

## Anger and Patience

Anger can destroy friendships, undercut the possibility of cooperation, and prevent the uptake of our best intentions. And people who are raised in Europe or North America often find expressions of anger difficult to watch. Since anger is often conceptualized as an irrational and uncontrollable emotion (Nussbaum 2016a), such expressions seem to provide evidence of a dangerous or unpredictable personality. These facts have troubling implications in the context of struggles against racial injustice. Where feelings of racialized fear enhance worries about the risk of violence (Lerner & Keltner 2001), calls for racial justice can *seem* like dangerous displays of aggression and hostility. Public criticisms of angry Black ‘thugs’ can then fuel these fears, by highlighting the irrationality of Black anger, and evoking further worries about the ‘dangerous’ and ‘unstable’ personalities that hide behind calls for racial justice. Consequently, while anger can “lead to powerful movements that can transform cultures and societies” (Jinpa 2016), existing power relations often distort expressions of anger in the service of sustaining White power. This should give us pause when a philosopher advises us to eliminate anger from our moral repertoire (Srinivasan 2016). Consider this fair warning: I contend that we would be better off without anger.

In this chapter, I develop an argument for this claim, based on insights from Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA). Specifically, I argue that the elimination of anger from our moral repertoire plays a critical role in the cultivation of an awakened and compassionate mind, which is governed by the motivation to bring about the liberation of all sentient beings (*bodhicitta*). In developing this argument, I focus on the use of patience as a bulwark against White fragility, and I argue that while we should work to cultivate patience, we should also be careful in criticizing displays of anger. Such criticisms can be useful when they are directed toward forms of anger that perpetuate systemic injustice; but they can also derive from our own mental discomfort. And where anger is directed against systemic injustice, we should instead work to eliminate the conditions that produce anger in people who face socially entrenched forms of disadvantage, marginalization, and exclusion. These claims may seem too obvious to argue for. But by approaching them from the perspective of cultivating *bodhicitta*, I hope to clarify the interdependence between these intrapersonal and interpersonal projects. Put schematically: ignoring the information that undergirds our own anger allows mental distress to persist; likewise, ignoring the information that’s present in public displays of anger allows social forms of suffering to persist; and where there is social suffering, a person who is motivated by compassion and the wish to attain liberation for all sentient beings (a *bodhisattva*) cannot be at ease.

## 1. What is anger?

Śāntideva was a careful phenomenologist, who understood that mental discomfort arises when we experience something as an unjustified impediment to the satisfaction of our desires, and when we *feel like* someone we care about faces such an impediment (BCA VI:7). Within contemporary psychology, there is a relatively consistent view of anger, which focuses on this experience of discomfort as the cause of our anger (see Dubreuil 2015 for a review). People become angry when an important goal is obstructed, by another agent, in a way that threatens their identity, community, or values; and since they assume that another agent is responsible for obstructing their goal, they are typically motivated to restore justice, or eliminate illegitimate inequalities. Of course, people can also become angry in nonsocial situations (e.g., when an operating system fails to perform as planned); but such responses tend to feel misplaced upon further reflection. For example, since bodily states cannot *intend* to harm us, we don't get angry *at them* for causing discomfort (BCA VI:22). Likewise, if harms seem irreparable or situational, they tend to provoke sadness instead of anger; and when we are uncertain of how to deal with a harm or a threat, we tend to become afraid or anxious (Litvak et al 2010, 290).

In general, expressions of anger thus signal a *commitment* to responding to experienced or perceived injustice, in ways that show that deviations from shared norms will not be tolerated. Anger focuses our attention on controlled forms of behavior that cause discomfort, and makes us attentive to potential threats and harms (Lerner et al., 2003). This makes us optimistic about the possibility of overcoming impediments to the satisfaction of our desires (Lerner & Keltner 2000, 2001). And by focusing on the agent who is most likely to have caused our discomfort, anger commonly leads us to seek reparations for perceived harms, and motivates us to restore fair and cooperative behavior in the face of inequality (Baumard et al 2012; Fehr & Gächter 2002). Where things go well, our expressions of anger also allow us to hold one another to higher moral standards (McGeer 2012). But while anger can make us more vigilant, and more aware of threats to our identities and communities, it can also evoke antisocial or aggressive reactions that will motivate us to disengage, to refuse to make concessions, and to undermine cooperation (Van Kleef et al 2010, 60).

