims to convince others that one is 'morally respectable.' By this we mean that grandstanding is a use of moral talk that attempts to get others to make certain desired judgments about oneself, namely, that one is worthy of respect or admiration because one has some particular moral quality — for example, an impressive commitment to justice, a highly tuned moral sensibility, or unparalleled powers of empathy. To grandstand is to turn one's contribution to public discourse into a vanity project." (2016, 199) They contend that grandstanding is manifested through five modes of expression, three of which are of particular interest to our discussion. The first is "piling on," which is the act of repeating an argument to claim a spot as a member of the righteous group. The second is "ramping up," which consists of making "increasingly strong claims about the matter under discussion" (2016, 204). See it as a purity contest in which participants continuously outbid one another for the moral high-ground, with ever more bombastic rhetoric. The third expression of moral grandstanding is "excessive emotional displays or reports". This essentially refers to the expression of moral outrage as a means to signal that one is more attuned to a moral question than cooler commentators. Tosi and Warmke's paper discusses grandstanding from the perspective of political philosophy and public moral discourse. Their examples feature fictional legislators and committee members deliberating on policy. There is debate as to whether or not Facebook qualifies as a public sphere. But it seems to me that a large number of Facebook users are engaged in discourse which cannot be qualified as private, such as raising consciousness on specific issues. Combine that with the "echo-chamber" effect. How does anybody distinguish themselves in a forum which is likely to be populated with individuals that share moral and political inclinations? If Facebook notoriety is your thing (and the platform does everything in its power for it to be), then grandstanding and outrage might just be the shortest path toward your next dopamine hit.



SO WHAT?

Our discussion began from this central question: "Why is it that moral outrage has become the default mode of political speech on Facebook?". In my attempt to answer it, we have talked about peacocks, the yellow press, Sean Hannity, a couple writing fake news from their garage and user interface elements. I have only scratched the surface but would also contend that the interplay of psycho-evolutionary, economic and structural mechanisms described herein, can provide some insight. At the very least, I hope to have demonstrated that this is a very complicated and interdisciplinary question that warrants further inquiry.

"So what?" you may ask. Well, that is a tough question. I have thus far done my best to avoid treating the spread of moral outrage as a "bad" or "good" phenomenon. I have – pun-intended – avoided being outraged about outrage. But the question begs asking. Historically, this emotion has been at the root of much social progress. From the overthrow of tyrannical regimes to the struggles for equal rights, outrage toward acts of injustice and harm have federated movements which have transformed societies for the better. But this is a double-edged sword. State-sponsored weaponizations of Outrage have played major roles in two recent genocidal campaigns: in Rwanda through radio (Lyon 2013) and in Myanmar with rumors of pedophilia perpetrated by Rohingyas disseminated on social media (Mozur, 2018).

This work looks at moral outrage from a WEIRD perspective. That is Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (Henrich et al, 2010). So, it's worth asking what the consequences of mass online

outrage will be for these societies. Plenty of ink has been spilled on that topic and there are essentially two schools of thought. One says that “if we are outraged about everything, then we are about nothing”. Consequentially, we should witness a generalized state of political apathy brought about by “outrage fatigue.” Even more entrenched in this view is neurologist Sebastien Dieguez who sees in mass outrage just another manifestation of “bullshit culture” (2018, 321). On the other side, you have the alarmists like columnist Frank Bruni who published “The Internet Will Be the Death of Us” in the aftermath of the political violence that engulfed the United States during the week preceding 2018’s mid-term elections. He views social media platforms as engines of mass radicalization : “a glorious buffet” pushing users “toward only the red meat or just the kale.” (Bruni 2018). Tech philosopher Jaron Lanier sees a multi-pronged threat in social media, including the diagnosis that it turns its users into “assholes.” His latest book – which is more of a long-form pamphlet – urges complete abstinence (2018).

As for myself, well, I do not have a crystal ball and would prefer to avoid ending this work on a deterministic note. But I do believe that the political moment we are witnessing is already a consequence of mass outrage. From the triumphant re-emergence of right-wing populists to the political monism threatening free-speech on U.S. college campuses, I would contend that outraged parties have already hijacked public debate. If moral outrage is a fire, then our current state of affairs is the ash fall.

“DESPITE THE CONSTANT NEGATIVE PRESS COVFEFE”

Unintentional comic relief, courtesy of president Donald Trump

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acker, Lizzy. “Who Is Jeremy Christian? Facebook Shows a Man with Nebulous Political Affiliations Who Hated Circumcision and Hillary Clinton.” *OregonLive.com*, May 30, 2017. http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2017/05/who_is_jeremy_christian_facebo.html.

Anspach, Jayse D. “@United Overbook #flight3411 and Decided to Force Random Passengers off the Plane. Here’s How They Did It” Tweet. @*JayseDavid*, April 10, 2017. https://twitter.com/JayseDavid/status/851223662976004096.

Aratani, Lori. “Why Do Airlines Overbook Flights?” *Washington Post*, April 10, 2017, sec. Gridlock. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/dr-gridlock/wp/2017/04/10/why-do-airlines-overbook-flights/.

