

THE MORALITY OF ACHILLES

ANGER AS A MORAL EMOTION

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“I was angry with my friend: I told my wrath, my wrath did end. I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow.”¹

333

Anger is central to moral and legal decision-making. Angry individuals reason differently than people in a temperate state. Aristotle and the ancient Greeks understood anger’s practical role in forensic argument and moral judgment—an intuition modern psychologists have largely confirmed. Psychological experiments show that people primed to anger will draw different inferences than people in a tranquil state of mind from the same factual circumstances. As Aristotle understood, our ability to reach conclusions about a set of facts is influenced by emotional processes such as anger. This article analyzes competing views of anger in contemporary moral philosophy. It uses cross-cutting psychological, biological, sociological, anthropological, historical and philosophical arguments about the experience and expression of anger to critically assess leading philosophical accounts of the role of anger in moral and judicial decision making.

Keywords: Legal Reasoning, Law and Psychology, Legal Theories, Law and Moral Theory, Legal Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Legal Judgment Theory, Crime and Punishment.

1. William Blake, *A Poison Tree* (1794), available at <http://www.online-literature.com/poe/622/> (last visited Mar 26, 2013).

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I. INTRODUCTION

Anger is central to moral and legal decision-making. Angry individuals reason differently than people in a temperate state. Aristotle and the ancient Greeks understood anger's practical role in forensic argument and moral judgment. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle advised prosecutors to make speeches that aroused moral indignation (*orge*) in the minds of the judicial decision-maker. Aristotle recognized that successful legal arguments dispose judges and jurors toward particular attitudes. Prosecutors and plaintiffs are most likely to win a verdict if their description of the case rouses the judge's sense of moral indignation.

Modern psychologists have confirmed Aristotle's intuition about the role of anger in decision making. Psychological experiments show that people primed to anger will draw different inferences than people in a tranquil state of mind from the same factual circumstances. As Aristotle understood, our ability to reach conclusions about a set of facts is influenced by emotional processes such as anger.

Although anger is commonly viewed as an impediment to good decision making, as, for example, when excessive anger leads to injustices, like attacks on innocent parties, anger is also valuable to the process of moral reasoning. Anger can reveal truths or values that would otherwise remain obscure.

For example, I may believe that Judaism is no longer an important part of my identity. Because I do not identify with Judaism, I do not believe that impersonal verbal attacks on Judaism will anger me. If I later become extremely angry at my friend for anti-Semitic slurs, this emotional reaction could force me to revise my previously held beliefs. Before my friend's anti-Semitism aroused me to anger, I believed I no longer identified with Judaism or cared about insults directed at Jews. If I had been nonplussed by my friend's anti-Semitism I could have continued to hold both beliefs.

However, my surprisingly intense anger at my friend for his anti-Semitism requires me to revise my belief that I am ambivalent toward impersonal attacks on Jews or Judaism. My reaction also provides strong evidence that I do care about my Jewish heritage because I took my friend's anti-Semitism as a personal attack. While it is possible my anger was directed at my friend's general disrespect for a historically marginalized

group, my acute anger at my friend's attack implies a stronger identification with Judaism than I had acknowledged. My intense experience of anger at my friend for his anti-Semitism implies that I do continue to identify as a Jew. In this sense, my angry reaction to my friend's anti-Semitism requires me to reconsider my beliefs about the nature and quality of my Jewish identity.

The emotion of anger is epistemologically valuable to moral and legal judgment in two significant ways. First, it focuses the moral actor's attention on particular aspects or features of the data relevant to decision making—for example, anger at an infringement of someone's rights may lead me to appreciate aspects of an interaction and its consequences that I may otherwise not have noticed, such as the perpetrator's disdain and the various psychological and material harms inflicted on the victim. Second, the moral actor's anger can provide circumstantial evidence for the truth or falsity of particular beliefs. My reaction to a friend's anti-Semitism appears to conflict with my belief that I had dis-identified with Judaism and its corollary that anti-Semitic attitudes are less offensive than I actually believe them to be.

This article analyzes competing views of anger in contemporary moral philosophy. It uses cross-cutting psychological, biological, sociological, anthropological, historical and philosophical arguments about the experience and expression of anger to critically assess leading philosophical accounts of the role of anger in moral and judicial decision making.

II. COGNITIVE AND NON-COGNITIVE THEORIES OF ANGER AS A MORAL EMOTION

To say that “anger” or “orge” is a moral emotion does not say much about the way anger interacts with cognition to produce moral and legal judgments. Cognitive and non-cognitive theories of the emotions provide alternative views of anger's relationship to evaluative judgments or appraisals.

A. Cognitive Theories of Anger

1. Anger in “Pure” and “Mixed” Cognitivist Theories

Cognitive theories of anger interpret the feeling of anger as an implicit or explicit judgment about facts existing in the world. Jesse Prinz describes two types of cognitive theories of emotion, which I will call “pure cognitivism” and “mixed cognitivism.” Pure cognitivists think about anger in strictly cognitive terms, while mixed cognitivists recognize that anger has both cognitive and affective qualities. All cognitive theorists contend that anger requires certain beliefs. The common thread in pure and mixed versions of cognitivism is the view that anger entails conceptual evaluation.

Robert C. Solomon’s theory of anger is a paradigm of pure cognitivism. In *The Passions* (1977), Solomon provides a taxonomy of the conceptual basis for anger and other emotions. He argues that anger depends on an individual’s belief that he has been wronged by another person. On this view, anger is akin to a judicial determination that someone has offended me. Indeed, Solomon describes anger as a juridical emotion. A person’s anger is the product of his judgment that another person’s actions are offensive and blameworthy. Pure cognitivists suggest that feelings of anger arise from our judgment of personal offense and dissipate upon the refutation of beliefs giving rise to our anger. My judgment that you have offended me is necessary and sufficient for me to become angry with you and my refutation of the anger-inducing belief (e.g., you did not mean to cause offense) is necessary and sufficient to dispel my anger.

Pure cognitivists argue that anger is so dependent on specific truth-conditions that a refutation of relevant facts is sufficient to quell one’s wrath. Solomon says that anger requires at least three discrete beliefs: (1) that a responsible agent (2) has caused me personal offense and (3) the agent’s action is “blameworthy.” For Solomon and other pure cognitivists, anger simply “is” a “set of judgments” about the truth of these beliefs.

Pure cognitivism differs from mixed cognitivism in degree, not kind. For mixed cognitive theorists, anger entails a belief that “my goals have been threatened, that the source of the threat is another person, and that aggression is an available option for coping with the situation.” Mixed cognitivists’ central thesis is that anger and other emotions require cognitive appraisals, even if anger also includes an affective component.

Unlike pure cognitivists, mixed cognitivists recognize that feelings of anger are not reducible to cognitive judgments. A person's anger includes a physiological affect and a cognitive appraisal. Although my anger with you is a judgment that you have offended me, anger is experienced affectively and differs from the purely cognitive process of solving a math problem. My cognitive evaluation that your actions are personally offensive and blameworthy is necessary for anger, but this evaluation results in the embodied feeling of anger that includes non-conceptual sensations such as a quickened pulse and clenched teeth. Despite mixed cognitivists' recognition of feelings in the experience of anger, mixed cognitivists adhere to the fundamental cognitivist precept that anger cannot arise, change, or dissipate without changes in beliefs or opinions.

