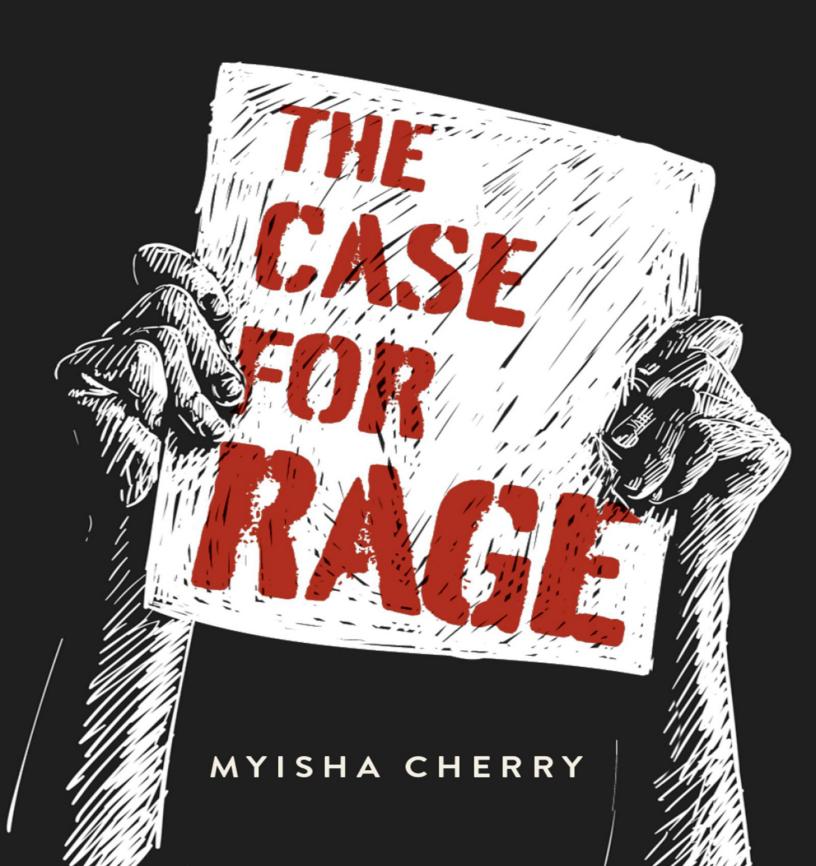
WHY ANGER IS ESSENTIAL TO ANTI-RACIST STRUGGLE



The Case for Rage Why Anger Is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle

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Painting in Broad Strokes

He is meant to be an example, his life a cautionary tale of what happens when you let anger control you—at least that's how many interpret the story. Whether you've read all 15,693 verses of Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* or used the cheat code by staring into Brad Pitt's dreamy eyes for three hours in the 2004 movie *Troy*, you may be somewhat familiar with the story of the Greek hero Achilles *and* his anger.

After feeling slighted when his bride was taken from him by his commander, Achilles—full of anger—temporarily leaves his own army. He refuses to continue to fight in the Trojan War and is tempted to return home. Since he is the real MVP of #TeamGreeks, many of his compatriots would die as he counted his grudges from the sidelines. In Achilles's absence, they would lose one battle after the other. Rage can bring harm to those you care about.

When Hector of #TeamTroy kills Achilles's best friend, only then does he return to battle. He avenges his friend's death. But he goes even further. Unable to tame his anger, Achilles desecrates his enemy's corpse, violating law and custom in battle. Rage can make you lose your mind and morals.

Or at least that's what we are made to think. This is the stereotypical image of anger. It's what most people think of when they think of it. Rage is untamed, lacks reason, and results in chaos. But those who hold this image of anger are making a mistake by thinking this is all that anger is. Anger can be a force for good on the battlefield for justice. We must remember this in the face of urges to abolish it altogether.

Give Anger a Chance

Often when we talk about anger, we paint it in broad strokes. That is to say, we generalize about anger as though it is one thing. The one image or portrait that we paint of anger looks something like the fictional villain Dr. Evil from Mike Myers's *Austin Powers* films. Dr. Evil—as the name implies—is a master of evil and he won't stop until he terrorizes and takes over the world. Similarly, anger in all forms is often illustrated in the same way. It is painted as a villain who has destructive powers and wields terror through whoever happens to be possessed by it, even great heroes like Achilles. It has no nuance, no upside. This generalized, one-dimensional, broad-strokes depiction of anger was first painted by ancient thinkers and is perpetuated by contemporary psychologists and philosophers. It has a long history. And it continues to be just as prevalent today as it was in years past.

