Anger States Can Be Pro Tanto Reasons

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Intro

This paper argues that the intentional contents of the mental states characteristic of certain emotions, such as anger, constrain which actions can be rationalized for agents by those states. The intentional content of a state is its object or a representation of its object. In arguing for this thesis, I give an account of how a particular emotion, anger, can provide agents with genuine reasons to act in ways that are commonly thought to be motivated by anger. When it is argued that emotions can be "reason-giving," the relevant reasons are pro tanto, normative reasons of the kind that are thought to rationalize actions, or make actions rational to some degree from the subjective standpoints of the agents who perform them. That the reasons are pro tanto means that they need not be overriding normatively or motivationally. In other words, that an occurrent emotional state E gives an agent S a reason to Φ does not mean that Φ-ing is all-things-considered rational for S on account of E, but only that the fact that S has E objectively counts in favor of S's Φ-ing.

Others, including Hursthouse, have written about "intentional actions explained by occurrent emotion" (p. 241), some of which would count as to some degree rational according to the account of this paper. Hursthouse's contention is that some actions motivated by occurrent emotion are intentional actions whose explanation leaves out any mention of Davidsonian reasons, or instrumental reasons that consist of belief-desire pairs, where the belief is about what would be a means to satisfying the corresponding desire. Davidson claimed that reasons of this kind must be involved in the explanation of all intentional action. Because they allegedly are not motivated by Davidsonian reasons, Hursthouse calls the actions she is concerned with "arational actions." She further says that the actions with which she is concerned "cannot be *made* rational" in the sense that "reason cannot endorse them" (p. 251). That is, it is not and cannot be the case that the agents who perform those actions hold beliefs that they are doing something instrumentally rational, or suitable for contributing to the satisfaction of their actual desires or ends, in performing them.

Among the actions Hursthouse discusses are "wreaking damage or violence on inanimate objects that have angered one" (p. 241). In its special concern with the intentional contents of the emotional states that correspond to the emotion of anger, this paper will have additional things to say about two of the particular cases Hursthouse addresses, and so it would be fitting to mention them here. These are cases of actions

> "(b) explained by anger, hatred, and sometimes jealousy—violently destroying or damaging anything remotely connected with the person (or animal, or institution) one's emotion is directed toward, e.g., her picture, letters or presents from her, awards from her, books or poems about her; the chair she was wont to sit in, locks of her hair, recordings or 'our' song, etc.;
> (c) explained by anger with inanimate objects—doing things that might make sense if the things were animate, e.g., shouting at them, throwing an 'uncooperative' tin opener on the ground or out of the window, kicking doors that refuse to shut and cars that refuse to start, tying towels that

keep falling off a slippery towel rail onto it very tightly and then consolidating the knots with water; muttering vindictively 'I'll show *you*' or 'You *would* would you." (p. 242)

Although this paper concedes the point that the agents who act in the ways Hursthouse mentions are not acting from Davidsonian reasons, it is trying to establish that those agents, in some cases, have at least pro tanto normative reasons, in a non-Davidsonian sense, to act in the relevant ways. If the reason to Φ given by the fact that an agent S is in some occurrent emotional state E is genuinely a consideration that counts in favor of S's Φ-ing, and if Hursthouse is right that the explanation of S's Φ-ing does not involve any reference to the instrumental rationality of Φ-ing for S from the standpoint of S's desires, she could be right that it is possible for agents to act intentionally for reasons that are not instrumental to the satisfaction of desire. However, this point is not the paper's primary concern. Nonetheless, there is an interesting question in the background about whether this paper's account of the at least pro tanto rationality of some actions from emotion would challenge the view that all practical rationality is instrumental to the satisfaction of desire.