Anger leads us to perceive others as angry, makes angry messages sound more convincing, and increases our willingness to search for evidence of blameworthiness and malintent (Litvak et al 2010, 298; Schultz et al 2010, 313). During the 2016 presidential election, for example, many angry people found the angry voice of an angry candidate congenial, and they searched for reasons to sanction their dispreferred candidate (Jinpa 2016). Anger can also trigger catastrophic and dichotomous patterns of thought, as well as tendencies to

overgeneralize (Schultz et al 2010, 313); and we have begun to see these effects play out in liberal reactions to the election of the 45<sup>th</sup> President. Anger also shapes unrelated judgments of responsibility and blame (Litvak et al 2010, 295). After witnessing a hostile interaction, people often report feeling morally angry; and they subsequently make harsher and more punitive judgments about unrelated situations (Goldberg et al. 1999; Rothschild & Keefer 2017). This is probably because anger makes people want to hold *someone* responsible, and offering harsher judgments helps to satisfy the drive for retribution. But the drive for retribution is puzzling: nothing we can do will change the karmic flows that have led to our current state; and retaliation requires us to assume that harming someone, for causing harm, will somehow be able to right a wrong (Chakrabarti 2012). Even worse, retribution is often not what we really seek. Redirected aggression is often sufficient to assuage our anger (Barash & Lipton 2011). And the sense that someone has been held accountable is often enough to diminish our drive for justice (Goldberg et al. 1999)

By contrast, where angry emotions are left unchecked, they “tend to compound themselves and keep on increasing” (Gyatso 1997, 27). The perception of angry behavior can increase a person’s willingness to engage in similar forms of behavior (Bond & Bushman forthcoming). And exchanges of anger and blame can often stabilize and amplify through interpersonal feedback loops: increased feelings of harm trigger increased patterns of blame, and vice versa (Quigley & Tedeschi 1996). Since anger leads us to search for the agent who is responsible for harming us, it often leads us to retaliate, to seek revenge, or to find another way to recuperate what we’ve lost. Of course, “the angry person doesn’t need to wish to take revenge herself. She may simply want the law to do so; or even some type of divine justice” (Nussbaum 2016b). But where threats and insults are uttered in anger, especially by men, they can trigger an interpersonal arms race, where failing to follow through on angry threats yields reputational damage, and invites additional attacks; to stave off this possibility, anger is often met with anger, and people feel motivated “to continue pouring fuel on the fire” (Fesler & Quintelier 2013, 473).

Unfortunately, while we know that anger can spread like a fire, we aren't particularly successful in predicting how it will spread; we rarely know in advance how our anger will affect a particular person in a particular context, and we can rarely predict the ripple effects that it will cause (Jinpa 1997, vii; Flanagan in prep). So our best hope of preventing these feedback loops from taking over is to eliminate anger early, by reshaping the karmic chains that would otherwise “explode in an emotional state like anger or hatred. The idea is to stop it at an early stage, rather than wait for that anger or hatred to arise fully” (Gyatso 1997, 19; cf., BCA VI:70-71). As Śāntideva argues, we can act to prevent further suffering (*duḥkha*) by focusing on the factors that produce our anger, uncovering

the cause of our suffering, and using this knowledge to break down our habitual patterns of attachment. Doing so requires practicing patience (*kṣānti*) in the face of discomfort, and doing so in ways that retain our access to the morally salient information that seems to be embodied in the experience of socially situated anger.

