

# On being angry at oneself

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of self-anger has been overlooked in the contemporary literature on emotion. This is a failing we should seek to remedy. In this paper I provide the first effort towards a philosophical characterization of self-anger. I argue that self-anger is a genuine instance of anger and that, as such, it is importantly distinct from the negative self-directed emotions of guilt and shame. Doing so will uncover a potentially distinctive role for self-anger in our moral psychology, as one of the strongest affective motivators for self-change.

## KEYWORDS

anger, emotion, guilt, self-anger, self-change, shame

Oh my God! How could I forget the midterm exam was today?!

Damn it, I've lost my keys AGAIN!

Why on earth did I wait so long!? Now I've missed my freaking chance!

Sometimes we are the objects of our own anger. Sometimes we only have ourselves to blame for certain actions or omissions. Self-directed anger has, for the most part, escaped the attention of analytic philosophers.<sup>1</sup> Both contemporary work on anger, as well as work on negative self-directed emotions, such as guilt and shame, have neglected the phenomenon of anger at oneself. This leaves open the possibility that self-anger is a mistaken emotion term that actually refers to a particular variety of shame or guilt.<sup>2</sup> This paper addresses this gap in the literature by taking the first steps towards a characterization of self-anger. I begin by characterizing self-anger as a

<sup>1</sup> In the Freudian and Nietzschean traditions self-anger is discussed only insofar as it is construed as self-aggression and taken to characterize the nature of guilt (Nussbaum, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> This could fall out of existing discussions of self-anger (see footnote 1) where self-anger is not a separate phenomenon to guilt.

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genuine instance of anger before distinguishing it from guilt and shame. Doing so will allow us to uncover a potentially distinctive role for self-anger in our moral psychology as possibly one of the strongest affective motivators for self-change.

## 1 | ANGER

Despite self-anger having been systematically neglected in the contemporary literature on anger (Callard, 2020; Cherry & Flanagan, 2018; Cogley, 2014; Na'aman, 2019; Nussbaum, 2016; Pettigrove, 2012; Silva, 2021),<sup>3</sup> acknowledgement that anger can be self-directed is actually widespread in this literature, such that inattention to self-anger is not explained by scepticism regarding the phenomenon. Self-anger is thus both ubiquitously acknowledged, and thoroughly undertheorized in the anger literature. In this section I take steps towards correcting this by fleshing out how self-anger compares to paradigmatic instances of anger.

Anger is paradigmatically other-directed. It typically has entities other than the emoting agent as its intentional object. Anger can arguably be felt towards groups or institutions, as well as individuals. Self-anger, on the other hand, always has the angry agent themselves as its intentional object. The most obvious difference between what I will call "paradigmatic anger" and self-anger is that they differ with respect to their intentional objects.

There is a helpful distinction regarding the intentionality of emotions worth mentioning. Emotions are thought to have two different types of intentional object: particular objects and formal objects. Particular objects are those objects an emotion is felt to be about: Oneself, in the case of self-anger; a rival football team, when one is losing a home-game; one's ex-partner, when going through a break up. Formal objects are the evaluative properties that each emotion type is thought to share, which provide the correctness conditions for an emotion and plausibly individuate emotion types (all instances of fear are about danger for example) (Mulligan, 2007; Scarantino & de Sousa, 2018; Teroni, 2007).

Paradigmatic anger is thought to have as its formal object the evaluative property of offence (broadly construed), as anger is triggered by events that strike the agent as unfair, unjust or wrong (Scarantino & de Sousa, 2018; Teroni 2007). Anger is a negatively valenced experience correlated with approach behaviour, typically aimed at confronting the target of one's anger, be it to seek revenge, apology, deterrence or rectification for an offence.<sup>4</sup> Anger is a highly motivational emotion, robustly observed to involve a high evaluation of one's capacity to cope with, control, or change, the triggering offence (Roseman, 1991; Scherer, 2005). That is, unlike other negative emotions such as sadness, where coping potential is paradigmatically low (little can typically be done to change the saddening event or its consequences), anger involves an element of optimism regarding the agent's capacity to change the triggering event, keep it from repeating itself, or seek reparations for it.