This topic is practically interesting in light of the modern discourse around psychopaths and other pathological, personality disordered individuals. This discourse thrives on websites like Instagram, as well as in the mainstream news. We regularly hear about the individuals to whom personality disorders are attributed taking out what appears to be anger on unwitting and unfamiliar subjects. In addition, murderers like the Gilgo Beach serial killer often seem to be motivated by anger to commit extremely violent acts. In more mundane settings, most of us are familiar with feelings of anger appearing to us to be at least apparent reasons to act out in less violent ways. This paper explores the extent to which these apparent reasons might be said to be not merely apparent, but genuine. Might our emotions toward particular people really be pro tanto reasons to brutally or covertly attack them? If so, from where would these reasons derive their normative authority?

The first section will provide reasons why we should think that anger as an emotion can give rise to normative reasons for action in the first place. The second section will discuss the intentionality of emotional states and consider how the intentionality of anger states could be thought to constrain the range of behavior that we would consider rationalizable by those states. Finally, the paper will apply the account to real world cases.

Section One

It will help toward arguing that the intentional contents of emotional states constrain the actions that can be rationalized by those states to clarify and make a case for the claim that emotions themselves can give agents pro tanto reasons for action. The claim that emotional states, of which anger states are a paradigmatic example, have rational authority in themselves bears some resemblance to Dennis Stampe's claim that desire states have *per se authority.* He explains what this means in the following passage:

"Desire confers upon action a rationality not inherited from the rationality of one's beliefs or the rationality of any others of one's attitudes. Even

> if one knows no reason to want the thing, and thinks there is none, the fact that one wants it may still be a reason to try to get it. Even if there is a good reason *not* to want it, the fact that one does want it may nevertheless itself be a reason to try to get it. It is not the rationality of desire that confers rationality upon action: it is the desire itself, whether it be rational or not. It is not that desire is necessarily at war with belief but that a desire is a reason in itself, and in its own right, the contrary dictates of belief notwithstanding." (343)

Stampe makes the argument that desire "is an origin of rationality" (p. 343) by asking the reader to imagine two agents, one of whom has the desire to learn German and the other of whom does not have that desire. He claims that even if the agents in question were identical in all of their other attitudes, none of the others of which would support any further reasons to learn German, we would intuitively agree that the agent with the desire to learn German had a reason to learn German that the agent without the desire to learn German did not have (344). This thought experiment is supposed to go some way toward convincing the reader that we really do share the intuition about the *per se authority* of desire that Stampe is trying to defend: that an agent's possession of a desire state in itself constitutes a consideration that counts in favor of her bringing about the state's object, regardless of the other states she may possess.

The claim that anger states have *per se authority* might be argued for in a similar way. We could imagine two agents, Danielle and Gary, who are otherwise identical in their attitudes except that Gary is angry at Iris and Danielle is not. We might, therefore, agree that Gary's being angry at Iris gives him a pro tanto reason to punch her in the face that Danielle does not have. Moreover, this reason of Gary's does not come from any of his desires arising from his anger at Iris, though in theory, he might have such reasons in addition. That is, in virtue of being angry at Iris, Gary could have desires to be rid of his feeling of anger or to vent his anger, and so he might have a pro tanto reason to punch Iris in the face based in part on his belief that doing so would satisfy those desires arising from the fact of his anger. However, the claim about the *per se authority* of emotion-- in this case, anger-- is that Gary has a reason to punch Iris in virtue of being angry at Iris that is independent, even, of any of his desires. The anger state whose object is Iris gives Gary a pro tanto reason to punch her in the face, whose authority as one consideration that counts in favor of his doing so does not come from any other states Gary may possess.

That some emotions, like anger, have *per se authority* the way desire states do is borne out in the ways people talk about anger rationalizing actions. If Gary were moved by anger to actually punch Iris in the absence of any further desires of his that would be satisfied by his doing so, we might judge that it was not prudent for him to punch her, but most would be hard pressed to say that he punched her "for no reason." Plainly, he did have a reason, and if asked to identify it based on a description of the case, most would say Gary's reason for punching Iris was his being angry at Iris.

