

The Rage of the Disesteemed: Anger, Politics and Epistemic Agency

DAN TAYLOR 

The Open University

Abstract:

Recent political mobilisations of anger – from the January 6 Capitol riot to the racial justice protests following the murder of George Floyd – have reinvigorated philosophical debates about anger’s role in democratic politics. Existing responses tend to polarise between anger-as-threat (Nussbaum) and anger-as-resistance (Srinivasan; Cherry) views, each preoccupied with the question of justification: when, if ever, is anger apt? This paper argues that such justification-centred approaches, while important, fail to capture anger’s significance as a contextual social and political phenomenon, and in particular its protean capacity to power both emancipatory resistance and reactionary backlash. Reframing anger as indignation – anger with an argument – I propose an alternative framework drawing on Benedict de Spinoza’s theory of the affects, and especially on the late naturalistic Spinoza of the *Political Treatise*, for whom indignation is a political fact to be understood rather than moralised. Indignation, so framed, is best analysed as a signal and diagnostic tool: neither inherently anti-democratic nor intrinsically allied to justice, its democratic significance depends on how it is channelled and the kinds of collectives it generates. I distinguish two aspects of indignation’s relation to agency – the motivational and the epistemic – arguing that while its motivational force is considerable, its epistemic power is limited unless organised toward understanding the causes of the wrongdoing it responds to. On that basis I develop a contrast between ‘communities of indignation’, united by a shared sense of grievance and a moralisation of politics into us-and-them, and ‘collectives of resistance’, which harness indignation to consciousness-raising, coalition-building and the Spinozan cultivation of common notions. Rather than purifying public discourse of anger, I argue, democratic politics requires the critical transmutation of the rage of the disesteemed into an insurgent rationality of co-liberation.

Keywords: anger; indignation; affect; Spinoza; Sara Ahmed; collectives of resistance.

1. Introduction

The rage of the disesteemed is personally fruitless, but it is also absolutely inevitable; this rage, so generally discounted, so little understood even among the people whose daily bread it is, is one of the things that makes history.

James Baldwin, ‘Stranger in the Village’ (1955: 165)

On 6 January 2021, in what the *New York Times* called the ‘Day of Rage’, supporters of the defeated US President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol building, attempting to overturn the election result. Many of them believed that the US election had been rigged, and their rioting was a means of lashing out at duplicitous lawmakers and implement what they believed to be the true democratic result of the election. The riot led to nine deaths, the injuring of more than 100 police officers, and the charging of over 850 rioters by federal prosecutors (Khavin et al. 2021). Such insurrectionary anger had not emerged *ex nihilo*; Trump, throughout his three

presidential campaigns, has effectively mobilised the anger of mostly white American males against a phantasmagoria of villains out to deceive and cheat ‘hard-working Americans’, be it ‘Crooked Hillary’, ‘Sleepy Joe’, ‘Slimeball Comey’, ‘shithole countries’, Mexican ‘rapists’, ‘pet-eating’ Haitians, the ‘fake news’ media, ‘woke’ ideology or, purporting to ‘drain the swamp’ of Washington D.C. corruption and the wider power of ‘un-American’ elites. This mobilisation of anger has been enormously consequential, transforming not just the Republican Party and the American right, but taking the presidency on two occasions, the latter in 2024 through the popular vote, particularly with the votes of angry American men. ‘I get so angry, I’m up here seething’, Donald Trump said at a rally in Wisconsin, days before the 2024 election (Fernández 2024); a remark that attests to Trump’s extraordinary capacity to communicate and channel such anger, as well as its remarkable consequences in reshaping democratic politics. In one of his earliest executive orders of 2025, Trump pardoned and released the rioters at the Capitol. As he had promised on the campaign trail, ‘I am your retribution’ (Smith 2023).

The troubling events of the Capitol and their aftermath illustrate the power of anger to shape political action and discourse in contemporary democracies. They also raise urgent questions about anger’s proper role in democratic politics. When, if ever, is anger an appropriate political response to perceived wrongs? What are anger’s effects on civic culture and democratic institutions? How should democracies address the anger of their citizens?

These questions have provoked a wide range of responses from political philosophers. Some, like Martha Nussbaum (2016; 2018), regard anger as fundamentally corrosive to democratic values. In this view, anger is an inherently retributive emotion that cannot be trusted to track justice and that, when used as a political tool, undermines democratic norms of mutual respect and the capacity to understand one another and compromise. Call this the anger-as-threat view. Fuelled by what Pankaj Mishra calls a ‘global turn to authoritarianism and toxic forms of chauvinism’ (2017: 14), anger is an unhealthy, ‘intoxicated’ but additive malady that, for Josh Cohen, simultaneously offers up the fantasy of omnipotent cathartic release while reinforcing our weakness and disempowerment (2024: 73). The anger-as-threat view calls for anger to be healed and replaced with something more salutary. For Mishra, ‘transformative thinking’ about ‘the self and the world’ (2017: 346); for Nussbaum, ‘practical hope’ and ‘Transition-Anger’ that moves from retribution towards love and reconciliation (2018: 205).

Other philosophers argue that anger, when rooted in genuine experiences of injustice, is not only appropriate but also politically necessary. Amia Srinivasan (2018) and Myisha Cherry (2021) argue that ‘apt’ anger in the face of oppression is essential for motivating and sustaining resistance, disrupting unjust status quos and driving progressive political change. In this view, the anger-as-threat position rests on an overly narrow conception of anger that devalues its emancipatory potential and reflects a misguided effort to police the emotions of the oppressed (Srinivasan 2018: 134–6; Cherry 2021: 31). Although such anger can lead to mistakes or emotional burnout, for Cherry, anger ‘provides the eagerness, optimism, and self-belief needed to fight against persistent and powerful racist people and systems’ (2021: 6). Let’s call this the anger-as-resistance view.

Much of this debate revolves around the question of anger’s justification or warrant – that is, specifying the conditions under which anger qualifies as an appropriate response to injustice. This paper argues that this justification-centred approach, while important and insightful, fails to fully capture anger’s significance as a political phenomenon. Focusing on the ‘fittingness’ of anger obscures its complex, context-dependent social and political manifestations.

Instead, this paper proposes that a more productive framework for theorising anger's role in democratic politics would focus on how anger shapes distinct kinds of political communities and modes of relating to perceived injustice. Specifically, I argue for distinguishing between what I call 'communities of indignation' and 'collectives of resistance'. Communities of indignation are united primarily by their shared sense of victimisation and grievance; their identity is defined and communicated through a mutual reinforcement of anger at an opposing political faction. Such communities of indignation tend to become defined by inclusion/exclusion, a moralisation of politics into good and bad actors, emotional burnout of members and disengagement and antipathy from non-members. Collectives of resistance, by contrast, are galvanised by a common commitment to understanding and systematically addressing the deeper causes of a given injustice, combining anger's motivational force with practices of critical reflection, consciousness-raising and coalition building. Collectives of resistance understand that societies are best served by simultaneously widening democratic participation in decision-making as far as possible and increasing public understanding of social and political issues as much as possible. Where that democratic power does not exist, collectives of resistance demand it, with their indignation harnessed to understanding.