2. *Solomon's Cognitive Theory of Anger*

Allan Gibbard, Michael Stocker, and Jesse Prinz provide strong arguments against Solomon's controversial view that emotions like anger are simply evaluative judgments about the world. Clearly, Solomon is right that our beliefs sometimes cause anger. However, Solomon does not convincingly show that certain beliefs about the world are necessary to experience anger. In a passage Gibbard quotes in *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Solomon writes, "A change in my beliefs (for example, the refutation of my belief that John stole my car) entails (not causes) a change in my emotion (my being angry that John stole my car). I cannot be angry if I do not believe that someone has wronged or offended me." But Solomon's conclusion is a giant leap from the logical force of his example. If my only reason for being mad at John is my belief that John stole my car, my anger may abate upon discovery that John hasn't stolen my car. However, as Gibbard points out, I can still be irrationally angry at John. If my thought that John has stolen my car has placed me in a state of agitated excitement, my anger at John will not necessarily abate upon learning that John has not, in fact, stolen my car. In my excited state of mind, I may find other "reasons" for being angry at John, finding fault with John's behavior, which I would ordinarily consider innocuous. Moreover, I can be angry at John for many reasons that have nothing to do with whether he has "wronged or offended me." Perhaps John is America's president and has been stirring up support for a war I consider immoral. I may be angry at John for miring America's armed forces in a dubious foreign conflict, but my anger at John has nothing to do with any "personal offense" and is unrelated to any belief that he

Adam Wallwork

has “wronged or offended me.” Finally, Solomon’s cognitive approach to anger falls prey to a version of G.E. Moore’s Open Question argument for after learning that John has “wronged or offended” Mary personally, and that Mary is fully cognizant of John’s offense, it remains an open question whether Mary is angry with John. It makes perfect sense for me to say: “I understand that John offended Mary personally, but is Mary angry with John?” Mary might be a tranquil or religious person who responds to John’s personal offense with calm congeniality. Or her love for John may prevent her from becoming angry.

3. A Critique of Cognitive Theories of Anger

Cognitivist theories of anger face the serious objection that no theorist has yet developed a comprehensive, non-circular, and non-question-begging account of the concept of anger. Cognitivists require the emotion of anger to obey the principles of formal logic. Solomon posits that humans experience anger if and only if they believe a responsible agent has acted in a blameworthy manner and caused a personal offense. Within Solomon’s framework, our anger can be “refuted” by learning the right set of facts about the offender’s agency, blameworthiness, and intent to offend.

Solomon’s “logic” of anger surely puts the cart before the horse. Solomon does not offer to prove that anger does in fact always and everywhere involve the three conceptual elements he posits: a responsible actor, a blameworthy act, and a personal offense. Solomon’s thought experiment about a person whose anger ceases upon learning he has no rational grounds for anger is, at least, counterintuitive. People in a rage do not usually pause to reflect on the truth of their beliefs. And when people do pause to reflect on the reasons for their anger—for instance, in psychotherapy—they sometimes abandon false premises for their anger without abandoning the anger itself. This can happen if a person misattributes the source of anger, and yet remains angry after recognizing the falsity of his belief. For instance, Person A may believe he is angry at Person B for stealing his car, but is really angry at B for flirting with A’s wife at the Country Club. A may continue being angry at B after recognizing that he had actually lent B his car, because he is not really angry about the car but about B flirting with his wife. Even after discovering A’s wife and B were not flirting but merely confirming a play date for A’s son and B’s daughter, A’s anger at B may not abate, if, for example, he does

not realize that his anger at B for stealing (i.e., “borrowing”) his car was an expression of his anger about the flirting, which A no longer believes occurred. He may just “sense” or “know” intuitively that B has harmed him in some way.

Moreover, decades of psychological research on anger tend to refute the cognitivists’ implicit claim that cognition precedes emotion. Schachter and Singer’s epinephrine experiment on the “Cognitive Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State” (1962) showed that “human subjects can be readily manipulated into states of [] anger” without cognitive beliefs supporting it. Schachter and Singer’s experiment injected subjects with a stimulant drug, epinephrine, that mimicked the psychological arousal of affective states such as rapid heart rate and increased blood pressure. Four groups of subjects were either misinformed or uninformed about the drug’s effects and two control groups were informed about epinephrine’s stimulant effects. The subjects were placed in one of two environments where the researcher’s confederate either acted euphorically or angrily. Compared to the control groups, subjects who were unaware of epinephrine’s simulative effects reported strong feelings of anger when placed with the angry confederate, and euphoria when placed with the happy confederate. Schachter and Singer’s epinephrine experiment provides strong evidence that anger is not merely a set of judgments, much less the set of judgments Solomon identifies. Schachter and Singer could make subjects experience anger by combining physiological and social stimuli. The uninformed participants’ affective mimicry of the confederate’s anger demonstrates that anger can arise from non-cognitive features of the environment.

Epinephrine doesn’t stimulate ideas; it stimulates feelings. Persons in aroused states search their environment for causes and attribute arousal to their surroundings. Schachter and Singer’s experiment demonstrates how self-attribution of anger can be shaped by stimuli unrelated to personal offenses. Their experiment also suggests that the actual causal relationship between anger and its environmental causes is sometimes the opposite of what cognitivism requires. If epinephrine can stimulate anger in particular contexts, anger can arise without a foundation in beliefs. As William James and Carl Lange have suggested, people may focus on offenses and wrongs because they are angry, and not, as the cognitivists would have it, the other way around.

B. Non-Cognitive Theories of Anger

1. *Non-Cognitivism*

Non-cognitive theorists deny that feelings of anger arise or change due to purely cognitive appraisals of the world. As William James wrote “What is an Emotion?” (1884), purely cognitive accounts of anger are “pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth.”¹ There are many different kinds of non-cognitive theories of anger and other emotions, but all non-cognitivists reject the proposition that anger requires evaluative or normative judgments. In short, cognitivists assert, while non-cognitivists deny, that human beings feel anger if and only if they hold certain beliefs about the world.

2. *The James-Lange Version of Non-Cognitivism*

James provides an alternative to Solomon’s “pale” and “colourless” cognitive theory of anger. James’s bodily theory of “surprise curiosity, rapture, fear, **anger**, lust, greed, and the like,” is meant to account for the “*bodily changes*” aroused by anger that allow us to “actually *feel* afraid or angry.”²

James reverses the cognitivist’s stylized account of emotional experience. The cognitivists contend that (1) “the mental perception of some fact” such as an undeserved slight **causes** (2) “the mental affection called [anger]” which in turn (3) “**gives rise to** the bodily expression” of pain and the desire for revenge. Cognitive theories that reduce anger to the perception of an insult and a judgment that “deem[s] it right to strike” do not adequately account for the “bodily changes that follow directly the **PERCEPTION** of the exciting fact [the insult],” and that constitute the feeling of anger. Anger is an affective state of mind that involves certain corresponding bodily manifestations.

The experience of anger includes non-cognitive changes in human physiology from “changes in the functioning of glands and muscles, and in the circulatory apparatus” to changes in breathing patterns and neural pathways. James and Carl Lange argue that our cognitive perception of anger and other emotions derive from bodily responses to a threat or insult.

1. William James, *What is an Emotion?*, 9 MIND 188, 189 (1884).

2. *Id.*

James asks, “Can one fancy the state of rage and picture no ebullition of it in the chest, no flushing of the face, no dilation of the nostrils, no clenching of the teeth, no impulse to vigorous action?” The *feeling* of anger is an immediate affective response. It does not require conceptual mediation. Anger does not depend on a disembodied evaluation of John Doe’s words as insulting and a judgment that it would make sense for me to retaliate against John Doe. James and Lange argue that the cognitivist explanation of anger is an *ex post* rationalization of angry feelings.

C. Contemporary Psychological Evidence on the Cognitive or Non-Cognitive Nature of Anger

Modern psychology tends to show that anger can be aroused in the absence of cognition. John B. Watson’s Little Albert experiment showed that humans can be conditioned to experience fear and anger in the absence of stimuli that had previously been causally related to those emotions. In the Little Albert experiment, Dr. Watson exposed a nine-month-old child, Albert B., to a white laboratory rat. Initially, Albert B. exhibited no signs of distress in response to the white rat, but after Albert’s first exposure, Dr. Watson would make a startling noise behind Albert each time he showed Albert the white rat. Albert began to cry whenever Albert made the startling noise. After repeatedly pairing the white rat with the startling noise, Dr. Watson observed that Albert would cry whenever he saw the white rat, even if Dr. Watson made no noise: “The instant the rat was shown, the baby began to cry.” Dr. Watson’s Little Albert experiment is a paradigm example of classical conditioning. Little Albert was not frightened of the white rat before he learned to associate the rat with a frightful noise. After Little Albert made that association, he would be frightened by a stimulus—the rat—that previously evoked no emotional reaction.