Although this seems clear enough, already the proposal raises some questions. We might grant that Gary's anger at Iris gives him a pro tanto reason to punch Iris in the face, but does it give him a pro tanto reason to run her over with a truck? Or to abduct her and dismember her body? Are there any constraints on the act types that a given anger state can rationalize in itself? Does Gary's anger at Iris in itself give him a pro tanto reason to yell at the waiter at the restaurant where he has dinner, or to make

bullying comments to his son? All of these questions will be addressed by the account of how the intentional contents of anger states constrain the range of actions rationalizable by those states...

Another reason to think that emotional states like anger states can provide agents with genuine pro tanto reasons for action is their function as mental states within the human mind. Myisha Cherry notes in *The Case for Rage* that people generally tend to think of emotions as states that help us grapple with the world. She also cites Darwin, who held that emotions have the biological function of aiding organisms in survival and reproduction (p. 3). Presumably, emotional states are capable of playing a biologically useful role because, under normal conditions, they are sensitive to certain kinds of information about the environments in which they are formed. The states themselves are responses to information about environments that may dispose organisms in those environments to behave in biologically advantageous ways. That emotional states are sensitive to environmental information under normal conditions and may have evolved to causally trigger us to respond to that information in evolutionarily appropriate ways (Prinz 2006 p. 147 echoes this point) suggests that we should take emotional states into account in our practical deliberation. That emotional states may be irrational in some circumstances, in the sense that they may not be properly sensitive to any environmental information, does not compromise their normative authority from an agent's subjective point of view. This is what is at stake in the claim that emotional states in themselves are pro tanto reasons that count toward certain types of behavior.

Section Two

The last section sought to provide some basis for accepting the claim that emotional states, and more specifically, anger states, have per se normative authority. That is, anger states can provide an agent with pro tanto normative reasons in support of certain behavior, even in the absence of any belief or desire states of the agent's that would rationally support the same behavior. This section seeks to develop the idea that the intentionality of an anger state constrains the kind of behavior that it has per se authority to recommend.

So far, emotional states, including anger states, have been loosely spoken of as mental states possessed by agents. Although there are a variety of theories about how exactly emotional states function in the mind and how they come to have the contents that they do, many have held that anger states have intentional contents, or that they are directed at something (Prinz p. 146, Ratcliffe p. 251). The intentionality of a state has also been described as its "aboutness" or its seeming to be about something (Chalmers p. 184). What a mental state in general is about is typically called its object, and because one straightforward way in which a state may be about an object is by representing it, many intentional states are thought to be representational.

The "content" of a representational state may refer to whatever is included in the representation of its object. People who hold an externalist view about the representational contents of certain states (paradigmatically beliefs) hold that the content of a mental state is just identical to its object, whereas those who endorse an internalist view hold that the representational content of an intentional state may include more or less than the object of its representation. Although the externalist view about contents makes sense insofar as it concerns purely descriptive states like beliefs, whose function is often thought to be to provide the agent who has a belief with an accurate representation of the way the world is, it is less apt to hold an externalist view about the contents of emotional states

insofar as these are thought to be intentional in ways that involve their being representational. This is because emotional states are also intuitively directive states (a point made by Cochrane 2019), or states, part of whose function is to provide an agent who possesses the state with a motivational basis for goal-directed behavior in response to whatever descriptive information may be conveyed by it. The claim of this section restated is the minimal claim that the descriptive information conveyed by an anger state constrains its directive function in a rational agent, or the behavior that the state can rationally support, to some degree.

Behavior motivated by an occurrent anger state has two aspects that could be at least partially determined by the content of the state. These two aspects are the act type the agent would be motivated by the occurrent anger state to perform and the objects or people at which the angry behavior is directed. The claim is that the intentional content of an anger state actually does constrain the varieties of behavior that can be rationalized by that state to some degree along these two dimensions. Again, this account is concerned with pro tanto reasons given by occurrent anger states themselves and not concerned with pro tanto reasons that are based on the desires that may arise in agents because they are occurrently angry. The latter reasons should be counted and weighed separately in an agent's process of judging whether some action is right overall, which, if undertaken properly and acted on, should result in her performance of a rational action.

