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## Anger and Our Humanity: Transhumanists Stoke the Flames of an Ancient Conflict

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# Anger and Our Humanity: Transhumanists Stoke the Flames of an Ancient Conflict

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## Abstract

This paper presents Stoicism as, in broad historical terms, the point of origin in Western thought of an extreme form of rational essentialism that persists today in the debate over human bioenhancement. Advocates of “radical” enhancement (or transhumanists) would have us codify extreme rational essentialism through manipulation of genes and the brain to maximize rational ability and eliminate the capacity for emotions deemed unsalutary. They, like Stoics, see anger as especially dangerous. The ancient dispute between Stoics and Aristotle over the nature and permissibility of anger has contemporary analogues. I argue that, on the merits, this controversy should, finally, be put to rest in Aristotle’s favor. Beyond its philosophical assets, Aristotle’s perspective meshes well with “appraisal theory” of emotion in psychology and corresponding discoveries in neuroscience. What’s more, consideration of the ongoing struggle to achieve full racial equality in the United States supports the view that anger at this ongoing gap between λόγος and ἔργον is legitimate, and has a constructive role to play in furthering liberal democracy. As we are well positioned to retire the Stoics’ legacy regarding anger, all the more should we eschew transhumanists’ proposal to implement their position biologically, at which point debate over the nature and worth of anger would be permanently moot.

## Keywords

Stoics – transhumanism – anger – Aristotle – liberal democracy

## I Introduction

Debate over the biotechnological “enhancement” of human beings is prominent in bioethics and, increasingly, in public discourse.<sup>1</sup> Most contentious is advocacy of “radical” bioenhancement, or transhumanism. Transhumanists are committed to an extreme form of rational essentialism that includes outright hostility to faculties other than reason, above all, “negative” emotion and mood. As extreme rational essentialists, transhumanists urge us to develop genetic and neural technologies that would categorically heighten the rational ability of its possessors and eliminate the capacity for negative mood and emotion, especially anger.<sup>2</sup>

In broad historical terms, transhumanists’ extreme rational essentialism and associated quest to purge our capacity for anger has an ancient antecedent in Stoics’ rejection of Aristotle’s view in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that anger can be a rationally warranted, even morally obligatory, response to perceived injustice (III 1, 1111a30–31; IV 5, 1125b31–1126a1 and 1126a3–6; and V 8, 1135b27–29).<sup>3</sup> This ancient controversy reflects different versions of rational essentialism: while Stoics’ brand is extreme, on Aristotle’s formulation, *πάθη* figure essentially in a harmonious psyche and virtuous life.

Vigorous controversy over the moral permissibility of anger and its bearing on well-being continues today. This signals that, technically, the ancient dispute over the nature and “moral status” of anger remains unsettled (Flanagan 2018, vii). Stoics’ view, which ties anger closely to aggression and violence, has endured in arenas from the theoretical to the colloquial, via metaphors, such as “You make my blood boil” and “Simmer down!” (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987, 198 and 201).

Not only does Aristotle’s approach, too, garner support, but the strength and multifaceted nature of that support warrant our resolution of the ancient dispute in favor of his orientation. The ongoing philosophical influence of

1 Within this debate, the term “enhancement” refers to the augmentation of capacities where no prior deficiency exists.

2 In contemporary terms, Stoic *πάθη* include both “negative” and “positive” emotions, such as love; I do not directly address the latter here. Though “negative” implies a contrast with “positive,” transhumanists do not offer a clear, alternative template for “positive” emotion and mood, one that might anchor a specification of what, fundamentally, distinguishes them from their rejected, “negative” counterparts. See Bostrom (2003 and 2020), Minsky (2013), Moravec (2013), Walker (2002), Stock (1993), Savulescu and Kahane (2009), and Savulescu (2005).

3 Transhumanists themselves do not forge the connection to Stoics. This is not surprising, as they generally neglect the history of philosophy and even eschew traditional philosophical inquiry as otiose (Bostrom 2014, 58–59 and 256).

Aristotle's handling of emotion in relation to virtue is strong (see, for example, Annas [2006]). But the strength of his approach well surpasses this. Aristotle's perspective on emotion, and anger specifically, is buttressed by "appraisal theory" of emotion within psychology and convergent findings in neuroscience. What's more, there is strong evidence that anger can help to further the implementation of core liberal-democratic commitments; here, my analysis of ongoing barriers to racial equality in the United States supports the view that anger has a warranted and constructive role to play in continued efforts to close the gap between λόγος and ἔργον in this regard.<sup>4</sup> On this multifaceted basis, we have good reason to retire the Stoics' legacy regarding anger. A fortiori, we should reject transhumanists' doubling down on that position when they insist that we codify biologically a commitment to its removal.<sup>5</sup>

## II Stoicism and Transhumanists' Stoking of Stoical Positions

To anchor the aforementioned lines of argument, this section briefly presents Stoic and transhumanist positions on key topics: reason; "negative" emotion, above all, anger; and the parity of flourishing individuals with the divine.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, on all three topics, transhumanists ratchet up Stoic legacies.

4 It would be anachronistic to critique ancient Stoics for not anticipating liberal democracy; my focus is the liberal-democratic warrant for rejecting their view of anger. Of course, I am not suggesting that Aristotle's own approach maps onto liberal democracy. Among other things, pronounced adjustments to his constructions of justice and equality would be required (see further Levin [2021, 241–263]).

5 This is, obviously, a big-picture paper, and further unpacking and defense of the position advanced here would be required. Though I devote more attention to Roman than to Greek Stoicism, my prime concern is core commitments regarding the mind and macrocosmic governance that constrain what Stoics can see, and thus respond to, as harmful or immoral.

6 I follow Graver (2007, 3) and Annas (1992, 103–104) in rendering πάθη as "emotions," rather than "passions," in connection with Stoicism. I leave aside here Stoic εὐπάθειαι, which are "sanitized attitudes" that replace the umbrella πάθη of pleasure, fear, and desire (Annas 1993, 63n50 and Diog. Laert. 7.116). Greek and Latin are cited from the following sources: Diogenes Laertius (Long, ed. 1964), Stobaeus's *Anthologion* and Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (Wachsmuth and Hense, eds. 1958), Seneca, *De ira* (Basore, tr. 1928), *Epistulae* (Gummere, tr. 1920), and Aulus Gellius's *Noctes Atticae* (Rolfe, tr. 1952). Unless otherwise noted, the following translations were used, at times with slight adjustments: Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* (King, tr. 1945), *De officiis* (Miller, tr. 1913), Marcus Aurelius (Haines, tr. 1930), Seneca's *De ira* (Kaster, tr. 2010), and *Epistulae* (Graver and Long, trs. 2015); translations of Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, Cicero's *De natura deorum*, Seneca's *De tranquillitate animi*, Sextus Empiricus's *Adversus mathematicos*, Diogenes Laertius, and Stobaeus's *Anthologion*, along with citations of Plutarch's *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* and *De virtute morali*, are

A. *Stoics*. Nature, equated with rationality, is “the central normative concept of Stoicism” (Barney 2003, 306; Diog. Laert. 7.87–88; Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.5b3, 6–6a, and 6e; Sen. *Ep.* 45.9; and M. Aur. 1.17.5). In both the macrocosm and human beings, reason is all-governing (Diog. Laert. 7.135–136 and Sen. *Ep.* 37.4). For Stoics, perfected reason and virtue are synonymous (Diog. Laert. 7.127–128; Sen. *Ep.* 49.11–12, 74, and 76.10; and Graver 2007, 50 and 147).<sup>7</sup> Since only virtue and vice are good and bad, respectively, nothing can “make a man’s life worse that does not make the man worse” (Diog. Laert. 7.102, Sen. *Ep.* 94.8, and M. Aur. 2.11). Further, because our virtue is wholly under our control, the caliber of the lives we lead is up to us (Epict. *Ench.* 19).

Everything besides virtue and vice falls in the class of “indifferents” (ἀδιάφορα): things that “neither benefit nor harm,” in themselves, but “can be used well and badly” (Diog. Laert. 7.102 and Sext. Emp. *Math.* 11.61). “Preferred” indifferents (ἀδιάφορα κατ’ εἶδος προηγμένα) include physical attractiveness, health, wealth, and even legal and political freedom (Diog. Laert. 7.102; Sen. *Ep.* 31.11, 47; and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.7b). As the temptation to act on an over-valuation of these indifferents abounds, Stoics enjoin us to seek them “with a light touch, a kind of mental reservation that already anticipates the prospect of failure or reversal” (Inwood 2018, 86).