Baughman, James. “The Fall and Rise of Partisan Journalism.” *Center for Journalism Ethics* (blog), April 20, 2011. https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/2011/04/20/the-fall-and-rise-of-partisan-journalism/.

Benedikt, Allison, Dan Kois, and Jennifer Lai. “Behind the Year of Outrage.” *Slate*, August 3, 2015. http://www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2014/12/the_year_of_outrage_2014_behind_the_scenes_of_everything_you_were_angry.html

Berger, Jonah, and Katherine Milkman. “What Makes Online Content Viral?” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2018. https://jonahberger.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ViralityB.pdf.

Bernhard, Helen, Urs Fischbacher, and Ernst Fehr. “Parochial Altruism in Humans.” *Nature* 442, no. 7105 (August 2006): 912–15. https://doi.org/10.1038/nature04981.

Bernstein, Maxine. “Portland MAX Hero’s Last Words: ‘Tell Everyone on This Train I Love Them.’” *OregonLive.com*, May 29, 2017. http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2017/05/max_heros_last_words_tell_ever.html.

Bridges, Tyler. “@united @CNN @FoxNews @WHAS11 Man Forcibly Removed from Plane Somehow Gets Back on Still Bloody from Being” Tweet. @*Tyler_Bridges* (blog), April 10, 2017. https://twitter.com/Tyler_Bridges/status/851228695360663552.

Bruni, Frank. “The Internet Will Be the Death of Us.” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2018, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/30/opinion/internet-violence-hate-prejudice.html.

Buhrmester, Michael D., Dawn Burnham, Dominic D. P. Johnson, Oliver S. Curry, David W. Macdonald, and Harvey Whitehouse. “How Moments Become Movements: Shared Outrage, Group Cohesion, and the Lion That Went Viral.” *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 6 (2018). https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2018.00054.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. "The Weirdest People in the World?" *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, no. 2–3 (June 2010): 61–83; discussion 83-135. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X.

Hislop, Ian. "The Age of Outrage." *New Statesman*, December 5, 2016. https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/12/age-outrage.

Jacoby, James. "The Facebook Dilemma." *PBS*, October 29, 2018. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/facebook-dilemma/credits/.

Jordan, Jillian J., Paul Bloom, Moshe Hoffman, and David G. Rand. "Opinion | What's the Point of Moral Outrage?" *The New York Times*, December 21, 2017, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/opinion/sunday/whats-the-point-of-moral-outrage.html.
———. "Third-Party Punishment as a Costly Signal of Trustworthiness." *Nature*, no. 540 (February 25, 2016): 473–76. https://www.nature.com/articles/nature16981

Jordan, Jillian J., Moshe Hoffman, Martin A. Nowak, and David G. Rand. "Uncalculating Cooperation Is Used to Signal Trustworthiness." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 31 (August 2, 2016): 8658–63. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1601280113.

Karch, Marziah. "What Is a Google Bomb." *Lifewire*, May 3, 2018. https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-a-google-bomb-1616351.

Lanier, Jaron. *Ten Arguments For Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now.* Henry Holt and Co., 2018.

Lyon, Meghan. "Radio in the Rwandan Genocide" *The Devil's Tale,* October 5, 2013, https://blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein/2013/05/10/radio-in-the-rwandan-genocide/.

Matsa, Katerina Eva. "Fewer Americans Rely on TV News; What Type They Watch Varies by Who They Are." *Pew Research Center*, January 5, 2018. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/05/fewer-americans-rely-on-tv-news-what-type-they-watch-varies-by-who-they-are/.

Matthews, Dylan. "Everything You Need to Know about the Fairness Doctrine in One Post." *The Wahsington Post*, August 23, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-fairness-doctrine-in-one-post/2011/08/23/gIQAN8CXZJ_blog.html

Mozur, Paul. "A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military" *The New York Times*, October 15, 2018, sec. Technology https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html.

Muchnik, Lev, Sinan Aral, and Sean Taylor. "Social Influence Bias: A Randomized Experiment." *Science* 341 (August 9, 2013): 647–50. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1240466

Campbell, Joseph W. *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies.* Praeger, 2001.

Clogston, Juanita "Frankie." "The Repeal of the Fairness Doctrine and the Irony of Talk Radio: A Story of Political Entrepreneurship, Risk, and Cover." *Journal of Policy History* 28 (March 11, 2016): 375–96. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-policy-history/article/repeal-of-the-fairness-doctrine-and-the-irony-of-talk-radio-a-story-of-political-entrepreneurship-risk-and-cover/

Crockett, Molly. J. "Moral Outrage in the Digital Age." *Nature Human Behaviour* 1, no. 11 (November 2017): 769. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-017-0213-3.

Crockett, Molly J., Luke Clark, Matthew D. Lieberman, Golnaz Tabibnia, and Trevor W. Robbins. "Impulsive Choice and Altruistic Punishment Are Correlated and Increase in Tandem with Serotonin Depletion." *Emotion* (Washington, D.C.) 10, no. 6 (December 2010): 855–62. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019861.

Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 1871.