The first and most straightforward claim is that an occurrent anger state can only provide genuine pro tanto reasons in support of behavior that is directed at its intentional object. The intentional object of an anger state involved in some agent's experience of anger is whatever the agent is said to be angry at. To give an example of what this claim would imply, that I am angry at my boyfriend on this view would only give me pro tanto reasons that count toward behavior that would be directed at my boyfriend. However, that I am angry at my boyfriend would not give me any pro tanto reasons in support of behavior directed at anyone other than my boyfriend, including my mother or father.

Among those who have held that emotional states like anger states include as part of their content some information about an intentional object is York Gunther. In an analogy, Gunther compares particular emotional states belonging to the same emotional type (e.g. states that are all classifiable as anger states) to shades of a single color (e.g. shades of red). Information that corresponds to the phenomenological intensity of an emotion is supposed to interact with information that corresponds to the intentional object at which the emotional state is directed to determine the overall "shade" of the emotional state, which is supposed to be analogous to the content of the state as a whole (p. 48).

However, Gunther emphasizes that because overall emotional state contents are determined by a mixture of information about the phenomenological type tokened by an emotional state with information about the intentional object of the state, two states may share an intentional object without having any overall content in common. That is, the state I am in when I am angry at my boyfriend and the state I am in when I am sad about my boyfriend may have no content in common, though both are directed at the same object. This may be true even if the same belief (e.g. a belief that my boyfriend threatened to kill me) were a cognitive precondition of both emotional states. Similarly, Gunther holds that my anger at my boyfriend that he threatened to kill me may correspond to an emotional state with a different content than my anger at my boyfriend that he told me my outfit is ugly.

That the object of an anger state would make the state capable of rationalizing in itself only behavior directed at that object is not surprising if we consider that upon rational reflection and independently of any emotions, the reasons why agents' anger states are directed at specific people are usually also reasons for those agents to behave in particular ways toward those specific people and not others. Arguably, information supporting the rationality of action against specific individuals is carried by anger states themselves through their objects, even if those who have the relevant states do not reflect on the explanatory reasons for their anger.

To see this, first consider that people usually get angry at other people for an explanatory reason. For instance, Tom may be angry at Jerry for stealing his bike. That the anger state Tom possesses in this instance is directed at Jerry conveys information about the explanatory reason he is in that state: the fact that Jerry undertook an action that threatened Tom's welfare—in this case, by taking one of his possessions. Reflecting on the situation as a third-party observer, one would most likely say it would not be a rational response to the fact that Jerry stole Tom's bike alone for Tom to behave in any way toward anyone other than Jerry. This is because the fact that Jerry stole Tom's bike, in and of itself, is simply not relevant to determining how Tom should behave toward anyone other than Jerry. However, if Tom were to reflect on this, the fact that Jerry stole Tom's bike, which is the cause of Tom's anger state, would be a reason, independently of any of Tom's emotions, for Tom to take some kind of punitive action toward Jerry or exhibit behavior toward him that expressed a demand for compensation. By having Jerry, and not someone else, as its intentional object, Tom's anger state embeds some of this information about what it would be rational for Tom to do in light of the cause of his anger.

One could object to the claim that the explanatory reasons on the basis of which anger states are formed are always facts that support reasons to take retaliatory or other actions against their intentional objects by highlighting cases of people who are angry because they possess false beliefs. Such cases might call into question the claim that anger states themselves have any per se authority to rationalize actions. To modify the earlier example, we could suppose that Tom gets angry at Jerry only because he believes Jerry stole his bike, although the fact of the matter is that Tom only believes this because he visually perceived Jerry's identical twin Bill stealing his bike.

In this modified example, one could say, we should not hold that the explanatory basis for the formation of Tom's anger state is a pro tanto reason for him to behave in any way toward Jerry, since Tom only falsely believes that Jerry stole his bike. The question of why we should take Tom's anger state, or the fact that he is angry in an instance like this one, to have any legitimate normative authority for him might then arise. In other words, cases in which agents possess anger states based on false beliefs of theirs seem to challenge the idea that the normative authority of emotions can be completely accounted for by the idea that an agent's emotions in some situation share a common basis with some objective demands on how they should behave in light of the facts of that situation.