Shifting the focus from anger's justification to its variable socio-political expressions gives us a more nuanced reckoning with anger's ambivalent relationship to democracy. Drawing on Benedict de Spinoza's theory of the affects (1985; 2016), I show how this distinction can help us better understand anger's contrasting roles in animating or undermining democratic politics. As I will argue, anger is neither inherently anti-democratic nor intrinsically allied to justice. Its significance for democracy depends on how it is channelled and the kinds of collectives it generates.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 critiques philosophical approaches to anger's role that focus primarily on justification, arguing that they neglect anger's significance as a social force to be interpreted rather than simply be justified. Section 3 makes the case for reframing anger as 'indignation', foregrounding anger's ambivalent democratic status as a mode of contestation and setting it out in terms of a signal and diagnostic tool. Section 4 develops a Spinozan framework for further clarifying and understanding indignation's political manifestations and effects, and its relation to the capacity to act. Building on this foundation, Section 5 sets out two models, communities of indignation and collectives of resistance, considering their divergent modes of solidarity formation and transformative agency. I then conclude, in Section 6, by reflecting on the implications of this analysis for the challenges of using indignation for democratic renewal.

2. The Limits of Justification-Based Approaches

The urgent questions raised by the Capitol riot and the wider political mobilisation of anger by Donald Trump have reinvigorated philosophical debates about anger's role in democratic politics. As we saw, one prominent strand of this debate, exemplified by Martha Nussbaum's work, sees anger as a threat to core democratic values and healthy functioning.

For Nussbaum, indignation is inherently harmful because it is retributive and focused on payback. It is a 'poison to democratic politics' and the task of the philosopher is to 'resist anger in ourselves and inhibit its role in our political culture' (2018: 68). Although a handful of instances of indignation can be useful in signalling wrongdoing and motivating resistance, for political progressives, indignation should be 'purified' of its retributive tendencies and replaced

with love (ibid.: 222). The paradigm of love is the relation of good parents to children: if the children do something wrong, the parents may be ‘angry’, but instead of punishing them, they reason with them. Why? Because they love them. Likewise, we should love our fellow citizens. If we were to do so, fear would evaporate, and anger would be redirected from the past to the future (in a process that Nussbaum calls ‘Transition-Anger’) for the sake of the common good.

In *Anger and Forgiveness*, Nussbaum employs Aristotle’s treatment of anger (*orgé*) in the *Rhetoric* to make this case. She interprets Aristotle’s view of anger as ‘a desire accompanied by pain for an imagined retribution on account of an imagined slighting inflicted by people who have no legitimate reason to slight oneself or one’s own’ (2016: 17). Note the emphasis on a perceived slight and the desire to retaliate. Nussbaum maintains that such anger often leads either to ‘narcissistic’ self-concern about perceived slights to status, or to ‘magical thinking’ that harming the wrongdoer will somehow remove our pain (ibid.: 24–5). In its place, Nussbaum makes the case for ‘Transition-Anger’, anger that emerges from moral outrage and that, rather than focusing on retrospective retributive urges, ‘focuses on social welfare from the start’ and ‘commits itself to a search for strategies’ (ibid.: 39; cf. Nussbaum 2018: 74). The civil rights tradition is repeatedly invoked as a model of protest without payback, a ‘patient and forbearing disposition to see and seek the good rather than to harp obsessively on the bad’ (ibid.: 250). But a movement embodying these qualities requires a number of elusive things: a belief that difficult, time-consuming campaigns aimed at amelioration or reform can succeed; access to potentially sympathetic politicians or media; and even the bare practical knowledge about how to organise. Riots – what Dr King once called ‘the language of the unheard’ – often involve those who lack such belief, connections, know-how or voice (King 2015: 239).

Nussbaum does not challenge the idea that anger contributes to agency in the motivational sense. Anger, alongside many other things, does motivate justice campaigns. However, if not sufficiently guided and purified, the initial motivational force that anger supplies can endanger and toxify such campaigns, rendering the emotion ultimately detrimental to motivational agency. Furthermore, without transitioning to compassion and forgiveness, anger hinders epistemic agency, because Nussbaum regards angry people as being too fixated on payback to pay sufficient regard to the causes of the wrongdoing.¹

As an opponent of attempts to justify political violence, Nussbaum’s well-meaning moral critique of anger requires that anger and fear be disciplined. However, her use of Aristotle, upon whom her account of anger relies, is selective. Her summary of *Rhetoric* 2 omits an important section in his discussion of *orgé* as a response to ingratitude (a failure to recognise benefits, help, obligation, affiliation or solidarity between people). Angry people do not merely resent insults to their own status: they consider it unfair to be treated badly by someone whom they have treated well (Aristotle 2007: 1379b17–18; b24). This insight is helpful in explaining forms of ‘bad anger’ for which Nussbaum might have little sympathy, such as that espoused by France’s *gilets jaunes*, many of whom were retirees, who took to the streets for months to protest what they saw as insufficient reward for their contributions to the economy. It reflects what Arlie Russell Hochschild described as the ‘deep story’ of working class white American conservatives she interviewed in the wake of Trump’s first presidential campaign: the image of waiting patiently in a line as one worked throughout one’s life for the modest rewards of the American Dream, then feeling enraged and cheated at apparent ‘line cutters’ aided by the ‘betrayal’ of liberal elites (2016: 135–40).

Conversely, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* contains resources for an understanding of *orgé* as something proportionate and virtuous. Between the excess of irascibility and the deficiency of slavish submission of those indifferent to offence, Aristotle places the virtue that

permits us to ‘get angry with the right people, at the right things, in the right way’ (Aristotle 2004: 1126b). Although we should evaluate expressions of anger by the contexts in which they occur, anger can nonetheless reflect courage and spiritedness in the pursuit of ‘what is noble’ and can demonstrate fitness to command (ibid.: 1116b; 1126b). Against Nussbaum’s reading, then, anger can become a useful political emotion.

If Nussbaum is critical of justifications of anger, and so sets out a justification of other political emotions, there is another line of thought which justifies anger as a morally and politically legitimate response to oppression. For Lindebaum and Geddes, moral anger is elevated above everyday anger by its altruism, in ‘upholding moral standards, seeking fair treatment, and protecting those more vulnerable’ (2016: 740–1). Although the authors provide relevant (liberal) examples of anger’s mobilisation and moralisation into a form of ‘good anger’, e.g. whistleblowing, anti-racism campaigns, they overlook more complex and frequent displays of indignation that involve a shared evaluation of grievance or loss of power, like, say, right-wing indignation over the locations of refugee hostels and women’s safety. Consider, for instance, right-wing protesters assembling to protest at a hotel housing refugees, and anti-fascists mobilising to defend the inhabitants: the literature on moral anger can explain only the motivations of the latter. Both are examples of indignation, regardless of whether one agrees with either rationale.