Dr. Watson’s Little Albert experiment is about the conditioning of fear rather than anger, but its results are important for our understanding of the nature of negative emotions generally, including anger. If Dr. Watson could make Little Albert feel frightened by otherwise benign stimuli merely because of the stimuli’s association with scary stimuli, his experiment suggests the same should be true of anger. A feeling of anger may not be due to any appraisal of beliefs, but an arbitrary connection between one’s present situation and other situations that have previously

Adam Wallwork

elicited feelings of anger. Think about the way Democrats respond to a Republican candidate's speech, or Republicans respond to a Democratic candidate's speech. Our experience has taught us to associate the opposite political party with ideas, beliefs, and opinions we reject. Many of their policies may even anger us. Does a Democrat's angry reaction to a Republican candidate's speech have anything to do with what he or she says? Probably not. Imagine a liberal Democrat angrily hitting the radio dial upon inadvertently tuning in Rush Limbaugh in her car before hearing anything he has to say. We see or hear the candidate, know his party affiliation, and our angry reaction is automatically primed. Adult human beings may be less susceptible to conscious conditioning than little children, but in many ways we are not so different from Pavlov's dog.

In addition, Schachter and Singer's epinephrine experiment discussed above demonstrates that people can experience biochemical arousal before they attribute this arousal to anger. The subjects in the epinephrine experiment did not identify emotions on the basis of the existence or non-existence of cognitive facts. Instead, the subjects first experienced physiological arousal, then searched for features of their environment to explain their excited state of mind. The epinephrine experiment seems to show that anger can arise before cognitive judgment. Cognition may in fact distort the feeling of anger by misattributing its source.

While the epinephrine experiment's results are troubling for cognitive theories of anger, they are perfectly consistent with non-cognitivism. For James and Lange, anger is just a state of physiological arousal caused by particular environmental conditions. The epinephrine arouses people to anger, which causes them to search for environmental causes of their anger. For non-cognitivists, anger just is this physiological arousal. The cognitive components of anger are simply *ex post* rationalizations of the bodily feeling of anger. Because anger's cognitive component is extrinsic to the embodied feeling of anger, subjects can be led astray in their search for the causes of anger. Thus, in the epinephrine experiment, subjects perceive anger in terms of psychophysical responses, but wrongly judge its source.

The fact that physiological stimulus can induce anger without eliciting a corresponding change in beliefs is difficult to square with cognitive theories of anger, since cognitive judgments are not responsible for the epinephrine subjects' experience of anger or lack of anger. Non-cognitive

theorists appear to be right that emotions involve physiological states of mind that cannot be reduced to matters of pure cognition.

However, anger ordinarily requires an emotional appraisal of a social threat that includes, but is not limited to, its physiological components. Although anger does not necessarily depend on judgments about truth or falsity, it is a complex emotion normally responding to cognitive beliefs and reflective of values. Unlike fear, anger does not cause a consistent physiological reaction such as those associated with fight-or-flight, but rather ranges along a continuum from mild irritation to moral indignation to rage.

IV. GIBBARD'S CONCEPT OF ANGER

A. Anger and Closeness

Allan Gibbard's chapter on "Moral Emotions" in *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* takes anger as a fundamental component of moral judgment. He argues that moral norms of blame involve anger and guilt. A person's action is blameworthy if, from a perspective of "full, impartial engagement," it makes sense "for others to feel angry with him for having done it" and "for him to feel guilty for having done it."³ When Gibbard says "it makes sense" for others to feel angry and for him to feel guilty, he imagines a "special" normative perspective toward anger and guilt. Gibbard would ask the moral/legal decision-maker to evaluate, first, whether a neutral observer close to the person's conduct would feel angry with him for his action and, second, whether that person's conduct would make a reasonable person feel guilty for what he had done. Thus, Gibbard requires the moral/legal decision-maker to take a "special [emotional] standpoint" of "full engagement" with the issue at hand.

Gibbard's concept of "fully engaged" anger parallels Stocker and Hegeman's discussion of the closeness required for anger.⁴ As Gibbard puts it, "If my camel is stolen I will be outraged and we may all agree it

3. ALLAN GIBBARD, *WISE CHOICES, APT FEELINGS* 126–27 (1990) (cited in note 7).

4. Compare *id.*, at 126–27, with MICHAEL STOCKER & ELIZABETH HEGGEMAN, *VALUING EMOTIONS* 309–18 (1996).

Adam Wallwork

makes sense for me to be outraged[, but if] I were outraged at the theft of a stranger's camel far away, that would be strange."⁵ Gibbard's example points to anger's close connection to actions that affect ourselves or our friends. It makes sense for me to feel angry if a thief steals my camel because I care deeply about things that happen to me. If I learned that a thief had stolen my friend's camel, it would make sense for me to feel angry because I care about my friends and their misfortunes upset me. I might be slightly less angry about my friend's stolen camel than my own because I care somewhat less about what happens to my friends than I care about what happens to myself.

The level of anger it would make sense for me to feel over another person's camel theft is largely a function of our closeness. Gibbard's example of "the theft of *a stranger's* camel *far away*" correctly identifies how relational and geographic closeness can factor into norms of anger. It makes no sense for me to feel angry at the theft of *a stranger's* camel because I have no emotional investment in perfect strangers. A stranger's everyday triumphs and misfortunes are of no concern to me. Hence, the theft of his camel is unlikely to stir me to anger. I am especially unlikely to feel anger toward the theft of a stranger's camel *far away* because I cannot see myself or my friends endangered or otherwise affected by the theft.

Consider how norms of anger change when we vary the relational or geographic connection with "the theft of a stranger's camel far away." If either the victim or the thief is a friend or relation, the norms of anger change according to the strength of the relational connection. It might make sense for me to feel merely indignant upon learning that a friendly acquaintance's camel had been stolen. At the same time, the theft of my spouse's camel, my mother's camel, or my father's camel might appropriately provoke me to outrage. Similarly, the theft of a stranger's camel at a house in the neighborhood might arouse sensible anger among the neighbors. The theft at a house next door makes the neighborhood feel less safe no matter who the victim is. It might make sense for me to feel angry in response to the theft of a stranger's camel at the house next door because the thief has disturbed the tranquility of the neighborhood and made me feel less secure in my own property's security.

In this regard, Gibbard follows Aristotle who wrote that anger (*orge*)

5. GIBBARD, *supra* note 3, at 126 (cited in note 7).

was felt in response to personal slights and slights against those in our care such as “our parents, children, wives or subjects.” Both Gibbard and Stocker and Heggeman recognize that norms of anger depend, in part, on our closeness to the events or our identification with those involved. But Gibbard’s discussion of “full engagement” and his example of camel stealing assumes that anger can only be stirred by identification with the victim. That can’t be right.

Surely, anger can also be provoked by identification with the aggressor. It makes sense for Americans to feel outraged by the torture of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers in Abu Graib. Americans might also feel justly angered by the government’s decision to go to war in Iraq on the basis of faulty intelligence suggesting Sadaam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. Americans feel angry about Abu Graib and the War in Iraq because of their identification with America. American citizens cannot help but identify with conduct of America’s soldiers overseas and the government’s War in Iraq because other peoples attribute these actions to America. Americans’ anger at the government for torturing prisoners and conducting war in their name is a function of identification with America. Anger is felt in response to harms done by or against those who we care about.

B. Speculative Biology and the Nature of Anger

Gibbard assumes anger is one of “[t]he old emotions”⁶ tied to “the limbic system we share with all mammals.”⁷ In his view, anger and rage are primordial emotions deeply rooted in our evolutionary past. Gibbard argues that human anger has evolved from the simpler expressive behavior of a dog’s bark.⁸ Like anger, the dog’s bark is a particular and predictable reaction to a certain type of threat. Dogs bark in response to certain types of circumstances such as territorial intrusions or startling events. Anger is also a response to specific threats, including social slights, narcissistic wounds, criminal acts, and wrongs done by those with whom we are identified (e.g., our nation’s unjust wars, laws, and/or policies).

6. GIBBARD’s list of the “old emotions” humans “share with all mammals” includes “rage, fear, and sexually tinged excitement.” *Id.* at 136.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.* at 32–33.

