

This essay will argue why anger is not the appropriate response to injustice. Anger is not the appropriate response to injustice because, over time, its corrosive nature impedes one's ability to think rationally. Anger is corrosive because it is fueled by thoughts that justify its own existence. This is not unique to anger. Most emotions have thoughts that accompany them, often justifying them. However, using thoughts to justify emotion can not only justify or satiate one's current feelings but also cause one to feel an even greater emotion than they did before. This is common for feelings of anger and will cause anger to grow to such an extent that the irrationality of anger can cause violence and hatred, which is ultimately detrimental to people and societies.

For example, anger towards another person will cause one to think of reasons why they have been wronged and why they desire retribution. These reasons will justify one's current anger and also produce a greater or surplus feeling of anger. This surplus anger will produce more thoughts or reasons. These thoughts and reasons are ones of resentment and a subsequent desire to harm those who have wronged them as a form of punishment. However, due to the excess amount of anger, one's feeling of resentment or hatred, and their desire for retribution, will never be satisfactory even if action is taken. Anger will force one to continue to act and think in ways to meet the requirements of anger, eventually reaching a point where one is acting completely irrationally. This is why we associate anger with a sense of being uncontrolled or possessed, as anger increases exponentially. When anger uses this cognitive cycle, it will continue to create more anger until the humanity of those who have committed the perceived injustice is questioned. When those who are angry no longer see those they are angry against as deserving of certain rights, it becomes far more likely that violence and hate will be used to correct the perceived injustice. As a result of this violence and hatred, new injustice is formed in addition to failing to correct the original perceived injustice. These new injustices are only loosely connected to the original injustice but still stem from the original anger.

Examples of anger abusing this cycle are seen throughout history. A far too common example is when soldiers commit atrocities against a civilian population out of anger for having to endure the horrors of war while missing the benefits of peace. Often, the civilians' contribution to the war having occurred, and to the angered soldier having to fight are so loosely connected that they do not justify any direct action against them. However, the angered soldier sees the civilians as causing his current situation. Initially, he might blame them for his frightened state or an injury. He then blames them for contributing to the battle. Eventually, he sees the civilians as responsible for the whole war and the uprooting of his life. Now the soldier no longer sees the civilians as deserving of life, as they are the cause of so much unnecessary injustice. By killing them, the soldier thinks he is correcting past injustice and preventing new injustice. On a larger scale, this thought process can lead to genocide or mass killings. To explain this snowball effect of anger more clearly, I will lay out the cycle linearly:

- a. A perceived injustice occurs.
- b. A person is angry as a result.
- c. This anger is justified by thoughts about why the injustice is bad.

- d. These thoughts do not stop when they should, as they are not isolated to the specific injustice. This is caused by overcompensation for feeling the need to justify one's own position to such an extent that one looks for any evidence to bolster their stance.
- e. As a result, there is more perceived injustice.
- f. This causes more anger, which causes more thought, which causes more anger.
- g. This cycle will continue, eventually reaching a point where one finds no place left to place their anger except on the credibility of the humanity of others.
- h. This can cause those who are angry to see the perceived wrongdoers as inhuman.
- i. People view others as not deserving of basic human rights, making it easier to respond with violence or hatred to correct the perceived injustice.
- j. A new injustice occurs that is now entirely unrelated to the initial perceived injustice.

One possible objection is that anger is not the cause of failures to respond to perceived injustice or the cause of new injustice, but instead serves as a powerful motivator for intentions and beliefs that are already held by people. It is these intentions that will determine if the response to perceived injustice is effective, ineffective, or violent and hateful. If anger is used correctly, it will cause people to properly acknowledge injustice by motivating them to take action against the injustice. If someone responds to injustice with the predominant emotion being sadness or despair, they are not properly responding to injustice because while they recognize injustice has occurred, they are not acting rationally in taking the steps to correct the injustice. Therefore, the only proper response to injustice must be any emotion that both acknowledges injustice and motivates one to take action. While many emotions can cause one to acknowledge injustice, only anger provides sufficient motivation to correct the wrong that has occurred and prevent future injustice. One who is truly responding to injustice and using anger correctly will either be apathetic towards the outcome of the wrongdoer (as they are more concerned with correcting the effects of the injustice) or seek justice against the wrongdoer that is in a manner that does not resemble the philosophies and ethics (or lack thereof) used to commit the perceived injustice. Anger does not change the intentions behind why someone is responding to perceived injustice. If a person is angry and truly cares about the perceived injustice, they will respond as I have just described. If a person is angry and does not truly care about the perceived injustice, they will use the perceived injustice as a justification for already established opinions and philosophies, and if desired, will commit a new injustice. In this case, anger is only masquerading as a response to injustice and, in reality, is only a motivator for previously held views. Anger is a motivator for whatever the intention is and nothing more. This intention can be morally good or bad. However, we cannot abandon the only emotion that is truly effective against injustice out of the chance that someone could use anger wrongly, just as one could use any other emotion wrongly.

This response is not a sufficient objection to why anger is not the proper response to injustice because anger's antagonistic nature was not considered; Even if anger does not enter the endless cyclic loop in one's mind that is proposed and seems to make real change against injustice, it will always antagonize the group that committed the original injustice. Anger will always do this because any action taken will be perceived as a slight or attack against those who committed the injustice, even if the action is indirect, such as addressing the effects of injustice. When this group is antagonized, it will cause them to use anger to push back by either committing a new injustice or preventing the other side from addressing

the original injustice. While those who are responding to the original injustice might feel they are making a change in the moment, their efforts are ultimately not effective. A more effective response would be to stop employing an emotion that always meets an equal or larger response, and use emotions that foster a desire to understand why injustice is occurring. An anecdotal example of how to properly respond to injustice is the musician Daryl Davis, a black man who has helped over 200 KKK members leave the organization and renounce their views. Davis achieved this not by arguing for why the KKK and its members are evil and hateful, but by trying to develop friendships with the members. He showed them that they had nothing to fear and no reason to hate him. Davis states that hate takes root in ignorance and fear. If you help people understand the things they hate, they are forced to confront why they have such hate. If we understand something, there is no reason to fear it, and if there is no reason to fear it, there is no reason to show hate or violence against it. If Davis decided to instead try to convert the members by arguing why racism is bad and why the KKK and its members are evil, the members would have taken this as a pushback against themselves and their community, not only further cementing their beliefs, but also encouraging them to take action against the perceived injustice they have felt. It is likely that the main emotion they would have used to react to such injustice would have been anger. Much like what happens on an individual level, a positive feedback cycle of anger emerges between the two groups, ultimately culminating in more hate and violence.