Some respond to this discussion of indignation by running into a dead end, chasing examples of what Srinivasan calls ‘apt’ moral anger directed at a ‘genuine normative violation’ (2018: 130). Discussing what she calls ‘Lordean Rage’ (named after Audre Lorde), Cherry argues that it is ‘fully and unequivocally justifiable because it correctly tracks the violation (racism) and wrongdoers (their racist attitudes, actions, etc.)’ and is ‘more likely to correctly represent racial injustice’ than other forms of rage (Cherry 2021: 39). The examples tend to serve existing (often liberal or anti-racist) positions at the exclusion of a large array of (often conservative) socio-political phenomena from analysis. What constitutes a genuine normative or moral violation versus a non-genuine one? In most cases, indignant individuals and communities could supply some normative moral framework to support their sense of wrongdoing. The issue is that, in a democracy, these frameworks might differ in values or coherence. The supposition that appropriate moral anger requires a ‘genuine’ normative violation smuggles in a universalist (possibly deontological) understanding of morality that supplies monolithic non-contextual answers to the questions of what is morally good or bad. In that sense, for instance, the indignation of supporters of open borders would be moral, whereas that of right-wing xenophobes would be immoral. Such a view of moral anger is too narrow.

While this debate helpfully foregrounds anger’s moral and political status, the intense focus on justification obscures anger’s significance as a contextual social phenomenon. The reality is that substantial numbers of citizens in democracies feel angry about perceived injustices, and so seek to mobilise that anger for different political ends, regardless of whether that anger is apt or proportionate. Focusing on justification alone misses how anger operates as a political force, one that can fuel both emancipatory change and reactionary backlash.

Consider two recent manifestations of anger: the racial justice protests following the murder of George Floyd (a central reference point for Cherry’s 2021 analysis), and the January 6 Capitol riots fuelled by false claims of electoral fraud. Certainly, the question of whether the anger was justified matters. But my argument is that it is just as important, from a political perspective, to examine how these movements channelled anger to generate collective identities, frame and make sense of grievances and, from there, impel action. In both cases, anger served as a powerful emotional catalyst that mobilised people and changed the political terrain,

albeit in opposing ways. Reckoning with anger's political importance requires recognising these dynamics of mobilisation and contestation, not just to the rational justification of the anger itself.

Feminist scholarship is useful here. For Sara Ahmed, feminist anger, while sharp-edged, has been essential for rendering misogyny visible and speakable as a systemic rather than private wrong. Such a (feminist) anger involves a 'reading of the world in a particular way' (2014: 171) that enables new forms of solidarity and resistance. Although anger does not necessarily arise from knowledge (we might be angered but not immediately understand why), the feeling of being against something can prompt an attempt to understand what we are for, a 'something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet' (ibid.: 175). Of course, anger can fuel insularity as much as solidarity, resentment as much as justice. The key point is that anger is an affectively charged mode of political claim-making that can be steered in various directions depending on the collective it assembles, its modes of operation and the narratives it employs. Morally assessing anger as justified or unjustified only goes so far in understanding its real-world significance and impacts.

What is needed then is an approach that 1) takes anger seriously as a political emotion that galvanises collective identities and actions; 2) reckons with its varying social logics and effects across contexts; and 3) provides resources for distinguishing more or less generative and sustainable mobilisations of political anger in relation to both their ends and to the wider common good of all citizens in democracies. With this in mind, I propose to reframe anger as indignation, a term that foregrounds its status as an ambivalent mode of contestation.

3. Reframing Indignation

Indignation, as I use the term, refers to anger that responds to perceived violations of social or moral norms that one deems important. Whereas generic anger is typically a personal response to frustrated goals or expectations (e.g. traffic jams, a child accidentally destroying a precious object or a malfunctioning vending machine – the classic example in the scholarly literature), indignation has an inherently norm-laden, evaluative character. Notably though, this evaluation may or may not be grounded in an accurate understanding of events or a coherent moral framework. To be indignant is to experience oneself, or another person whom one cares about or identifies with, as wronged within a web of social and political relationships, to feel that some standard of appropriate treatment or fair distribution has been breached.

This shift in terminology has several advantages. Firstly, it clarifies that the anger at issue is not just any negative arousal but embodies an interpretative appraisal.² Indignation, we might say, is anger with an argument: it argues not just that one is unhappy with some state of affairs, but that one has been wronged in such a way that warrants social redress.

Amid the clichéd readings of our era as an 'age of rage', this approach usefully foregrounds what is at stake when citizens of many different political stripes express their indignation, whether in the streets, the ballot box or on social media. On a theoretical level, it reflects what historians Carol and Peter Stearns call an 'emotionology': 'the attitudes or standards that a society ... maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression', and 'ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct' (1985: 813). That is not to say that anger itself is increasing – tracking the prevalence of an internally experienced emotion is very difficult – but rather that attitudes, standards, and reflections of anger are changing. William Reddy uses the term 'emotional regimes' (2001: 124–5) to

describe the dominant social norms around emotional behaviour that in turn shape political expression and power.

Secondly, my approach captures indignation's relational and communicative character. Emotions like anger are inherently communicative, protesting objectionable conduct and calling for a social response. As a form of heightened moral address, indignation can constitute and project a public, seeking recognition of injury and some form of answerability. This reflects indignation's character as a collective emotion. For Sara Ahmed, it creates what Max Scheler called 'communities of feeling' (Ahmed 2010: 578–9), wherein individuals disturbed by the harm of some commonly-valued object are drawn together and communicate, with the aim of organising publicly to express their indignation, to stand together in solidarity, and to demand change. Thus, indignation motivates action and can bring together people with shared feelings and worldviews.

Thirdly, conceptualising anger as indignation foregrounds its protean capacity to power both resistance and resentment, critique and reaction. One of the limitations of justification-based approaches was the focus on which instances of 'moral anger' are morally justified. In such cases, it is not the nature of such anger that is in question, but rather whether a wrong has genuinely violated a given norm in the relevant way. D'Arms and Jacobson call this the 'moralistic fallacy' – an emotion 'can be fitting despite being wrong to feel' (2000: 65; Cherry 2021: 27). In other words, such scholars use the label 'moral' to legitimise instances of anger with whose causes they agree (thereby delegitimising as amoral instances of anger at less 'worthy' wrongdoings). Of course, it's obvious that indignation at injustice has powered worthy collective actions for social change against existing status quos, whether it is Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, AIDS activism or Black Lives Matter. But indignation also has a darker aspect, in the defensiveness and backlash on the part of dominated and of dominant groups, mobilising a kind of 'wounded attachment' against perceived threats to privilege (Brown 1995: 72; 2019: 187). The grievances of the 'angry white male' (Kimmel 2013), to take one prominent trope, often centre on a sense of unrecognised merit or status – a feeling that one's social worth is no longer properly valued or affirmed. While such indignation may clash with social reality, it nonetheless shapes politics and perceptions in potent ways. It thereby provides a frame for examining how different politicised experiences of feeling wronged can generate contrasting political phenomena (cf. Shklar 1990: 83).