## 2. The gap between fuel and fire

The experience of mental discomfort provides the fuel for angry thoughts and angry behavior (BCA VI:7; BCA VI:71). But anger itself is always shaped by our expectations, as well as our normative and conceptual assumptions. Mental discomfort does, however, trigger the motivation to avoid or alter a situation; as this motivation is conceptualized as an action-value, it then triggers forward-looking trains of emotionally-laden thought; and as these trains of thought flow back through our conceptualizations, they shape our motivations, and affect the state of our bodies; finally, “when affect is conceptualized and labeled with emotional knowledge, it becomes associated with an object in a specific situation, providing the experiencer with information about how best to act in that specific context” (Kashdan et al 2015, 12). By recognizing that anger is the output of this process of psychological construction, we can start to find space between our feelings of mental discomfort and our experiences of anger. And we can begin to cultivate forms of patience, which will enhance our ethical understanding of the world by minimizing the effects of distortions caused by our angry reactions, and by peeling away our assumptions about how things *must* be. As Sāntideva argues, practicing patience allows us to uncover the motivation to eliminate suffering for all living beings. To see what this means, it will help to consider a pair of cases where the insertion of a gap between the fuel of mental discomfort and the fire of anger transforms experience (BCA VI:8).<sup>1</sup>

The first example comes from my own experience. While we don't get angry at bodily processes, bodily discomfort can provide fuel for anger. For most of my life, my body has been at war with itself—I've struggled with severe digestive issues, depleted vitamin levels, and incredibly ugly effects on my mental and physical health. I have celiac, and when I am exposed to gluten, my body enters a heightened state of distress; the resulting physical and mental discomfort often triggers outbursts of reactive anger when things don't go as I expect them to. Like the blogger at Gluten Dude (2012), I'm an instant asshole when you add gluten. In reading Buddhist philosophy, and cultivating an awareness of the causes of my distress, I have started to understand that these feelings arise through

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<sup>1</sup> I offer a more detailed discussion of the process of psychological construction that is at play here, as well as a more detailed discussion of the relationship to Buddhist psychology in a companion paper, “Anger and Emptiness”.

a habitual misattribution: since anger and fear are typical responses to mental distress in the context of interpersonal interaction, I treat my feelings of mental discomfort as evidence of an interpersonal threat. By treating my experience as a fully formed informational state, I have conditioned myself to “deal with stress in ways that ultimately perpetuate stress rather than release [me] from it” (Brewer, Davis, & Goldstein 2013, 76). And I’ve developed a habit of reacting angrily to my bodily states, as anger is more comfortable in the short run than sitting with pervasive feelings of bodily discomfort. Being aware of this situation helps, and realizing that my bodily state has a biological cause helps me understand why anger is misplaced; and to the extent that I remember that my body is causing my distress, I can open up space between my feeling of distress and my experience of anger. Where I can remind myself that the cause of my anger is distinct from the content of my anger, I can acknowledge my distress before it ignites (McRae 2012; Tsongkhapa 2000, 161).

A second example comes from Robin DiAngelo (2011), who argues that most White people in the US never develop strategies for managing racial stress, as they inhabit environments that protect them from such stress. She claims that many Black people in the US expect racial stress in interactions with White people, and that experiences with racial hostility facilitate the development of strategies for navigating, diffusing, or minimizing the effects of such stress. But while people can typically choose to interact with other White people, they can typically avoid non-White spaces, and they can learn to think of racism in primarily individualist and explicit terms. When White people interact in multiracial contexts, and when they are forced to acknowledge their position in structures of racial privilege, this often triggers discomfort. And when they are told that their behavior is racist, this often triggers “emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (DiAngelo 2011, 57). White fragility is the result of an internal conflict between the desire to avoid racism and feeling implicated in racist practices (McRae 2016, 102); put differently, these forms of racial stress are often experienced as threats to the self-understanding of White people, and threats to values that they take themselves to have. These are precisely the kinds of conditions that will trigger anger, fear, and guilt. And since many White people feel compelled to defend their ‘self’, they display reactive forms of anger that mask their feeling of racial discomfort beneath an externalizing reaction. This is a familiar strategy that we employ to avoid dealing with the causes of our distress (Gyasto 1997). We become more fragile when we repeatedly avoid facing the sources of our discomfort. And such responses further entrench White fragility, and prevent people from engaging in the kinds of actions that would help to address racial injustice. Put much too simply, emotional distress makes it hard to

*listen, learn*, and take part in collaborative practices aimed at dismantling White privilege.