Cases in which emotions are formed on the basis of false beliefs do not undermine the claim that emotions provide a normative basis for action in their own right. To see this, consider that in cases that involve the formation of an emotion on the basis of a false belief, the belief on the basis of which the emotion is formed may be either rational or irrational. If the belief on the basis of which the emotion is formed is a rational one, then there is still a clear sense in which the emotional state formed supports behavior that is based on an objective demand. In these cases, the emotionally supported

behavior toward an object an agent incorrectly believes to have provoked that emotion is just what the situation demands of the agent based on what she should believe in light of her reasons.

In the earlier example, it just so happens that the false belief on the basis of which Tom's anger state is formed is a rationally formed belief, as most consider perceptual beliefs to be rationally formed. Tom's emotional state, therefore, genuinely rationalizes his behavior toward Jerry in the example, although he might not be right to act as his anger recommends. Tom really does have a reason to behave angrily toward Jerry in light of his anger at him because Tom's anger, in some sense, captures what Tom has a reason to do based on what he has a reason to believe.

One could reply that there may be additional cases in which emotions are formed on the basis of irrationally formed beliefs. For example, if Tom came to believe that Jerry stole his bike via the fortune telling of a tarot card reader and subsequently became angry at Jerry, it seems like there would be no sense in which Tom really had a reason to do what his anger state inclined him to do. There are two straightforward ways of addressing the question of whether Tom's emotion, in this case, has any per se authority. The first is to doubt that the case is possible. One could doubt that there have been any actual cases in which agents have formed emotions on the basis of irrationally formed beliefs, since upon reflection, it does not seem like there have been many such cases.

Granting the possibility of the formation of emotions on the basis of irrationally formed beliefs, a second reply would be to concede that Tom's anger state in the relevant case does not have any per se authority to rationalize action because he is an irrational person. That someone could be led by the fortune telling of a tarot card reader to form a belief in the first place, one could say, would indicate that he is thoroughly irrational. If none of the things he takes to be reasons are actually reasons, we are free to exclude him from this discussion of how emotions can make a contribution to rationalizing actions. If cases in which emotions are formed on the basis of irrationally formed beliefs always involve the formation of emotional states by irrational agents, then these do not challenge the normative authority of emotions in rational persons, either.

The next task is to discuss how the intentional content of an anger state could constrain the act types the state has the authority to rationalize. One fairly straightforward proposal is that the content of an anger state constrains the range of act types it has the authority to rationalize by incorporating information about the intensity of the experiencing agent's phenomenological experience of anger. Then, we might propose some sort of relationship between the intensity of an anger state and the range of responses it is capable of rationalizing. Gunther has argued that there is some kind of systematic relationship between the intensity of an anger state and its intentional content. He argues that the phenomenology and intentionality of emotional experience are interdependent, where the phenomenological type that is tokened by some anger state includes information about the intensity of the emotion as it is experienced by the agent who has it (p. 51).

There may be a worry about this proposal that there need not be any substantive connection between the intensity of an anger state and the demands placed on an agent's behavior by the agent-external features of a situation in which she possesses it. If we think that an anger state should only be capable of rationalizing an action insofar as the situation in which the agent possesses the state would rationalize the same action independently of the state, then the intensity of an anger state should not bear on its status as a pro tanto reason for behavior.

We might resist the claim that the intensity of one's anger state tracks anything objective about the situations in which a person becomes angry because, as Gunther has observed, "different intensities of [an emotional state may]...have the same cognitive preconditions" (p. 51). For instance, belief states with the same content (e.g. that Frank fell down the stairs) might causally produce, in some situation, corresponding states of amusement in different observers. Although the causes of their amusement would be the same, each person might experience a different intensity of amusement and thus possess an emotional state whose phenomenological type differed from those of the states possessed by the other observers. Even if the intensity of each agent's amusement state tracked something objective, like her relationship to Frank or her complete set of background beliefs, desires, and memories, the possibility of different agents forming emotional states of different intensities in response to the same situation would seem to challenge the idea that the intensity of an agent's anger state in a given instance can be taken as any sort of guide to her appropriate behavioral response.