This last point highlights a key reason to favour indignation over anger as an analytical frame. Whereas anger's everyday meaning spans everything from irritation to rage, indignation highlights the meaning-making work of the emotion at stake, its embeddedness in interpretations of value and violation. Indignation in this sense serves as an evaluative lens, a way of reading the world, to use Ahmed's term again.

In this respect, indignation, as a moral evaluation and response to wrongdoing, is important as both a signal and a diagnostic tool. It is a signal in that indignant expressions, acts, speech or ideation are useful indicators that some person or community perceive that some harm has occurred. Once identified, this perception requires that others listen (and show to the indignant that they are listening), determine the causes of the perception and address these causes appropriately. Indignation is also a diagnostic tool in that it aids the diagnosis of social and political ills, allowing decisions to be made about how to address the indignation.

This approach takes us further than an approach that uses anger and indignation interchangeably. One example appears in Jonathan Haidt's essay 'The Moral Emotions'. For Haidt, anger is 'the most underappreciated moral emotion' (2003: 856). It arises when goal-oriented behaviours are thwarted, including processes of justice and fairness. This puts anger at the root

both of cases of violent revenge and coercion and of campaigns to redress the oppression of victimised groups. But these kinds of anger are different phenomena. Should my laptop crash before I can save my paper about the rage of the disesteemed, I may well howl and roar, but I do not perceive that I have been wronged according to a moral framework. I am angry, but I am not indignant. Anger is largely self-orientated, based on harm to one's interests, whereas indignation is largely orientated around a perceived harm either to someone else of concern, or to oneself as part of a community. While one can feel indignant about wrongdoing to oneself, it differs from anger in evaluating that wrongdoing in terms of a larger moral framework of transgression and repair beyond just that of fulfilling everyday needs and tasks.

Such distinctions are important because they help us to determine what indignation is and what it does. As a response to an evaluative wrongdoing, indignation is indignation whether or not moral and political philosophers approve of its grounds. Slicing indignation into good and bad forms (e.g. racist or anti-racist indignation, revolutionary or reactionary indignation) makes for interesting discussion, but it does little to illuminate the social and political phenomenon of indignation. In that respect, a key task for theories of political anger is to probe the normative frameworks in which instances of indignation are embedded, and the collective identities and investments they reflect. *Pace* Nussbaum, the point is not to purify public discourse of anger but to examine how different social epistemologies (ways of reading the world) generate contrasting 'affective economies' of indignation (Ahmed 2004: 121). Through this, we can grasp indignation's context-dependent political logics and effects.

Here, Ahmed's work on the cultural politics of the emotions is instructive. For Ahmed, emotions like what we call indignation do not simply reside in individuals but 'circulate' between bodies and signs (ibid.: 119–122); they are powerful modes of affective world-making that 'glue' people together into aggrieved (and aggrieving) collectives. Anger has been described by others as a 'contagion'; angry speech and gestures are known to inspire feelings of anger in others (Stapleton and Dawkins 2022). The task then is not to transcend indignation but, first of all, to understand it as a certain mobilisation of public feeling. The question then is what kinds of indignation others should affirm and ally with, not whether to ally with anger at all.

What this theoretical framing of anger as indignation provides, then, is a way to bring its operation as meaning-making, identity-shaping force into focus, prefiguring its contrasting manifestations and effects. But let's draw out another element. This signal-and-diagnosis approach supplies neither a normative nor an empirical framework for evaluating its efficacy in righting perceived wrongs. Is such a framework possible? Well, one can begin by looking at indignation's connection to agency: to what extent does it contribute to or detract from one's effective political and ethical capacity to act and understand? We can consider this by distinguishing two aspects of the relationship between agency and an emotion like indignation:

- 1) *Motivational* – to what extent does indignation move us to act, in a way that knowledge alone cannot?
- 2) *Epistemic* – to what extent can indignation help us to see and understand what is right (because the understanding is felt to be insufficient for moral knowledge)?

I argue that while indignation offers significant motivational power, its epistemic power is much more limited. This is because indignation tends to promote overconfidence in strength, agency and control, which, preoccupied with expressing disapproval, does not necessarily address the causes of the perceived wrong, unless organised thus. These are questions of power

that, in the next part, we shall explore through the understanding of emotions as political and as sources of empowerment in the thought of Spinoza.

4. A Spinozan Framework for Indignation

Why read a seventeenth century metaphysician and lens-grinder about the political emotions of the twenty-first century? For two reasons: he has provided a widely-used theoretical framework of the affects that underpins a lot of good, relevant and recent scholarship on the political emotions (the ‘affective turn’, led by Massumi 1995, drawing heavily on Deleuze and Guattari 1977); and because he has a uniquely holistic understanding of the affects in relation to human power, understanding and the capacity to act.

Firstly, what is an affect and why does it matter? The term ‘affect’ derives from the Latin *affectus*, and both Spinoza’s major work, the *Ethics*, and his *Political Treatise* (also significant) devote substantial attention to the psychology and politics of the affects. Indeed, the affects are the central fact of ethical and political life. Spinoza defines the affects as ‘affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished ... and at the same time, the ideas of these affections’ (emphasis added).³ By affections, Spinoza means alterations in our bodily states in response to internal or external causes (e.g. hunger at the sight and smell of a hot food stand at a fairground). Joyous affects correlate with an increase in our power of acting, and sad affects (sometimes translated as ‘sad passions’) with a decrease. These affects follow his definition of the *conatus*, ‘the striving to persevere in being’, which is ‘the essence of all things’ (E3p6). The *conatus* can be defined, in simple terms, as a built-in tendency in everything, whether person, plant, animal or inorganic matter, to continue existing and to develop according to its nature. For us human beings, we experience our striving through our appetites, which we understand in the mind as desires, which are ‘appetite together with consciousness of the appetite’ (E3p9s). The additional introduction of a ‘consciousness’ touches on the problem of evaluation discussed earlier. An individual’s consciousness of or judgement about a given appetite is no guarantee that it is universally conducive to individual wellbeing or harmonious relationships. Different people might form different ideas based on their appetites (e.g. if you are a vegan and I am a carnivore, the smell of a hot dog stand will provoke diametrically opposed ideas). Spinoza adds that we do not necessarily desire what we judge to be good; rather, ‘we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it and desire it’. In other words, our judgements about what constitutes a good may not necessarily provide a veridical basis for understanding what aids self-preservation.