The Stoic philosopher Seneca believed that anger "is above all other [emotions] hideous and wild, raging with an utterly inhuman lust for arms, blood and tortures. . . . Anger [is] a short madness: for it is equally devoid of self-control . . . forgetful of kinship." Writing millennia later, psychologists would assert that the action tendency of anger (by which I mean behavior that a person is likely to engage in, given the anger) is retaliation and it "comes with an inclination to attack, humiliate, or otherwise get the person back who is perceived as acting unfairly or immorally."² On the philosophy side, some thinkers argue that the desire for retribution helps us to see "the irrationality and stupidity of anger." Some of those who subscribe to the broad-strokes picture of anger as destructive and uncontrollable, even going back as far as eighth-century Buddhist sage Santideva, recommend its elimination. They think that we should replace anger with meekness or sadness. If we are angry, we should not be for long since revolutionary justice is best served by our transition from anger to generosity and love.4

Anger is often, although not always, painted in broad strokes, while other emotions are not. When we think of love, for example, we view it in its varieties. There is *philia*, which is brotherly love. There is

also *agape*, which is universal love. Then there is romantic love, a love that involves the erotic. Love admits of varieties. There is also conditional and unconditional love, requited and unrequited love, as well as love for virtue and love for vice. Here too, love admits of varieties. These types have distinct targets and action tendencies. And the recognition of their distinctiveness allows us to not only see love's varieties and appreciate its different forms, but it provides us with adequate information to approve or disapprove of a particular type.

Similarly, we should look at anger in its varieties by taking on what I call the *image variation view*. This view appreciates the varieties and complexity that anger contains. In seeing anger in its varieties, we can appreciate that anger, particularly anger at racial injustice, is not necessarily destructive. If it is, it is only destructive to oppressive systems and not to life as we know it.

There is not just one type of anger but many. In the realm of political injustice, we can find at least five types of political anger. As we'll see, recognizing the nuances and types of political anger in all their richness, and thinking about how we can work with them rather than simply reject them, will lead to powerful and important change in our moral and political lives.

Other Variation Artists

Before I provide my own view of anger at racial injustice, it is important to point out that not every person who has written about anger has painted it broadly. A few philosophers have attempted to describe anger's varieties—although this is not a common philosophical move. I call them *variation artists*. We can categorize these thinkers' attempts by the kinds of distinctions they make—which they then use to help determine if the anger is good or bad.⁵

Those in the *concern distinction* camp classify types of anger by what the anger is about or what concerns it manifests. If the anger is about moral concerns, then generally speaking the anger is good. If the anger is about immoral concerns, then the anger is bad. For example, virtuous anger is anger that manifests a concern for

fairness, rights, equality, and the well-being of others.⁶ Vicious anger manifests a lack of concern, ill will, or malice; this is the type of anger you probably think of first, given all its negative connotations. The former is usually captured in the language of "righteous indignation."

According to people in the *intent distinction* camp, we can classify anger as good or bad based on its wish or desire. And that wish helps us determine if the anger is good or bad. Those in this camp think that anger types like payback, pain-passing, and recognition-respect anger differ in what we intend when we are angry. I intend to cause harm when I have payback anger. I intend to cause pain on those who are not responsible for my pain when I have pain-passing anger. And I intend to restore my sense of dignity by making demands for respect when I have recognition-respect anger. Out of these three, it is the latter type that we are more likely to approve of morally. We are less inclined to think that payback or projection is acceptable.

People in the *type distinction* camp believe that anger is very black-and-white. They view types of anger as dichotomies, with one bad and the other good. For example, there is sudden anger and deliberative anger. The former is irrational, partial, and aims at destruction. The latter is rational, impartial, and aims at justice. There's also a contrast between garden-variety anger and transition anger. While garden-variety anger involves protest and payback, transition anger has the protest minus the payback aspect. It takes a stand against wrongdoing but doesn't aim for revenge. Instead, as the anger transitions to love, it aims for generosity. The Greek philosopher Aristotle is also a part of this camp, perhaps its founder. He makes a distinction between anger that lies according to what he calls the mean and anger that does not. Moderated anger is directed at the right thing, at the right time, and to the right degree. Unmoderated anger—you might guess—is all over the place.

I am a variation artist like the aforementioned philosophers. But although their distinctions improve on the broad-strokes view, they do not in fact articulate the various elements of political anger—particularly anger at racial injustice—that concern me. Nor do they explain how the distinctions they describe naturally go together.

None of these possible ways of distinguishing between different types of anger gives us relevant dimensions to describe *and* evaluate anger at racial injustice in particular. This is what is missing.

My aim, though, is not to give my own theoretical account of anger. I am only focused on introducing new categories from which to distinguish political anger types and thus evaluate them properly. Once we know what kind of anger helps drive racial justice, we can pursue and cultivate it without any worry that it's the kind of anger that we want to avoid.

Some Preliminary Points

So how should we distinguish among types of anger in a way that points us toward the types that will lead to racial justice and away from those that will not? We can focus on the *target*, *action tendency*, and *aim* of the anger, as well as the *perspective* that informs the anger. These dimensions are sufficient in distinguishing varieties of anger and determining if a particular variety is good or bad, in the sense of productive or unproductive when it comes to the pursuit of justice—especially racial justice. By "target" I am referring to whom the anger is directed at: yourself, your friend, maybe your country or a certain policy. By "aim" I mean what a person hopes to achieve in a way that is somehow connected to being angry (e.g., the purposes and plans that the anger naturally tends to lead to). The perspective that informs the anger refers to an attitude or way of thinking from which the anger arises.