Self-anger has a "hot" phenomenology in line with that of paradigmatic anger. That the term "self-anger" has emerged suggests as much, and indeed, in one of the only empirical studies to probe self-anger, subjects reported feelings of "boiling inwards" in anger and self-anger, but not in other emotions (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). Furthermore, much like paradigmatic anger, this empirical study found self-anger to involve high levels of coping potential compared to other negative emotions (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). Unlike paradigmatic anger however, self-anger has been associated with avoidance, as opposed to approach, behaviour (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). This is not surprising, as in self-anger one is as close to the object of one's anger as one could be. Nonetheless, one may behave punitively towards oneself in self-anger, and self-anger seems to involve the desire to change one's

<sup>3</sup> Nussbaum (2016) is an exception, where aggressive self-anger is equated to guilt. Nussbaum is doubtful that cases of non-aggressive self-anger would count as anger, as anger is, for her, inherently retributive. See footnote 4.

<sup>4</sup> In this paper I assume a pluralist view of anger's desires. That is, I will assume that anger can have a number of aims, including retribution, recognition, and/or rectification. I do so such as to not assume a restrictive view of anger that would need defence of its own and against which the question of self-anger's nature would be of considerably more narrow interest. Further, pluralist views have been gaining popularity in tandem with recent critiques of traditional retributivist views of anger (Cherry & Flanagan, 2018; McBride, 2018; Silva 2021; Srinivasan 2018).

ways and not repeat the triggering action/omission. Even if self-anger involves different behavioural tendencies to paradigmatic anger then, it seems to share paradigmatic anger's aims: to confront anger's target and punish and/or change its ways. Self-anger, then, matches paradigmatic anger in phenomenology and aims, while having always the emoting agent as its object.

What about self-anger's formal object? For self-anger to be an instance of anger, it must presumably have the same formal object as paradigmatic anger: offence.<sup>5</sup> The occurrences that trigger self-anger do not straightforwardly qualify as offensive, unfair or unjust however. It does not seem right to characterize my having forgotten my keys as unfair, or my having missed out on an opportunity as offensive. I think there are promising ways to make sense of self-anger as having the formal object of offence that are worth exploring. First, those situations that trigger self-anger would plausibly have been offensive, or unfair, had one suffered them at the hands of another (if someone had concealed from you that your mid-term was coming up, hid your keys, or made you miss out on an important opportunity). A counterfactual condition of this sort is a candidate formal object for self-anger that deserves exploration.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the notion of "self-offence" might emerge as relevant to a characterization of self-anger as we will see that self-anger involves a strongly divided self where one part is antagonistically opposed to the other.

For now, it seems that we have a number of reasons to construe self-anger as a genuine instance of anger, including its phenomenology and aims, as well as a few promising directions to pursue in an attempt to secure self-anger the same formal object as paradigmatic anger. However, especially if we fail with respect to the latter point, we must consider whether self-anger is a mistaken emotion term and whether the phenomenon it describes collapses into the negative self-directed emotions of guilt or shame.

## 2 | GUILT AND SHAME

Shame, guilt, and self-anger all seem to be triggered by regrettable behaviours, omissions, or traits that one reprimands oneself for. To determine how self-anger might differ from guilt and shame we need first to appreciate how shame and guilt differ from each other. As this is a topic of considerable controversy I will rely on three of the most widely accepted differences between the two emotions.

1. *Particular objects*: Guilt is often contrasted to shame in being construed as a response to negative evaluations of particular behaviours, while shame is thought to involve negative evaluations of a more global sense of the self (Deonna et al., 2011).<sup>7</sup> I feel guilty for cheating on a test when I negatively evaluate the act of cheating. I feel instead shame when I evaluate myself to be a bad person for having cheated. Although guilt and shame share the same target, the emoting agent, they still bear subtle differences at the level of particular objects. Teroni and Deonna (2008) cash this out in terms of a difference in evaluative focus, where guilt and shame share the same particular object, oneself, but differ with respect

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<sup>5</sup> I return to this claim in my conclusion and outline a few ways we might reject it while maintaining that self-anger is a genuine instance of anger.