This doesn’t get us to indignation yet, but it provides an initial framework for thinking about how a given emotion like indignation can be embodied, made sense of and evaluated in different ways. But there is a tragic element to this too. For Spinoza, the pursuit of our desires usually leads to adversity and failure (e.g. I might not have enough money for the overpriced hot dog stand or eat too much; you might search the fairground in vain for a vegan food stall). Because this diminishes our capacity to act, it correlates with affects of sadness. In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*, hereafter TTP), Spinoza argues that such adversity makes us ‘vacillate wretchedly between hope and fear’, seeking and clinging to the omens and superstitions that best explain our disappointments (and successes) in terms of a compelling, accessible imagining of humanity’s elevated place in the natural order (TTP pref.1). In the *Ethics*, this reveals a universal human tendency to anthropomorphism that serves and reinforces conventional religious beliefs (e.g. that a human-like God made the world

for our benefit and uses), by obscuring a true understanding of God as the infinite, necessary, impersonal and self-sustaining reality of everything that exists (E1app). Although rather abstract, this speaks to our example in that each of us might have formed diametrically opposed evaluations about our respective ‘right’ to eat certain foods, and to judge others accordingly.

Leaving behind the fairground and the cradle of human belief, here is where we can begin to think about the affects in terms of their politics. In the *TTP*, Spinoza highlights the political dangers of a public led by fear, superstition and ignorance of the causes of their own affects into the arms of charismatic religious and political figureheads who compel them to ‘fight for slavery as they would for their survival’ (*TTP* pref.10). Spinoza calls rule by the passive affects – particularly fear and hate – a form of ‘servitude’. The mind’s ‘freedom’ (following the title of *Ethics* Part 5) therefore lies in understanding the causes and nature of the affects, and, through that understanding, developing a greater sense of agency by controlling the ways that those affects (like fear) can drive our actions and thoughts, while living and thinking in ways that support our strength of mind and self-contentment. In this way, understanding the nature of the emotions and their consequences increases our capacity to act and understand. In the *Ethics*, this leads to a systematic reconfiguration of the affects to support present-oriented human power, desire and causal knowledge. In the *TTP*, it leads to Spinoza’s argument for democracy, which is understood as a form of collegial deliberation and power-sharing, alongside imagination-driven measures to instil civic concord.

Thus, the affects correlate with increases or decreases in our self-evaluated power of acting, and they relate and communicate those perceptions and dispositions to others. An angry person will act very differently from one driven by love or generosity. But what does Spinoza specifically say about anger? In the *Ethics*, Spinoza largely examines anger and indignation through their contexts. Anger is ‘a Desire by which we are spurred, from Hate, to do evil to him we hate’, while vengeance is ‘a desire, by which, from reciprocal hate, we are roused to do evil to one who, from a like affect, has injured us’ (E3da36–37). Hate is ‘sadness with the accompanying idea of an external cause’ (E3p13s). Indignation, interestingly, is a species of hate, not anger: ‘hatred towards him who has done evil to another’ (E3p22s; E3da20). Spinoza finds no good role for anger and indignation in the life guided by reason (E4p73).

These positions are uncontroversial. They reflect a wider Stoic influence on the intellectual climate of this period: Seneca’s ideas, which viewed anger and indignation as a dangerous loss of moral and rational agency, percolated into this environment via intermediaries such as Justus Lipsius. In that respect, Spinoza is conventional – his position is also reminiscent of that of Nussbaum, who also draws extensively on Greco-Roman Stoicism. Spinoza also takes the position, common in Roman republican thought, that the indignation of the majority endangers the rule of law. In his *Ethics* he writes that ‘when each one is allowed to pass judgment on another’s deeds, and to enforce either his own or another’s right, we live without a law’ (E4app24; cf. *TTP* 18.24).

But the *Political Treatise* of 1677 (2016), Spinoza’s last, incomplete, work, aims to address indignation and the common affects within a wider ‘science’ of politics that applies the rigour of meteorology to the climates of human passions. He resolves ‘not to laugh at human actions, or mourn them, or curse them, but only to understand them’ (TP 1.4). What can an affect-centred political analysis tell us about power? Spinoza’s approach in this work is significant because it eschews moralistic praise or blame of sad passions such as indignation – taken in themselves – in favour of instead understanding the affects and the behaviours that they drive within a wider framework of empowerment or disempowerment. This is the ‘rage of the disesteemed’ in the James Baldwin epitaph – these perceptions and responses happen anyway,

whether or not scholars or policymakers deem them to be genuinely moral; and, salutary or not, in politics they often get things done.

Whereas the *Ethics* condemned indignation on Stoic, individualised grounds, in the *Political Treatise* Spinoza is guided by Machiavelli's insight that the collective right of the common people constitutes the power of any given polity (TP 5.7). Thus, affective expressions of public discontent must be understood by anyone committed to the freedom and security of the State, whether they are reasonable or unreasonable, because they have the power to transform the political order. He introduces a helpful new term here. The political order is founded on the 'common affects' of the multitude: these affects can be a common fear, hope or 'desire to avenge some harm' (TP 6.1). In each case, the multitude share a common affect, which disposes them either to establish and defend the political order, or to bring about its downfall and replacement.

Would Spinoza endorse indignation as good for democracy then? Not quite, though it depends which part of Spinoza one works with. The *Ethics* does not consider indignation as an acceptable route to better individual understanding. But his later position in the *Political Treatise* does commit him to the more naturalistic view that indignation has the power to collectively change the political order, for the better or the worse. As Alexandre Matheron writes, when a tyrant and their forces arbitrarily massacre or persecute their subjects, 'fear turns into indignation', as 'everyone, through imitation of the affects, espouses the resentments of his fellow men, and everyone realises that his own hate is universally shared' (Matheron 1988: 416, author translation; cf. TP 4.6). It thereby forms an affective cycle that dissolves the old political order and ushers in another. But note that such mobilisations of indignation are not necessarily democratic or progressive by nature (contra Lordon 2014: 140). Indignation can indeed contribute to change when the indignant react to a wrong that is demonstrably harmful to the common good: indignation supplies motivational agency. However, that does not necessarily contribute to power or knowledge. In the *TTP*, particularly discussing the Hebrew Republic, Spinoza is clear that political expressions of anger (*ira*) are often to the harm of their subjects and their common good, and to the wider civil order. Frequently paired with the word 'hatred', the violence of such anger is often a consequence of poor political constitutions. Drawing some lessons from Hebrew history, Spinoza writes that 'government which makes it a crime to hold opinions ... is the most violent of all. Indeed, when this happens, what rules most is the anger of the mob' (TTP 18.23). Rather than some propensity to progressive insurrection, such anger often takes the form of the violent persecution of minorities and scapegoats, with wily and irresponsible demagogues 'inflaming the savage multitude in their anger' for their own political ambitions (TTP 18.27). As Spinoza recognised, there are many historical lessons about the dangers of public indignation – what if doing 'something else' involves violently attacking a scapegoated minority, or a resistance to liberal norms such as universal human rights or equality before the law? Nor does it stand up to the critique of moral anger seen earlier. We are dealing with human beings not as they (or some of them) are, but as we would like them to be. Nor is it clear that democracy is best served by self-appointed participants in social movements, rather than reformed and representative institutions.