You may be wondering: is it the person who feels the rage who has a particular aim, or is the aim a function of the emotion? Well, it's both. Emotions motivate us to act in a certain way. They can also influence our beliefs and desires. Yes, we can act or not act, and the emotion can only do its thing through us and in partnership with us. If I say the action tendency of anger is to approach a target, I simply mean that the anger motivates us to do so. What we eventually do is up to us. When I talk about aims, I am talking about emotions influencing our desires and goals. How we allow this desire to influence our behavior is up to us.

My intention is not to describe and defend or criticize every type of anger. To accomplish this task requires more space than this book can provide. This is not to say that my categories are not useful for creating a more generalized account of anger's varieties. It is only to admit my limited focus. My main task is to offer some varieties of anger (defined by the four categories I described earlier) in the context of racial injustice. As I've said, the varieties that I introduce are within the sphere of political anger in general and racial injustice in particular. (I am writing this in the summer of 2020, when the connection between anger and racial justice is maybe more at the top of more readers' minds than it would have been in 2019 or any year before, as protests and other activism reached a crescendo across the United States when many could no longer hold inside their anger at police violence, among other race-based injustices in our country.)

Moreover, the variations that I describe are not exhaustive. We can add other types to the list, but for brevity I only focus on five. We can also add more positive variations, but here I only present one. These distinctions are also not neat. Some variations can have features of another. They can overlap, even run into or transition to the others. The perspective of the rage is also a huge source of the rage. How I think about myself and others will have an impact on the anger I have. A white supremacist and civil rights leader are unlikely to share the same anger, and this has a lot to do with their dissimilar social outlooks. While the anger is paradigmatically born of these perspectives, if you can change the worldview perhaps the anger will change. As we will see, changes in perspective—for example, coming to believe that Black lives do matter—can sometimes cause changes in the kind of anger that we feel.

These variations are also not group essential—by which I mean they are not restricted, by definition, to certain racial groups. I needn't be a member of a particular racial group in order to experience a specific type of anger. And just because I belong to a certain racial group doesn't mean that I will always experience one type of anger over another. An Arab person and an African American person could share the same type of anger. A white Brit and Black South African could also share the same type of anger. While I

provide historical and present-day examples of each account, we should not think that only one racial group can experience one particular type of anger.

Finally, I describe these variations mostly by using the term *rage* instead of *indignation* or *anger*. While it can be said that the use of *rage* points to the irrational, uncontrolled, and dangerous nature of anger in politically charged contexts, at least in a colloquial sense, I do not use the term with reference to this kind of pejorative reputation. Instead, it is following in the tradition of race scholars who embrace the term "Black rage," including bell hooks and Cornel West, as well as feminist scholars like Soraya Chemaly and Brittney Cooper, who use "rage" to describe the anger of women under a patriarchal society. I use the term as a synonym for anger. This rage is not by definition an unbridled anger, rather it is an intense anger in response to incessant injustice. Since I provide anger types that fit this description, "rage" is the term I'll favor.

A Look at Five Varieties

Rogue Rage

Christian Picciolini was fourteen years old when he became a member of a violent neo-Nazi organization. What drew him? By his own account, he was a young white man who felt marginalized, angry, and broken. Through his band, White American Youth, he would go on for eight years to create music that inspired listeners to engage in acts of violence. He also participated in this violence. It served as a vehicle where he and others could project their anger and pain onto innocent people who they thought were responsible for their problems. Christian was not only a white supremacist. He was also a rogue rager.

Rogue rage is anger at injustice, although the target of the anger is not necessarily the person or institution that caused the injustice. A person with rogue rage blames almost everyone for his unjust experiences. His anger is directed at them because almost everyone —at least according to the rogue rager—is responsible for the injustice he senses.

Given this "me versus everyone else" positioning, those with rogue rage have an action tendency to isolate themselves. This doesn't mean that they decide to be alone and angry. They may decide instead to isolate themselves from the general society but opt into small communities that share in their rage, either online or in person. In this way they "go rogue."

The aim of rogue rage is not to find a resolution to experiences of injustice. Those with rogue rage are not looking for new laws to be enacted, polices to be reformed, funding to be distributed, or authorities to listen to their demands for change. This is because the resolution isn't what interests them. Their only aim is to hit back at the world for supposedly hitting at them first. Often this response is physical violence; other times it is not. And the victims of their response are likely to be anyone and everyone. It's not surprising that people like young Christian Picciolini would engage in random acts of violence. Only by hitting back in this kind of way can rogue ragers find any relief or satisfaction.

