

Strawson, Peter. 1962. "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, no. 48: 187–211.

Kimberly Kessler Ferzan

University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School

Philosophical Review, Vol. 132, No. 4, 2023

DOI 10.1215/00318108-10697594

Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage: Why Anger Is Essential to Anti-racist Struggle*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. xv + 203 pp.

From Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth to Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks, the United States has a rich tradition of writers and activists who have drawn attention to anger's value as a tool for resisting racism. "Racial hatred is real," hooks (1995: 17) observed a quarter century ago, "and it is humanizing to be able to resist it with militant rage." Myisha Cherry's *The Case for Rage* is a timely and engaging contribution to this tradition. Responding to the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and others, it invites a new generation of readers to reflect on their anger at racism. The book does not ignore the fact that in day-to-day life anger is often hasty, confused, badly motivated, or poorly expressed. But it points to another form of anger that it argues is insightful, considered, motivated by commitment to the good and opposition to evil, and expressed in effective and articulate ways, and that affirms the value of those who have been subjected to racial injustice.

In the first of the book's seven chapters, Cherry differentiates her approach to anger from other recent approaches. Rather than assuming all instances of anger are the same, she proposes that anger comes in several varieties. She distinguishes between these variants by looking at their object, "*target, action tendency, and aim . . . as well as the perspective that informs the anger*" (14). She discusses five varieties, four of which are clearly problematic. *Rogue rage* has a sensible object—namely, injustice. But it falls short in each of the other dimensions. It is targeted at almost everyone, blaming them for the injustice whether they were responsible or not. Its action tendency is to separate the angry person from everyone else in a 'me-against-the-world' fashion. Its aim is to hit back at those blamed for the injustice. But it despairs of the world getting better (which is its perspective). A second variant, *wipe rage*, is no more discriminating than rogue rage. In response to a perceived injustice (real or imagined), the person with wipe rage selects a racial target, blaming their pain

on (all) the members of another race. Because their perspective assumes they are caught in a zero-sum game, their aim is to wipe out members of the other race and their action tendencies are directed toward this end, trying to eliminate the other either literally or figuratively. *Ressentiment rage* is rooted in an experience of powerlessness that is blamed on a more powerful group. Its aim is to pay members of the more powerful group back for one's own (or one's group's) powerlessness. It is fundamentally reactive, focused more on the condition and history of the powerful than on the angry person's or group's future flourishing. The distinctive characteristic of *narcissistic rage* is that it responds to an instance of systemic injustice as if it were merely a personal affront. The provocation for narcissistic rage is not that some injustice occurred but rather that it happened 'to me'. The narcissist is unmoved by similar injustices happening to others. What matters to them is not justice or its absence but rather personal hardship or insult. The target of narcissistic rage is not an unjust system that treats many people like this but merely the individuals they think have mistreated them. The perspective from which it arises is the belief that one is a special case and its action tendency is to insist that one should be exempt from such treatment on account of one's privileged status.

The fifth variety of anger Cherry discusses avoids the problems of rogue, wipe, resentment, and narcissistic rage. She calls it *Lordean rage* after Audre Lorde. It is the variety of anger that she thinks "essential to the racist struggle." The object of Lordean rage is racism as it manifests itself in systems, institutions, actions, attitudes, and assumptions. "The targets of Lordean rage are those who are complicit in and perpetrators of racism and racial injustice" (23). Its aim is to change the things that currently support racism, including the beliefs, social norms, and institutional arrangements that maintain it. The perspective from which Lordean rage arises is a desire to see racism eliminated, not only in the forms that affect one's own group but in all its forms. "I am not free," Lorde (2020: 63–64) suggests—and Cherry agrees—"while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." Finally, the action tendency of Lordean rage is to pursue the steps required to root out racism in all its forms.

Chapter 2 contends that Lordean rage can meet three conditions that frequently come up in both philosophical and public discussions of anger, namely, it can be fitting, appropriate, and correct. In claiming that Lordean rage is 'fitting', Cherry means it makes sense to be angry at racism, just as it makes sense to be afraid of something dangerous or delighted about something good. By 'appropriateness' she means moral appropriateness. It is morally appropriate to respond to racism with Lordean rage, Cherry asserts, provided one's anger "respects the humanity of the wrongdoer and aims to create a better world" and does not cause one to neglect other, sufficiently important, responsibilities (37). Finally, Lordean rage is correct when it represents the world accurately, tracking a genuine instance of racial injustice and attribut-

ing it to the right cause(s). Because victims of racism are frequently greeted with ignorance, skepticism, and a lack of empathy on the part of members of the dominant group, they are saddled with an unfairly heavy evidentiary burden. The silver lining, Cherry suggests, is that Lordean rage “is more likely to correctly represent racism than the other anger variations” because such high demands have been made of the members of oppressed communities before their testimony is taken seriously (46).

Chapter 3 looks at benefits of Lordean rage for anti-racist struggle. Anger communicates to others that the angry party thinks someone has wronged them. Lordean anger is particularly eloquent because it is clear about its object, target, perspective, and aim. Lordean rage can serve to deter future transgressions of the same type. The angry person is eager to act, which increases the likelihood they will confront racism. Because anger boosts one’s confidence, Lordean rage can support a person’s belief in their own capabilities at the precise moment when racism challenges this belief. These benefits are evidenced both by psychological experiments and by the testimony of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King Jr., and those they inspired to oppose racist practices in the United States.