Davidow, Bill. "Skinner Marketing: We're the Rats, and Facebook Likes Are the Reward." *The Atlantic*, June 10, 2013. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/06/skinner-marketing-were-the-rats-and-facebook-likes-are-the-reward/276613/.

Dieguez, Sebastian. *Total bullshit! : Aux sources de la post-vérité*. Presses Universitaires de France - PUF, 2018.

Fehr, Ernst, and Urs Fischbacher. "Third-Party Punishment and Social Norms." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 25, no. 2 (March 1, 2004): 63–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138(04)00005-4.

Fehr, Ernst, and Simon Gächter. "Altruistic Punishment in Humans." Nature 415 (January 10, 2002): 4. https://www.nature.com/articles/415137a

Ferda Aysan, and Mustafa Savci. "Relationship between Impulsivity, Social Media Usage and Loneliness." *Educational Process: International Journal* 5, no. 2 (March 7, 2016): 106–15. https://doi.org/10.12973/edupij.2016.52.2.

Fincher, Katrina M., and Philip E. Tetlock. "Perceptual Dehumanization of Faces Is Activated by Norm Violations and Facilitates Norm Enforcement." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 145, no. 2 (2016): 131–46. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000132.

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Vintage, 2012.

Henrich, J., Richard McElreath, Abigail Barr, Jean Ensminger, Clark Barrett, Alexander Bolyanatz, Juan Camilo Cardenas, et al. "Costly Punishment Across Human Societies." *Science* 312, no. 5781 (June 23, 2006): 1767–70. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1127333.

Nussbaum, Martha. *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis.* Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Prior, Markus. "Media and Political Polarization." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (February 1, 2013): 101–27. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-100711-135242

Roose, Kevin. The Business of Internet Outrage. *The Daily*, October 31, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/podcasts/the-daily/mad-world-news-facebook-internet-anger.html

Rose-Stockwell, Tobias. "Facebook's Toxic Behavior Problems Can Be Solved with Design." *Quartz*, April 30, 2018. https://qz.com/1264547/facebooks-problems-can-be-solved-with-design/.

———. "How Facebook's News-Feed Algorithm Sells Our Fear and Outrage for Profit — Quartz." *Quartz*, July 28, 2017. https://qz.com/1039910/how-facebooks-news-feed-algorithm-sells-our-fear-and-outrage-for-profit/.

Salerno, Jessica M., and Liana C. Peter-Hagene. "The Interactive Effect of Anger and Disgust on Moral Outrage and Judgments." *Psychological Science* 24, no. 10 (October 2013): 2069–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613486988.

Schiller, Bastian, Thomas Baumgartner, and Daria Knoch. "Intergroup Bias in Third-Party Punishment Stems from Both Ingroup Favoritism and Outgroup Discrimination." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 35, no. 3 (May 2014): 169–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2013.12.006.

Shariff, Azim F., and Jessica L. Tracy. "What Are Emotion Expressions For?" *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20, no. 6 (December 5, 2011). https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411424739

Sobieraj, Sarah., and Jeffrey M. Berry. *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility.* 1 edition. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

———. "From Incivility to Outrage: Political Discourse in Blogs, Talk Radio, and Cable News." *Political Communication* 28, no. 1 (n.d.): 19–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2010.542360

Subramanian, Samanth. "Meet the Macedonian Teens Who Mastered Fake News and Corrupted the US Election." *Wired*, February 15, 2017. https://www.wired.com/2017/02/veles-macedonia-fake-news/.

Tosi, Justin, and Brandon Warmke. "Moral Grandstanding." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 44, no. 3 (July 26, 2017): 197–217. https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12075

Turner, Julia. "The Year Of Outrage." *Slate*, December 17, 2014. http://www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2014/12/the_year_of_outrage_2014_everything_you_were_angry_about_on_social_media.html.

Uzuegbunam, Chikezie, and Sunny Emmanuel Udeze. "Sensationalism in the Media: The Right to Sell or the Right to Tell?" *Journal of Communication and Media Research* 5, no. 1 (April 2013). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304140282_Sensationalism_in_the_media_the_right_to_sell_or_the_right_to_tell

Wade, Nicholas. "Darwin's Evolving Genius." *The New York Times*, February 9, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/09/world/europe/09iht-darwin.4.20058973.html

Wells, Patrick. "Myanmar's Killing Fields." Frontline. *PBS*, May 8, 2018. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/myanmars-killing-fields/.

"What Is Wrong With You People? Hannity on 'Unhinged' Left Harassment of Trump Officials." **Hannity**. *Fox News*, June 25, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtaNapnBlYY.

Wilson, David Sloan. *Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society.* University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Acknowledgments

This work was tutored by Lysianne Lechot-Hirt. I am grateful for her patience, availability and insight.

Special thanks to my father for all the sources and conversations. I am very grateful for my wife, who bore with me through dark days of heavy Hannity consumption, and helped design this book. Thank you to the HEAD Media Design faculty and Remi for their feedback. Thank you Anna for proof-reading.

Finally, a very special thanks to my Facebook network for inspiring this thesis.

Typeface: Suisse International (Swiss Typefaces)

—HEAD
GENÈVE