Rogue ragers do not aim for or think that there can be a resolution, and this is partly because the perspective that informs rogue rage is nihilism. Nihilism is a sense of dread and despair, an absence of belief or hope, that, according to activist and scholar Cornel West, "results from forms of soul craft that put a premium on conquest and domination, mendacity and criminality." In nihilism, hope, meaning, and self-worth dwindle. 14

Recognizing that rogue rage comes from this nihilistic perspective helps us make sense of rogue rage's lack of aim for change. If a person does not have any hope that things will get better, he is less likely to aim and thus work to get it. Examples of rogue rage can include the rage of racist terrorists, but it can equally be racist internet trolls—they act to provoke a response rather than to seek particular resolution to what fuels their rage in the first place.

Wipe Rage

Around one thousand people, consisting of white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and other members of the alt-right and other far-right groups, descended on the campus of the University of Virginia in the summer of 2017 to protest the removal of a Confederate statue of Robert E. Lee. Decked in polo shirts and carrying tiki torches, white men and women marched chanting anti-Black and anti-Semitic statements like, "You will not replace us!" The phrase refers to the belief that whites are on the verge of extinction by nonwhites—and something must be done about it. Their march not only expressed fear, hatred, and desires for white power. It also expressed wipe rage.

Some people may feel a sense of injustice because of their race. They may experience economic disparities and feel ignored by a government system that is supposed to represent and serve them. In response to the injustice, they may experience rage that is aimed at wiping out or eliminating the other. Though this may sound just like rogue rage, it is quite different from it.

The targets of wipe rage are not anyone and everyone, nor are they economic leaders or the government. Racial "others" are the targets. This is not simply a case of pain-passing—where the outraged passes on the pain that they have experienced to those who are not the cause of it. On the contrary, those with wipe rage believe that the racial other *is* the cause of their experiences of injustice and they are often resistant to information that proves the contrary. In this way, the targets of wipe rage are scapegoats. (Think of people who are unemployed, or see the problems in the US job market and blame immigrants from Mexico for "taking our jobs.")

The action tendency of those with wipe rage is to eliminate the scapegoats. This action tendency is possible because of the hatred directed at scapegoats. When we hate others, we often want them to be eliminated. This elimination need not be physical. Those with wipe rage can desire the scapegoats' social death; to take the example of immigrants and jobs, they would aim at the expulsion of immigrants from their country and the banning of future immigration. In other, darker examples, the words "elimination" and "death" are not metaphorical but literal, as with Jews and other marginalized groups whom the Nazis aimed to eliminate entirely in the Holocaust. Elimination is both an action tendency of wipe rage and an aim and goal for its targets.

The perspective that informs wipe rage is a zero-sum-game way of thinking. In this perspective, there is only one winner and one loser.

If you win, then I lose. If I win, then you lose. To ensure that my racial group wins (e.g., gains economic advances), another racial group must lose (e.g., face economic setbacks). Those with wipe rage fail to see that justice is a win-win game. When one group makes advancements, other groups are able to as well.

Ressentiment Rage

Ressentiment rage may sound strange at first, perhaps even redundant. "Ressentiment" is the French translation of the English word "resentment," even though it does not perfectly latch on to what we take resentment to be in English. ¹⁶ But what do I mean by the term?

Ressentiment rage is aimed at a racial group in power and is expressed by those who are without power. It is likely to be directed at all members of the powerful group. I am thinking of an Indigenous person who is angry at *all* white people in America. Given that the racial group in power obtained power through some form of struggle with the now-outraged (genocide in the case of Native peoples), the aim for those with ressentiment rage is revenge. The outraged wishes for revenge as payback for the racial group taking away his group's power. And he may wish for and even cause physical, mental, or status harm as a result. But the outraged also envies his target—for a part of him wishes he was in power. Imagine the Indigenous person who hates all white people, but also wishes he had white people's exploitative power.

The action tendency of ressentiment rage is reactivity. People with ressentiment rage are reactive in the world, always playing defense or making up lost ground—pick a metaphor. In being reactive, they are subjects acted upon. They define themselves only against the other. For example, a person who is reactive only sees himself as confident when he makes others feel insecure or he sees himself as wonderful only when he views others as inferior. Reactive people can only see themselves as a response to and in opposition to others. The Indigenous person, for example, can feel self-respect only by disrespecting whites.

Those with ressentiment rage do not act in the world. People act on them. In being active, on the other hand, a person doesn't require others to be small for him to be big. In addition, he takes something as his object and uses creativity to create the world. He creates a world full of values and improvements.

The perspective that informs ressentiment rage is that the oppressive group is the standard. This "reactive" preoccupation with the powerful racial group makes the oppressor the point of reference. It defines the terms in which the outraged think and act (making any response that they have more akin to reactivity rather than activity). This makes the outraged think of and judge themselves against the racial, dominating other. The powerful becomes the outraged's obsession. And the outraged's eye becomes focused on the powerful group and not on their own flourishing future.¹⁷ Another example of ressentiment rage could be the colonized who might both want to enact revenge on the colonizers while envying them at the same time.