The largest obstacle to one’s becoming virtuous is “false beliefs about what is really good and bad,” or a core misconception about what is and is not truly valuable (Brennan 2005, 37 and 101–102). The judgments at work in emotions reflect the errant view that indifferents are essential to our living well.<sup>8</sup> Premised on the allocation of “great value to paltry things,” πάθη are irrational and unnatural psychic motions (Sen. *De ira* 3.34.2; Diog. Laert. 7.110; Gal. *PHP* 4.4.16–18 and 24–25; and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.10). Here, “irrational” does not mean “detached from reason altogether”: after all, emotions are *judgments*. Πάθη “are rational in that they make use of our mind’s capacity to operate on the basis of reasons, and yet not rational in the sense of that word which implies that one’s reasons are correct” (Graver 2007, 37–38); in other words, they are normatively, though not descriptively, irrational (68).

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from Inwood and Gerson, trs. (1997). Epictetus’s *Diatribai* and *Encheiridion* are cited from Oldfather, tr. (1928 and 1998).

7 Diogenes Laertius lists Panaetius and Posidonius as exceptions to Stoics’ general view that virtue suffices for flourishing (7.128), and Seneca chastises Antipater for having given “a tiny amount” of weight to externals (*Ep.* 92.5).

8 Zeno presented πάθη as “contractions, relaxations, elations and depressions that supervene on the judgments,” while Chrysippus equated πάθη with psychic judgments (Gal. *PHP* 5.1.4). The positions themselves do not differ significantly. Rather, Chrysippus “seeks to bring out more clearly what was already implied in Zeno’s version: that it is the nature of the judgment that defines what sort of impulse has occurred” (Graver 2007, 33).

Stoics conceptualize the soul's condition in terms of health and disease; thus, virtue "is the health of the soul," while being subject to *πάθη* "sickens" it (Brennan 2005, 127; Diog. Laert. 7.115; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.23; Sen. *Ep.* 15.1 and 85.10–12; and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.10e). *Πάθη* themselves are "violent," insofar as individuals in their grip "are swept away by [their] vehemence" (Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.10a). Absent "[a] wrenching readjustment of the personality," those individuals' subjection to *πάθη* endures (Graver 2007, 139).

In Stoics' fourfold division of emotions, anger falls under desire, or "irrational aspiration" (Diog. Laert. 7.111–114). Specifically, anger is "a desire for revenge (*ἐπιθυμία τιμωρίας*) on one who seems to have done an injustice inappropriately" (113). When *πάθη* are listed in the category of desire, anger and rage are separately identified (Diog. Laert. 7.113 and Cic. *Tusc.* 4.21). But when the dangers of anger are stressed, anger, rage, aggression, and violence may be conflated. To illustrate: Anger "has an eye only for doing harm" (Sen. *De ira* 2.14.3). "The covetousness peculiar to the angry man is the desire to stamp the brand of uttermost pain upon the person by whom he considers himself injured" (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.19). Anger is "unbridled and untamed," involving "lunatic frenzy" (Sen. *De ira* 1.9.3 and 3.3.6). It "consists entirely in aroused assault. Raging with an inhuman desire to inflict pain in combat and shed blood in punishment ... it throws itself upon the very weapons raised against it, hungry for a vengeance that will bring down the avenger too" (1.1.1). In this way, anger is "just like a collapsing building that's reduced to rubble even as it crushes what it falls upon" (1.1.2). As "there's no passion over which anger does not hold dominion" (*Nullus affectus est, in quem non ira dominetur*), "No pestilence has been more costly for the human race" (2.36.6 and 1.2.1). Clearly, then, "No one can at the same time be both angry and a good man" (2.12.2).

"When you're angry, you should allow yourself nothing. Why? Because then you want to allow yourself everything" (3.12.7). There is no such thing as opening the door to anger only a crack, for "when it has entered and made its way through the gates, it accepts no limits from those it has taken captive" (1.8.2). The sole remedy for the ongoing specter of this utter loss of control is one's elimination of the errant constructions of good and bad that qualify anger and emotions more generally as deleterious (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.13 and Epict. *Disc.* 2.18.8–11).<sup>9</sup>

9 Although sages make no errant judgments of value, they continue to experience "involuntary bodily movements," such as a racing heart or going pale (Sen. *De ira* 2.3.2–3). These are not emotions, but, instead, *προπάθειαι*, as the *φαντασίαι* in question are never followed by *συγκαταθέσεις* (Graver 2007, 85–101 and Gell. *NA* 19.1). Because these involuntary biological reactions occur independently of assent, "They are nonculpable" (Graver 2007, 99).

One proceeding thus has followed nature—his own and the macrocosmic—to the hilt (Diog. Laert. 7.87–89).<sup>10</sup> Stoics “find in god the measure of human-kind” (*hominem deo metientur*; Sen. *Ep.* 71.6). As divine and human reason are one in kind (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.79), what makes man and god wise is also one (Sen. *Ep.* 87.19). In terms of attainment, “Being wise and thus free of the *pathē* does mean that one is godlike, for knowledge is a harmonious condition that resembles the harmony of the god-infused cosmos as a whole” (Graver 2007, 210). The human soul was “framed by nature to this end, that it should desire equality with the gods” (*in hoc a natura rerum formatus est, ut paria dis vellet*, Sen. *Ep.* 92.30).<sup>11</sup> Perfectly rational and, thus, self-sufficient, the sage achieves that parity (31.5, 59.14, 92.2, and Epict. *Disc.* 1.12.26).<sup>12</sup> On this basis, “The happiness of Zeus is in no respect more worth choosing or more honorable or more majestic” (Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11g; see also Plut. *De comm. not.* 1076a).<sup>13</sup>

Officially, the sage conducts a flourishing human life. Arguably, however, this figure more accurately reflects Stoics’ standing as what I call “reluctant humans, without ambivalence.”<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, sages do not become gods (Sen. *Ep.* 71.27). On the other, their rationality is no less perfect, due to its brevity, than that of the gods (73.13). As Aristotle realizes, parity of any kind with the divine is incompatible with human flourishing (*EN* x 6–9 and Whiting 1986). Transhumanists, like Stoics, are reluctant humans, without ambivalence. They also prioritize divine parity, but deem any form thereof incompatible with human nature. Their solution? Humanity’s self-transcendence can and should be technologically engineered.

*B. Transhumanists.* For transhumanists, reason is all that ultimately matters about human beings.<sup>15</sup> Though human rationality is too weak to anchor genuinely flourishing lives, applied to science and technology, it could spearhead the advent of beings whose upgraded rational capacity would do just that. Indeed, posthumans would be designed for rational self-sufficiency (Bostrom 2020). Compared with unenhanced human beings, posthumans would constitute a

10 According to Diogenes Laertius, Cleanthes, unlike Chrysippus, cared that we follow κοινήν μόνην ... φύσιν (89).

11 Gummere, tr. 1920.

12 In keeping with this idea, *μαντικὸν δὲ μόνον εἶναι τὸν σπουδαῖον, ὡς ἂν ἐπιστήμην ἔχοντα διαγνωστικὴν σημείων τῶν ἐκ θεῶν* (Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11s).

13 Both sources attribute this position to Chrysippus. Insofar as our rational perfection is a product of effort, we are said even to surpass god (Sen. *Ep.* 53.11). Aikin calls this the “greater credit principle” (2017, 28).

14 Cf. Nussbaum’s account of “external transcendence” (1990, 378–382).

15 Transhumanists’ positions regarding the mind, unlike Stoics’, are not rigorously defended; for a detailed assessment of transhumanists’ views, see Levin (2021).

superior species (Savulescu 2005; Harris 2003, 95 and 2010, 3–4; Wood 2013; Walker 2002; and Bostrom 2009 and 2020).