A reply to this line of argument for the claim that the intensity of an anger state should not constrain the range of behavior it has the ability to rationalize is to hold that an agent's emotions themselves have some kind of brute rational authority for her. The basis for this authority, however, would remain inexact, and another consequence of granting brute rational authority to emotions would be the relativization of reasons for action to individuals to a high degree. This consequence may be a virtue of the proposal rather than an objection, though, since we would probably agree that one has more pro tanto reason to react angrily to one's significant other breaking a promise than one does to react angrily to one's college professor breaking a promise.

In addition, assuming that some agent in a particular situation possesses an anger state, it also does not seem like, counterfactually, she could have formed an anger state of a different intensity in response to that situation than she did. This observation indicates that the intensity of an agent's emotional states are tracking something objective, although the objective features tracked by an anger state's intensity might be highly relativized to the agent who possesses the state. The objective features tracked by an anger state could amount to facts about things like the angry agent's personal history and her relation to the cause of her anger. Without going too deeply into the specifics of a proposal for a systematic relationship between the intensity of an agent's anger state and the range of act types it has the rational authority to recommend for her to any degree in some instance, the proposal is that some such relationship exists and should be taken into account when considering whether an anger state itself is really a consideration that counts in favor of a certain behavioral response for some agent.

Section Three

The previous section made a case for the plausibility of the per se authority of anger states and further claimed that it is plausible that the content of an anger state also constrains the actions that state has the ability to rationalize along two dimensions. The proposal is that the object of an anger state constrains both the target of the behavior the state can rationalize and that the intensity of the state constrains, in some vague way, the act types to which the behavior that the state has the ability to rationalize can belong. This final section of the paper explores some real world and fictional cases that seemingly raise objections to and highlight interesting implications of the proposal that anger states, by themselves, have normative authority to rationalize behavior.

First, a case involving serial killings of various targets in response to a killer's anger at a different person will be examined. Second, the section examines whether anger states can rationalize crimes of

passion, including domestic violence. These two types of cases, and especially those belonging to the latter, might be thought to present a challenge to the idea that anger states can by themselves count as reasons for behavior. One might hold on moral grounds, for example, that it should not be conceded that an individual's anger at a lover could count as even a pro tanto reason for her murder. However, we can, via closer examination, deny that these cases and the paper's proposal commit us to problematic claims about the practical reasons there are. Finally, the section considers Hursthouse's cases of actions motivated by anger toward inanimate objects and whether the relevant anger states, by themselves, can rationalize those actions in even a pro tanto way.

Because many serial killers are thought to be motivated by anger to commit violent crimes, they are interesting figures to consider in connection with the thesis that anger states have per se authority to rationalize angry behavior. Rex Heuermann, who was charged several months ago with the murders of three sex workers whose bodies were found on Long Island's Gilgo Beach, has at times been characterized by the media as an "angry loner," (https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/28/nyregion/rex-heuermann-gilgo-beach-high-school.html?smid=url-share) and characterizations of serial killers that attribute to them 'being angry' as a character trait are not uncommon. On an episode of the TV show "I Survived a Serial Killer," during which Lisa McVey Noland recalls her confrontation with serial killer Bobby Joe Long, she describes some of his behavior as having been angry and recounts a conversation during which Long suggests that anger toward his ex-girlfriend may have been a motive for his serial killing.