Narcissistic Rage

In August 2018 a white man, Dr. Jeffrey Epstein, was detained by police at an Orlando airport for being unruly. As police forced him to the ground, Epstein screamed, "You're being rough with me! You're treating me like a f*cking Black person." Recognizing the irony but also the asymmetry between his perceived treatment and the treatment of Black folks, the subtitle of the *GQ* article covering this incident read, "Despite This, He Was Not Shot." While there are several ways that we could read the viral video, the second part of his reaction is worth analysis. Though the statement could be quickly read as an analogy of mistreatment, it points to—at least as I see things—narcissistic rage.

bell hooks coined the term *narcissistic rage* in her 1995 book *Killing Rage*. An example of people she describes as having this rage are Black elites. She notes that when some Black elites are outraged, it is not at white supremacy that exploits and oppresses Black people. Rather, they are outraged because although they have worked hard and risen through the ranks—gaining much social

capital and even acceptance by some whites—they face the reality that "they are not exempt from racist assault." A sense of exceptionalism and not a sense of systemic injustice motivates the rage. These Black elites are outraged because their perceived exemption status has not been taken seriously. And it has not been given uptake because oppressive powers refuse to make a distinction between them and other members of the oppressed group.

In this way, hooks's analysis and example map onto the Orlando airport situation. Narcissistic rage can apply to people at opposite ends of the privileged scale. So let's flesh out narcissistic rage a little more.

Who is the target of narcissistic rage? It is not oppressive forces, institutional racism, or white supremacy. The target is "those who target me." In other words, those who are narcissistically outraged are not angry at racial injustice and forces that enact, enforce, and are complicit in it. Instead, they are mad at only those forces that target them as individuals. They are mad at the police who target them and not a biased police department that may also target a particular community. They are not angry at a white supremacist system that discriminates against certain immigrants. Rather, they are angry at a system that doesn't allow people *like them* individually to succeed—or yell freely at an airport.

The action tendency of those who are narcissistically outraged is to express their place within a particular hierarchy. Part of their protest involves proclaiming and reiterating their place within the overall system. So, unsurprisingly, they express that they "are not a Black person" or at least not like the nonelite ones. (Not surprisingly, this does little to advance the anti-racist cause.) This tendency also reveals an indifference to the sufferings of others—because the kinds of injustice or mistreatment that they are experiencing are only relevant given that they are the victims. They are indifferent to those who are suffering under the same oppressive system.

We see this phenomenon not only across racial and class lines, but based on gender and sexual orientation as well. Those with narcissistic rage may think that the only Black lives that matter are straight Black men—or maybe even specifically their own Black life.

They are indifferent to violence against Black trans and cis women. And the expression of their narcissistic rage is to signal the hierarchal place of straight Black men above Black trans and cis women. This is comparable to the narcissistic rage that leads cis white feminists to agitate for equality for "women," when they are only trying to advance the rights of women just like themselves—not women of color or trans women.

There are other options on the table. In hooks's view, the narcissistically outraged could link their rage to "progressive challenge and critique of white supremacy rooted in solidarity with the [other] masses." But instead they focus on themselves, their privilege, and their status. This reveals that the aim of narcissistic rage is not to change a racist system, dismantle privilege, or fight for the unheard. Rather, the aim is "justice . . . just for me." The aim of narcissistic rage is for the outraged to be treated better than those who fall outside of their level of privilege.

The perspective that underlies narcissistic rage is not merely excessive self-importance, although those who have this rage will feel that they are more important than others. But it is also an egocentric self-entitlement that determines what, for whom, and to what extent they are outraged. The perspective that a person is a special case, separate and different from all others, and should be treated accordingly is what informs narcissistic rage.

* * *

Given the targets, aims, action tendencies, and perspectives of rogue, wipe, ressentiment, and narcissistic rage, we can clearly see why these types of rage are morally and politically problematic and why they should be criticized. And by being problematic in the particular ways we've seen, they bring shame to rage's name—especially for those who are so hasty that they paint it in broad strokes. The diverse categorical distinctions I have provided help us see why this is the case. Remember, wipe rage aims to eliminate others through hate, ressentiment rage reproduces oppressive actions, and narcissistic rage shows an indifference to the suffering of others and projects a sense of superiority. These aims and tendencies are not only unethical but can produce harmful effects in

the world. But not all anger looks like them. While we can see how these variations might obstruct racial justice and even perpetuate injustice, another variation stands out from all the rest that deserves our attention. It is our best hope.

Lordean Rage

Lordean rage contrasts with the other types of rage in stark ways. It is this anger type that I explore and make the case for throughout the rest of this book. Named after the Black feminist scholar and poet Audre Lorde (and based on my reading of her essays on anger and race), Lordean rage, as I conceive of it, is a type that plays an important role in anti-racist struggle and is not necessarily destructive. (From here on, know that when I refer to "rage" or "anti-racist anger," I'm speaking about Lordean rage in particular.) Although I use Lorde's work about anger and race to help theorize Lordean rage, the conception of Lordean rage is my own.

Lorde defines *racism* as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied."²¹ The targets of Lordean rage are those who are complicit in and perpetrators of racism and racial injustice. This type of anger is directed at racist actions, racist attitudes, and presumptions (of people) that arise out of those attitudes. These needn't come from powerful forces from afar. These attitudes and actions can (and often do) come from people who profess solidarity with the racially marginalized.