In addition, since it only interferes with reason's untrammelled operation, transhumanists would have us erase the capacity for negative mood and emotion from the mental profiles of our successors. They tie anger closely to, and even conflate it with, aggressiveness and criminality (Savulescu 2005; Savulescu and Kahane 2009). Transhumanists join Stoics in medicalizing emotional operations that they eschew (Jotterand and Levin 2019, 64–65 and 70 and Persson and Savulescu 2008, 172; 2012, 107, 117; 2013, 129; and 2019, 9). Stoics maintain that individuals can cure themselves of the dysfunction tied to *πάθη* by replacing false judgments about good and bad with knowledge, which is “unshakable” (Brennan 2005, 104). As transhumanists do not share Stoics' confidence in our capacity for self-remediation, they would have us excise the pathology that humans' capacity for negative mood and emotion represents via germ-line genetic interventions. Stoics' solution is permanent for the individual (Brennan 2005, 97), while transhumanists' adjustments would, eventually, be pervasive and irreversible at the species level.<sup>16</sup>

Transhumanists set their sights on ontological transcendence and deem it achievable. For them, being human is itself an ailment that biotechnology would “cure” (Hauskeller 2016, 138). Transhumanists' telos is the divine, construed as supremely rational (Wood 2013; Harris 2003, 95; and Walker 2002). Stoics assess man by divine standards and assert sages' parity with god in terms of perfected reason and, thus, self-sufficiency, without dissolving the ontological barrier between them (Sen. *Ep.* 71.27). For their part, transhumanists exult at the prospect of humanity's self-transcendence and transmutation into post-human divinity.

As we have seen, on the topics of reason, “negative” emotion, and the parity of flourishing individuals with the divine, transhumanists (unwittingly) ratchet up Stoic legacies. They do so in light of their own commitments,

16 According to Graver, since the sage continues to have involuntary biological reactions, “One should not imagine [him] to be some kind of monster whose affective equipment has somehow been radically altered. The attainment of tranquility ... does not mean that any psychic capacity has been removed” (2007, 101). Physiological responses are “intrinsically inert and impotent” (Brennan 2005, 310). That the mental affirmations at issue in *πάθη* are impossible for the wise individual has monumental import, as it makes all the difference between a life of virtue and one of vice. This transfiguration “may also be described in purely physical terms as a transformation of the tension (*τόνος*) of one's soul,” meaning that “the way in which a Stoic spiritual exercise will work is by an increase in the tension (*τόνος*) of the breath (*πνεῦμα*) that constitutes the material soul” (Sellars 2003, 126). But Graver's claim that “[no] psychic capacity has been removed” (2007, 101) does not obviously follow.



including a wholesale lack of confidence in individual and sociopolitical routes to addressing major human travails (Green 2007, 170; Barben 2012, 394; de Melo-Martín and Salles 2015, 228–229; and Hall 2017, xii). If the codification of extreme rational essentialism became biologically feasible, further debate over the nature and value of targeted emotions, above all, anger, would be otiose. Not only that: the psychic capacities on which positions diverged would themselves no longer exist.

### III Retiring Extreme Rational Essentialism

Today, we are in a strong position to put to rest the extreme rational essentialism that Stoics debated. Elsewhere, I argue for the philosophical merits of a broadly Aristotelian perspective on the mind, drawing, as well, on current psychological theory of emotion and corresponding neuroscientific findings (Levin 2021).<sup>17</sup> Here, I bring these contemporary developments to bear on Stoicism.

Within psychology, appraisal theory has become the dominant lens on emotion. Per its main competitor, “basic-emotion theory,” there is a small group of core emotions, including fear and anger, each of which has been “programmed” by natural selection to elicit “prototypical” physiological and behavioral responses to pertinent external situations (Scherer 2009, 3460–3461). In evolutionary terms, these responses are adaptations that equipped our ancestors to react rapidly to environmental cues in ways that promoted their survival and reproductive fitness (Ekman 1992, 171). Features of basic emotions include “distinctive universals in antecedent events,” “distinctive physiology,” “presence in other primates,” “capable of quick onset,” and “unbidden occurrence” (Ekman and Cordaro 2011, 365). Because (1) cue-response duos are standardized for each emotion, (2) emotions are reactive phenomena, and (3) nonhuman primates also have them, emotions are noncognitive phenomena in the sense that reason is not involved.

Appraisal theory, in contrast, rejects a reactive lens on emotion, foregrounding instead individuals’ interpretations of events (Lazarus 1991, 353–354; Frijda and Zeelenberg 2001, 141; Kappas 2001, 157; Roseman and Smith 2001, 6–7; and Scherer 1987, 14 and 2009, 3461). It also embeds a clear distinction between two senses of “cognition” (Scherer 1987, Leventhal and Scherer 1987, and Ellsworth

<sup>17</sup> Section III draws selectively on that discussion.

and Scherer 2002): on the one side, a capacity for informational intake and processing found in humans and nonhuman animals; on the other, “reason/rationality,” or “epistemic justification,” which belongs to humans alone (Joyce 2014, 270–273; Woodward 2016, 97–98; and Deigh 2010, 26–28). Although “cognition” in the broad sense includes physiological responses, contra basic-emotion theory, they are not foundational to what emotions are.

Since nonhuman animals and young children have cognition in the broad sense, they are capable of emotional experiences, albeit far less sophisticated ones than are possible for most human adults. When “cognition” is narrowly construed, emotional experiences involve “propositional knowledge,” and reason operates in normatively apposite or unfitting ways, as the case may be (Scherer 2009, 3463 and 2002, 563 and 565). When reason functions well in normative terms, emotional experiences tend to be salutary for the individual and may benefit others, too.

As Klaus Scherer’s version of appraisal theory makes clear, emotions involve “the entire person,” evincing “[the] enormous variability and subtle distinctions” of which the human mind is capable (Scherer 2009, 3459 and Ellsworth and Scherer 2002, 573). This variability includes temporal duration: rejecting basic-emotion theorists’ notion that emotions are self-contained and ephemeral, Scherer’s appraisal theory “nests emotional reactions within a longer term ... temporal framework” belonging to “a larger set of conceptual structures, such as that for the self system” (Ekman and Cordaro 2011, 365, and Leventhal and Scherer 1987, 11).

According to Scherer, the appraisal process has numerous aspects and levels (Leventhal and Scherer 1987, Ellsworth and Scherer 2002, and Scherer 2009). The facets of situational assessment are the eliciting agent and her aim; whether the situation is controllable by human agency; one’s own capacity to steer what transpires; one’s ability to accommodate herself, if need be, to the results; and normative import (Scherer 2009, 3465). For our purposes, the most relevant aspect is the last, “normative significance,” which involves “[an] overall assessment of the event with respect to compatibility with self-concept, values, social norms and moral rules” (3465). Standards are both internal and external, as a person asks herself, “Does the event or my behaviour correspond (i) to my self-concept or my values, is it just given my entitlement ... and (ii) to social norms, values, beliefs about justice or moral principles?” (3465). Especially salient is “the evaluation of *deservedness* or *justice*” and the assessment of what occurs “with reference to [one’s] self-ideal” (Ellsworth and Scherer 2002, 581). So central are assessments of justice that one might even “conceptualize perceived unfairness or injustice” as an appraisal category in its own right (Mikula et al. 1998, 779).

The norms and values that comprise one's reference point in assessments of justice may reflect or challenge the status quo. Humans' ability to consciously monitor our own emotional processes makes them accessible to "reflexion and ... verbal description" (Scherer 1987, 35). And this, in turn, enables us to cast a critical eye on familiar practices and behavior, asking not only "What priorities do these evince a commitment to?" but also "What are the stakes of affirming these rather than others?" and "Are these stakes that warrant one's embrace?" As the content of these queries suggests, in appraisal theory, emotional processes may foster greater understanding of oneself and others.

In appraisal theory, as for Aristotle, emotional experiences per se are neither salutary nor unsalutary, with context, including proportionality, often crucial to evaluations of their merit. What's more, for appraisal theorists, reason can be embedded in emotional processes in ways that support and affirm emotions' intellectual and moral justification (cf. Arist. *EN* II 5, 1105b27–1106a1; II 6, 1106b18–25; II 9, 1109a28–30; III 1, 1111a30–31; IV 5, 1125b31–1126a1, 1126a3–6; and VII 8, 1151a15–17).

The payoff of this orientation is clear in appraisal theorists' rich handling of anger (Ellsworth and Scherer 2002, Litvak et al. 2010, Wranik and Scherer 2010, and Novaco 2010). Basic-emotion theorists grant that emotions, anger included, "can be enacted in either a constructive or destructive fashion" (Ekman and Cordaro 2011, 365). That said, since basic-emotion theory ties the adaptive benefits of anger closely to hostility and aggression (365), it reflects a widespread reduction of anger to a narrow subset of ways in which it is experienced and expressed. Appraisal theory challenges a longstanding conflation of "anger," "hostility," and "aggression," together with the judgment that anger per se is "associated with poor social integration, health, and well-being" (Wranik and Scherer 2010, 244); in other words, appraisal theory rejects the assimilation of anger *simpliciter* to forms of anger experience and expression that typify psychopathology (Novaco 2010). Differentiating between normatively sound and unjustified anger episodes helps Aristotle and appraisal theorists to substantiate the ontological and moral distinctness of "state anger" and "trait anger" (Arist. *EN* IV 5, Wranik and Scherer 2010, and Novaco 2010).