Adam Wallwork

Gibbard uses the example of a dog baying at an intruding stranger to indicate the evolutionary similarity between the dog's bark and expressions of anger. Barking "is a state of the dog—presumably a state of its neurons and endocrine system—that tends to be incited by certain kinds of events, of which territorial intrusion is a prime example."⁹ Gibbard's description of the dog's bark closely parallels James' discussion of being in a state of anger. As James explained, there is no cognitive intermediary interposed between a man's perception of a slight and his embodied feeling of anger.¹⁰ Like the dog excited by an intruder, the angry man's chest seethes, his heart-rate quickens, his face contorts, and he readies to strike.¹¹ The dog's excited affective response to the intruder "leads to special kinds of overt expression (barking and the like) and primes the dog toward special kinds of action (attack)."¹² Gibbard suggests the same holds true for anger and other basic human emotions. Anger is a state of mind *provoked by* some external threat to oneself or one's concerns. This angry state of mind is *expressed in* relatively invariant patterns of varying affective intensities and behavioral expressions. These include the contraction of certain facial muscles and other physiological symptoms. And a person's anger *impels him toward* retribution against the person(s) or institution(s) threatening him and his concerns. In Aristotle's words, anger stimulates "a desire . . . for a conspicuous revenge."¹³

Most importantly, for Gibbard's evolutionary analogy, the dog's bark and a person's expression of anger indicate a tendency to strike or attack. Human and animal expressions of anger serve an evolutionary purpose only if they serve some adaptive purpose. According to Gibbard, behavioral manifestations of anger and barking are examples of "matched adaptations" because they communicate, and are understood to communicate, the intention to attack.¹⁴ If human anger and dog barks are harbingers of violence, then addressees who want to avoid a physical confrontation will tend to back down in the face of such expressions. This is adaptive

9. *Id.* at 132.

10. James, *supra* note 1, at 194 (cited in note 10).

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. *Rhetoric, in, 2 THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ARISTOTLE: THE REVISED OXFORD TRANSLATION*, Book II, Sec. 2, 1378a 31–33 (W. Rhys Roberts trans., Jonathan Barnes, ed., 1984).

14. GIBBARD, *supra* note 3, at 133 (cited in note 7).

for both the addressor and the addressee. When angry scowls and dog barks achieve currency among potential rivals as behavioral precursors to an imminent attack, the threatening precursor alone will often deter rivals from challenging the angry man or barking dog. By instilling fear in the minds of the addressee, the man's scowl or the dog's growl may be sufficient to maintain control over scarce resources—food, shelter, and sexual partners—without a fight. Angry gestures benefit the addressor if they enable him to protect his resources, while avoiding bloodshed. But the angry man's scowl and the dog's bark can also benefit the addressee by warning him of potential danger. Unless the addressee is desperate for scarce resources, it is adaptive for him to retreat in response to a scowl or growl in order to avoid injury or death. Because these signs of anger are harbingers of battle, they allow the addressor to forestall costly fights with weaker rivals and help weak or risk-averse addressees avert violent retribution.

For expressions of anger to be adaptive in the way Gibbard thinks a dog's bark is adaptive, the expression of anger must be adaptive for both the addressor and the addressee. At a minimum, this requires other people to recognize the behavioral correlates of anger and act accordingly. If my angry behaviors (e.g., scowls, flushed face, verbal threats) are not reliable harbingers of attack, or others do not recognize the anger of these signs of anger, anger's adaptive function will not work like a dog's bark.

Anger cannot be a matched adaptation unless its typical expression automatically conveys the addressor's intention to attack to the addressee. Gibbard explains that dog barks are a matched adaptation because “[i]f the dog who barks and growls at me is likely to attack it is adaptive for me to back down, and if I am likely to back down when confronted with barking or growling, it is adaptive for the dog to bark or to growl at me.”¹⁵ The dog's bark immediately incites a fight-or-flight reaction because the intruder understands the bark as a threat to fight if the intruder does not flee. Human expressions of anger can, but often do not, stimulate a fight-or-flight response. If the person I've made angry pulls out a gun or throws a punch, his anger is transformed into an immediate threat to life and limb, which provokes a fight-or-flight response. Even in this example, however, my fight-or-flight response is likely attributable to *fear*, not *anger*. The man's evident anger, combined with his apparent readiness

15. *Id.* at 133.

Adam Wallwork

to use violent force, increases my feeling of *fear* and triggers my fight-or-flight response.

Unlike the dog's growl, a person's anger alone is rarely sufficient to give rise to his addressee's reactive desire to fight or flee. Without some additional indicia of violence, like an angry man pulling out a gun or preparing for fisticuffs, we do not normally expect violence to follow immediately upon an expression of anger. Consider a more typical case of anger than the angry-guy-with-a-gun example above. A, B, C, and D are average fifteen-year-old students at Marion Barry Junior High School. A, B, and C are the three leads in the school's production of *Macbeth*: A plays Macbeth; B plays Lady Macbeth; and C plays Duncan. All three actors prepare meticulously for their roles and spend dozens of hours rehearsing. The day after opening night, D writes a devastating critique of *Macbeth* in the junior high school newspaper. D's article singles out A, B, and C for special ignominy, calling them "the worst actors to play *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth, and Duncan in the last four hundred and seven years." A, B, and C are livid. They confront D in the high school newspaper's office and loudly condemn D for his "outrageous" and "slanderous" review. D recognizes that A, B, and C are furious with him. He may feel ashamed, but he is unlikely to be cowed by their anger. However palpable the actors' anger toward D, D will probably not believe their remonstrations amount to a serious threat to life or limb. Typically, we do not experience another person's anger as the precursor to a fight. This makes anger very different from the dog's growl.

Gibbard's description of the adaptive role of the emotions points to two possible sources of anger's failure to produce fight-or-flight reactions. Gibbard writes, "Emotions, in evolutionary terms, cash out in action: in the actions to which they lead and in the actions they elicit in others."¹⁶ The emotion of anger will not be evolutionarily adaptive if: (1) a person's anger does not lead to predictable actions or (2) the person to whom the anger is addressed (the addressee) does not recognize or understand expressions of anger as harbingers of an attack.

1. *Internalization*

Anger creates special problems for Gibbard's adaptive story because people often do not express anger toward those they are most likely to

16. *Id.* at 139.

strike or attack. Indeed, it makes good evolutionary sense for human beings to refrain from barking or growling in anger before they've had their revenge. As William Blake writes: "I was angry with my friend: I told my wrath, my wrath did end. I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow." Anger may be most dangerous when it festers over time growing below the surface like a rhizome.

The Greek playwrights and Shakespeare recognized that anger, rage, and fury can be most dangerous when buried deep. After learning of his father's murder, Hamlet must "rest [the] perturbed spirit" before he can plot his revenge against King Claudius. Hamlet's anger seethes just below the surface and boils over in his ruse to have the Players perform the Murder of Gonzago and in his confrontation with his mother, Queen Gertrude. Hamlet's rage at Claudius spreads through him like venom 'til it consumes them both. Clytemnestra waited ten long years to take her revenge on her husband, Agamemnon, for his sacrifice of their daughter, Iphigenia, to appease the war-god Artemis and gain favorable winds for his ships to sail to Troy. When Agamemnon returned home after the Greek army's victory in Troy, Clytemnestra gave no outward signs of her wrath, but welcomed Agamemnon home as a conquering hero. After Clytemnestra's welcoming ceremony, she took her "great vengeance" for Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia by taking Agamemnon's life as he took "[m]y daughter's life, as that of a sheep or goat." In Euripides' play, Priam's wife, Hecuba, is outraged to learn that Priam's supposed ally, the Thracian King Polymnestor, betrayed Priam and Hecuba by murdering their son, Polydorus, who had been placed in Polymnestor's care. Like Clytemnestra, Hecuba never betrays her knowledge of Polymnestor's treachery or her boiling hatred until she gets her revenge by murdering Polymnestor's own children and blinding him.