<sup>6</sup> One might object here by noting that the counterfactual cases I have mentioned are ones where others have *intentionally* harmed me (willful concealing for example) while we might think that one does not intentionally harm oneself in cases that trigger self-anger. The objection would be then that we do not have an actual counterfactual here: the real counterfactual would be when others cause one harm without intending to, and this, we might think, falls short of offence and therefore does not satisfy the formal object of anger. First, it is not clear that intention is necessary for offence, and second, self-anger may actually often be triggered by actions or omissions that are indeed intentional. Lastly, my claim here is that a counterfactual construal of self-anger's formal object is an avenue worth pursuing in a, currently lacking, philosophical investigation of self-anger, not that it will ultimately be successful.

<sup>7</sup> This need not mean that shame involves an all-encompassing negative evaluation of oneself. The thought is that shame involves a relatively more global, or more severe, negative evaluation than guilt. Deonna et al. (2011) cash out this severity as follows: In shame one evaluates oneself as lacking the capacity to uphold a value that one holds, while in guilt one merely evaluates one's behaviour as having transgressed a norm. One's capacity to uphold such norms is not (as severely) threatened in guilt.

to what aspect of this object is the focus. In guilt, behaviour is the evaluative focus, while in shame a more global sense of the self is the focus: one's capacities, as an agent, to uphold values one holds dear, for example.

2. *Formal objects*: It has been proposed that shame is triggered by failures that undermine one's ideals, while guilt is triggered by norm violations, making "undermined ideals" and "norm transgressions" their respective formal objects (Maibom, 2019; Teroni & Deonna, 2008). One feels shame for having cheated on a test when it is part of one's ideal self-conception that one be the sort of person that does not cheat. One feels guilt for having cheated when doing so violates a norm that one values, namely that one should not cheat, but where this violation does not threaten one's ideal self-conception.
3. *Behaviour*: Guilt is characterized by seeking amends (such as offering apologies), while shame triggers avoidance behaviour and the tendency to cover one's face or hide (Maibom, 2019; Teroni & Deonna, 2008). This makes sense as in guilt one often feels that there is something one can do about the situation, typically seek amends. In shame things may be harder to address, as the problem is often perceived to be with one's very self, such that avoidance and hiding behaviour is typically motivated instead. This is in keeping with guilt involving higher appraisals of coping potential than shame (Tracy & Robins, 2006). Behaviour (in guilt) is typically easier to address, change or excuse, than one's self, or broader capacities (in shame).

Although those occasions that trigger guilt overlap with those that trigger shame, there are some general trends that help distinguish these emotions. Shame and guilt seem to have relevantly distinct particular objects (self vs action focus), formal objects (undermined ideals vs transgressed norms), and differential patterns of action tendencies (avoidance vs seeking amends). There is currently no similarly fine-grained characterization of self-anger that would allow us to discern how it differs from guilt and shame. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, how to carve out the differences between guilt and shame is a subject of considerable debate. For the reader that disagrees with my summary of these differences it might be helpful to note that what I am after is a characterization of self-anger, or at least the beginnings of one, that approaches the fineness of grain of those existing for the negative self-directed emotions of guilt and shame. As such, my proposal will survive much disagreement on the specifics of how guilt and shame differ, so long as self-anger emerges as sufficiently distinct from both of these emotions.<sup>8</sup>

### 3 | SELF-ANGER

The following is one of the few examples of self-directed anger in the philosophical literature:

Leontius, the son of Aglaion, was going up from the Piraeus along the outside of the North Wall when he saw some corpses lying at the executioner's feet. He had an appetite to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned away. For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, overpowered by the appetite, he pushed his eyes wide open and rushed towards the corpses, saying, "Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!"

I've heard that story myself. It certainly proves that anger sometimes makes war against the appetites, as one thing against another. Besides, don't we often notice in other cases that when appetite forces someone contrary to rational calculation, the person reproaches himself and gets angry with

<sup>8</sup> For example, my construal of the formal objects of guilt and/or shame may be wrong, but so long as they are distinct from the formal object of self-anger, my proposal that self-anger does not collapse into guilt or shame may be left standing.

that in him that's doing the forcing, so that of the two factions that are fighting a civil war, so to speak, spirit allies itself with reason?

[Plato, *Republic*, 439e-440b, in Cooper (1997)]

Four important points emerge from this passage. First, that self-anger seems to be characterized as distinct from shame. We see Leontius plausibly moving from shame (evidenced by his covering his face), to self-anger (Jimenez, 2020). Second, self-anger seems to be felt towards a part of the agent, here specifically Leontius' eyes. Third, the part of the agent that self-anger is felt towards seems to stand in considerable tension with the rest of the agent. There is a conflict within the agent, "two factions fighting a civil war". Lastly, this fight does not involve two otherwise equal parts of the agent: self-anger seems to, at least in this case, side with the agent's overall judgement of what they ought to do or their "normative self".