The views of Aristotle and the Stoics share features with appraisal theory and, thereby, with one another:<sup>18</sup> emotions revolve around or comprise interpretations, wherein values are applied to situations; emotional experiences are, at bottom, active phenomena; they involve the whole person; as foci of

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18 I wish to thank my commentator, Corinne Gartner, for spurring me to articulate where Stoics' and Aristotle's views are alike. I am also grateful to her and the anonymous referee for prompting me to pinpoint how Stoicism is like and unlike appraisal theory.

“reflexion and ... verbal description” (Scherer 1987, 35), emotions can facilitate self-critique and, thereby, improved well-being; and emotional episodes of a certain type (for instance, angry ones) may lead to one’s formation of the corresponding character trait (in this example, proneness to anger).<sup>19</sup>

This is only part of the story, however. On the following points, Aristotle aligns with appraisal theory, while Stoics diverge from both. First, for Stoics, emotions are signs of an unhealthy psyche and always detrimental. Differently put, the whole person that Stoic *πάθη* involve is one whose single “directive faculty” is fundamentally misguided (Sen. *Ep.* 121.10 and *De ira* 1.8.3, and Plut. *De virt. mor.* 446f–447a). Second, one can avoid forming the character trait of proneness to anger only by replacing false beliefs about what has value with knowledge. One who does this, however, will be no longer have the *πάθος* of anger at all. More generally, one whose rational activity is exemplary has replaced her false beliefs about good and bad with an understanding of cosmic and human nature. As a result, she is free of *πάθη* across the board.<sup>20</sup> Though Stoicism and basic-emotion theory diverge greatly on specifics, both adopt a highly circumscribed, standardized view of what count as emotional experiences. The rigidity of the two approaches to the essence of emotion is cast into sharp relief when Stoicism and basic-emotion theory are juxtaposed against appraisal theory.

What’s more, as I can indicate only briefly here (see further Levin 2021, 62–68), recent neuroscientific findings are compatible with appraisal theory and Aristotle, while undercutting extreme rational essentialism. For our purposes, the upshot of these discoveries is that “emotional states and higher cognition are truly integrated. At some point of processing, functional specialization [of brain regions] is lost, and emotion and cognition [in the sense of ‘reason’] conjointly and equally contribute to the control of thought and behavior” (Gray 2004, 48). Not only is “every area of the brain ... modulated by [one’s] emotional state, but every area ... can be affected by classically ‘cognitive’ processes” (Klein 2011, 152). All in all, recent discoveries strongly support a “nuanced view [of the brain] in which emotion and cognitive control [namely, reason] are integrated, at times working in harmony” (Gray 2004, 46).

19 In contrast, the position that emotions are unique to humans unites Stoics’ position and Aristotle’s view of the soul in relation to virtue and vice (*EN* 1 13) against appraisal theory.

20 Beyond the above points, for appraisal theorists, unlike Stoics, physiological phenomena fall under emotion itself, albeit in a nondefining way. Aristotle observes that a physiologist would see anger as *ζέσιν τοῦ περὶ καρδίαν αἵματος καὶ θερμοῦ* (*De Anima* 1 1, 403a31–b1); although *πάθη* necessarily involve the body (1 1), their essence, and Aristotle’s ethical focus, is psychological (see further Levin 2021, 80–81).

#### iv Moral and Political Losses of Disallowing Anger, Part 1

Beyond the above-discussed theoretical support for Aristotle's orientation over Stoics', as I argue in the rest of the paper, we stand to lose a great deal today, morally and politically, if we embrace Stoics' position. Within this account, three closely related organizing concepts, important both in Stoicism and in American liberal democracy, will be freedom, moral equality, and respect. Where stances differ, a focus on American constructions, combined with ongoing gaps between λόγος and ἔργον involving them, helps us to see why we should reject Stoics' view of anger. My focus is the continuing struggle to realize full racial equality in the United States. I illustrate the endurance of pronounced gaps between American λόγος and ἔργον by considering the right to vote. In Section v, I proceed to argue that, beyond being legitimate, anger at this ongoing state of affairs stands to play a distinctive and fruitful role in its amelioration.

Stoic ethics concentrates on "the perfection of the individual," which is tied to rational self-sufficiency (Garrett 2008, 85; Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11h; Sen. *Ep.* 74.1, 17–21; and Epict. *Ench.* 33). Relentless dedication to Stoics' divinizing ideal yields the only freedom worthy of the name (Sen. *Ep.* 37.3–4, 44.1–2, 47, and 80.4–5). Vice, the sole evil, is identified with genuine enslavement (Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11i and Sen. *Ep.* 47.17, 80.4, and 85.25–30). Those who see "externals" as key to flourishing peg their living well to people, things, and happenings that no human can control. Via πάθη, they are "enslaved" to these (Sen. *Ep.* 47.17). For Stoics, "free" and "enslaved," like "wealthy" and "impoverished," are properties of the mind alone (51.8–9; Epict. *Ench.* 1, 14; *Disc.* 4.1.54–58, 4.4.32–38; M. Aur. 9.40; and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11j).

Thus, legal slavery and the associated lack of political empowerment, common in the ancient world, is merely a "dispreferred" indifferent (Sen. *Ep.* 47, 85.26–27; Brunt 1998, 139; and Hunt 2018, 14). Differently put, for Stoics, possessing "political rights and privileges" in a familiar human sense—for which legal freedom is a necessary condition—is, "strictly speaking, worthless" (Nussbaum 1994, 362). Insofar as any "political" community counts, it is the macrocosmic one (Epict. *Disc.* 4.1.154–155 and M. Aur. 3.11, 4.4, 10.15, and 12.36). Familiar political terms are "depoliticized. ... What was novel in Stoicism was its conception of the ideal community of perfectly rational persons, all subject to the same internalized natural law of reason, and sharing with the gods in the only true city" (Schofield 1999, 768 and 770). As Julia Annas observes, "The very fact that the Stoics say that actual cities are not really cities suggests that they reject specifically political discussion in favour of a redefinition of

political terms which uses them in a context where political issues do not arise" (1993, 306).

Such is the guiding orientation of the Stoic sage, whose mind should "retreat as much as it can from things not its own [and] devote itself to itself" (Sen. *Tranq.* 14.2). This does not entail a lack of literal involvement in worldly activities. Because, however, Stoic indifferents include the virtuous acts that Aristotle deemed requisite for moral virtue (*EN* VIII 5, 13; IX 9–10, 12; and X 8), and the virtuous are self-sufficient, Stoic virtue cannot require these opportunities for worldly translation.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Stoics insist that "the inner ... aspect of virtuous actions" and "the active exercise of virtue" are identical (Annas 1993, 407–408 and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.8, 11e). As Martha Nussbaum puts the point, "A virtuous or vicious act is ... complete at its inception in the heart" (1994, 365).

A restrained orientation toward worldly engagement is also fostered by Stoics' view that divine reason presides over the cosmos (Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 20–21; Diog. Laert. 7.138, 147; and M. Aur. 2.3, 17). "Reason," "nature," "god," and "providence" name aspects of one macrocosmic agency (Diog. Laert. 7.135 and 147; Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 1; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.77; and M. Aur. 2.3). Since divine reason is providential, Stoics encourage us to be content with our allotted "roles" in the "cosmic order" and to work toward freedom from there (Shaw 1985, 34–36 and Brunt 1975, 13, 20, 33n5).

Since all that happens contributes to actualizing "the world's order and function," we should "be pleased with whatever has been pleasing to god" (Sen. *Ep.* 74.20). What stems from macrocosmic, or divine, reason is just (M. Aur. 11.1). Further, because divine "law" embodies a higher justice (Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 2, 34–35),<sup>22</sup> "If someone wants to improve on something [in the cosmos], either he will make it worse or he will be longing for something that simply could not have happened" (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.87).