Shakespeare's Hamlet, Aeschylus' Clytemnestra and Euripides' Hecuba illustrate how long-term rage is constitutive of human anger. Memory enables human beings to hold their anger in abeyance for longer than other animals and seek revenge when the time is right. Hamlet, Clytemnestra, and Hecuba display a distinctly human form of anger that is evolutionarily adaptive because it makes use of the human powers of memory and planning. Clytemnestra and Hecuba slaughtered kings who killed their offspring. Clytemnestra's and Hecuba's capacity for long-term anger and delayed revenge provides a strong incentive for other people

Adam Wallwork

to avoid treacherous actions that endanger their children. If one cannot know when a Clytemnestra or a Hecuba will strike, it makes sense to avoid betraying such women in the first place. Hecuba wiped Polymnestor's genetic imprint from the world for a single, monstrous act of betrayal: the murder of Hecuba's son, Polydorus. Human anger differs from a dog's growl in important respects, but both provide significant deterrents against crossing unmarked lines.

The problem of internalization seems to be a special problem with human anger that confounds Gibbard's analogy with animal growls. Angry people can intentionally or unintentionally hide their anger from others. The dog's growl is adaptive because it is expressive and potentially communicative, but internal feelings of anger cannot help the addressor or the addressee avoid a fight if these feelings remain unexpressed. A person's internal anger has no chance of cowering a potential rival. By contrast, a dog's bark or growl is always expressed on the surface. Dogs rarely keep their anger hidden from an intruder. But human beings, with their longer lives and capacity for planning, may find it advantageous to keep their anger seething below the surface rather than profess it to the world at-large. We can intentionally sublimate our anger to further other ends such as revenge. Clytemnestra, Hecuba, Medea, and Hamlet all conceal their feelings of wrath to achieve the purpose of Aristotelian anger, namely, vengeance. In addition, people may unintentionally sublimate feelings of anger and keep their rage hidden even from themselves. For instance, Freud claims that male children unintentionally sublimate their anger toward the father for possessing his mother's love out of a fear of castration. For all these reasons, anger may not be expressed in external behavioral cues that others might take as a threat of violence. Dogs and other animals do not self-consciously monitor the behavioral expression of their anger to achieve future ends. Since humans often hide their anger, the mutually adaptive role of anger in signaling a potential threat is much more complicated than Gibbard's growl analogy suggests.

The human capacity to hide anger creates a second confounding factor by limiting the value of expressed anger as a signal of imminent danger. The signaling value of anger is further diminished by its potentially long duration in humans. Dogs growl when they are highly stimulated by circumstances occurring in the moment, but human beings have much longer memories than other animals and human anger is not always provoked by then-occurring exigent circumstances. People can be angry

about a colleague's snub at last year's office party or not being chosen high school valedictorian. Contrary to Aristotle's suggestion in *The Rhetoric* that time cures anger, some people can be angry for decades about perceived injustices. Recently, the New York Times reported that Clarence Thomas's wife, Virginia Thomas, called Anita Hill "[n]early 20 years after Anita Hill accused Clarence Thomas of sexual assault during his contention Supreme Court confirmation hearings" to ask Ms. Hill "to consider an apology sometime and some full explanation of why you did what you did with my husband." Virginia Thomas' angry, and apparently unprovoked, phone call to Anita Hill suggests she continues to feel angry about what "you [Anita Hill] did with my husband" nineteen years after Justice Thomas' confirmation hearings. And Clytemnestra's anger apparently grew more bloodthirsty during Agamemnon's ten-year absence. Since human anger can be hidden, and need not be expressed immediately, human expressions of anger are not simply outward manifestations caused by particular stimuli. As Ivan Pavlov showed, dogs bark and salivate in respond to consistent patterns of environmental stimuli. For the most part, expressions of anger are not cause-and-effect manifestations like the salivation of Pavlov's dogs.

2. Does Anger "Cash Out" in Action?

Gibbard's theory that anger is the human analogue of growling can only be sustained if feelings of anger are reliably associated with overt expression that warn others of impending violence. Anger's overt expression is a more calculated and less reliable indication of internal states of mind. As Blake suggests, people in the thrall of long-term anger may be most likely to reveal their anger to those they are least likely to attack—their friends—and they may be least likely to expose their anger to their enemies and rivals who are most in danger of attack. From this perspective, signs of anger are poor candidates for matched adaptation. Expressions of anger do not provide the warning function of a dog's growl because there is no obvious cause-and-effect relationship between anger signs and attacks.

Dog barks and growls are fairly well correlated with dog attacks. Anger, on the other hand, is not reliably correlated with physical violence. In the Marion Barry Junior High School scenario discussed above, D clearly perceived A, B, and C were angry with him. He probably also perceived

Adam Wallwork

that A, B, and C could overpower him if they desired. Yet it would not make much sense for D to have a fight-or-flight reaction to “mere” expressions of outrage because these signs are not reliably correlated with imminent attack. The situation would be altogether different if A, B, and C, brought with them a growling attack dog. Then, it would make perfect sense for D to feel a need to fight or flee. The dog’s growl is evidence he is ready to attack; the actors’ expressions of anger are not.

Compared to dog barks, expressions of anger are poor predictors of violent behavior. While dog attacks typically follow immediately after the dog’s bark or growl, expressions of anger are neither necessary precursors of imminent violence nor sufficient conditions for such violence. Revenge may follow long after expressions of anger like Clytemnestra. People constantly express anger at corporations, politicians, and groups of people, without ever believing that revenge against such person(s) or institution(s) is possible. A man’s scowl is simply not a good indicator that he will fight or strike at all, much less in the immediate future.

V. A BIO CULTURAL THEORY OF ANGER AS A MORAL EMOTION

A. Anger Naturalized

In *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, Jesse J. Prinz provides a somewhat different evolutionary account of the role anger plays in the moral emotions. Prinz premises his theory on the acceptance of four types of philosophical naturalism: metaphysical naturalism, which holds that existence is limited by the laws of natural science, explanatory naturalism, which holds that existent things must be describable in scientific terms, methodological naturalism, which uses the scientific method of hypothesis testing to adjudicate claims of truth and falsity, and transformation naturalism, derived from W.V.O. Quine’s holistic theory in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” that our beliefs about the world are structured in relation to the totality of our beliefs—the most important of which are our best scientific theories. Like Gibbard, Prinz follows Quine’s empirical methodology and explanatory holism to hold that anger must be explicable in terms consistent with—if not dictated by—Darwin’s

theory of species differentiation and natural selection. Darwin's theory of natural selection provides the best scientific explanation of how particular traits and physiological processes developed. Therefore, Gibbard and Prinz both approach anger through a type of speculative biology that works backward from the universal human experience of anger to explain the role of anger in human development and morality.

However, Prinz's speculative biology of anger is far more influenced by contemporary psychological research than Gibbard's theory of anger. While both Prinz and Gibbard accept Quine's philosophical naturalism and holism, only Gibbard follows Quine's behaviorist approach to human psychology. Gibbard's account of human anger is a version of classical behaviorism. Recall Dr. Watson's Little Albert experiment discussed above. In Dr. Watson's experiment, the white rat was initially a neutral stimulus for Little Albert because it provoked no psychological arousal, while Dr. Watson's loud banging was an unconditioned stimulus for Little Albert that automatically elicited an unconditional response of fear and crying. Dr. Watson's experiment showed that Little Albert could be conditioned to have the same frightened response to the originally neutral white rat by repeatedly pairing the neutral stimulus to the unconditioned stimulus. After repeated pairing, Little Albert's conditioned response to the white rat (the conditioned stimulus) becomes a physiological "reflex" to the white rat.

Gibbard's evolutionary story of anger relies on this classical version of behaviorism, but Gibbard's behaviorism is largely inconsistent with his speculative biology. Gibbard describes the co-adaptive function of anger in terms of the interrelated perspectives of the angry person and his interlocutor. From the angry person's perspective, anger is a straightforward physiological reaction to stimuli that naturally arouse negative feelings and physical aggression. Anger is an unconditioned reflex like Little Albert's reaction to Dr. Watson's cacophony.