The action tendency of Lordean rage is to absorb and use it for energy. As the title of Lorde's influential essay "Uses of Anger" suggests, anger has its benefits. And Lordean rage is useful if it is focused with precision and translated into needed action. In this way, Lordean rage is metabolized anger—"the virtuous channeling of the power and energy of anger without the desire to harm or pass pain."²² It is a call to "fight injustice and respect the reality of one's anger without being destroyed by it."²³

Note that this anger is *transformative anger* and not *transition anger*.²⁴ For Martha Nussbaum in particular—in her 2016 book *Anger and Forgiveness*—revolutionary justice can only occur after

anger transitions to generosity and love. Lordean rage, on the other hand, doesn't need to disappear or transition to something else in order to achieve certain results. Instead, it is morally, politically, and epistemically useful for transformative ends as it is. Put another way, rogue, wipe, and narcissistic rage do look like the kinds of anger that need to be replaced with something else before you can have sustained progress (even if they might be useful for justice in a sporadic, contingent, lucky way now and then). But Lordean rage is a kind that is well suited to maintain itself just as it is, without needing to get out of the way so that "better" emotions can get to work.

At what is Lordean rage aimed? Its aim is change. Change could mean to make worse or to return to a previous, unjust state. Those who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, for example, wanted America to return to its racist past. But Lorde helps us to see that the change she was concerned with was not "a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good." It is instead "a basic and radical alteration in all those assumptions underlining our lives." Lordean rage aims for this kind of change—not destruction of the good or elimination of the other, but change in racist beliefs, expectations, policies, and behaviors that shape and support white supremacy. This anti-racist rage can be used to engage in action that brings about such a change.

The perspective that informs Lordean rage is best put in Lorde's own words: "I am not free while any [other] is unfree." Freedom is not exclusive. It is inclusive. And those who desire it in this way embrace those whose "shackles are different from our own" rather than selected members of a particular group. Lorde was not only concerned about justice for well-educated Black women like herself. She was also concerned about the poor and those in developing nations. We can learn from this.

This inclusive perspective helps us to see that if we fail to "recognize them as other faces of [ourselves]," then we are contributing not only to their oppressions but also to our own.²⁷ This makes Lordean rage quite different from narcissistic and wipe rage. Absent this perspective, the outraged are only fighting for "their own"

and the rage is bound to be destructive since it is indifferent to the sufferings of others. Without this perspective, the outraged may see others as the cause of their own suffering when instead they are fellow sufferers, themselves outraged for other reasons. But Lordean rage's inclusivity allows it to escape some of the poisons of the other variations and reach its goal.

Someone might think that in developing my account of Lordean rage, I have just picked all the potentially positive features of anger and packaged them. Why are the features I have attached to Lordean rage what they are—naturally? Well, I think these features are naturally bundled together for several reasons. When your anger is a response to racism (a widespread phenomenon, system, and structure), you or one other person are never the only victims. Your response to racism is a response to all of those fallen victims. Therefore, the perspective that informs it is likely to be freedom for all, even if you and those close to you are no longer vulnerable to racism. And since anger, in general, has an approach action tendency (more on this in Chapter 3), the person with Lordean rage would aim to tackle racism head-on by seeking to change the world, so that racism is no more.

This helps us see why the features of the other types of rage, like narcissistic rage, are also naturally bundled. If a person is only angry at racial injustice when it affects them and no one else, this says a lot about what they think about themselves and what they aim to do. If I am indifferent to the sufferings of other people who look like me, but not my own suffering, perhaps I think that something is special or unique about me. In a racial schema, perhaps I think I am the exception, superior. This will affect what I believe, desire, and aim to do. So, it makes sense that narcissistic rage would have the features it has.

This is not to say that Lordean rage is by definition virtuous and that, if it goes wrong, we cannot criticize it since at such a failure point, it ceases to be Lordean rage. Lordean rage manifests with a particular set of features and is likely to go right, but it can go wrong in a limited number of cases for understandable or foreseeable reasons. (I say more about this in Chapter 2.) For example, Lordean rage can go wrong when I invest my full emotional life in responding

to wrongdoers at the neglect of loving and being attentive to those with whom I am in solidarity. In this case, it causes me to abandon people who are in my circle of concern. Lordean rage can also go wrong when it causes me to abandon not only other-directed care but also self-care. The outraged person can be so angry at injustice and motivated to pursue justice for all that she neglects tending to her own psychological needs. Also, since racial injustice is persistent, the temptation to constantly express and act in response to this rage—at all times, no matter how productive—can burden the outraged person. If Lordean rage leads a person to think they must fight every fight, never taking a break to recover, it can cause burnout and distress. So Lordean rage being apt or fitting depends on circumstances.

You may have noticed that I have not talked about feel, intensity, or duration within these accounts. This may lead you to assume that I do not think these political anger types have any unique feel to them, for example. And if they have no feel, then why should we call them anger? The omission was intentional. But the reasoning is quite different from what you might assume.