The basis of humans' moral equality is reason, "the most comprehensive bond that unites together men as men" (Cic. *Off.* 1.50–51). By nature, humans have the capacity for virtue and, thus, liberation (Sen. *Ep.* 31). On this basis,

21 Seneca recommends curtailing occasions for disquiet through minimal worldly involvement (*De ira* 3.6.3, 6), adding that if one does engage, he should be realistic about what can be accomplished because "regret for a task left incomplete will make you irritable" (7.2). Stoics do not have a uniform position on political involvement (beyond the passages cited above, see Diog. Laert. 7.121 and Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11b and 11m). Differences on this matter aside, psychological restrictions on Stoics, their views of what qualify as good and evil, and individuals' driving commitment to their own perfection unite them.

22 Ζεύ, φύσεως ἀρχηγέ, νόμου μέτα πάντα κυβερνῶν ... δὸς ... [ἀνθρώπους] κυρῆσαι γνώμης, ἧ πίσυνος σὺ δίκης μέτα πάντα κυβερνάς (quoted from Stob. *Anth.* 1.1.12).

Stoics endorse the fundamental moral equality of human beings, rich or poor, powerful or uninfluential, legally slave or free (Sen. *Ep.* 31.11 and Epict. *Disc.* 3.26.5). Of course, given the above, this equality “has no consequences for the reform of institutions” (Garrett 2008, 87).

Within Stoic theory, shared rationality also anchors an attitude of respect for all human beings. Every act that a wise individual performs is virtuous (Brennan 2005, 187). Since virtuous acts are “complete at [their] inception in the heart” (Nussbaum 1994, 365), if a sage consciously has the aforementioned attitude of mind, this is no less a virtuous act than if he also expressed the respect externally. If individuals are to actualize their own virtuous potential, self-respect is required (Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.11k; Sen. *Ep.* 6.7, 20.1–5, 34.3–4, 75.4–5, and 108.38–39; Epict. *Disc.* 2.10.15–16, 22, 3.15, and 4.6; and Brunt 1975, 33n5). Since, for Stoics, evident respect from others counts as an external, it is inessential to self-respect.

Liberal-democratic constructions of freedom, moral equality, and respect, as well as their relationships, differ from Stoics'. When it comes to racial justice, much of American history is explicable in terms of an ongoing struggle for the full translation into *ἔργον* of the nation's guiding ideals and rights, in light of which human beings, as such, are politically free, morally equal, and thus worthy of equal respect. The *λόγος* here, represented by the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and key legislation, builds in or presumes the country's responsibility to work persistently toward this translation. In no small part, America's story is that of a nation's protracted striving and struggle to make good on its self-defining constructions of political freedom, moral equality, and equal respect.

The *λόγος* has itself evolved, with subsequent components reinforcing and unpacking their predecessors. On the plane of theory, the core achievements of the Second Reconstruction (1948–1968), “full citizenship for blacks, to include voting rights ... were merely reaffirmations of legal rights already guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments” (Ellis 2018, 54). Enduring gaps between *λόγος* and *ἔργον* make it clear, however, how far African Americans, as a group, remain constrained in relation to the full enactment of their human equality. That progress in relation to *λόγος* has not been equally mirrored in *ἔργον* testifies to the fact that legal headway does not, of itself, lead to matching lived experience.

To illustrate this ongoing *λόγος-ἔργον* gap, let us consider the right to vote, which is a foundational element of liberal democracy. Per the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” The Voting Rights Act (VRA)

of 1965 sprang from Congress's recognition that overtly discriminatory mechanisms, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, were being used in some parts of the country to block Black citizens' free and full exercise of their right to vote. The VRA not only made such provisions illegal but also sought to undercut attempts to reinstitute discriminatory mechanisms.

There is widespread agreement that the VRA spurred great headway in addressing blatant forms of discrimination. Sections 4(b) and 5 were crucial provisions that fit together hand in glove. The "coverage formula" of Section 4(b) singled out for federal scrutiny jurisdictions with a history of discriminatory practices and rates of registration or turnout below 50% of eligible voters. Section 5 was forward looking; it compelled covered jurisdictions to obtain approval, or "preclearance," from the US Department of Justice (DOJ) before altering their voting-related requirements, in order to "prevent them from imposing newer tactics with the same purpose" as discriminatory mechanisms that the VRA had deemed illegal (Hardy 2020, 859n10).

Congress has reauthorized the VRA several times. In 2006, by a vote of 390–33 in the House and 98–0 in the Senate, it did so for 25 additional years. But in *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 US 529 (2013), the Supreme Court ruled that the coverage formula of Section 4(b) was unconstitutional. The act had "proved immensely successful at redressing racial discrimination and integrating the voting process" (Opinion of the Court, 15). "Blatantly discriminatory evasions of federal decrees are rare," yet in 2006, Congress reauthorized the VRA, in particular, the "extraordinary and unprecedented features" embodied in Sections 4(b) and 5, "as if nothing has changed" (Opinion of the Court, 7, 14; Syllabus, 3). Since, a half-century after the act's debut, "things have changed dramatically," Section 4(b)'s coverage formula was outdated (Opinion of the Court, 13, 18, 21). It therefore imposed an undue burden on certain states, violating states' rights to equal sovereignty per Article IV of the Constitution and the Tenth Amendment (9–23).<sup>23</sup> Though Section 5 was not also declared unconstitutional (24), an absence of covered jurisdictions rendered it otiose.<sup>24</sup>

According to the dissenting justices, the Court's ruling makes the VRA a victim of its own success (Dissenting Opinion, 1). The dissent, written by the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, foregrounded a tension within the Court's opinion: it granted that "voting discrimination still exists; no one doubts that," yet overrode Congress's own view that the VRA's intact, continued enforcement

23 The foregoing treatment of the VRA benefited from discussion with Alice Hearst.

24 The vote in *Shelby County v. Holder* was 5–4, with Chief Justice Roberts writing the Court's opinion. The majority included Justice Thomas, who wrote a concurring opinion in which he maintained that Section 5 was unconstitutional as well (Concurring Opinion, 1).



“would facilitate completion of the impressive gains thus far made ... and ... guard against backsliding” (Opinion of the Court, 2; Dissenting Opinion, 1).

Appreciating that documentary freedoms do not maintain or extend themselves, the dissenters in *Shelby County v. Holder* supported Congress’s rationale for renewing the act, as well as its authority to make that call. By, effectively, substituting its judgment for that of Congress with respect to enforcement of the Fifteenth Amendment—which gave Congress that role expressly—the Court had overstepped its own authority (Dissenting Opinion, 8–12).

Not only that, but the caliber of its assessment of present and future conditions regarding racial discrimination in voting was far inferior to that made by Congress in 2006. The preclearance provision of the VRA, Section 5, had prevented an immense number of discriminatory changes to voting procedures. From 1982 to 2006,

DOJ objections blocked over 700 voting changes based on a determination that the changes were discriminatory. Congress found that the majority of DOJ objections included findings of discriminatory intent. ... On top of that, over the same time period the DOJ and private plaintiffs succeeded in more than 100 actions to enforce the §5 preclearance requirements. ... The number of discriminatory changes blocked or deterred by the preclearance requirement suggests that the state of voting rights in the covered jurisdictions would have been significantly different absent this remedy. (Dissenting Opinion, 13, 15)

Though “conditions in the South have impressively improved since passage of the Voting Rights Act,” Congress rightly gleaned that “voting discrimination had evolved into subtler ... barriers, and that eliminating preclearance would risk loss of the gains that had been made” (Dissenting Opinion, 18). What’s more, as it stood, the coverage formula was flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances through the addition or subtraction of jurisdictions, as the case may be (21–22).

Not two hours after the Court’s decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* had been issued, the Attorney General in Texas, a state that had been subject to the coverage formula, announced that it would reestablish straightaway what is called a “strict voter ID law,” according to which would-be voters “must present one of a limited set of forms of government-issued photo ID in order to cast a regular ballot—no exceptions” (US Commission on Civil Rights [USCCR] 2018, 60; DOJ 2020; ACLU 2017). The General Assembly in North Carolina, to which the coverage formula had also applied, hastily responded in a similar way (USCCR 2018, 60).

There can be little doubt that strict voter ID laws discriminate against people of color and the poor. It is estimated that 25% of Black citizens of voting age are without valid, government-issued photo IDs, while that figure is just 8% for whites (Brennan Center for Justice 2006). Where that type of ID is lacking, low income is often a factor, as “the combined cost of document fees, travel expenses and waiting time” can be prohibitive (ACLU 2017). Even where this is not the case, states may restrict access to offices that grant driver’s licenses, a routinely used form of government-issued photo ID, as when Alabama’s Law Enforcement Agency closed 31 driver’s license offices in 2015 (Astor 2018). Though the closings were purportedly due to budget cuts, “There was a clear racial pattern. Of the 10 counties with the highest percentages of African-American voters, eight lost offices. Of the 10 counties with the lowest percentages, only three lost offices” (Astor 2018).