In self-anger then, there seems to be an important sense of a divided self, of one part of oneself evaluating another. Notions of a divided self are widespread (see Nussbaum 2016, p. 129) and may be important also in capturing instances of shame and guilt, as it is often plausibly "parts" of oneself that are negatively evaluated in these emotions as well (one's actions in guilt, plausibly one's capacities in shame). Self-anger however seems to involve a strongly or fiercely *divided* self, where one part reprimands the other in a confrontational, oppositional, manner that challenges its target. In shame and guilt, if the self is in some sense split, its parts do not relate to one another in the same oppositional manner as in self-anger. The phenomenology of shame is often characterized by feelings of deflation, smallness and incapacity (Gilbert et al., 1994). This fits with a more severe, and (relatively) more global, negative evaluation of oneself or one's capacities. There is a sense of helplessness in shame, while in self-anger there is an emboldening. In guilt there is a stronger felt division between the self that evaluates and the evaluated behaviour/omission. In this sense guilt is closer to self-anger than shame. Nonetheless, guilt plausibly implicates one's self-concept and self-worth to a greater extent than self-anger, as the latter but not the former involves such division that the targeted part of the self is treated as almost another, or separate, self.<sup>9</sup> This matches differences in phenomenology between the two emotional phenomena, for while in self-anger we contest a part of oneself and are poised to confront and tackle it, guilt is characterized by feelings of sinking, depletion and stasis (Gilbert et al., 1994). In so far as guilt is animating, these feelings are typically other-focused and involve hues of humility apt for seeking amends, as opposed to the confrontational colourings present in self-anger. Self-anger is the only one of the three to be characterized by a hot, empowered, arousal that challenges and confronts its intentional object.

The three examples cited at the beginning of the paper involve more common experiences of self-anger than Leontius' predicament. In them too, self-anger sides with one's overall judgement (I should not have forgotten my keys, or that my exam was today. I should not have been so indecisive). The parts of oneself that anger targets are less physical in these cases, they are one's traits or habits as well as one's failures to act. In all three cases self-anger involves a confrontation between two sides of oneself, one that is let down and one that is culpable for letting the other down. One is not merely disappointed in oneself however. One part of the subject is antagonized with the other and the subject feels strongly that they could, and should, have behaved otherwise.<sup>10</sup> The subject is, plausibly, offended by themselves. The target of self-anger is an unwanted or contested aspect of oneself that plausibly causes the agent offence. Much as paradigmatic anger makes demands

<sup>10</sup> By this I do not mean that self-anger can only target the voluntary (indeed the initial examples plausibly involve cases of anger at one's traits or habits, such as forgetfulness and indecisiveness) but rather that it is part of the nature of self-anger to evaluate one's failing as potentially changeable or improvable upon. Whether self-anger's targets are in fact changeable is a separate concern (self-anger, like any emotion can be inapt) but many non-voluntary features or traits (such as forgetfulness, disorganization, cowardliness) are at least potentially within the realm of things that can be worked on. Attempts at improvement or control will often be executed through voluntary actions that indirectly target one's undesirable traits. Self-anger then does not exclusively target the voluntary, but rather involves the feeling (that may be unjustified) that one's failings are at least somewhat within one's control. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising the issue of voluntariness.

<sup>9</sup> See Smith and Lazarus (1990) for a similar claim. Self-anger differs from guilt in being paradigmatic other-blaming anger that happens to have a part of oneself as its target. One's self-concept and self-worth is plausibly less threatened than in guilt as in self-anger we in a sense treat the target as another.

of other agents in light of offences, self-anger may make demands of the agent themselves, in light of “self-offences”. It may then be key to a characterization of self-anger that sense be made of the unfamiliar notion of “self-offence”. Whether such a notion proves feasible or helpful is a topic for future work. For now, the proposal is that self-anger involves a strongly divided self, where one part is antagonized by another and challenges it in a confrontational manner.