I have omitted giving attention to the categories of feel, intensity, and duration because, while I admit they are present in these varieties of anger, I do not think they determine, in definitive ways, what makes one variation different from the others. A person with wipe rage may experience the same phenomenological feel of anger as the person with rogue rage. A person's narcissistic rage may be as intense as someone else's Lordean rage. A person's ressentiment rage may last as long as someone's wipe rage. Even if the intensity of rogue rage is stronger than wipe rage, I do not think this says anything significant about endorsing it or not, nor whether it has good political uses. More must be said, and I hope that my explanation of these various types of rage has at least begun to address this.

The image variation view gives us additional information to determine whether the anger critics are right or wrong about their generalized picture of anger as necessarily bad. It gives us a clearer picture of what anger can look like within a political context of racial concerns. But it also helps us see where the mistakes of the anger

critics lie. The real target of anger critics is not anger. It is actually only *some* anger variations. Lordean rage is one variation (among possible others) that escapes their criticisms.

Who Can Experience Lordean Rage?

You might be wondering at this point if Lordean rage is just virtuous Aristotelian anger with a political, anti-racist twist. And if it is what some people might then call *noble rage*, is it also—in Aristotle's sense—something that only the virtuous person can have and sustain? I understand the worry behind this question. It may seem that Lordean rage is not something to which we're naturally given. It also seems that it will be hard work for many to become the kind of person who can have Lordean rage. Is Lordean rage, then, an exclusive emotion that only a few noble souls are capable of feeling?

Thankfully, the answer is no. It's easy to think that Lordean rage is not something to which we are *naturally* given. What we are naturally given to when we are angry at a sibling, for example, is a desire to hit or lash out at them. In this way, you might accept that the *natural* action tendency of anger is retaliation, and any opposing tendency is either superhuman or supervirtuous. However, this kind of thinking stems from a broad-strokes picture of anger, which, as we've seen, leads us astray. More specifically, it says that anger motivates us in only one way. I am trying to challenge this very idea. As I show in the next few chapters, many people, motivated by Lordean rage, have engaged in positive action, thereby showing that we are all capable of Lordean rage.

Does Lordean rage require me to be a noble soul? I do not think so. I could have a destructive kind of anger directed at my brother and a constructive kind of anger directed at racists. (Both kinds of anger can coexist in me—I contain multitudes!) The presence of the former may show that I'm not so morally perfect after all. It doesn't cancel out the possibility of Lordean rage directed at racists. To put it simply, Lordean rage does not require the extremely hard moral work that we think it does or more character work than other emotions like compassion. Yes, it stands in sharp contrast to a rage that aims to eliminate others based on hate (wipe rage). But this doesn't mean

that to then direct our anger at racists requires something as extreme as moral perfection. It may require that we recognize wrongdoing. But it doesn't require that we have excellence of character in order to aim for change. Maybe all we need to have is the desire for something morally and politically better. In other words, it's possible that Lordean rage may require us to have moral sensitivity and moral imagination, but not necessarily moral excellence. It is within reach.

Now, for some people, their natural dispositions and social positioning may make them more suited for Lordean rage. For example, those whose lives are more socially vulnerable may be more likely to respond with Lordean rage given their intersectional understanding and thus their acceptance of the perspective that informs Lordean rage (I am not free until we all are free). It is therefore not surprising that the figure who inspired my account of anger—Audre Lorde—is a Black lesbian. Lorde had an intersectional understanding of oppression and was aware of the ways that oppression can negatively affect everyone. Also, a person who is optimistic or proactive may be more likely to respond with Lordean rage given their view of the world and their disposition to actively engage with it. But dispositions are not synonymous with moral traits of perfection.

Lastly, there are three practical reasons why we should resist the idea that only noble souls can exhibit Lordean rage. For Aristotle, the virtuous man is rare. Virtue or excellence of character is something we aim for, but rarely achieve. Lordean rage is not rare, however. It is attainable and there are many examples of it out in the world. (I have not written this book for the rare breed or the emotional equivalent of W. E. B. Du Bois's famous "Talented Tenth," but for lots of ordinary folks who have, in many instances already, experienced Lordean rage.)

If Lordean rage requires a noble soul and being noble is rare, it may be hard for people to recognize Lordean rage when it appears or may easily dismiss it when it appears—referring to it as narcissistic or rogue rage—based on its perceived rarity. They may think that Lordean rage's rarity gives us decisive reasons to default to doubt when it appears. This presents an additional roadblock to

achieving the emotional intelligence of which I am trying to persuade readers. (More on this later.)