There is evidence that strict voter ID laws have a suppressive impact on voting by African Americans. Using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study to analyze the validated vote in multiple elections, both before and after states instituted strict voter ID laws, Hajnal et al. found a 4.6% drop in Black turnout in primaries where such laws were in force (2017, 368). Comparing voter turnouts for the 2008 and 2012 general elections in Kansas and Tennessee, both of which adopted strict voter ID laws in 2011, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) uncovered a statistically significant, disproportionate reduction in voting by Blacks (2014; National Conference of State Legislatures 2017). Based on comparisons with several other states whose voter ID requirements were substantively unchanged between the 2008 and 2012 elections, GAO attributed this lowered turnout to “changes in the two states’ voter ID requirements” (2014, 47–48). In both Kansas and Tennessee,

Turnout was reduced by larger amounts among African-American registrants, as compared with Asian-American, Hispanic, and White registrants. We estimate that turnout was reduced among African-American registrants by 3.7 percentage points more than among Whites in Kansas and 1.5 percentage points more than among Whites in Tennessee. (52)

It should be noted that reductions in turnout need not be large to be significant, for in some elections, including but not limited to local ones, “even a small effect could have a large impact” on results (Bright and Lynch 2017, 345).

Post-*Shelby* developments support the view that discrimination has ramped up in the legal vacuum created by the Court’s decision. The case of strict voter ID laws is but one illustration of how, “unlike the discriminatory tactics and laws of the Jim Crow era that were banned and declared unconstitutional after

the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, contemporary voter suppression has taken on a more subversive and facially neutral quality” (Hardy 2020, 857). Tennessee’s strict voter ID law ends with the statement, “This act shall take effect January 1, 2012, the public welfare requiring it” (Tennessee Senate 2011). This is an allusion to voter fraud, used as a pretext for the promulgation of such laws. In fact, “In-person voter fraud is exceedingly rare” (USCCR 2018, 105)—more so than “death by lightning” (Levitt 2007, 3).

States in which voting-rights violations occur commonly employ multiple discriminatory measures, ones that promote reduced turnout and/or “dilute” the impact of “vra-occasioned increases in black voting” (USCCR 2018, 369–372 and *Shelby County v. Holder*, Dissenting Opinion, 5–6). The latter, termed “second-generation barriers,” include gerrymandering and at-large elections (*Shelby County v. Holder*, Dissenting Opinion, 5). In addition, after *Shelby County v. Holder*, laws allowing people’s removal from voter rolls “were enacted and enforced at an alarming rate across state legislatures, especially those ... already aware of their discriminatory effect” (Hardy 2020, 858). Though fraud-prevention is the stated rationale, “There is no evidence to support allegations that double registration leads to double voting” (Fessler 2019 and USCCR 2018, 108).

Furthermore, zealous voter “purges” may unfairly disadvantage the poor and people of color, who tend to relocate more frequently than do white voters (USCCR 2018, 108). Arguably, purges can help to sway the very outcome of elections, as was asserted following Georgia’s gubernatorial race between Brian Kemp and Stacey Abrams in 2018, which Abrams lost by 54,723 votes (Georgia Election Results 2019). That may seem like a lot, until one learns that in 2017 alone, when Kemp was Secretary of State, over 668,000 voters were purged (Niese 2018). Moreover, in the three months directly prior to the race in 2018, over 85,000 registrations were cancelled (Shah 2018).

Beyond the above, Black citizens may be prevented from freely and fully exercising their right to vote via “underfunding of training and equipment for polling locations,” as well as “discriminate closures” and malfunctioning machines (Hardy 2020, 857 and NAACP 2018). For example, during the aforementioned election in Georgia, eye witnesses reported “touch screen irregularities when [voters] attempt[ed] to select Stacey Abrams as their choice for governor—the machines instead chose Secretary of State Brian Kemp. In other instances, machines showed ballots being cast before ... the person actually voted” (NAACP 2018).

The 2013 Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* was too sanguine about the present and future of voting discrimination, which, as indicated, takes a range of forms today. As predicted by the Court’s dissenters (Dissenting Opinion, 14),

the invalidation of Section 4(b) and resulting inapplicability of Section 5 of the VRA have made challenges to suspect voting practices harder and slower to bring, as empirical data on the outcomes of these practices must be gathered and recourse sought through the courts (Hardy 2020, 857–858).

Thus, a century-and-a-half after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, US *ἔργον* related to voting remains a mismatch with the *λόγος* that should direct it, in salient ways. As if this were not enough, crimping Black citizens' exercise of the right to vote stymies the process by which institutional improvement in democratic governance occurs. For, as the late civil-rights leader John Lewis observed, in an op-ed that he had arranged to be published on the day of his funeral, "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society" (Lewis 2020).

What's more, voting is not an outlier, as, even where legal prohibitions exist, racial discrimination is evident today in arenas including education, employment, housing, banking, incarceration, medical care, and medical research (Owens 2020, Randall 2002 and 2006, Pager and Shepherd 2008, Western and Pettit 2010, Quillian et al. 2020, Flitter 2020, and Nafiu et al. 2020). In these domains as well, in varying ways and to varying degrees, discrimination restricts Blacks' opportunity to help guide systemic change.

Clearly, the embedding of principles in law is necessary for racial equality but not sufficient. Attitudes, too, are key in terms of the moral acknowledgment at issue here. As Martin Luther King Jr. observed apropos of integration,

The demands of desegregation are enforceable demands while the demands of integration fall within the scope of unenforceable demands. ... Unenforceable obligations are beyond the reach of the laws of society. They concern inner attitudes, genuine person-to-person relations, and expressions of compassion. ... Such obligations are met by one's commitment to an inner law, written on the heart. ... The ultimate solution to the race problem lies in the willingness of men to obey the unenforceable. (1986, 123–124)

Deficient enforcement and ongoing efforts to circumvent the letter of the law, in voting and other areas, testify to the rightness of King's position (considered further in Section v).

In America's liberal democracy, political inequality is tied closely to failures to genuinely acknowledge humans' fundamental moral equality. On the plane of *λόγος*, we are committed to moral, or basic human, and political equality. Yet, in the United States, Blacks have a persistent experience of being treated as if they failed to satisfy the "threshold" represented by what Allen Buchanan

calls the “Moral Equality Assumption” (2009), meaning that they are seen as being of lesser intrinsic worth. Beyond their existence in relation to law and institutions, violations of moral equality are enmeshed in the daily lives of Blacks, hence Claudia Rankine’s description of their moral denigration as “quotidian” (2014, 24).

In the context of racial injustice, physical violence is very clearly also moral violence. But moral violence is a far broader category, for it occurs any time Blacks are not seen and treated as equal human beings. In the “quotidian” failure of moral acknowledgment in Rankine’s “Making Room,” a Black woman is all-too-painfully visible simply as Black, and thereby shunned:

On the train the woman standing makes you understand there are no seats available. And, in fact, there is one. Is the woman getting off at the next stop? No, she would rather stand all the way to Union Station.

The space next to the man is the pause in a conversation you are suddenly rushing to fill. You step quickly over the woman’s fear. ...

The man doesn’t acknowledge you as you sit down because the man knows more about the unoccupied seat than you do. ...

You don’t speak unless you are spoken to and your body speaks to the space you fill and you keep trying to fill it except the space belongs to the body of the man next to you, not to you. ...

You imagine if the man spoke to you he would say, it’s okay, I’m okay, you don’t need to sit here. (2014, 131–132)

Elsewhere, Rankine points to the experience of a Black woman’s perceiving-herself-being-perceived-as-invisible by another:

In line at the drugstore it’s finally your turn, and then it’s not as he walks in front of you and puts his things on the counter. The cashier says, Sir, she was next. When he turns to you he is truly surprised.

Oh my God, I didn't see you.

You must be in a hurry, you offer.

No, no, no, I really didn't see you. (2014, 77)

One may come forth from this invisibility, only to be “pulled back into the body of you receiving the nothing gaze” (141). In the drugstore example, Rankine presents the man's not-seeing as feigned: as really a seeing, following which the beholder deceives himself into believing that his “oversight” was benign, when it was anything but.

Ongoing failures to acknowledge Blacks' full moral equality, whatever their form, fit hand in glove with disrespect for them as human beings. Within American liberal democracy, recognition of persons' equality in a fundamental human sense, together with respect for them on this basis, is necessary for the full attainment of freedom.