On Gibbard's telling, anger's priming function is not independently adaptive for the angry individual, but is co-adaptive if we consider its signaling function for other individuals. Gibbard's argument for anger's co-adaptive role relies on two insights. First, human beings and their evolutionary ancestors are social creatures. Darwin and Aristotle both recognized that man is inherently a "social animal." Since human anger evolved in a communal environment, it makes sense for Gibbard's

Adam Wallwork

speculative biology to take account of anger's societal function. But what exactly is that function? Initially, human anger does not appear to facilitate group cohesion in the way joy and grief bring people together respectively in happiness and sorrow. From the aggressor's standpoint, anger may even be counter adaptive because it automatically primes him for combat, which sometimes ends in violent injury or death before the angry individual has a chance to reproduce.

Gibbard explains that anger only appears counter adaptive when we look at anger from the aggressor's perspective and fail to account for his interlocutor. But if anger evolved in a social context, the aggressor's anger must be conceived from the perspective of addressor and addressee. In fact, Gibbard contends, anger has a communicative component that can be adaptive for both the aggressor and his interlocutor, but only if the aggressor's anger warns his interlocutor of potential danger. Gibbard explains anger's biological significance through its behavioral connection with physical attacks. If human anger is reliably associated with attacks, the aggressor's interlocutor will associate the conditioned stimulus of anger with the unconditioned stimulus of attacks and reflexively decide to fight, flee, or otherwise placate the aggressor. Anger is a symptom of the aggressor's propensity toward physical aggression. It signals that a person is ready to strike or attack. A target of aggression who learns to perceive an aggressor's anger before his attack has a chance to avoid fights. Avoiding fights is usually adaptive for the aggressor and the target, since physical confrontations often result in injuries to both sides. In this sense, Gibbard argues that anger has a two-fold significance. For the aggressor, anger is an unconditioned physiological response to a perceived threat; for the aggressor's target, anger is a conditioned stimulus—reliably associated with the unconditioned stimulus of attacks—that can cause the same “habitual” fight-or-flight reflex before the actual attack, when this reflex is most likely to help both persons avoid a potentially devastating fight.

Gibbard's behaviorist account of anger is problematic within the ambit of behaviorism and the theory of natural selection. Dr. Watson and Ivan Pavlov both recognized a crucial difference between conditioned and unconditioned reflexes. While unconditioned reflexes—Little Albert's fear of loud noises and the salivation of Pavlov's dog—occur naturally in species due to physiological mechanisms produced by natural selection, conditioned reflexes are not hard wired into our nervous system. Little Albert and Pavlov's dog had no natural reaction to the neutral stimulus

before the neutral stimulus was associated with the unconditional reflex. The following four-step schema describes what happened in Dr. Watson's classical conditioning experiment:

(Step 1: Unconditional Reflex) Loud Bang—>Fear Response

(Step 2: Conditional Pairing) Loud Bang—>White Rat à Fear Response

(Step 3: Conditioned Reflex) White Rat—>Fear Response

(Step 4: Extinction) White Rat1—>Fear Response; White Rat2—>Diminished Fear Response; White Rat 3—>No Fear Response

As this schema indicates, classical conditioning appears to produce anger and fear through a process of environmental learning rather than universal biological processes. This learning process is independently adaptive, but learned reflexes are not permanent and probably not genetic. There is nothing special about Dr. Watson's white rat compared to any number of neutral stimuli he could have paired with the unconditioned cause of loud noise to produce Little Albert's agitated emotional state. When the causal connection between the conditioned and unconditioned stimulus is severed, conditioned reflexes gradually diminish and eventually cease in a process called extinction. Thus, Pavlov and Dr. Watson observed that their subjects' conditioned reflexes were quickly unlearned after several repetitions of the conditioned stimulus without the unconditioned stimulus.

Gibbard's co-adaptation thesis makes anger's adaptive role dependent on a pairing with actual physical assaults. Gibbard suggests anger is adaptive only if it helps people avoid fights by reliably indicating a potential for violence. Just as dog growls help rival dogs avoid fights, human expressions of anger mitigate violence through the learned association between anger and violence.

If Gibbard's co-adaptive thesis is correct, anger helps us survive because human beings have developed a conditioned reflex to the natural pairing of anger and a propensity for violence. Perhaps anger's value does depend on its conditional pairing with violence and suffers extinction in the absence of reinforcement. This certainly explains contemporary Americans' relative indifference to displays of anger. As discussed above, another person's anger rarely excites a fight-or-flight reaction. But conditioned

Adam Wallwork

reflexes are learned responses to contingent behavioral associations. In Darwin's world, human beings do not pass along conditioned reflexes. Our conditioned response to another person's anger cannot facilitate the sort of multi-generational co-adaptation Gibbard proposes.

B. Prinz's Conception of Anger

Prinz avoids the pitfalls of Gibbard's behaviorism. With most contemporary psychologists, Prinz recognizes that cause-and-effect stimulation is insufficient to explain either anger or moral emotions. As we shall see, Prinz does not believe anger is a moral emotion, though he believes anger underlies the moral sentiment (i.e., emotional disposition) of blaming others.

Prinz distinguishes "ordinary [amoral] anger" from "moral anger." According to Prinz, the brain and central nervous system detect and regulate patterns of somatic excitement. In this respect, Prinz follows the James-Lange theory of anger as bodily manifestations. Prinz argues that anger has evolved to prepare the body for aggression. In anger, we clench our fists, ready to strike; our muscles contract, preparing the body to shield blows; and heart rate increase, increasing oxygen to the heart, which allows the aggressor to move faster and quickly rushes blood to clot new wounds. The angry man bears his teeth and raises his voice making the fighter appear young, vicious, and physically imposing. All of anger's arousal prepares the body for attack.

Prinz proposes that anger's aggression-response is triggered by a functionally unified set of environmental causes that represent "affront[s]." From his perspective, the evolutionary function of anger is to reliably detect "attacks . . . and other threats and provocations." Prinz endorses a modified version of James' non-cognitivism, which makes use of Fred Dretske's and Jerry Fodor's information processing theory to explain how people's bodily experience of anger can represent either cognitive or non-cognitive content without being composed of a judgment about the existence of an affront. For Prinz, the state of anger indirectly represents things as affronts because anger is the perception of the body's preparation for aggression in response to a specific environmental threat. Prinz suggests that anger is the "bodily perception" of aggression "that ha[s] come to represent specific relationships between organism and environment" characterized by their offensive quality. Anger-causing

environmental triggers are grouped together in mental files. When we experience anger we represent the environmental cause to be a “token” of the representations in the mental file. Thus, in Prinz’s view, our brain’s information processing system “calibrates” anger to affronts. Prinz’s approach is non-cognitive because it differentiates the brain’s perception of anger’s affective quality from the brain’s mental file of anger-triggers. He rejects the cognitivists’ thesis that the mental representation of an anger-trigger must be a “component part” of anger. Thus, Prinz accepts, while Solomon rejects, the view that we can remain angry for some time after the reasons for our anger have been abandoned.

Like Gibbard, Prinz claims that anger has evolved in response to natural selection. Prinz contends that our brains evolved to sort various experiences in the evolutionary environment into mental categories he calls “calibration files.” We’ll call anger’s “calibration file” the “outrage file.” Outrages and affronts are classed into one mental file with functionally similar representations such as social slights, indignities, rule-breaking, and infidelity. My co-worker’s failure to invite me to the office holiday party might be a representation in the “outrage file” because it is a token instance of the general category of social slights. Representations in the “outrage file” automatically trigger anger.

Anger is an evolved, bodily response calibrated to experiences in the “outrage file.” The experience of social slights, indignities, cheating, and infidelity reliably cause the somatic feeling of anger. The outrage file calibrates anger to social threats. Anger is the emotion triggered by threats to social standing and other interpersonal outrages.

C. Is Anger a Moral Emotion?

For Prinz, anger is not itself a “moral emotion.” He distinguishes between “ordinary anger” and “moral anger.” Prinz’s distinction between two different kinds of anger appears at odds with his commitment to empirical science and hypothesis testing. From the perspective of transformation, metaphysic naturalism and metaphysical naturalism, anger must (at least) be consistent with Darwinian biology. Prinz argues, anger (along with disgust) is a building block of moral emotions.