There are two important implications of the Spinozan framework for indignation. Firstly, the affects are inherently relational – they reflect how we are impacted by and respond to encounters with others. Indignation reflects a felt decrease in power – a sense of being harmed or devalued by another. But the meaning and impact of this felt impingement depends on the web of social and political relations and norms in which it occurs. What I experience as

indignity, and how I respond to it affectively, is conditioned by the hierarchies and histories I am embedded in.

James Baldwin reflects on these histories in discussing the ‘rage of the disesteemed’. Writing about the racial prejudice he encountered as a Black American man in a remote Swiss village, he reflected on wider white supremacist prejudices that had viciously impacted him back home in the States. Twisting Stephen Dedalus’s famous line in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, he writes, ‘people are trapped in history and history is trapped in them’ (Baldwin 1955: 167). Yet one’s place in these histories is not static. While ‘no individual can be taken to task for what history is doing, or has done’, a point that anticipates Spinoza’s non-normative understanding of nations and their often inglorious histories (TTP 17.93), what matters is the power of ‘moral beliefs’ to activate and transform disempowered peoples to break the cycle of trauma and domination (Baldwin 1955: 174). Such beliefs ‘create for them [the oppressed] a frame of reference and a necessary hope, the hope being that when life has done its worst they will be enabled to rise above themselves and to triumph over life’ (ibid.: 175).

This is why, as we saw, indignation takes on starkly different political forms depending on whether it is felt from above or below, by dominant or subordinated groups. The indignation of the ‘angry white male’ who feels his centrality threatened arguably diminishes his conative power by rigidifying his dependence on relative privilege. The indignation of the feminist or antiracist militant by contrast can enhance their power to act by fuelling a desire and common action that challenges and transforms an unjust and disempowering status quo (the position of Cherry 2021: 167). Spinoza’s account of the ‘common notions’ (E2p38–p40) helps clarify this further. Common notions are adequate ideas that grasp the common properties between bodies, enabling mutual empowerment. Political problems arise when we remain stuck in imaginative ideas that elevate our own ‘rights’ over or beneath others, dividing the social field into binary oppositions, breeding sad passions of rivalry and resentment. But common notions, borne from a knowledge of joyful encounters and reflective causal understanding, reveal our interdependence and give rise to practices of listening, care and solidarity.⁴

It follows then, that to remove a tyrant, writes Spinoza, we must also remove ‘the causes of the prince’s being a tyrant’ (TP 5.7). Acts of indignation may (or may not) force a change in the political order or restore justice. Without an adequate understanding of the causes of the wrongdoing or the nature of the perception of wrongdoing, the indignant community are at the mercy of events over which they have little control. This maps onto the Spinozan contrast between imaginative ideas and common notions. Communities of indignation cohere around a narrow, dichotomous understanding of social relations that pits an ‘us’ against ‘them’, deriving a precarious unity from shared antagonism. Collectives of resistance, by contrast, use their indignation at an evaluated injustice into an expansive and empowering programme for cultivating common notions and understanding of the systemic, intersecting nature of oppression, and the shared interest of all in transformation.

On this reading, indignation’s political character is not just about its object (e.g. the cruel tyrant in the *Political Treatise*, or the scapegoated minority in the TTP’s account of the Hebrew Republic), but about the epistemic orientation and form of collectivity it yields. Indignation can be a catalyst for emancipatory struggle when embedded in practices of critical consciousness-raising that reveal the common features behind various expressions of discontent. But it can also breed political stagnation when it devolves into insular commiseration that mistakes feeling wronged for political analysis.

The Spinozan lens, in sum, helps us recognise indignation’s different epistemic and agential effects as it circulates through different affective economies and organising practices. A key

task for democratic theory then is to elucidate the conditions that enable indignation to contribute to, rather than detract from, an enhanced collective power to understand and contest domination. The next and final section takes up this task by further fleshing out the contrast between communities of indignation and collectives of resistance as divergent modes of affective organisation. The aim is to set out a normative model of indignation's role in democratic politics that does not valorise or condemn it categorically, but rather grasps its potential for both regression and transformation.

5. Cultivating Collectives of Resistance

Some of the most insightful literature on indignation has come from those embedded within resistance movements. Participating in indignant communities can feel liberating, drawing people together in a sense of free expression without fear of mockery, rancour or persecution. In such communities of feeling, Max Scheler writes, we share not just the same 'value-situation' but also the same 'keenness of emotion in regard to it' (2008: 12–13). Feminist thinkers like Lorde, Ahmed, Cherry and Brittney Cooper (2019) have compellingly argued for embracing anger as a catalyst for emancipatory change. In a similar vein, the African American tradition has long affirmed righteous indignation as a moral and political resource, from Frederick Douglass's thunderous denunciation of slavery's persistence invoking 'the name of humanity which is outraged ... not light that is needed, but fire' (Douglass 2018: 69, 72), to Malcolm X's insistence that pan-African independence movements, and Black power more broadly, were driven by a confidence and level of organisation borne of anger ('when they get angry, they bring about a change' (X 1965: 107)).

Such approaches, borne of lived experience, grasp indignation's contextual character. They recognise that the political meaning and impact of indignation depends on the social location from which it emerges and the collective practices that shape it. But it is risky to focus solely on the affect itself, rather than considering it, as Spinoza does, through a wider evaluation of the affected individual (and collective)'s power of acting. When we consider common hopes, fears or desires for revenge, these should be understood in terms of what conditions them – the existential uncertainty and loss of power experienced when we perceive ourselves to be harmed or threatened. In so doing, we can accept that, while collective affects such as indignation are experienced in different contexts and groups, these similarities are superficial in contrast to the profoundly different content of these affects and the different regimes and norms around which they are organised.

Indignation can inhibit and weaken the understandings of some and increase that of others. During the AIDS epidemic in 1980s USA, 'Televangelist' Jerry Falwell's 'Moral Majority', a right-wing evangelical Christian campaign group of the indignant, spread falsehoods about AIDS and actively opposed government funding to find a cure. Such indignation diminished sympathy and charity for the suffering and led to overt hostility towards gay men. The indignant 'Moral Majority' were united by a sense of belonging and by their adherence to a very conservative interpretation of Christian morality. Inclusion was often exercised through exclusion, rather than through solidarity. Like the Hebrew Republic that Spinoza analyses in the *TTP*, the sense of communal identity among the 'Moral Majority' was founded on fear and 'the most bitter hatred' (*TTP* 7.4) of perceived deviants and threats.