Due to ongoing moral and political violations, Blacks' right, as human beings, to what the Declaration of Independence proclaimed as “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” remains constricted. Pertinent legislation should be vigorously enforced and, where necessary, expanded. Yet violations on the plane of ἔργα, which reflect defective attitudes, are rampant, and we have no good reason to think that more laws will make them cease. Morally and politically, this state of affairs is unacceptable.

According to Seneca in *De ira*, “A single judgment—that one has been wronged—gives rise to anger. ... The mere impression of a perceived injustice does not set anger into motion; only assent to this impression does” (Vogt 2006, 65–66). No matter how others treat us, or what fortune otherwise brings, Stoics urge us to judge that we have not been harmed (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.74; Sen. *De ira* 3.5.7–6.1 and 3.11.1; Epict. *Ench.* 1, 30–31; and M. Aur. 4.7, 39, and 7.14). For one who makes this assessment, there is nothing to be angry about (M. Aur. 11.18.7).

## v Moral and Political Losses of Disallowing Anger, Part 2

We should reject Stoics' and transhumanists' eliminative stances regarding anger, for this emotion has a legitimate subject matter. Anger at inveterate failures of will, persistence, and, above all, moral acknowledgment on the part of dominant groups is warranted and rational. Given Scherer's point that anger is

“an explanandum,” not itself “an explanans” (1987, 35), the question becomes, “What does anger at ongoing, pronounced racial inequality illuminate and help to explain?” As we will see, the moral and political functions of anger are deeply entwined. Further, as I construe them, these roles have epistemological and motivational aspects.

From the standpoint of appraisal theory, if subjects’ anger is sidelined as impermissible, their responses to racial injustice may be incomplete, insofar as these anger experiences help bring home to a person *in her entirety* her “equal [moral] status in the face of attempted degradation” (Scherer 2009, 3459; Kauppinen 2018, 39). This situation illustrates how Scherer’s salient appraisal category of normative import comes to the fore in anger experiences. When it is a response to failures of moral acknowledgment, the guiding aim of what David Shoemaker calls “fitting blaming anger” is “communicative,” namely,

to generate the offender’s acknowledgment. ... The most natural explanation for why acknowledgment successfully resolves blaming anger is that it’s precisely what was missing prior to the offense. ... Insufficient acknowledgment effectively involves viewing the victim as a moral *lesser*. ... This creates [or reinforces] a moral imbalance, a tilt away from genuine moral equality. (2018, 81–82)

Rather than treat expressions of anger by those in socially and politically “subordinate” groups as a phenomenon calling for thoughtful exploration in fundamental human terms, members of “dominant” groups may presume that this anger can contribute nothing to their own understanding, reflecting, instead, shortcomings in subjects themselves. That the anger of Blacks, in particular, has been treated as explosive and irrational illustrates the broader point that, by seeking to “place limits on the kinds of emotional responses appropriate to those subordinate to them, [dominant groups] are attempting to exclude those subordinate to them from the category of moral agents” (Spelman 1989, 270). This attempt to forge emotional limitations can itself add fuel to the anger. But,

the more forcefully and vehemently [members of subordinate groups] express their observations and claims, the more emotional they appear and so the more easily they are discredited. The alleged epistemic authority of the dominant groups then justifies their political authority. (Jaggar 1989, 165)

Thus, “There is a politics of emotion: the systematic denial of anger can be seen as a mechanism of subordination, and the existence and expression of anger as an act of insubordination” (Spelman 1989, 270). As long as members of “dominant” groups reject the equal standing of the messenger, they stave off having to face straight on the message itself.

The above tendencies illustrate “anger policing,” which is “used to derail or deflect away from the injustice or oppression (the cause) that the angry agent desires to bring attention to” (Cherry 2018, 58). Crucially, “The evaluator dismisses the cause of the anger altogether. ... It is not the anger itself that keeps one from hearing it. It is the message within the anger” (58). These tendencies also reflect “gaslighting,” which aims to “radically undermine someone’s sense of standing to protest bad conduct ... her independent standing as deliberat- or and moral agent” (Abramson 2014, 6 and 8). To the extent that gaslighting succeeds,

It undermines the target’s ability to take her own words, thoughts, reac- tions or views as having the force they otherwise would. ... Successful gaslighting ... involves ... a kind of existential silencing. ... [That] gaslight- ing often ... occurs in the context of power inequities ... adds a dimension to its moral perversity: to ... manipulate someone ... in a way aimed at radically undermining her independent standing, *by using manipulative leverage one has in virtue of a power inequity*, is a special brand of immo- rality indeed. (17–19)

Anger policers and gaslighters want “the agent [to] think that the anger stems from pathology or a weakness of [subjects’] emotionality rather than the facts of the matter” (Cherry 2018, 62). In terms of appraisal theory, they treat anger straightaway as explaining something essential and unflattering about its expresser, rather than seeing the anger as a phenomenon requiring interpretation and investigation in its own right.

Alison Jaggar notes the revelatory power of what she terms “outlaw emo- tions,” including anger (1989). Anger can certainly be disclosive for the one whose anger it is. Thus, Rankine addresses

the anger built up through experience and the quotidian struggles against dehumanization every ... black person lives simply because of skin color. ... You begin to think ... that this ... kind of anger is really a type of knowledge. ... It responds to insult and attempted erasure simply by asserting presence, and the energy required to present, to react, to assert is accompanied by visceral disappointment. (2014, 24)



At the same time, “Recognition of this lack ... might illuminate the erasure the attempted erasure triggers” (24).

In so doing, this anger can contribute to self-respect. According to Elizabeth Spelman, by virtue of the self-regard that her anger displays, the subject stakes her claim to human parity (1989, 266). When the individual assumes the role of “judge,” she takes herself “seriously” as the target’s moral equal (266). In this way, one’s anger is a self-respecting “act of insubordination” (266).

Anger, construed as self-respecting insubordination, can reflect and foster insight.

The perspective on reality that is available from the standpoint of the subordinated ... is a perspective that offers a less partial and distorted and therefore a more reliable view. Subordinated people have a kind of epistemological privilege in so far as they have easier access to this standpoint and therefore a better chance of ascertaining the possible beginnings of a society in which all could thrive. For this reason ... the emotional responses of subordinated people in general ... are more likely to be appropriate than the emotional responses of the dominant class. That is, they are more likely to incorporate reliable appraisals of situations. (Jaggar 1989, 168)

According to Diana Tietjens Meyers, “when astutely decoded,” an outlaw emotion such as anger “debunk[s] a society’s self-congratulatory illusions about its own fairness and beneficence” (1997, 209). Explored as an explanandum, beyond its revelatory role for subjects themselves, this anger offers those in dominant groups an opportunity to grasp more clearly and deeply that λόγος and ἔργον involving American ideals are far from harmonized, and the profound, relentless human impacts of America’s failure to thoroughly repudiate the gap. Thus construed, this anger is an invitation to do “the hard work of excavating honesty” (Lorde 1997, 281).

An unwillingness by members of dominant groups to open themselves to this understanding and process is self-serving, insofar as it helps them retain their self-understanding and worldly position *as* dominant—a contrast-dependent status requiring that others be subordinate. At bottom, though, this unwillingness to appreciate what the aforementioned anger signifies and absorb what it stands to contribute to their self-understanding manifests resistance to embracing the full equality of Blacks. Further, members of dominant groups cannot fully know what it means to respect themselves—cannot fully understand who and what they are respecting in human terms—unless they

appreciate that self-respect entails one's having and acting on the same fundamental respect for human beings across the board.<sup>25</sup>

Since an intellectual grasp of humans' equal moral worth does not suffice for its vigorous instantiation, the question becomes: what aspects need our mental repertoire include in order for us to "mobilize ... respect for persons" (Sherman 1998, 119)? Being prompted to actively contest injustice requires both an intellectual appreciation of the wrong at issue and moral motivation to translate that recognition into *ἔργα*.<sup>26</sup> Anger is an emotion that can "help promote a campaign against the root causes of ... injustice" (Prinz 2011, 225). This includes "vicarious anger ... a species of concern" that can be strongly motivational (226). According to Jesse Prinz, "What we really need is an intellectual recognition of our common humanity, combined with a keen sense that human suffering is outrageous" (229).<sup>27</sup> Moral acknowledgment is essential, but, if limited to the internal plane, it is insufficient.