Prinz’s tripartite schema of moral emotions draws on the three types of ethical systems identified by Richard A. Shweder, Nancy C. Much, Manamohan Mahapatra, and Lawrence Park in “The ‘Big Three’

Adam Wallwork

of Morality (Autonomy, Community, Divinity) and the ‘Big Three’ Explanations of Suffering.” Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park argue that all cultures are partially constituted by an “ethics of autonomy,” an “ethics of community,” and an “ethics of divinity.”

Prinz contends that “moral anger” is preeminently concerned with transgressions against the person—the “ethics of autonomy”—such as rights violations and injustice. Other transgressions elicit other types of moral emotions. According to Prinz, transgressions against the natural order elicit moral disgust, while transgressions against the community elicit contempt. Prinz describes contempt as a mix of anger and disgust. Drawing on Shweder’s three types of ethical systems, Prinz argues for two forms of “moral anger”: (1) Righteous anger is anger calibrated to rights violations and (2) Indignation is anger calibrated to injustice.

D. Anger as Social Threat Detector

1. *Evolutionary Basis*

While Gibbard likened anger to dog growls, Prinz’s “embodied appraisal theory” of anger uses the analogy of a smoke detector. Prinz thinks anger is fundamentally calibrated to detecting undifferentiated offenses or affronts. However, I think the feeling of anger is a more specific signal triggered by social threats.

Using Prinz’s analogy, I would describe anger as a social threat detector. It surfaces in infants “when a goal has been interrupted or blocked (e.g., when a toy is suddenly taken away from a child).” Typically, anger is directed at another human being, but it need not be. Aristotle explained that anger (*orge*) “must always be felt towards some particular individual, e.g., Cleon, and not man in general.” Anger has more potential targets in the contemporary world, but Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and Darwin’s *Origin of Species* both predict that anger will be strongest in relationship to direct competitors within our species. We might say that paradigmatic anger stems from our relationship to human rivals in direct competition with us. Non-paradigmatic anger involves an extension of interpersonal anger to other things that represent a social threat to my existence, including my social standing in the community.

Contrary to Gibbard’s suggestion, we do not have to learn to associate anger with attacks because our brains have evolved to automatically

recognize anger in the voices and faces of others. Psychological studies show that infants recognize anger in caregivers' faces in the first months of life. These studies suggest our perception of anger is unconscious, subconscious or pre-conscious. Infants do not need cognition to experience and respond to anger. The infants' recognition of anger probably does not depend on conscious appraisals of articulable beliefs and opinions. Rather, the capacity to recognize a caregiver's anger is built into our unconscious or pre-conscious mental apparatus.

This serves a valuable evolutionary purpose. Recognizing anger may permit us to avert danger. If our caregiver is angry, this represents a threat to the infants' survival. The infant may not be able to communicate in language, but the infant recognizes the existential threat of the caregiver's anger and responds accordingly.

The first target of human anger is parents and other kinfolk whom the child relies on for survival. An infant's wrath is utterly feckless, but sometimes indomitable. How does infant rage toward caregivers serve an evolutionary purpose? The infant cannot avenge an insult or injury, yet infants are the least able to regulate their anger. The infant's wrath is calibrated to bodily discomfort such as hunger, thirst, loneliness, and undifferentiated pain. The child's anger may represent the desire for his mother's milk. His rage is relatively transparent: he screams and cries until his needs are met and passion is abated. The child's noise alerts the parents that his needs have not been met. To pacify the raging infant, the mother may respond by nursing him. If the child wanted to be fed, his anger serves the child's purpose and contributes to his survival.

The infant's anger is calibrated to his prostrate state. But the infant's uncontrolled anger is not evolutionarily adaptive in adolescents or adults. Indeed, our ability to regulate negative emotions such as anger is crucial to our survival because anger leads us into conflict. Human anger tends to become more internalized over time. Psychologists call this maturation process emotional regulation. Developmental psychologists have linked the child's inability to regulate anger with serious emotional and behavioral problems. As the infant grows, his parents may grow weary of his wining unless the growing child learns to regulate his anger. Most children learn to regulate their emotions beginning in the fourth month after birth. Their undifferentiated rage is modified and tailored to more pressing desires—say, malnourishment rather than simple hunger. Anger serves

Adam Wallwork

an evolutionary function: it apprises us of the existence of a social threat.

2. Normative Governance

Through the process of maturation, individuals learn to express their anger according to the norms of their society. Norms regarding the public expression of anger differ across cultures. While modern Japanese society condemns public expressions of anger, ancient Greek writers such as Aristotle and Homer praised Greek men who expressed anger in appropriate circumstances.

Aristotle's analysis of anger (*orge*) in his *Rhetoric* provides a normative account of anger in adulthood. Aristotle defines anger "as a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one's friends." To slight someone is to treat him as having little or no importance. Aristotle identified three types of slighting—contempt, spite, and insolence.

Contempt is the feeling that someone is not entitled to our respect. Thus, "Forgetfulness, [] causes anger, as when our own names are forgotten, trifling as this may be; since forgetfulness is felt to be another sign that we are being slighted [because] it is due to negligence, and to neglect us is to slight us."

Spite is another type of slighting, which Aristotle defines as a purely malevolent effort to thwart our goals. Spiteful men like Arnaeus, the suitor's messenger in Homer's *Odyssey*, show their lack of respect by needlessly interfering with the efforts of others. When Arnaeus found a ragged and disguised Odysseus sitting upon the porch outside his palace, Arnaeus immediately began to berate and threaten him: "Be off, old man," he cried, "from the doorway or you shall be dragged out neck and heels." Odysseus frowned at Arnaeus' spiteful words and answered: "I do you no harm; people give you a great deal, but I am not jealous. There is room enough in this doorway for the pair of us, and you need not grudge me things that are not yours to give." Odysseus is justly angered by Arnaeus' spiteful conduct. Arnaeus has nothing to gain or lose from Odysseus' begging, but he nonetheless seeks to frustrate Odysseus' efforts to beg scraps from the suitor's table by driving Odysseus from the palace's porch. By trying to prevent Odysseus from eating food that is not Arnaeus' to give, Arnaeus demonstrates that he regards Odysseus as a worthless old man who should "be dragged out [of the palace by] neck and heels."

Arnaeus' attitude also illustrates Aristotle's third category of slights due to insolence. Aristotle says that young men are often insolent because they overestimate their own abilities. Arnaeus is young, tall, and brazenly insolent. Indeed, Thomas Hobbes's 1677 English translation of Homer's *Odyssey* describes Arnaeus as "insolent." Arnaeus berates Odysseus who Athena has disguised as an elderly beggar on his return to Ithaca and ultimately draws Odysseus into a fight. But Odysseus makes Arnaeus pay for his insolence, shattering Arnaeus' jawbone and knocking out his teeth before dragging his unconscious body to the edge of the property. However, Homer's description of Odysseus' punishment of the young and brazen Arnaeus foreshadows his destruction of the insolent suitors who carelessly lay waste to Odysseus' estate without a thought of his return.

Aristotle frequently draws on Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* to explain features of anger (*orge*) embodied in ancient Greek culture. At the beginning of *the Illiad*, Agamemnon insults Achilles and takes his battle prize, "the fair Briseis." Achilles becomes enraged by Agamemnon's seizure of his battle prize and refuses to fight for Agamemnon against the Trojans: "He hath taken my prize [Briseis] and hath done me dishonor [] [l]ike an alien honored by none." Achilles' "deadly wrath [] brought woes numberless upon the Greeks and swept to Hades many a valiant souls," but Achilles' wrath was entirely rational within the ancient Greek schema: "A man expects to be specially respected by his inferiors in birth, in capacity in goodness and generally in anything in which is much their superior." Thus, Achilles who was the greatest Greek warrior was right to become enraged at Agamemnon for seizing Achilles' battle prize because Achilles, though inferior to Agamemnon in rank, was much his superior in battle. In essence, Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon arose from a debate over the relevant social value of rank and fighting prowess in a battle. Homer's depiction of Hector's destruction of the Greek ships after Achilles withdrew from battle demonstrated Achilles' unparalleled value to the Greek army in the Trojan war. Whatever Agamemnon's rank, his command of the Greek army was worthless without its greatest fighter. Agamemnon and the Greek army would pay dearly for slighting Achilles.