One of Śāntideva's key insights is that understanding the underlying causes of our fragility provides the key insight for gaining control over our reactions. He argues that we gain control over our reactions by developing strategies for navigating minor difficulties, and using these to cultivate skills for navigating more complex difficulties. Initially, it is hard for us to confront the difficulties we face without becoming distressed or angry. But by reflecting on the causes of our anger, and becoming aware of "the destructive effects of anger and hatred as well as the beneficial effects of tolerance and patience", we can begin to shift our attention toward more productive patterns of engagement (Gyatso 1997, 18). As we attend to the causes of our mental distress, we gain resources for reorienting "our character so that we become less prone to strong reactive emotions such as anger" (Jinpa 1997, xxi). Anger that is triggered by bodily discomfort or White fragility will typically *seem* like a unified feeling. But in each case, careful attention to the state reveals a complex set of responses, which are constructed to navigate conflicts between our internal state and the state of our social world. By rejecting the claim that emotional experiences are unified states, we can begin to shift attention toward the causes that produce them, including facts about our learning histories, habits of attention, interoceptive states, and local contexts (Barrett 2017). And by focusing on the forms of ignorance, delusion, and mental discomfort that have produced our anger, we can work to prevent these feelings from being elaborated into an emotional state.

Understanding that my anger was caused by an autoimmune disorder has made me more vigilant about my food choices, and more willing to recognize that my feelings of unease are bodily reactions. Likewise experiencing feelings of racial discomfort as evidence that we haven't learned to think adequately about race can lead us to engage in the difficult conversations that will help us to see how much we have to learn. And more generally, learning to sit with feelings of mental discomfort will make us mentally stronger, by helping us to see that such feelings rise and fall, that they do so in ways that depend on our current circumstance, and their rising and falling tends to foster suffering (*duḥkha*). Śāntideva's reason for shifting attention to the causes of anger is thus deeply pragmatic. As he puts this point:

When a house is burning down and the fire has spread towards the next house, any grass or such in which it might spread is dragged off and taken away. So, when the mind is catching alight with the fire of hatred as a result of contact with something, it must be cast aside immediately (BCA VI:70-71).

Were we to focus only on the experience of anger, we would leave the underlying forms of ignorance, delusion, and mental discomfort that fuel our anger in place. By contrast, focusing on the causes of mental discomfort, and working to eliminate them, allows us to remove this fuel, and to prevent our initial reaction from spreading further into our mental lives.

Over time, learning to sit with mental discomfort can also help us to realize that emotional states dissipate. And recognizing the impermanence of our emotional states makes it easier to sit with minor forms of discomfort. This is important, for as we practice patience with feelings of minor discomforts, we can develop habits that make powerful forms of discomfort more bearable (BCA VI:14; BCA VI:73). Of course, we can only control our own reactions (BCA V:13-14), and at one point, Śāntideva goes so far as to suggest that we should “follow the solitary life, which is delightful and free from strife, leading to the auspicious and calming all distractions” (BCA VIII:38). This won’t be a helpful suggestion, if our only hope is to hide from the world, and to avoid becoming angry by avoiding any interactions with others. Fortunately, Śāntideva also sees that cultivating patience can provide us with the resources to remain calm in the face of social discomfort; and he argues that this can open up space for adopting more compassionate motivations which will lead us to pursue the liberation of all sentient beings.

### **3. Agency and causal dependence**

One of the primary obstacles to cultivating this more social state of *bodhicitta* is that we are deeply attached to our affective reactions. In social interactions, we treat emotional expressions as information that can be used to predict what others will do. And when things go well, this information helps us to avoid communicative breakdowns (McGeer 2012). But things do not always go well. Perceiving wrongdoing as the reflection of another person’s agency often leads to cycles of reactive aggression (Litvak et al 2010). So long as we remain ignorant of the causes another person's behavior, it is easy to feel angry when they harm us, and to feel the need to retaliate or to avoid them (Pelden 1997, 214). And this process allows anger to spread interpersonally, unless we find a way to eliminate this social flow of emotion. Here too, we can increase our control over social anger by shifting attention to the underlying causes of another person’s actions.