Chapter 4 discusses a range of social assumptions and informal social norms that have often been used to discourage victims of racial injustice from experiencing Lordean rage. Because these norms make it an “outlaw emotion,” just experiencing Lordean rage can be an act of resistance, independently of any other steps one might take to combat injustice.

The fifth chapter sounds a cautionary note for allies in the struggle against racism, because there are errors to which their Lordean rage is particularly prone. (An ally, in this context, is someone who takes steps to resist injustice X but who is not from the group[s] at whom X was/is directed.) Allies should not think that, simply because they are angry about an injustice, they know what it feels like to be its victim. This is true even if they have firsthand experience as a victim of a similar injustice. Allies should not let their anger or actions sideline the primary victims of injustice. They should guard against the temptation to think their own anger is what ‘really’ matters. Allies should not use their anger to advertise their own virtue. And allies should not think of themselves as heroes riding in to save the downtrodden.

Chapter 6 offers an alternative approach to anger management for those experiencing Lordean rage. Standard approaches aim to moderate, suppress, or eliminate anger. Cherry’s alternative encourages the expression of Lordean rage. Rather than hiding it, victims of racial injustice should give it voice. They should find others who feel similarly and work to support each other. They should set out plans with concrete steps to help them translate their anger into action. And they should refuse “to give up” their anger “until there is a reason to do so” (160).

The book ends on a personal note, reflecting on how Audre Lorde's essays and poems have inspired Cherry's own writing and guided her responses to experiences of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Both Lorde's work and the anger she championed, Cherry suggests, can help "hold back the despair" that might otherwise take hold when one is confronted by racism's persisting presence in American life.

The book is meant to appeal "to the academic and activist, the philosopher and citizen" (7). For the activist and citizen, I think it succeeds. It is a welcome introduction to a rich tradition of thought for a nonspecialist reader wanting to reflect on healthy ways of responding to racism. Reading *The Case for Rage* should inspire them to engage with more of that tradition. However, the academic and philosopher will, unsurprisingly, wish the book had spent more time mapping the conceptual terrain and wrestling with the academic literature on the topic. I found myself with a number of unanswered questions, including:

1. Why is anger "essential" to anti-racist struggle? The book only argues that it can be useful to the struggle.
2. Is Lordean rage a different variety of anger than resentment or narcissistic rage? Or is it, instead, anger in a different sort of person—one who cares about justice for all rather than merely personal benefit or harm? More broadly, how do we distinguish between what is true of a kind of emotion and what is true of a kind of person who might have that emotion?
3. What conclusions should be drawn from the acknowledgment that some cultures take a dimmer view of anger than WEIRD cultures (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic)? Is the upshot of the case for Lordean rage that non-Western cultures are wrong about anger? Is the case merely spelling out what members of WEIRD cultures will think about anger once they work out the implications of their fundamental assumptions? Is the case an intervention in WEIRD culture that is trying to shift that culture's views on anger in one direction rather than another?
4. Are "expressing," "suppressing," and "repressing" the only possible ways of responding to one's anger?

Hopefully reading Cherry's book will inspire academic readers to take up some of these questions and carry on the conversation.

References

- hooks, bell. 1995. *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Lorde, Audre. 2020. "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism." In *The Selected Works of Audre Lorde*, edited by Roxane Gay, 53–66. New York: W. W. Norton.

Glen Pettigrove

University of Glasgow

Philosophical Review, Vol. 132, No. 4, 2023

DOI 10.1215/00318108-10697624

Robert W. Batterman, *A Middle Way: A Non-fundamental Approach to Many-Body Physics*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xiii + 174 pp.

For over two decades now, Robert Batterman's work has been important reading for anyone interested in emergence and reduction in the natural sciences. In Batterman's first book, *The Devil in the Details*, he identified a varied collection of patterns of inference that exhibit what he called "asymptotic reasoning": systematically eliminating or abstracting away details from the full description of a physical system given by fundamental physical theory. Batterman argued that recognizing that many details of a physical system are irrelevant to much of its dynamical behavior and, using asymptotic reasoning to eliminate those irrelevant details, often play an essential role in securing predictive and explanatory success in the physical sciences.

Based on this study of asymptotic reasoning, Batterman argued that there are many cases in which the resources for explaining a physical phenomenon are not housed solely within fundamental physical theory. Nor are those resources housed solely within the less fundamental, superseded physical theory. Instead, explaining a large class of physical phenomena requires a third, hybrid theory that inhabits the "asymptotic borderlands" between the fundamental and superseded theories: a theory that abstracts away from select details of the fundamental theory while incorporating elements of the superseded theory. Batterman argued that such hybrid theories are typically necessary to explain multiply realized (what physicists call *universal*) patterns of behavior: identical behavior displayed by physical systems that are, in their fundamental details, importantly distinct.

These two themes—the challenges of explaining universal patterns of behavior and the philosophical significance of intertheoretic borderlands—again figure centrally, if in rather different guise, in Batterman's latest book *A Middle Way*. The book is framed around the following question:

AUT: How can systems that are heterogeneous at some (typically) micro-scale exhibit the same pattern of behavior at the macro-scale?