For Aristotle, anger is the perception of a social slight. Aristotle identifies eight social causes of anger: (1) laughing, mocking, or jeering at us; (2) inflicting injuries upon us; (3) speaking badly of our moral or intellectual qualities, especially "if we suspect that we are . . . lacking completely or to any effective extent in the qualities in question" ; (4)

Adam Wallwork

disregard for our projects; (5) indifference to our pain or suffering; (6) failure to return our kindnesses; (7) opposition to us by our inferiors; and (8) those who insult us in front of “our rivals, those whom we admire, those whom we wish to admire us, those for whom we feel reverence, [and] those who feel reverence for us.” All of these actions elicit anger because they indicate a failure to treat us with proper respect.

Both Aristotle and Homer describe anger in ways that reveal its complex interplay with cognitive, social, and moral judgments. For Aristotle, anger is a natural condition, which is neither praiseworthy or blameworthy in and of itself. “[T]he man who feels [] [] anger is not praised, nor is the man who simply feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way” is worthy of praise or blame. Aristotle writes: “With regard to anger [] there is an excess, a deficiency, and a mean.” He calls the appropriately angry person “good temper[ed],” the excessively angry person “irascible,” and the insufficiently angry person “inirascib[le].” While Aristotle recognizes that anger is a natural passion, he also assumes that correct perception and judgment can properly guide the experience of anger. Thus, Aristotle argues that “good tempered” persons are virtuous because they avoid the extremes of perceiving everything as a slight and never perceiving slights. In Aristotle’s view, people could become good tempered by learning to correctly judge whether another person’s conduct was slighting and hence deserving of anger. This decision required Greek men to have a nuanced understanding of their role in the Greek world’s complex social hierarchy. For instance, Achilles’ anger reflected a keen understanding that although Agamemnon technically outranked him in the Greek army, Achilles’ fighting prowess actually made him more valuable to the Greek army than Agamemnon. Agamemnon later came to appreciate this role reversal when Hector laid waste to the Greek ships and Agamemnon was forced to beg Achilles to return to the fight. Greek men like Achilles and Arnaeus had to be capable of recognizing social slights in order to defend their place in the Greek social hierarchy, but Greek men also had to calibrate their anger in terms of their interlocutor’s relative superiority or inferiority. Achilles’ anger against Agamemnon was justified because Achilles was, in fact, more valuable to the Greek army than Agamemnon. Odysseus’s brutal beating of Arnaeus and his eventual massacre of Penelope’s suitors reveal the tribulations of incorrectly judging a rival’s relative merit in Greek society. In the Greek world of Aristotle and Homer, norms of anger required individuals to keenly appreciate

relative social status relationships and norms of behavior that sometimes corresponded only roughly to titles and ranks.

The ancient Greeks recognized that anger (*orge*) was necessary to perceive certain facts about the world such as threats to social status. Although Aristotle did not claim that cognitive judgments were necessary to experience anger, he believed people could train themselves to experience anger in the right circumstances for the right reasons. Thus, Aristotle acknowledged that cognition and moral training could properly influence feelings of anger.

V. CONCLUSION: ANGER AS A MORAL EMOTION

Aristotle first recognized the significance/centrality of anger as a socially embedded emotion to our capacity for moral judgment. He also recognized the extraordinary complexity of anger as a moral emotion.

Aristotle's concept of anger (*orge*) extends from the inappropriately mild to the terrible extremes of murderous rage. Aristotle and Jesse Prinz both conceive of anger as a social barometer or threat detector. Anger alerts us that something is amiss. While rational anger correctly detects a social threat, irrational anger seems to miss the mark. A person's anger can be rational or irrational even though anger does not necessarily involve a cognitive deduction of true and false beliefs. This is because anger is meant to respond to serious social threats. Anger is rational when it properly detects such threats and otherwise irrational. If I become angry in response to trifles, my anger is an irrational false alarm because it has been activated in the absence of the social threats it is meant to detect. But however irrational my anger might be, it remains conceptually possible for me to be angry without appropriate stimuli. Irrational anger is just as real as a false fire alarm. The more inaccurately someone's anger is calibrated to social threats the less likely their anger is to be rational in any given situation. In the same way we ignore fire alarms that routinely go off without a fire, we ignore the moral seriousness of an angry person's anger because its accuracy is suspect.

Like other emotional gages, anger must be tuned through the process of acculturation. We do not expect a child's anger to be perfectly attuned

Adam Wallwork

to social expectations. Children often become enraged by trifles such as a broken toy or a late meal. They must learn to differentiate the types of stimuli that call for anger in their society. Youths “are hot-tempered and quick-tempered, and apt to give way to anger; bad temper often gets the better of them, for owing to their love of honor they cannot bear being slighted and are indignant if they imagine themselves unfairly treated.” In Aristotle’s hierarchical society, a Greek man’s failure to seek revenge in response to a threat from his social inferiors was as dangerous as seeking revenge against more powerful men. Too little anger and too much anger were likely to degrade a man’s status in the rigid class structure of the ancient Greek polis. It made sense for Greek men to become angry and ready to fight for social status when their legal and political rights depended on class membership. Thus, Aristotle said that Greek men could only rationally be angry toward their social equals against whom revenge was possible and potentially advantageous.

Unlike a fire alarm, however, Aristotle and Prinz both recognize the individual’s capacity to learn from anger and properly regulate it. Social learning teaches us how to detect morally relevant threats. Like Prinz, Aristotle distinguishes a range of normatively governed moral anger between the extremes of placidity and rage. Moral anger makes us sensitive to serious social and ethical issues by focusing our attention and imbuing our decisions with emotional significance. The moral genius of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi was their ability to articulate a form of moral anger that inspired righteous action without inciting violence. When properly calibrated to injustice, moral outrage can change the world.

The concept of moderate and appropriate anger that guides Aristotle’s discourse on anger (*orge*) in his *Rhetoric* lays bare two distinct forms of anger: the properly calibrated anger that is fundamental to moral and legal judgment, on the one hand, and the unthinking rage that too often overwhelms practical reason.

Normatively governed anger helps focus our attention on compelling problems. A prosecutor in a murder trial would be remiss for failing to draw the court’s attention to the victim’s innocence and the brutal injustice of taking a life. If the prosecutor fails to tell the victim’s story, the judge or jury may not feel sufficiently aroused to condemn the accused to death or life imprisonment. Moral anger focuses the judge and jury on their task of punishing injustice. This focus is sometimes crucial for moral and legal

decisions that require individuals to take a strong stand against injustice.

Moral anger also helps people to recognize the values at stake in a particular situation. I might regard the War in Iraq with casual ambivalence until I become enraged after seeing television images of Shock-and-Awe's total devastation of Baghdad. Here, my anger revealed values I may not have known I had before being affected by the television's flickering images of bombs falling on Iraq. Thus, anger can help us recognize subjectively held beliefs about the world. Before I became angry, I regarded the War in Iraq with indifference. Now that I am angry, I can no longer truthfully claim to be ambivalent toward the war. Either I value peace more than I realized or am more repulsed by war than I knew. Or perhaps both.

Does anger reveal intersubjective truths about the world? Sometimes anger is a crucial component of moral judgments about the world. These "truths" are primarily subjective in nature, but sometimes they can point to broad based agreement about beliefs. Our collective anger at the shocking images from Abu Ghraib—and the recent controversy over Zero Dark Thirty's graphic portrayal of American torture—appears to reflect a moral consensus that torture is wrong. Our anger is the emotional correlate of the belief that torture is wrong. If Americans were generally unaffected by images of torture by American officers at Abu Ghraib, it would be difficult to argue that we regarded these actions as morally wrong. Like ordinary Germans during the Holocaust, a person's lack of anger toward the mistreatment of others reflects a belief in the moral indifference of the action. Those who feel nothing at the sight of another person's torture may be said to believe such actions are not morally wrong. Thus, anger can disclose personal and collective beliefs about the world. And lack of anger at certain actions can be just as revealing about the values and beliefs one holds.