Śāntideva provides us with a promising tool for reshaping these forms of social attention, known as “exchanging self for other”. We generally direct our actions toward the preservation of our own needs and interests, and the minimization of our own suffering. To shift this habitual pattern of thought, he proposes something like the following meditative practice:

On one side you visualize your own normal self, the self that is totally impervious to others' well-being and an embodiment of self-centeredness...on the other side, you visualize a group of beings who are suffering, with no protection and no refuge...[then]...view yourself as a neutral third person impartial observer, who tries to assess whose interest is more important here. Isolating yourself in the position of neutral observer makes it easier for you to see the limitations of self-centeredness, and realize how much fairer and more rational it is to concern yourself with the welfare of other sentient beings. (Gyatso n.d.).

Notice, this is a meditative practice that is designed to change the attitudes we've formed about our 'self', as well as the attitudes we've formed about 'others'. It provides us with a strategy for shifting away from our self-interested habits, while simultaneously increasing "our feelings of compassion by imagining ourselves taking on the suffering of another being" (McRae 2012, 345). This is only the first step—and it should come as no surprise that Śāntideva develops this practice in ways that are at odds with much of contemporary moral psychology in the European tradition.

Suppose we develop the capacity to understand transgressions and evil deeds as arising from underlying networks of causal forces (BCA:25). The resulting habits of attention will help us to highlight the conditions that have produced an action, rather than focusing on the agent who we are interacting with. And from this perspective, we will begin to see that "when a person inflicts harm on us, the harm that is inflicted is in some sense out of that person's control because he or she is compelled by other forces such as negative emotions, delusions, ill feelings, and so on" (Gyatso 1997, 41). At this point, *agency* seems to go missing. It is commonly supposed that reactive attitudes, including moral anger directed toward injustice or illegitimate harm, are integral to moral practices; put differently, it is only by treating a person as an agent, who has control over their own actions, that we can hold them responsible for wrongdoing. Śāntideva is not, however, denying the possibility of agency. He is advising a shift in attentional focus, which highlights the facts that anger can spread between individuals, and rapidly transform good social interactions into problematic situations. He recognizes that failures to address another person's wrongdoing will have karmic effects. But he claims that we should respond to harms with compassion (*karuṇā*), and with the motivation to minimize overall suffering—this provides a more promising way to prevent problematic effects from arising, as it stops negative patterns of reciprocal anger from taking hold of our social interactions. Over time, this can help us to avoid the danger of "becoming

habituated to extremely negative actions” (Gyatso 1997, 12). This points toward a reconceptualization of questions about the role of ethical motivation, which focuses on developing a more robust understanding of the forms of suffering in our world, and on the constructing of more robust patterns of relationality and collective liberation. But to see what this amounts to, we must look more closely at the way in which we “are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny” (King 1967).

We experience anger where we perceive an interaction as an existential threat, as a threat to our status, or as a criticism of our goals or values. And anger seeks to create incentives for *others* that will make *our own* needs, goals, or interests more salient (Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides 2009). So anger forces us to focus on ‘others’, and to treat ourselves as distinct and isolatable ‘selves’. From Śāntideva’s perspective, this is always a bad thing. But many philosophers have argued that anger is a liberating force, a signal and a beacon, an offspring of distress that can motivate the collective pursuit of racial justice. These signals tell us that the world is deeply divided, and they can reveal patterns of social dissonance. They also can serve as beacons of transformative hope (Michael Swanson pc,15/11/16). By attending to expressions of anger as signals of social dissonance, we can cultivate motivation to eliminate the cause of social distress, and to uncover the reasons why a social system is pulling against itself. But to make use of the information that is encoded in these signals, we must shift our attention away from the way that the expression of anger affects us, and toward the role that these signals are playing in revealing suffering.

While it might seem obvious that we would be better off if we could remove anger from our moral repertoire, anger sometimes becomes the only reasonable response to an unreasonable situation (Srinivasan 2014). Where exclusion and oppression lead to inhumanization, anger can be “loaded with information and energy” (Lorde 1984, 127), and it can motivate people to resist social injustice. Expressions of anger can constitute demands for equality and liberation, and they can signal a willingness to work together in the pursuit of racial justice (Cherry unpublished; Michael Swanson pc). Such expressions can also signal a willingness to overcome injustice by whatever means are necessary. Most of us know from experience that power “concedes nothing without a demand” (Douglass 1857). But when fear of collective punishment is triggered by displays of righteous anger, this can sometimes push us toward constructing a better world.