But whereas indignation led some to prejudice and organised hate campaigns, for others it led to consciousness-raising and increased public awareness. Writing about ACT UP, a

democratic AIDS advocacy group that, through direct action, demanded medical funding and balanced media coverage, Deborah Gould sets out how indignation became a powerful affective glue for organising and articulating resistance while ‘complementing frequent expressions of self-respect’ (2001: 150). Whereas the Moral Majority were a community defined by a sense of belonging and exclusion, whose indignation drove them towards hatred and persecution of others, ACT UP harnessed their indignation to transform and increase the public understanding of HIV/AIDS. While the Moral Majority merely aimed to perpetuate their own indignant community of feeling, reinvesting their indignation into actions that generated hatred and division (with diminishing returns), ACT UP are an example of a diverse group who organised collectively to increase understanding and peacefully transform relations, systems and institutions of power. I call groups like these collectives of resistance. Their identity is constituted not through an exclusionary sense of belonging, but rather through a commitment to understanding the social and political causes that give rise to perceived harms, and by an inclusionary sense of solidarity and purpose to democratically resist, transform or defend the common good. Collectively cultivating an understanding of the causes of disempowerment, and of how it can be resisted and transformed, can be as socially transformational as the protest actions themselves.⁵

This draws on Spinoza’s understanding of the affects as correlating to states of power. Indignation does not inevitably beget authoritarianism or harm democracy. Although it reflects how people perceive wrongdoing, it also indicates the relations that have caused that loss of power. Indignation is information, then; but information that invites critical inquiry into its causes, and an appreciation of its revolutionary and reactionary bases. In collectives of resistance, indignation is used in group spaces to heed, reciprocate and then understand the causes of a given wrongdoing, cultivating powers of critical reasoning in the process.

The key factor distinguishing these contrasting cases is whether indignation is integrated into an expansive practice of solidarity-building, consciousness-raising, causal understanding of social forces and political economy, and reducing antagonisms of us-and-them division. Collectives of resistance bridge the particular and the universal, honing indignation at concrete oppression into social programmes and visions of shared empowerment. As Paolo Freire argued, emancipatory politics requires a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ that can rupture a culture of ‘silence’, in which oppressed people become passive, voiceless and unable to critically engage with their reality, a ‘naturalised’ conditioning that reflects and is enforced by domination (2005: 48, 64–5). Through dialogic processes of reflection and action, the oppressed can come to understand the systemic character of their subordination and generate new forms of democratic agency.

We see this in the Movement 4 Black Lives (M4BL) who, motivated by outrage at endemic police violence, coalesced into an intersectional movement that links racial justice to broad-based struggles for working class economic power, gender justice, sustainability and global peace. This recent development mirrors the interest of Dr King, in his final years, in organising a ‘Poor People’s March’ on Washington, alongside the late turn to human rights and economic power in the post-Nation of Islam thought of Malcolm X with the Organisation of Afro-American Unity. Through intensive processes of political education and alliance building, M4BL as a collective of resistance have mobilised indignation at specific acts of brutality into a far-reaching, holistic vision of mutual empowerment and social and political transformation (cf. Woodly 2022). By contrast, a left-wing example of a community of indignation would be one defined by sectarian forms of identity politics that devolve into moralistic us/them thinking rather than coalition-building or consciousness-raising. Examples include campus-based

campaigns to no-platform controversial speakers, prioritising exclusion over engaging with and critically challenging their ideas, or the internal fractures within movements like Occupy Wall Street and Occupy London (St Paul's), where debates over 'privilege' and ideological purity often overshadowed efforts to build organisational coherence and a clear political strategy – leading to disillusionment and stagnation.

In line with Spinoza's account of the affects, such pedagogies and collectives of resistance recognise that felt diminishment is the starting point, not destination, for social and political change. Underpinning them are active practices of critical understanding and recognition of our interdependence. Cultivating such collectives is not easy, given our backdrop of stark divisions and structural violence. Indignation also has a built-in tendency to ignore and belittle any listening or 'selling out' to the 'other side'. The centrifugal pressures of social hierarchy and material precarity threaten, always, to undermine fragile solidarities, inducing retreats into wounded narcissism that find sympathetic echo-chambers. Moreover, as Spinoza insists, the mind's power over the affects is not absolute; we cannot will away stubborn passions with reason alone (E4p7).

And yet, history shows the possibility of mobilising the rage of the disesteemed into emancipatory change when combined with patient, long-term organising. From Douglass's abolitionism to the civil rights struggles up to ACT UP's courageous insurgency, oppressed peoples have shown that indignation, when enacted through an ethics of coalition and consciousness-raising, can profoundly alter the entire political landscape for the better. Such struggles embody a commitment to enacting the empowering potential of collective affects within and against the constrained horizons of the present.

6. Conclusion

As we have seen, the dominant philosophical debate about anger runs aground insofar as it narrowly focuses on the question of justification. A more productive approach, I have argued, is to analyse anger in terms of indignation – a multivalent political affect that can fuel both reactionary and emancipatory forms of mobilisation. Drawing on Spinoza, I have proposed a framework for disambiguating indignation's seemingly opposing manifestations in terms of their contrasting epistemic orientations and modes of collectivity they support.

Instead, indignation ought to be analysed as a relational affect with communicative attributes. Indignation can be a diagnostic tool by which we might uncover shared grievances; it thus has the potential to produce a more democratic and just society. Indignation has significant motivational power. And while I've critiqued justification-centred approaches and drawn attention to wider social-relational dynamics underpinning individual judgements of indignation, I've affirmed that indignation involves a construal of wrongness and injustice, even if not a settled judgement. But for indignant collectives to be effective agents for addressing perceived wrongdoing, they must prioritise the task of understanding the causes, societal relations, values and institutions of power that have given rise to a perceived wrong.

One might object that the indignant might well believe that they have a firm grasp of the facts. As Ballard (2021) notes, emotional experiences can engender a feeling of direct acquaintance with evaluative properties. So someone in the grip of indignation at a perceived wrong may feel they have unmediated access to the relevant moral facts simply by experiencing that emotion. But, as Ballard argues, this felt acquaintance does not amount to genuine evaluative understanding. Indignation may 'present' someone as a wrongdoer, but without

further reflection on the wider conditions behind their actions, this presentation can mislead as much as it illuminates. To return to our first example, a #StoptheSteal protester might have been motivated to act by the ‘fact’ that the Democrats had ‘rigged’ the 2020 election, after consulting partial, misleading and irresponsible news sources. From the perspective of such a protester, there would be no point in consulting a countervailing news source because the ‘mainstream media’ are complicit in the ‘Big Lie’. There is no simplistic remedy to this, but we can find no help either in advocating for the good of radical rage or in dismissing its toxicity. There has been progress in countering misinformation and disinformation, for instance around climate change, through training people to recognise false information, and to better reflect on and evaluate the accuracy and authenticity of sources (e.g. Van der Linden et al. 2017). This is consistent with the Spinozan emphasis on cultivating powers of reasoning across citizens, but more work is now needed to identify the relationship between indignation and the capacity to reason. Contributing to this work is one aim of my distinction between motivational and epistemic agency.

In our own troubled times, beset by resurgent authoritarianism, global conflict and looming ecological collapse, the Spinozan belief in the transformative potential of collective affects like indignation coupled to causal understanding is more necessary than ever. As the communities of indignation amassing on the far right attest, anger at the dysfunctions of the present can all too easily become a revanchist politics of exclusion and domination. Countering this will require new forms of affective praxis that can mobilise grievances and indignations into a new politics of co-liberation. As Spinoza teaches, the path to active affects of empowerment lies not in the repression of anger but in its critical transmutation via individual and collective understanding. By grasping the structural sources of collective injury and developing solidarities and democratic structures to resist them, we might begin to tap into the rational possibilities of indignation, an insurgent rationality borne out of grasping our interdependence. For in the end, as Baldwin understood, it is the rage of the disesteemed that makes history – the question is in what direction, and with what consequences.