It is important to note that although self-anger will often side with one's overall judgement, as in the examples discussed above, it need not. One can be angry at oneself for reasons one does not reflectively endorse (for example, when feeling angry at oneself for having made a blunder while believing it was not a big deal). Cases of self-anger that do not align with one's normative judgements are classic cases of recalcitrant emotion where one experiences an emotion despite holding a belief that conflicts with it.<sup>11</sup> Self-anger then will not always align with one's normative self, but it will always involve a felt divided self, where the relation between parts is oppositional, and one seeks to change the other. In line with paradigmatic anger, self-anger, in confronting a part of oneself, likely includes an element of optimism regarding the agent's ability to change this part of oneself, plausibly making it highly motivational.

Scarce empirical work has been done on self-anger, such that it remains an underexplored emotion in psychology as well as philosophy. However, the little work that does exist stands in line with the above. Self-anger is taken to be a genuine instance of anger that involves the “other-blaming” component of paradigmatic anger being directed at the self. Further, self-anger has been thought to differ from guilt and shame in that one's self-conception and self-worth is not undermined (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006; Smith & Lazarus, 1990).<sup>12</sup> In line with this, self-anger has been observed to involve higher levels of coping potential, or appraisals of control, than shame or guilt (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). This fits with the phenomenological differences highlighted above. It makes sense that self-anger would involve higher levels of coping potential than shame, for in self-anger one hopes to change only a particular part or aspect of oneself, and one's self-conception is not (as) threatened. In self-anger one is more confident about one's ability to change the targeted part of oneself, while in shame the status of the very self that evaluates is often threatened, leaving one more pessimistic about one's potential to change. In shame one often feels in some sense unfit to live up to the ideals one values, while in self-anger one reprimands one's self for undermining goals that one feels strongly one *can* uphold. Self-anger also involves higher coping potentials than guilt, plausibly because self-anger's fiercely divided self involves less threat to one's self-worth or self-conception than in guilt (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Recall that guilt is thought to involve higher coping potentials than shame (Section 2). This higher coping potential, which puts guilt between self-anger and shame regarding control, can be understood to be other-directed, that is, it concerns the agent's ability to seek amends for harms they have committed. The coping potentials in guilt are, then, likely about one's capacity to seek amends while in self-anger they are about one's ability to change oneself. The success of one's efforts, in guilt, typically depend on the will of other agents, those one has harmed, as they must accept one's amends for amends to be made. In self-anger, as one is often the only “victim” of one's actions or omissions, the prospects for change frequently depend only on the angry agent, such that control over one's fate is more extensive.

In line with this, empirical work has observed self-anger to often occur in solitary agents. Shame and guilt experiences occurred in the presence of others 98% of the time, while self-anger was observed to occur when

<sup>12</sup> Note that the role empirical work is playing in my argument is indirect and suggestive. No empirical finding is brought forth as direct, much less conclusive, evidence for any claim. The study by Ellsworth and Tong (2006) involved participant self-reports and questionnaire responses. These methodologies are subject to a number of critiques and limitations. That being said, much empirical work in appraisal theory uses these methodologies and has proven informative to philosophers working on the emotions. A main worry is that very little empirical work has been done on self-anger, such that results observed in the existing study could well be easily overturned. My intention is first to highlight existing empirical work on self-anger and secondly to ascertain that it does not stand in tension with my philosophical proposal. Doing so lends plausibility to my proposal and may help spark novel empirical investigations on self-anger, in addition to furthering theoretical work on the topic.

<sup>11</sup> Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to clarify this point.

agents were alone in 48% of cases (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). This is a large difference that marks a significant difference between self-anger, on the one hand, and guilt and shame, on the other. Self-anger was also observed to be less concerned with social norms, community values, or how one is perceived by others, as the same study observed shame and guilt to typically have morally relevant triggers, while self-anger did not (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006).