In committing to the elimination of suffering for all sentient beings, the *bodhisattva* must acknowledge that many people experience anger, and they must learn to use the information that is encoded in signals of anger to find ways of transforming the ethical landscape. Ignoring these signals allows suffering to persist; and suppressing them or re-describing them in ways that minimize

suffering makes them ‘feel normal’. I thus believe that we should work to see some expressions of anger as alerting us to systematic oppression, rather than as personal attacks; just as we should work to see our own feelings of mental discomfort as signaling that something is wrong, without picking out a particular relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is our best hope for understanding the causes of our own problematic behaviors, and for understanding the structural causes of exclusion, oppression, and marginalization. People routinely condition themselves to deal with interpersonal stress in ways that will ultimately perpetuate that stress rather than release them from it (Brewer, Davis, & Goldstein 2013, 76). And in a world structured by White privilege, the world reinforces these patterns of conditioning (Huebner 2016). But these are tasks that meditative practices are designed to address, so we should take them seriously as tools for deconstructing privilege.

This process is more difficult when people have highly discordant goals. Such contexts produce ‘empathy walls’, which make it difficult to understand what others experience, what they value, and what they are worried about (Hochschild 2016). And where we don't understand the forms of distress that arise in other contexts, we cannot begin to worry about ways of addressing the causes of suffering. This problem is likely to be exacerbated where eliminating discomfort would require giving up something that people in power see as important. From a position of racial privilege, the structural interventions that would secure racial equality look threatening; and from a position of economic security, interventions that could create economic justice feel too risky. Finally, people who suffer exclusion and oppression in such contexts may (reasonably) be unwilling to share their experiences in ways that would clarify the nature of their suffering; and even if they do, it is often difficult for people in positions of power to understand this suffering, especially where they lack similar experiences. While the practice of exchanging self for other can motivate someone to recognize that others suffer, and to recognize that their suffering matters, gaining motivation to overcome systemic injustice is likely to require something more.

#### 4. Transformational relationality

By the time we've finished breakfast, most of us have relied on people from numerous parts of the world—including those who grow and transport our food, those who make our clothes, and those who roast our coffee (King 1967). We may not depend on the entire world, but cross-cutting, and overlapping patterns of mutual dependence implicate almost everyone on earth in the lives of almost everyone else. But this fact isn't embodied, practical knowledge. Our habit of considering ourselves as discrete entities prevents us from seeing how we are implicated in structures of inclusion and exclusion; so for many of us, the

pervasiveness of structural injustice can feel overwhelming, and lead us to retreat into feelings of anxiety, fear, or sadness. Such experiences draw attention away from the causes of structural injustice, and prevent us from understanding the material flows of power that we participate in. But whatever affects one of us directly, affects the rest of us indirectly (King 1967); and recognizing this in an embodied, practical way can motivate us to take part in transformative practices.

The individual practice of cultivating patience helps to bring unity to a disordered system. And while a patient mind is no more permanent or substantial than an angry and disordered mind, it is not a mind that is at war with itself. It is not a mind that's moved by flights of fancy, transient desires, or feelings of discomfort; it is a mind that displays an unwavering focus on eliminating the conditions that produce suffering. When people take part in practices of mutual aid and mutual support, they help to prevent social discomfort from arising, by limiting the effects of selfish motivations; these practices require recognizing the pervasiveness of interdependence, as well as the possibility that systems can be more or less organized; and they require thinking of social groups as bodies, which can work together harmoniously, or move toward self-destruction as disunified aggregates (Deleuze 1988, 42-43)

Śāntideva (BCA VIII:91) advises readers to meditate on the following pair of ideas: individual bodies can be divided materially, but they are undivided in their ability to suffer; the world is divided, but it too is undivided in its ability to suffer. A plausible way of reading this meditation is as reminding us that suffering is not a feeling of discomfort, but a pattern of internal discord that emerges when a complex system is internally disorganized. If we think of ourselves as 'naturally unified wholes', it will be difficult for us to understand the patterns of organization and disorganization that occur in the systems where we are parts. But by conceiving of ourselves as parts of a larger, dissonant, but changeable system, we can cultivate the motivation to shape our local surroundings in ways that make them *more resonant*; indeed, this would yield a precise parallel to the practice of cultivating patience in an individual. In both cases, we see ways for a system to be organized, which depend on the relations of dependence between all of the bodies that constitute a system.