We also need to be careful not to paint those with Lordean rage as moral saints—people we should admire but can never hope to be. Doing so can make us think that we are off the moral hook from acting in certain ways and are therefore justified in retreating into indifference, or wipe or ressentiment rage. But if we think about Lordean rage as something exceptional and rare, we can make the mistake of thinking that those who are more likely to have Lordean rage (the oppressed) are moral saints. While this may sound positive, it can become another way of making them the other, and setting them apart. While giving people moral credit is not disrespectful, it can feed into the trope of the oppressed as morally virtuous people whose virtue alone will save us all. This is a lot to put on the shoulders of those already oppressed. People with Lordean rage "are not goddesses or matriarchs . . . fiery fingers of judgment," but have simply "learned to use anger." 29 We can all learn to use anger. Lordean rage is attainable for everyone. Painting people with Lordean rage as moral saints also sets a really high bar for how the oppressed must act—a bar we do not set for those in power. Another injustice is perpetuated when you have to be morally perfect to be an acceptable person of color but can just be your average (moral) Joe if you're white.

Why Does This Matter?

I have not provided these varieties in order to fight with critics of anger or to indulge in the game of making distinctions for distinctions' sake. (This is something for which analytic philosophers are known.) Rather, I think that taking an image variation view instead of a broad-strokes picture matters for our moral and political lives.

It allows us to have a more nuanced conversation about political anger. Instead of constantly debating whether a case of anger is good or bad, we can talk about several variations of anger and discuss not merely their goodness or badness but their targets, action tendencies, aims, and perspectives. Trust me, this makes for a more interesting discussion.

The image variation view can also help us improve our emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, express, and control our emotions. It is also the ability to effectively respond to others. The more we know what we could be feeling, the more we are able to name it. This will also help us in how we respond to others. Instead of simply judging any manifestation of anger as destructive, we can identify the variation or a particular category and respond to it more appropriately than if we only had the broad-strokes view.

This view also helps us embrace emotional diversity. Emotional diversity, as I see it, is recognizing that we are unique, and that not all people have the disposition to experience the same emotions in response to the same cause. While some people may respond to racial injustice with sadness or compassion, others may respond with anger. Emotional diversity makes room for expressions of a variety of fitting emotions in response to a particular cause—emotions that are not only targeted toward wrongdoers but also victims.

The point here is not that everyone should be angry. This would be an unfair argument to make, since we cannot will ourselves to feel any emotion. I cannot decide at this moment to be sad. This is not to say that I cannot participate in activities that might help me generate the emotion, like recalling a traumatic event or watching a dramatic television series or the news. Still there are no guarantees that these activities will generate the emotion. To therefore say I should feel any particular emotion at a particular time seems impossible even just based on a mild "ought implies can" principle (meaning that in order to be able to say you ought to do something you have to be able to do that thing in the first place). Likewise, I do not think that anyone should argue that we should never feel anger since, as I argue in Chapter 2, not only is it an emotion that arises as a response to wrongdoing but it can also be a fitting and morally appropriate response to racial wrongdoing. We should be able to feel a variety of apt emotions in response to wrongdoing.

Anger is a *fitting emotion* to wrongdoing, although it is not the *only* emotion. We might include emotions other countercontempt, an emotion that is a response to the vices of arrogance and pride.30 We might also include emotions such as compassion, which is a response to victims. Emotional diversity allows for a variety of emotional experiences and expressions that myriad attentiveness, provide forms of communication, and action. Anger makes us attentive to wrongdoing and motivates us to pursue justice. Compassion is a response to victims, and it motivates us to be attentive to them. Emotional diversity is important because it allows us to attend to several relevant parties and be motivated to respond in a variety of ways, among other things. What I hope the image variation view makes room for is the freedom to experience anger variations. Here I offer one positive option to aim for from a sea of morally problematic ones.

If we embrace emotional diversity, this makes room for tactical diversity in the fight against racial injustice. Tactical diversity is the ability to employ several actions to defeat an opponent. For example, to succeed as a mixed martial arts fighter, just knowing how to box will not do. It will be advantageous for the fighter to also know jujitsu or muay thai—other fighting styles. In this way, she can have a variety of tools in her arsenal to defeat her opponent. This can also be applied to fights against racism. Lordean rage won't be the best tool for everyone to use in combating all occasions of racial injustice, but it is among one of the best options, as we'll see.

All these together can help those committed to anti-racism achieve justice and equality. Compassion, as a response to wrongdoing, informs the ways in which we might respond to and deal with wrongdoing. For example, compassionate tactics may include more education for the offender and compensation efforts for the victim. And anger tactics may include blaming politicians and pressuring them to pass legislation. Combined, these tactics, although different in the results they achieve, provide a variety of ways to respond to injustice. The inclusion of a particular anger variety as a response to racial wrongdoing puts more tactical options on the table.

If all of this sounds tenable, then what should we do next? Recall that in the beginning of this chapter, I said that a broad-strokes picture of anger impacts the actions a person recommends. If anger is necessarily evil, then you might suggest that we eliminate or replace it. But based on the image variation view, we now have reasons why some variations are more morally concerning than others. If an anger is likely to go right, then eliminating and replacing all anger should not be our default options.

Lordean rage is not just acceptable—it is what we need desperately. We should cultivate it, guard it, and use it in anti-racist struggle. Why and how we should do this will become clear soon.