The discussion so far supports self-anger involving a distinct formal object to guilt or shame. In self-anger one undermines one's goals in a manner which is plausibly construed as (self)offensive. Sometimes these goals will include ideals of one-self, overlapping with shame (as in Leontius' case), or norms, overlapping with guilt (especially when others are harmed as a consequence), but they need not. One's goals can be more personal and less moral (such as not wanting to forget one's car keys). When the intentional objects of self-anger overlap with those of shame or guilt, two (or all three) of these emotional phenomena may occur. Self-anger, shame and guilt have distinct formal objects however, (self)offense, undermined-ideals and norm-transgression, respectively. The above suggests that the evaluative focus of self-anger's particular object shifts depending on what part of the agent is culpable for undermining one's goals. Self-anger will shift from focus on actions and omissions, to character traits and habits, depending on the case. Perhaps this permissive focus is partly to blame for self-anger's neglect in the literature. Despite this wide overlap, self-anger will be more common in cases where the agent evaluates themselves as particularly capable of upholding their goals in the future, whether these goals concern ideals, norms, or merely non-moral desires, as self-anger involves a higher coping potential than guilt and shame. A high coping potential fits well with self-anger's proposed formal object, for offense is something we want to contest and rectify. Self-anger will, then, plausibly be exceptionally motivational, for it emboldens the agent to act to change their ways.

The empirical work also highlighted characteristic action tendencies for self-anger. Amend seeking was not observed in self-anger, unlike in guilt, and unlike in shame, face covering was not characteristic of self-anger. Crucially, unlike either shame or guilt, self-anger often motivated the agent to seek the support of others (Ellsworth & Tong, 2006). This may again have to do with the fact that cases of self-anger often do not involve other victims besides the angry agent themselves, therefore, the agent can plausibly seek the support of others without adding further injury to them. Furthermore, as one is (more) confident, in self-anger, that one's self-conception is intact, one is better placed to seek the support of others without fear of judgement, retaliation or exclusion. If this is so, self-anger may enjoy a further advantage, in addition to its highly motivational character, in the pursuit of self-change: self-angry agents may be able to create for themselves good conditions for self-improvement by recruiting the support and encouragement of their communities, which guilty and shameful agents may be less able to resort to.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

I have taken the first steps towards characterizing self-anger as genuine instance of anger and as distinct from the negative self-directed emotions of shame and guilt. Self-anger was taken to evaluate parts of one's self (be these actions, omissions, character traits or otherwise) as fiercely opposed, or offensive, to one's desires or goals. These goals are often non-moral, coming apart from goals that incorporate ideals dear to one's self-conception (as in shame), or norms (as in guilt). In line with paradigmatic anger, self-anger involves higher levels of coping potential than other negative emotions and emerges as a powerful motivational force as it represents its objects as offensive and in need of change. In addition to avoidance behaviour, self-angry agents pursue support seeking behaviour. These features, I have suggested, highlight self-anger as a particularly strong force for self-change or self-improvement.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This is not to suggest that self-anger has no deleterious effects on agents. Whether its negative effects outweigh its positive ones is a question for future work.

By providing a first characterization of self-anger I hope to have laid the groundwork for future work (both conceptual as well as perhaps empirical), on self-directed anger and its potentially key role in motivating self-change. Three points are particularly ripe for further investigation. First, the issue of how best to construe self-anger's formal object. I have sketched how to secure self-anger the formal object of offence. Some may doubt that efforts in this direction will enjoy much success, which could threaten my claim that self-anger is a bonified instance of anger. Two points in response: We may instead pursue a construal of self-anger as one member, amongst others, of an "anger family" or "genus" where each member or species has its own specific formal object. Alternatively, we may explore scepticism regarding whether offence is the formal object of paradigmatic anger in the first place. Goal frustration more simply could replace offence. In either case, self-anger's status as a genuine instance of anger could be secured while denying that offence is anger's formal object. Another topic for further investigation concerns how exactly to cash out the sense of a "divided self" in self-anger. Lastly, the proposal that self-anger is a particularly strong affective motivator for self-change raises a number of interesting questions. First, whether this is really the case remains to be scrutinized in light of further considerations, including empirical ones. One reason to favour a more modest role for the emotion would be if those occasions that trigger self-anger were found to be ones that are in fact easier to change. If so, self-anger would be extremely motivational, but only in achieving shallow, or otherwise more straightforward, self-change. Even if this turned out to be the case however, one might still advocate for the cultivation of self-anger in harder cases, such as to harness its motivational power for more labourous self-improvement.

I hope to have persuaded the reader that further neglect of self-anger would be a failing. If this first attempt at a characterization proves contestable, grappling with its inadequacies will nonetheless serve to further our understanding of self-directed anger.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None to declare.

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