In neither of these cases does the thesis that anger states per se rationalize actions imply any objectionable claims. This is true of most cases involving serial murders of victims unfamiliar to serial killers due to the point about the intentional object of an anger state constraining the possible targets of the behavior it can per se rationalize; anger at or about anything other than random strangers could not per se rationalize the murder of random strangers. Specifically, although Rex Heuermann may have been an "angry loner," it is not clear that he was angry at or had reasons to be angry at the sex workers he is alleged to have murdered. This suggests that his killing was rationally unsupported by any anger states of his, even if some of these states, whose intentional objects did not include his targets, influenced or interacted with his motivation to kill. Likewise, Long's anger toward his ex-girlfriend was not capable of per se rationalizing behavior toward anyone other than his ex-girlfriend, including the various women he killed and abducted. Although serial killers may be motivated, and even occurrently and non-derivatively motivated, by anger at specific people who are not their victims, their behavior toward their victims is not rationally supported by that anger.

Some cases involving crimes of passion and domestic violence can raise related challenges for the proposal that anger states have per se authority to rationalize angry behavior. In these cases, it seems like the perpetrators of violent acts who, in some cases, are motivated by occurrent anger to perform these, do behave angrily toward the proper objects of their anger. Danelo Cavalcante, a recent prison escapee in the state of Pennsylvania who was convicted of murder after stabbing his girlfriend 38 times in front of her children, may provide an example. Cavalcante had previously been on the run after receiving an earlier conviction for the murder of his significant other in his home country of Brazil (https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/13/us/danelo-cavalcante-captured-pennsylvania.html?smid=url-share). Season 1, episode 4 of the show "World's Most Evil Serial Killers" also describes an instance of domestic violence in which a perpetrator's angry behavior seems directed at the proper object of her anger: serial killer Rose West's murder of her daughter, whom the show suggests West came to view as

a threat to her authority in the household. Even though both of these crimes putatively involve agents behaving angrily toward the proper objects of their anger, we might still be unwilling to characterize the acts of their perpetrators as rationally supported by anger against their targets.

It is important to consider again, here, that the perpetrators of these crimes may have been motivated to commit them by anger based on false and irrationally formed beliefs. Cavalcante has been variously described as "abusive" in his relationships. Although there is no way to be sure, his history of intimate partner violence raises the possibility that he came to possess anger states directed at his romantic partners in these relationships that were not based on beliefs supported by good epistemic reasons. The anger involved in the case of Rose West's killing of her daughter is more difficult to rule out as a reason for having been based on irrational beliefs, as the show does characterize the murdered daughter as someone who posed a legitimate threat to her mother, who had other murders of her own to cover up. In a case like this one, and indeed, many other cases of domestic violence that involve seemingly disproportionate responses to perceived wrongs against the perpetrators, we can either deny that the intensity of the perpetrator's anger state was such as to license its per se rational support for the apparently extreme behavior or grant that the perpetrator did have a non-overriding pro tanto reason to commit the relevant crime.

The latter approach seems preferable, if not only due to the fuzziness of the proposal that the intensity of an anger state covaries with the act types of the behavior it is capable of rationalizing. It does not seem so morally offensive or out of touch with reality to concede that someone can be so intensely angry for good reasons that the anger in question counts as a pro tanto reason for her to commit violence or murder. Anger of that intensity might be appropriate if someone's daughter threatens to disclose information that could land her in prison, or, less controversially, if one has in the past been the victim of horrible abuses (as Rose West's daughter had been) and possesses anger states that provide a motive for a violent act of revenge. Still, it is important to remember that the proposal that anger can, in these cases, per se rationalize violent and criminal behavior does not imply that the behavior in question is rational. Most would probably agree that in a society with laws and heavy government surveillance, committing a violent crime is usually thoroughly irrational. That does not mean, however, that anger is never a pro tanto reason to commit such crimes. It only means that anger is usually not an overriding normative reason to do so and should rarely be an overriding motivational reason to do so. The type of case involving a battered person who is motivated to violent behavior by anger may be one in which anger is capable, in itself, of providing an overriding normative reason for violence.