America's founding documents effectively pledge full recognition of our moral equality:

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men ... would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (King 1986, 217)

Anger, tied to a sense of urgency, is a wholly fitting and rational response to a situation in which equal recognition has long been promised, yet full equality continues to be denied. Thus, King: "We want *all* of our rights, we want them *here*, and we want them *now*" (1963).

For Stoics, as previously observed, "A virtuous ... act is ... complete at its inception in the heart" (Nussbaum 1994, 365). From liberal-democratic and Aristotelian standpoints, this expansive notion of what counts as an enacted attitude or trait is unacceptable. Intellectual recognition does not, of itself, propel one to translate what she apprehends into sociopolitical reality.<sup>28</sup> Within

25 Stoics glean a connection between respect and self-respect, but, as we have seen, for them, strictly internal acknowledgment is no less complete, as a virtuous act, than if that recognition is also externalized.

26 On moral motivation, see further Jotterand and Levin (2019, 66).

27 In his broader discussion, Prinz uses "anger" and "outrage" interchangeably (229).

28 In Aristotle, see *An.* III 10, 433a22–24; *EN* VI 2, 13, and VII 2.

liberal democracy, this motivation and translation are required, and America's founding documents make this clear.

King speaks of "obligations [that] are met by one's commitment to an inner law, written on the heart" (1986, 123). Though, taken in isolation, King's formulation might seem reminiscent of Stoicism, his guiding vision of what enacting core human attitudes entails is far broader than Stoics'. Since "the mere conception of an other-directed act counts as an other-directed act," Stoics can insist that their position is "compatible with vigorous activity."<sup>29</sup> In contrast, King's phrase "written on the heart" connotes a passionate dedication to the full instantiation of fundamental equality in the operational fabric of American liberal democracy. Moral acknowledgment, if treated as necessitating only internal movement, is deeply inadequate, as it omits the motivation and dedication that are required to bring core liberal-democratic commitments to fruition.

Though anger is not a sufficient prompt for, or sustainer of, salutary activity, it can help mobilize people to engage in injustice-contesting endeavors to which they might not have otherwise committed. Absent anger, one may lack adequate focus, energy, and motivation to respond vigorously to injustice in potentially transformative ways (Lorde 1997, 280 and 283; Cooper 2018; and Pierce 2018). As long as the λόγος-ἔργον gap involving justice and equality persists, anger in relation to that discrepancy has a constructive role to play.<sup>30</sup>

It is often said that in his quest for Blacks' full moral and political acknowledgment, King shunned anger altogether in favor of love. If that were the case, King might well have affirmed Seneca's contention that "no one can at the same time be both angry and a good man" (*De ira* 2.12.2). This view of King, however, reflects a misconception and sanitization of his approach (Pierce 2018 and Obama 2020). What King rejected categorically was *violence*. As is clear from his life and work, nonviolent practice does not entail an absence of anger: "Nonviolent resistance caused *no explosions* of anger. ... It controlled anger and released it under discipline for maximum effect" (King 2010, 18; emphasis added). King did not reject anger per se but the violent tactics of those whose

29 Here, I quote the anonymous referee.

30 Though I maintain that anger is warranted and can help to propel headway toward full justice and equality in lived experience, I do not make the further claim that this anger is a morally requisite response of those in "subordinate" groups. As Gartner (2021, 166, commentary below) points out, I differ here from Aristotle, who viewed rationally justified anger as morally obligatory. Additionally, my view is not that the sociopolitical realm is the sole arena in which anger is justifiable and can be salutary; rather, I aim to show that since anger *is* warranted and constructive there, we should reject the eliminative stances of Stoics and transhumanists.

anger had run amok (1986, 296). Those who employed or approved of violence “ha[d] lost faith in America” (296).

What is the bearing of my account on the “state-trait” distinction and valuation involving anger, which is typically presented as sharp? Reflecting this divide, Scherer and Aristotle assume that trait anger, unlike the state variety, is unwarranted and unsalutary for individuals and the wider world. Conceptually and phenomenologically, however, the division between state and trait, with respect to anger, may be less clear-cut. Scherer’s appraisal process incorporates long-range temporal horizons, which are “typically part of a larger set of conceptual structures, such as that for the self system” (Leventhal and Scherer 1987, 11). A long-range temporal frame is very important when we consider anger about racial inequality, and this focus of application, in turn, supports the need for further elaboration of Scherer’s appraisal theory vis-à-vis the emotion of anger.

Anger in relation to incidents and experiences of racial injustice and inequality in a particular time and place may be frequent, even ongoing. Moreover, they occur in the context of America’s long, fraught history in relation to race, and this history amounts to incalculably more than a mereological sum of violations. Unless contextualized within the λόγος-ἔργον clash dating to America’s earliest days, anger expressed in relation to the ongoing practice of injustice and inequality might appear disproportionate. Patterns and frequency in violations involving justice and equality, each of which may warrant an experience and expression of anger, can make that anger seem to reflect a harmful trait: proneness to anger, to “flying off the handle” (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987, 195). But the anger spoken of here need not be a characteristic in this sense, if at all.<sup>31</sup> For even sustained anger may be appropriate where the impetus is correspondingly strong (Lorde 1997 and Meyers 1997, 208–209). This warranted anger may also be quite intense (Rankine 2014, 115–118 and Lorde 1997, 282).<sup>32</sup>

31 In my view, the familiar state-trait distinction does not map neatly onto the anger being considered in this paper; its more precise characterization is, however, a topic for another occasion.

32 I differ markedly here from Nussbaum (2015). In her commentary, Gartner questions whether “long-range anger” can be morally warranted (2021, 166). For Aristotle, it cannot. Though he allows for strong anger in response to outrageous acts (Urmson 1980, 161), Aristotle rejects “diachronically extended anger” (Gartner 2021, 166): within the state-trait binary on which he and appraisal theorists rely, diachronic anger falls under the latter prong. Gartner’s characterization of the anger I speak of as “habitual,” and her concerns to which it gives rise, flows directly from her mention of Stoics’ “chronically angry” individual and assumption that “habitual anger” means the same thing for me as it does for Aristotle (2021, 167). Gartner’s argumentative trajectory here could be taken to suggest that a negative answer to the question, “Is there an alternative to the traditional

Rather than taking one over, the above anger can be steady: one's whole being, or Scherer's "entire person" (2009, 3459), conveys that the challenge or denial involving our shared humanity must not stand. Unlike "backward-looking" anger, which "aims to *lower the relative status of the target in response to their having violated a normative expectation*," perhaps by resorting to violence, this "forward-looking" anger "aims ... to *force the target to conform to the normative expectation he or she is violating*" (Kauppinen 2018, 33; italics in original).<sup>33</sup>

## VI Conclusion

*Pace* Stoics, the caliber of lives we lead is not entirely up to us, and key facets of what they deem irrelevant to that quality are requisite conditions for individuals' being in a reliable position to conduct flourishing lives. Transhumanists' functional analogue to this Stoic view is their latching onto internal, biological shifts as the be-all and end-all of living well, and accompanying depreciation—even shunning—of social and political routes to addressing persistent human challenges.

As I have argued, beyond more familiar philosophical reasons, we have powerful psychological, neuroscientific, moral, and political grounds for relinquishing the position on anger bequeathed to us by Stoics. A fortiori, we should reject the biotechnological agenda of transhumanists, who would have us eliminate the very capacity for anger, without, however, doing away with the manifest failures of moral acknowledgment that occasion the anger spoken of here. If the experience of anger became biologically impossible, we would lack a powerful tool that helped us recognize injustice and inequality, appreciate the moral imperative to address them, and mobilize ourselves accordingly. Though transhumanists' view is more extreme, Stoicism is its historical *Ursprung*. It is time we put to rest the perspective on anger that the Stoics debated.<sup>34</sup>

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'state-trait' distinction in relation to anger?" is a forgone conclusion. At minimum, it predisposes one to answer, "no." I, however, am not convinced that the familiar state-trait binary exhausts the ontological, psychological, moral, and political terrain that justifiably belongs to anger.

33 As Gartner observes, Aristotle himself may not "be willing to countenance the forward-looking sort of anger" (Gartner 2021, 165) that I support. The point that anger is tied to acknowledgment fits broadly with Aristotle, but his aim is the restoration of balance (Konstan 2004). In the American setting, in contrast, anger stems from past and continuing failures of moral acknowledgment and presses for a fully enacted recognition that has yet to exist.

34 I am grateful to my commentator, Corinne Gartner, and the anonymous referee for valuable feedback.