ORCID

Dan Taylor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5115-9044>

Notes

1. This definition of epistemic agency is indebted to Michael Brady’s account of the relationship between emotional experience and evaluative understanding. Emotions do not just spur action, they also shape how we assess and appraise value-laden situations. For Brady, emotions ‘can motivate us to search for reasons or evidence that bear on the accuracy of our initial emotional responses’ (2013: 94; cf. Ballard 2021: 120).
2. For more on the idea that emotions are interpretive appraisals or ‘seemings’ with representational content, see Ballard (2021). Ballard argues that emotional experiences, like sense perceptions, have a presentational character – they purport to reveal something true about their objects. Applying this to indignation, one can say it does not merely register anger but asserts an evaluative claim about some state of affairs.
3. Referencing for Spinoza (1985; 2016): E = *Ethics*; Ep. = *Letters*; TTP = *Theological-Political Treatise*; TP = *Political Treatise*. References to TTP and TP indicate chapter number followed by section. References to *Ethics*: app = appendix; df = definition; da = Definitions of the Affects, end of Part 3; p = proposition; s = scholium. E.g. E3df3 indicates *Ethics* Part III, Definition 3, quoted in the text.
4. The connection between joyous emotions and our capacity to act resonates with Brady’s work on the link between emotions and epistemic agency. For Brady, emotions are not just motivational forces; they also influence our ability

to discern and respond to value-laden reasons for belief and action. A joyful affect in Spinoza's sense would be one that, for Brady, empowers our capacity to track evaluative truths (Brady 2013: 131; 2014).

5. Poma and Gravante's research with *Mujer Nueva* in Mexico demonstrates another good example of how indignation can lead to collective protest movements that incorporate consciousness-raising of power and solidarity, bringing about 'reflexive self-construction' and a greater sense of agency (2017: 62).

Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara (2004) 'Affective Economies', *Social Text*, 22: 2, 117–139.
- Ahmed, Sara (2010) 'Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness', *Signs*, 35: 3, 571–594.
- Ahmed, Sara (2014) *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahmed, Sara (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*, Duke University Press.
- Aristotle (2004) *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp, Cambridge University Press.
- Aristotle (2007) *On Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy, Oxford University Press.
- Ballard, Brian Scott (2021) 'The Epistemic Significance of Emotional Experience', *Emotion Review*, 13: 2, 113–124.
- Baldwin, James (1955) *Notes of a Native Son*, Beacon.
- Brady, Michael S. (2013) *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience*, Oxford University Press.
- Brady, Michael S. (2014) 'Emotion, Attention and the Nature of Value' in *Emotion and Value*, eds. Sabine Roeser and Cain Todd, Oxford University Press, 52–71.
- Brown, Wendy (1995) *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton University Press.
- Brown, Wendy (2019) *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cherry, Myisha (2021) *The Case for Rage: Why Anger is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle*, Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Josh (2024) *All the Rage: Why Anger Drives the World*, Granta.
- Cooper, Brittney (2019) *Eloquent Rage*, Picador.
- D'Arms, Justin and Daniel Jacobson (2000) 'The Moralistic Fallacy: On the "Appropriateness" of Emotions', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 61: 1, 65–90.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1977) *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Viking Press.
- Douglass, Frederick (2018) *The Speeches of Frederick Douglass*, Yale University Press.
- Fernández, Belén (2024) 'It was anger that won Trump this election', Al Jazeera, 6 November, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/6/it-was-anger-that-won-trump-this-election>> (last accessed 31 January 2025).
- Freire, Paulo (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, Continuum.
- Gould, Deborah (2001) 'Rock the Boat, Don't Rock the Boat, Baby: Ambivalence and the Emergence of Militant AIDS Activism' in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, eds. Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta, University of Chicago Press, 135–157.
- Haidt, Jonathan (2003) 'The Moral Emotions' in *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, eds. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer and H. Hill Goldsmith, Oxford University Press, 852–870.
- zHochschild, Arlie Russell (2016) *Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, New Press.
- Khavin, Dmitry *et al.* (2021) 'Day of Rage: How Trump Supporters Took the U.S. Capitol', *New York Times*, 30 June, <<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000007606996/capitol-riot-trump-supporters.html>> (last accessed 31 January 2025).
- Kimmel, Michael (2013) *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, Nation.
- King, Martin Luther Jr. (2015) *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West, Beacon.
- Lindebaum, Dirk and Deanna Geddes (2016) 'The place and role of (moral) anger in organizational behaviour studies', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37: 5, 738–757.
- Lordon, Frédéric (2014) *Willing Slaves of Capital*, trans. Gabriel Ash, Verso.
- Massumi, Brian (1995) 'The Autonomy of Affect', *Cultural Critique*, 31, 83–109.

- Matheron, Alexandre (1988) *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, Minuit.
- Mishra, Pankaj (2017) *Age of Anger*, Farrer, Straus and Giroux.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2013) *Political Emotions*, Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2016) *Anger and Forgiveness*, Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2018) *The Monarchy of Fear*, Oxford University Press.
- Poma, Alice and Tommaso Gravante (2017) 'Emotions and Empowerment in Collective Action: The Experience of a Women's Collective in Oaxaca, Mexico, 2006–2017', *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 1: 2, 59–80.
- Reddy, William (2001) *The Navigation of Feeling*, Cambridge University Press.
- Scheler, Max (2008) *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath, Transaction.
- Shklar, Judith (1990) *The Faces of Injustice*, Yale University Press.
- Smith, David (2023) "'I am your retribution': Trump rules supreme at CPAC as he relaunched bid for White House", *The Observer*, 5 March, <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/05/i-am-your-retribution-trump-rules-supreme-at-cpac-as-he-relaunched-bid-for-white-house>> (last accessed 31 January 2025).
- Spinoza, Benedict de (1985; 2016) [1677], *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volumes I–II*, trans. Edwin Curley, Princeton University Press.
- Srinivasan, Amia (2018) 'The Aptness of Anger', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 26: 2, 123–144.
- Stapleton, Carey E. and Ryan Dawkins (2022) 'Catching My Anger: How Political Elites Create Angrier Citizens', *Political Research Quarterly*, 75: 3, 754–765.
- Stearns, Peter N. with Carol Z. Stearns (1985) 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *The American Historical Review*, 90: 4, 813–836.
- Van der Linden, Sander, Anthony Leiserowitz, Seth Rosenthal and Edward Maibach (2017) 'Inoculating the Public Against Misinformation About Climate Change', *Global Challenges*, 1: 2, 160008, 1–7.
- Woodly, Deva R. (2022) *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*, Oxford University Press.
- X, Malcolm (1965) *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman, Grove.