I think that this approach helps to highlight an important difference between the kinds of anger that are directed at racial injustice, and the kinds of anger that sustain racial injustice. In stark contrast to the negative representation of Black anger, White rage is often ignored (Anderson 2014). Actions that are carried out quietly *seem* more respectable, even when they perpetuate racial prejudice. In part, this is because focusing on individual behavior leads us to track a difference between the expressions of anger among those fighting for Black liberation, and the quiet displays of anger among those fighting to sustain their racial privilege. When we focus on individuals, we find similar feelings of mental

discomfort. But when we focus on the social structure as a whole, we find different sources of discomfort dividing a social system, but the causes of the discomfort differ radically. The main thing to notice, though, is that *White rage seeks to perpetuate disorder in a system, while struggles for Black power seek to make the system more unified*. If bodies that work in unison have more collective power to act, then we can see revolutionary anger as a force that aims to push a social system toward unity. The only way to cultivate collective patience, however, is to eliminate the conditions that cause this anger—and that means struggling together to bring about collective liberation!

In light of this discussion, there is one final question that calls for a response. When is there value in criticizing those who are angry? Reminding others not to be angry can be useful, where we can expect uptake, criticize with compassion, and avoid entrenching exclusionary practices. Indeed, this is a basic practice that can help us to push one another to be better agents (McGeer 2012). We are often unaware of how our behavior affects others, and having them inform us can help us in the search for the underlying causes of our behavior. I am not optimistic about the use of reactive attitudes in this context, but practices of calling-in, that is forward-looking reminders of shared values and commitments, are helpful among friends who seeking collective liberation (Trần 2013). Additionally, criticisms are important where failing to call a person out will lead to the cultivation of habitual practices of hostility and hatred; here too, we should proceed with compassion, but we should take strong countermeasures to prevent these karmic flows from solidifying. “No matter the wrong we are naming, there are ways to call people out that do not reduce individuals to agents of social advantage. There are ways of calling people out that are compassionate and creative, and that recognize the whole individual instead of viewing them simply as representations of the systems from which they benefit” (Ahmad 2015)

Importantly, racialized criticisms of Black anger are not driven by compassion. They are driven by racial animosity, arising from the fear of losing control of a fragile society. The attachment to an imagined past where things were ‘better’ causes fear as things move further away from that imagined past. When criticism springs from these forms of mental discomfort, we should work to eliminate them. And I have no doubt that this will require transforming the world we live in. But such is the task of seeking collective liberation. As individuals we should seek unity by cultivating patience; and we should act to dismantle the forms of White fragility that perpetuate racial injustice. This will require taking strong countermeasures against those who act out of White rage. But it will also require acknowledging the value of anger as a signal that constitutes a demand for equality and liberation, and a signal of the willingness to pursue racial justice by any means necessary. What this means is that the cultivation of compassion requires an unwavering focus on *collective* liberation. This focus is impossible

when we are angry about criticisms, or ashamed of our actions. Such feelings divide our attention, leading us to focus on ‘us’, and ‘them’; the cost of this focus is inattention to the features of the world that produce suffering and discomfort. By contrast, in attending to the causes of mental discomfort that lie behind an expression of anger, we can begin to uncover the material and social features of the world that produce and sustain injustice, and we can begin to see how these conditions foster patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Of course, we always begin *in media res*, and there is no way for us to change the karmic flows that have led us to our current situation (BCA VI: 68). But acknowledging where we stand, and cultivating a more thoroughgoing understanding of the power we have to shape future interactions, can motivate us to dedicate effort to performing “good actions in such a way that everyone will develop an attitude of friendship, each towards the other” (BCA VI:69). We have a long way to go before the world is made whole, but we “aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality” (King 1967). As ethically motivated agents, we should thus act to eliminate the conditions that produce anger; and “since there is dependent origination there can be cessation of suffering” (BCA VI:32).

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