That anger can per se rationalize even murderous behavior is also revealing about its status as a genuinely normative reason. In a case where, for example, a man is motivated by occurrent anger to punch his romantic partner in the face because he rationally believes that she has cheated on him, some might characterize the man as having suffered from weakness of will. This is because we expect rational adults to be capable of weighing their emotions in deliberation about what to do, and also to be capable of refraining from behaving angrily when they judge that doing so would go against considered value judgments of theirs. That emotions like anger fall under the purview of the will's control suggests that it is not inappropriate to give these emotions the status of reasons rather than that of natural forces that move the will regardless of an agent's judgment on the matter of whether or not this would be a good thing.

It only remains to examine Hursthouse's two cases: those involving emotional behavior targeting items "connected with the person (or animal, or institution) one's emotion is directed toward" and those "explained by anger with inanimate objects" (p. 242). In arguing that the actions falling under these categories are "arational," Hursthouse denies that they are rationally supported to any degree within the Davidsonian framework for practical reasons. The question of whether they are rationally supported to any degree if we adopt a framework on which emotional states can provide reasons for action in themselves is taken up now.

In the former type of case, it seems clear that the target of the acting agent's angry behavior is non-identical to the object of her anger state. Thus, if an agent were motivated by occurrent anger to destroy images of a rival, for example, this behavior would not be rationally supported, according to the account of this paper, by her possession of an anger state whose object were the depicted rival in itself. The idea is, again, that situations whose features give rise to anger at a rival arguably also place objective demands on how an agent should behave toward the rival without placing such demands on how she should behave toward images of her rival.

One could argue that this idea is too simplistic by proposing that if, for example, the agent in question were angry about the fact that her rival had achieved greater fame than her, then the conditions that led to her possession of a corresponding anger state would rationally support her angry destruction of posters advertising the rival's product to the public. There may still be a question in a more complex case like this one, however, about whether instrumental reasoning would be required to make a transition from anger at a rival arising from the fact of his greater fame to motivation to take strategic action to undercut that fame by destroying instruments of publicity.

Another proposal that would allow the anger state in a case like this one to per se rationalize the destruction of a rival's image is that a person's "fame," as an object, is an institution constituted by a number of inanimate objects and practices involving multiple people. This section leaves open whether this more complex proposal is capable of making the destruction of a rival's posters in the case of one's anger about his fame a rationally supported activity, but holds that in a normal case of T's anger at person S, T's behavior motivated only by occurrent anger at S that targets images of S or objects connected to S is not rationally supported by that anger alone. To generalize about an explanation why, we can say that T's anger at S is usually not a reason for T to destroy pictures of S because the conditions that tend to give rise to one person's becoming angry at another do not also tend to provide reasons for the angry person to destroy images of the object of her anger.

Finally, in the latter case involving angry behavior directed toward inanimate objects, it is not clear that the relevant behavior is rationally supported according to this paper's proposal, either. In the first place, there is a question about whether people actually do get angry at inanimate objects. When you see a man coming out from under his broken down car swearing angrily, for example, it is not clear that he is really angry at the car or about the state of affairs: that he has tried and failed to fix it and cannot afford a new one. Insofar as anger at inanimate objects is possible, it seems like it would per se rationalize angry behavior toward those objects. It just isn't obvious that people who appear to possess anger states directed at objects are really angry at those objects. They seem just as likely to be angry about the fact that they wasted their time, or the fact that they have no means of helping themselves out of an undesirable situation of which those objects comprise some part.

Conclusion

This paper has made a case for the claim that anger states can be per se reasons in the sense Dennis Stampe means when he calls desires per se reasons. The fact that an agent is angry can be a pro tanto reason for her to take certain courses of action. The thesis has implications for the kinds of rational support that can be attributed to actions that are motivated by occurrent anger. It is also worth explicitly mentioning that it is difficult to argue that some fact is a reason worthy of consideration in practical deliberation without appealing to cases that support that intuition. That anger states seem subjectively to recommend certain courses of action and that we expect others to exercise willpower over their anger on occasions when exercising it in motivation would be inappropriate are points that support the claim that anger states can be per se reasons. Practical reasons count in favor of actions and are capable of being weighed in deliberation.